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THE HUMOR MATRIX: A CALCULUS OF
THE ENTRY AND INTENSITY VARIABLE IN
FRIEND AND MATE RELATIONSHIPS
WITHIN A MARGINALIZED COMMUNITY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Kenneth Emerson Williams, M.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1997

Dissertation Committee:

Professor John Dimmick, Ph.D., Adviser
Professor James Hikins, Ph.D.
Professor Nancy Chism, Ph.D.

Approved by

Graduate Program of Communication
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1997
ABSTRACT

Ellen DeGeneres's outing of herself and her character last month on *Ellen* have brought the humor of gay men and women into the homes of many. Long before that show (30 April, 1997), four years of field notes were gathered in gay male nightclubs for this research. Analysis of the notes was done for the purpose of understanding humor's roles and functions for that case-study population.

Humor serves an adaptability role allowing for friend and mate relationship growth. Humor is an entry and intensity variable in the relationships of men joking in the gay nightclub. This growth occurs as a result of the expanded repertoire of humor types (advancement through humor classes) that they share.

Though humor class growth is both indicative and reflective of relationship growth, humor content is more significant in predicting relationship types, within this population. Coupled gay men used more anti-gay humor as their humor content; non-coupled gay men used more anti-straight humor. Who joked with whom affected humor content.
and humor style. Single gay men in the crowd were scapegoated more often than coupled gay men. Single gay men seemed to accept this role. Female terms and pronouns were used more often when targets of the humor were single gay men.

Varying humor styles existed. Some enhanced communication competency more than others by having greater potential for flexibility and adaptability. As such, humor enhanced competency and could make communication more successful if norms were respected. Norms were explored as well; men were able to recognize uses of humor which violated norms but found articulating the norms difficult. Some relationships grew, and others ended while research continued. This leads to the humor calculus; a way of anticipating how a relationship is changing by examining how humor is changing. Unlike the humor used by Ellen, her producers, and her writers, the humor throughout this project was unscripted. This allows for a better understanding of humor's functions and roles in our own everyday lives, as opposed to seeing how gay or lesbian humor manifests itself in our living rooms via the medium of television.
A treatise on humor should naturally be dedicated to those who make us laugh the most. This includes not only the famed comediennes and comedians like Lucille Ball, Joan Rivers, Phyllis Diller, Moms Mabley, Gilda Radner, Roseanne, Ellen DeGeneres, Rosie O’Donnell, Robin Williams, Jim Carey, Billy Crystal, Chris Rock, Bill Cosby, Dick Gregory, Bill Mahr, and the cast of Golden Girls. It also includes, for me, friends and family with whom I laugh loudest, hardest, and longest: Dr. Michele S. Davis, Dan Dugan, Bob Mangia, Brian Rafferty, Brett Reid, Adam Savage, Deb Stollenwerk, Chris Stringer, and Ken Swickard (here in Columbus); my subjects, my peers and my students (at Ohio State); countless friends from Everett, Pa. and Shippensburg University and, of course, my siblings (Janet, Barb, and Bill), nephews and nieces (Donnie, Brian, David, Heather and Hayley), and in-laws (Jody, Don, and Tom). Of course, I first learned laughter from my parents, and I dedicate this to them most of all: to Harold Emerson and Jessie Elizabeth Williams, I say thanks for life, love, long-time support/encouragement, and lots and lots of laughter.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I’m verbose. I know this. Though I assume most dissertations contain a standard two to four pages of acknowledgments, I doubt if this is like most dissertations.

First of all, with field notes being collected during 43 months over a nine-year span of time, I encountered more subjects than most. Because of that span of time, I may have encountered more road-bumps than most. I also worked with more faculty and committee members than most (or at least it has felt that way). Further, my friends and family, with their patience, have been more generous than most. And I feel like I should acknowledge most.

Second of all, because my friends, family, peers, subjects, and students have been so willing to help or encourage me when road-bumps occurred, I am so keenly aware of their faith and trust in me. It makes me proud. As such, I feel like I should thank so many and thank them so often that I would feel like Oscar-winner Cuba Gooding, Jr. speaking on and on with much jubilation while the Oscar
music plays, the commercial is started, and the public can no longer even hear his thanks. Unlike Cuba, I have no Oscar or music leading me into a commercial, but that does not diminish my own jubilation in any way (even though most will no longer even hear my thanks either). Still, it is how I feel.

Academically and at Ohio State, let me first and foremost thank my students. Only one (Marilyn, who introduced me to Harvey Mindess’s Antioch Humor Test and, indirectly, to his other works) had direct influence on my dissertation topic and research. However, had it not been for students in my math and linguistics classes as far back as 1984 and 1985 and Michele Davis’s Academic Support Program Students in Communication 105 in 1988, I would not have known the thrill of teaching. Without that thrill, and the knowledge that I would need to have a Ph.D. to continue to teach at the college or university level, I doubt that I would have been as motivated as I was to finish. After all, nine years of lit reviews and field notes is a long time (I began the same month that Roseanne’s sitcom debuted; and finished one month after it left the air.). They truly must have inspired me.

Academically, I must also thank former faculty and supervisors before even starting to thank the current ones.
Without their early influence, I might not have chosen grad school or communication as a field. John P. Taggert and James St. Clair from Shippensburg University were instrumental in my pursuit of graduate studies in linguistics and speech. While working on my M.A. in linguistics, I took a single course in political communication and rhetoric from Dr. James Golden in The Department of Communication at The Ohio State University, and I was hooked. That one course with Dr. Golden turned into many, and it led to courses with Goodwin Berquist, William Brown and Josina Makau, and eventually my pursuit of the Ph.D. Position papers done for Dr. Golden's classes were developed further in Clifford Vaida's Discourse Analysis course and a number of courses with Vic Wall, Jr. All four of these communication faculty served at some point as chair or advisor of my doctoral committee but their departures from O.S.U. made it impossible for them to see my project through its final phases. Thanks go to Dr. Makau for her help with communication ethics and in the structure and organization of the first dissertation drafts. Special thanks go to Dr. Wall and Dr. Golden for their help in the earliest stages of topic selection and, mostly, for supportive words of encouragement as I embarked on a project that would allow me to draw upon my strengths within the field and to begin to overcome my weaknesses. No other two
faculty within my field seemed to have as much confidence in me as they did: I have remembered that over the years.

Dr. John Dimmick was very helpful, willing to move from the role of committee member to advisor when Josina Makau left and doing so quite well. Like Dr. Makau, he gave feedback that was thorough and fast: many advisors make advisees wait as long as ten months to have drafts returned; with Makau and Dimmick I never waited more than ten days. In fact, Dr. Dimmick read through the entire final draft over a weekend, and I thank him for that time and I thank his wife Karen Dimmick for allowing him to forgo household chores for the weekend. The other two committee members included Dr. James Hikins, who always had good advice and thorough comments on drafts, and Dr. Nancy Chism, who came to be known as St. Chism over the last month.

First of all, it should not have surprised me how effective Dr. Hikins is in his dealings with students: I've seen him spend countless hours with undergraduate students, lined up around the walls of our department. Yet, it did. His attention to detail and his flexibility in time-scheduling when it came time for the final oral defense of this document were appreciated -- a lot.
The second committee member, Dr. Nancy Chism (a/k/a St. Chism), came to be on this committee as a result of my work with her in the Faculty and TA Development Offices over the last six years. Had I not worked with her before and not come to respect her so much, I might not have even thought about adding her to a committee for a communication dissertation as her field is education. Her knowledge of participant observation is unmatched, and, in my book, her kindness is unparalleled. Having served as a fourth reader for re-candidacy exams, St. Chism was asked to fill in during May of this year as yet another original committee member had to leave unexpectedly. She not only filled in but completed reading most of that first draft over night and by the time of the final oral examination had not only questions but additional information, sources, and suggestions for my own future development in the area of ethnographic research. She truly has been a Saint to me when it came to my academic, professional and teaching growth at The Ohio State University.

It should also be added that St. Chism’s participation would not have been possible had it not been for Dr. Joe Pilotta, the original committee member who was overseas and unable to return. Though Dr. Pilotta had been helpful in previous stages of this process, he was gracious enough to encourage me to find a substitute when it became
clear that he would not make it back for the defense of my dissertation. Sandy and Dean Siddens in The Graduate School were also helpful as the original delay necessitated the missing of a deadline which they were kind enough to forgive, given the difficulty of the situation and my own fears about missing the scheduled graduation deadlines.

Another person, Dr. Michele Davis, was a big help in me landing the aid of St. Chism for this project. For one, she introduced us. But way beyond that, Dr. Michele Davis is -- without a doubt -- the single most incredible influence on me (and my teaching) while at Ohio State. I constantly learned from Michele Davis and have never stopped appreciating her for all that she has done for me and all that she has taught to me. Nancy Chism has been a Saint over recent months especially, but Michele Davis has been a slice of heaven in my life ever since this project first began in 1988. Nancy Chism, John Dimmick, James Hikins, and Joe Pilotta may have helped me to finish, but Michele Davis has made me want to finish: she has been nothing short of inspirational, and her presence at Ohio State continues to be missed.

The academicians listed above are of obvious importance for a dissertation’s completion. Less obvious but perhaps even more valuable most of the time are the

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following. They include names of friends, supporters, and even several subjects who made all those academic road-bumps a bit more smooth. Though they may not seem to have much in common with faculty and professors urging me to "stick to deadlines," some friends did encourage me to "stick to deadlines." Many times Bob Mangia would call and ask, "Are you typing?" and would follow my response of "No" with "Well, why not?" When friends are starting to ask the doctoral candidate these questions even more often than the candidate’s committee, one knows that it IS time to type. After all, friends, (unlike one’s committee members) are just impossible to avoid after a while. I am so grateful to Bob for those questions and for Chris Stringer who constantly listened to me vent when committee members were retiring, moving, and much much more. The same must be said of Dan Dugan who had so much faith in me that he started calling me "Dr. Williams" about three years ago, possibly to make me feel like a schmuck if I never followed through and Ken Swickard who tormented me with comments like "I just may graduate before you do," which, of course, he did but by only two weeks. Speaking of torment, no one -- I mean no one -- could have made me want to finish more than Mike and Mary Saulnier. My best buddies since my days at Shippensburg, both said that they would forever make fun of me if I did not finish or if I finished behind schedule. I have no doubt they would have, especially Mike. Thanks to
both for many weekend chats across several state lines: I love you both for your own (albeit, twisted) way of showing support. Thanks also to those friends (like Tamara Gillis, Matt Messersmith, Becky Mountain, Rich Reilly, Tom Rutherford, Debbie Stollenwork, Mark Tree) who knew of the process and balanced their taunting with words of encouragement.

There were many other people who knew a little less about the process of ‘a dissertation’ calling it the "D-word," after a while, like all grad students seem to do at one point. Though not all could not give words of advice on the process or suggest additional books to read (like faculty members were apt to do), they supported in their own ways. Foremost, they were friends. That, in itself, is support worthy of mention. So thanks go to a long list of additional people which have included (amongst others):

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Computer assistance was gotten from Linda Dobbs, Kurt Liggett, Al Palfi, Bill Sharkey, and Jon Gordon, as well as from The Department of Linguistics at The Ohio State University (especially from Jignesh Patel who assisted in the linguistics computer lab and from Dr. Brian Joseph, Department Chair, who was kind enough to allow an alumnus use of the linguistics department’s equipment while ours was down or being repaired: I know I would have missed at least one deadline if not for Dr. Joseph’s generosity). Additional assistance with computers, copiers, and paperwork issues was gotten from The Department of Communication’s Main Office Staff. Special thanks go to Peg Allemang, Liz Carlson, and Grace Rees. They made this process a bit less of a nuisance for me, and I know that without their help and support, all things in our department would come to the inevitable “grinding halt.” Similar thanks are directed to Jim Campbell as well, to Dr. Alan Osborne in education, and to the department of mathematics for additional funding and dissertation-friendly teaching hours.

Thanks also go to my family. I have had to miss a few important family events because of teaching and research schedules, data collection, and doctoral exams. Whether it be Brian (Hanks)’s marriage to Niki, Mom and Dad’s anniversary or most recent illness, visits from relatives in England, or just decreased quality time in general, they...
never seemed to hold my schedule against me. I am grateful. Not only that, but I could not even begin to count the numerous clippings from newspapers, handouts, and the internet that my sisters Barb and Janet regularly sent when I said I was getting a ‘doctorate in humor.’ I doubt if writers for Jay Leno, Johnny Carson, David Lettermen, or even Jerry Seinfeld produce as much material. That which was useful for the dissertation I certainly tried to include: that which was not useful sure made me laugh -- so, that too had its use.

I would like to add a special acknowledgment to my parents, who are almost as anxious to see this project finished as I. I know that the process is an odd one to them and that they are not exactly sure what goes into the completion of a dissertation and, in turn, a Ph.D., but I am so grateful that they encouraged me to follow my own goals anyway. I am thrilled that they may be attending my graduation (on a Friday, June 13th, no less). I know that some might think that my thrill comes from them being proud of me (which I certainly hope is true), but I think the thrill is more aptly the pride I have in them. Dad and Mom, you’ve done ‘good.’

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I need to acknowledge a few other people of great importance. First is David K. Kody. To my knowledge, I had never known an ‘openly’ gay man prior to him. I certainly had never met anyone so comfortable with himself, so hysterically funny, and so generous with his time when I asked what had to be the dumbest questions he had ever heard. I don’t suppose that, in his absence, I would have ever come to do a dissertation which featured gay humor. Stigma still attached to ‘gayness’ or ‘being gay’ or even ‘knowing someone who is gay’ is still surprisingly strong within American society (Ask Ellen DeGeneres!). Knowing someone like David Kody removed that stigma for me, and made this project possible. In essence, it may have emerged from my conversations with David in the mid-80s: he would crack a joke that I just didn’t "get" all the time. But, by George, I think I finally may have gotten it, after all.

A few other people worthy of mention include those associated with Ohio State’s Gay and Lesbian Alliance. Phil Martin, who served as director of campus-wide services, and several students proved helpful. A few were not only helpful but incredibly dedicated to everything they undertook. Mike Scarce and Tom Fletcher come to mind as being two people who were ambitious and energetic in their pursuit of gay-related issues on The Ohio State Campus. Their national notoriety as a result of their ‘activist’
stances never deterred them, and one has to admire their strength and fortitude through all that. The same could be said in more recent years of Marc Conte or in previous years of Brad Guisinger and Randy McGee. Likewise, numerous staffers and friends (Dwight, Eric, Andrew, Chris, Towsha, Kim, Rachel, Jill and others) often met and talked, usually sharing both information and laughter. Many were helpful when it came to researching aspects of gay history and communication.

Another person who I met soon after Mr. Kody was Chriss Large, some of whose talk is included in Appendix A. As the typist for the department of linguistics while I worked on my M.A. he was efficient and a great worker. As a human being he was kind, caring, sensitive, and gloriously funny. He, too, inspired me early on to examine the topics at hand, and I thank him greatly. I only wish that I'd have finished sooner so that Chriss could read it and see if I had made him (as he put it) "a star!" I also wish that my thanks to Chriss could be in person rather than posthumously.

Additionally, Marc Taylor was indispensable. Several conversations were recorded at his parties in Knoxville, supplying some of the data for field notes. More importantly, Marc and I actually discussed some of my early
hypotheses, and he inevitably shot a few of them down. He was right to do so. I think he would be pleased with the project in its current form but am finishing the research just one-half of a year too late. This is my biggest regret of all about undertaking a project this time-consuming: Marc will not see the result. Many gave me insight into my research; others gave books to read; still, others gave words of encouragement; and others just gave me much needed laughter and breaks from the sorting and categorizing. Marc did a little bit of it all; for his help (especially during General Exams), his love and support I am so grateful. You are loved and greatly missed by many, Marc. The saddest part of all, I guess, may not be the loss of just Chriss and Marc, (not even 29 years old yet); rather, the saddest part is that they are two of many including: Matt Nadason, Ben from The Eagle, Steve Christie & Eartha Quake from Tradewinds, Dave Barber, Bruce Timothy Rawlings, Clay, Jack Schuster, Omer W., and Jeff. These are just the people that I knew about: sadly AIDS has claimed even more of the people that I met and spoke to throughout this process: all of whom shall be missed.

I know that people like to take snapshots of people to freeze a moment in time or a likeness so that the person in the photograph is never forgotten, and that particular event is never forgotten. I’d like to think that I’ve done
this somewhat by taking snapshots of the humor of many of these men. Foolish as they may sound to a reader; I know it to be true. Reading through talk samples like those in Appendix A or through the more exhausting field notes, I immediately remember the times and the moment and the laughter. That is, after all, the best thing to remember about these sharp, witty, and hilarious people.

The comedienne, Roseanne, offers up simple words that seem fitting in these acknowledgments. When asked about her opinion about her show’s best scene ever, as the show finished its ninth season on the air, she told Oprah it was the one in which she attended her father’s funeral and spoke these words to him, posthumously:

Thank you for your humor.
I love you. Goodbye.

I believe Roseanne’s words convey my feelings as well.
VITA

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Humor, though often enjoyed within the communication rituals of our daily lives and, as it turns out, often studied in the academic rituals of scholars in disciplines like sociology, psychology, and even biology, has been overlooked to some degree by scholars in communication. Whereas early scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Descartes did give attention to humor as a communication device, primarily as a tool of persuasion, contributions since then have only reflected those scholars' early questions, judgments, and biases. However, much has changed since that time regarding the way humor is used in our everyday lives and what we seem to know about humor. Thanks to Freud, Mindess, and Davies, working in fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and linguistics, enough is known about humor to be able to do three things: (1) confirm that humor is a necessary component of our communication competencies and in turn a factor in our friend and mate relationships; (2) study humor in a way that is sound scientifically but relatively unobtrusive and
grounded methodologically; (3) recognize, advocate and pursue the study of humor’s content, contexts, roles and functions within marginalized populations.

Those three things are done in this project by: (1) beginning with a "greatest hits" of humor research through the years, highlighting implications for the communication scholar; (2) examining humor as it is actually used within a speech community via the method of participant observation; and (3) concentrating on the humor of patrons in the gay male nightclub, using three Columbus bars as the primary data collection spots over a 43 month period. Follow-up visits and interviews as well as written materials like gay publications were also used to help arrive at research questions and answers. Four different sets of results are presented and discussed: (1) Mindess’s charts of Humor Style, Humor Class and Humor Categories are slightly revised and justified; (2) humor level growth is analogized to Filtering in Friend and Mate Relationships; (3) the humor of gay un-coupled men, frequently demeaning to heterosexuals, is compared and contrasted to the humor of gay coupled men, frequently demeaning to single gay men, with differences in their humor content highlighted; and (4) significant changes in humor exchanges amongst subjects is shown to be a marker of changes occurring in those subjects’ friend and/or mate relationship.
The first chapter provides a more detailed overview of this project. In it, assumptions of the project are presented as well as Nicotera's relationship theories, friend and mate relationship literature reviews, a discussion of humor's role in each and a synopsis of humor literatures. From these items emerge a discussion of this project's purpose, the research questions, and a definition of the majority of terms used throughout. This first chapter begins with an overview section, meant to help the reader see some of these goals in greater detail.
1.A. OVERVIEW

Many are already aware of the importance that our interpersonal relationships have in our lives but are considerably less aware of the factors or variables that influence the initiation and sustaining of those interpersonal relationships. According to Cushman and Cahn (1985), two of the most important types of interpersonal relationships are friend and mate relationships commonly referred to as FR and MR in interpersonal communication literature. They also write that despite their importance, FRs and MRs are not adequately understood, even by experts. Calling FRs and MRs "problematic types of interpersonal relationships," potential weaknesses in the already existing literature bases are acknowledged (1985, 3-4.):

1. Most FR and MR research is survey-oriented, depending on subjects/respondents judgments about their own FRs and MRs, relationships about which they may find difficult to comment on objectively on surveys.

2. Though variables seem to emerge as factors in both FR and MRs, not enough of an attempt has been made to understand the individual variables better, and how they contribute to burgeoning FR and MRs.

3. A useful question to ask is not just what makes person X a mate and persons Y and Z a friend, but what makes X different from previous potential mates A, B, and C or person D, E, and F who were never considered as potential mates, and Y different from former friends or people never considered as potential friends? Likewise as we know that different friends fulfill different functions and roles in our lives (Cushman, 1985) and are, naturally, different from each other, what factors stand out that enable all of them to be considered our friends (i.e., are there any unifying
characteristics that are both reported and observed in FRs or MRs and what might they be?)

4. Though filters and self concept support are believed to be important in interpersonal relationships, the mechanisms used to develop self concept support, for example, are really not well understood especially at the entry level of a FR or MR.

5. Though Person A is generally involved in FRs with, say for example, Person B and Person C (amongst others), and A’s role in the friendship with B seems different from the role with C, little is known about the influences on A’s role and behavior made by Person B and C. This is especially important when Person A is (like many people) a member of several different groups, cultures or societies all at once. This impact of a group, culture or subculture on a FR and MR is not known but is crucial to consider as research outside the interpersonal communication literature bases suggest that some entry variables and intensity variables are extremely culture-influenced. Thus, a multicultural awareness is necessary to understand FRs and MRs better and in new ways.

Nicotera argues that it is surprising how much researchers claim to know about FR and MR in interpersonal relationships given that some of the fundamental variables in FR and MRs, like humor, are often not understood or treated in a manner that is consistent between scholars. Further, some of the grand claims that can be made about FRs or MRs depend on some fundamental assumptions about the existence of certain EVs (entry variables that influence person X’s decision to initiate a relationship with some other person, Y.) and IVs (intensity variables which influence whether the relationship between person X and Y will develop, dissolve or maintain) in FRs and MRs that still merit study in their own rights.
For example, many variables that emerge as significant in FRs and MRs are a part of our general communication competence and can be understood by consulting various communication competency literatures. Other variables which have emerged as significant, such as humor, in studies which specifically targeted questions regarding FRs and MRs have been acknowledged as being of "probable importance" but are not probed further, probably because they were not variables which were historically examined in communication competence literature. Humor is one such variable.

Though many of the general theories on FR and MRs have really been developed within the last decade and a half, they rely heavily upon the growing communication competence literatures of the mid-1980s when humor was not treated as an aspect of competence. Though it would seem that one could argue for the inclusion of humor in the competency literature (Duran, 1992 and 1983, did so; though it has still not generated much interest from researchers in the area of communication competence.), it seems even more obvious to consider humor's existence and rather important role as an EV or IV in FRs and MRs. First, researchers of FRs and MRs acknowledge that humor emerges as a common EV and IV in their studies, but do not pursue that connection
further because that was not their goal (Nicotera, 1993a; Cushman and Cahn, 1993, 1985; Bahk, 1993; Korn, 1993; Moemeka and Nicotera, 1993; Cushman in S.S. King, 1989;).

Second, research outside of the field of communication supports this as well: humor is an important communication variable as an EV and IV in FRs and MRs. Though humor as an EV or IV in FRs or MRs has not been given enough attention, humor in other domains of our lives has been studied (A later chapter discusses the humor literature as it is relevant for an understanding of FRs and MRs and the EVs and IVs in each.).

The purpose of this project is to mesh this understanding of EVs and IVs in FRs and MRs with an understanding of humor to add to the theory of FRs and MRs in interpersonal communication as well as to contribute, specifically, by showing the ways that humor works as an EV and IV in observable developing and sustaining FRs and MRs by a population in a specific setting.

The population for this case study is the gay male population in the chosen setting. The setting chosen is the gay nightclub/bar; three distinct clubs in the city of Columbus were chosen and observed for 43 months. Reasons for the selection of that location and population will be
explained in chapter three, on method. For now, suffice it
to say that governing factors for the selection of this as
the case study were: (1) the availability of research on
humor’s impact on people’s lives and on historically-
oppressed groups in particular; (2) the availability of
research on humor’s significance in the gay (male) community
and the lack of specific understanding of humor’s role in
that group or others as an EV or IV in FRs and MRs; (3) the
feasibility of the setting for a participant observation
method, a method that seemed crucial given the humor
literature and important given the interpersonal literature
on FRs and MRs; (4) the importance of the gay bar setting to
gay male populations, according to the literature on gay
male communities; and (5) the availability of the three
bars chosen, all located in the city of Columbus, Ohio but
deemed representative of other gay clubs/ settings in most
American cities for several reasons (to be discussed later
in the methods chapter) as well as the general cost,
location, and entry considerations that are always of
concern to the researcher.
1. B. GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS

Cushman and Whiting's (1972) rules perspective views humans as "conscious, teleological actors who choose to enact specific behaviors based on their goals and the structure of social rules that govern and guide the specific situation" (Cushman and Pearce 1977, p.5.) and is "rooted in symbolic interactionism and speech-act theory" (Nicotera, 1993, p.5.). It is this view of seeing humans as actors that is assumed for the purposes of this study (thereby maintaining a consistency with previous literatures in this area), and those human actors display behavior that can be classified as either motion or action (Burke 1955, 1950, and to some degree, 1951).

Motion or "movement" as it has been named by some (Cushman, Valentinsen, and Dietrich, 1982) is without intent and includes habit, reactive behavior and can exist only as the result of some previous event to bring about the motion. Action, however, is different in that it is with intent. Unlike motion, action depends on an availability of choices or options making action something that has purpose and is evaluative (i.e., a range of options is always available; the evaluative nature of action is the ability to choose and justify one option over the others within our communication.). It also can account for "proactive or
teleological behavior" (Nicotera, p. 5.) and can take two forms itself: perception (or information-processing) and consensus, the latter of which is most relevant here.

Consensus is referred to as a "coordinating action" according to Cushman, Valentinsen, and Dietrich (1982) and has the three characteristics of "a shared class of intentions, a common set of expectations and [a series] of communicative acts that [show the actors' commitment level] to the standardized usage. (p. 6.)." The basic communicative unit is a (descriptive) standardized usage which may come to exist in a variety of ways, but is nonetheless a "coordinating action." It is significant because it is deemed so (as if it is significant) by the actors. Rules theorists, thus, would be most interested in item B of the Cushman and Pearce (1977) practical syllogism:

A wants to bring about C;
A thinks that in order for C to happen, A must do B;
Therefore, A attempts to do B.

According to Nicotera (1993, p. 6.) the standardized usage within a community, culture or population (item B above) is most important to rules theorists since "it defines the set of alternative choices for behavior [and the rules theorist may choose to examine one or both of the] two
types of rules: constitutive rules, which specify the action's content and procedural rules which specify appropriate strategies for carrying out the action." It is precisely this way of looking at human actors and their actions that allowed Cushman, Valentinsen, and Dietrich (1982) to treat interpersonal relationships like FRs and MRs as "coordination systems" which create and keep agreement regarding individuals' self-concepts.
1.C. NICOTERA’S GENERAL THEORY OF COMMUNICATION’S ROLE IN FRs AND MRs

It is generally agreed that FRs and MRs each go through a series of stages, articulated first by Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) over a third of a century ago as "filters" in the relationship process. In the mid-1980s a "more complex theory of relationship development [emerged when Cushman and his associates posited] a three-step filtering process for both FR and MR development (Nicotera, p.6.)."

Based on this information from Kerckhoff and Davis (1962), Cushman and associates (1985, 1982), and Nicotera (1993) as well as several other theorists (Nofz, 1984, Knapp, 1978; Murstein, 1977; Duck, 1976; Berger and Calabrese, 1975; Lewis, 1973) who have contributed to the "more complex theory of relationship development" that has emerged over the last thirty or so years, this author has created the following Venn Diagram (Figure 1.1) to display their findings, which are briefly explained below Figure 1.1:
U = the universe of all people
Av = the field of availables,
   (all those with whom it is possible to form a relationship)
Ap = the field of approachables,
   (all those one finds desirable enough to approach to initiate a relationship)
Re = the field of reciprocals,
   (all those who have reciprocated the individual's attempt to initiate a relationship)

Figure 1.1: Venn Diagram of relationship levels, #1 through #4, and the "fields" through which one passes from U, the Universal population, to Av, the Field of Availables, Ap, the Field of Approachables, and finally Re, the Field of Reciprocals.

In Figure 1.1, numbers represent names we commonly give to people that have emerged from the "field" and made it to that next relationship level. Though FRs and MRs are obviously different, they each do follow the same pattern but use different vocabulary markers for the four levels of the relationship. In friendships we commonly refer to a level #1 FR as "acquaintance" and progress through level #2 FR (casual friend) and level #3 FR (good friend) before
being able to reach level #4 FR commonly referred to as "best friend." Likewise, in mate relationships, a level #1 MR (casual date) is of less intensity or is at an earlier stage than a level #2 MR (steady date), level #3 MR (fiancé) or level #4 MR (spouse). These levels are best articulated in Cushman and Cahn (1985) but are distinct enough for our purposes here and reflect common beliefs by several theorists who have either supported or drawn from this notion (Pam, A., Pluthik, and Conte, 1973; Woelfel and Fink, 1980; Murstein, 1976; Helm and Vance, 1977; Baxter and Bullis, 1986; Cahn 1987, 1983; Duck, 1988; and Nicotera, 1993).

Along with filters or stages of interaction as discussed above, the role of self-concept support is an important mechanism for relationship formation and growth, which allows one to move from one level to the next. Together these two dimensions serve as the crucial elements in Nicotera's "general theory of the role of communication in interpersonal relationships [and are consistent with as well as grounded in] the rules perspective. (p.6.)" Let us now turn to the second of those "generative mechanisms of relationship formation and growth," the role of self-concept support.
Self-concept (Nicotera, 1993, 8-9) is typically thought of as "how one sees oneself" and self-concept support thought of as "having others act in ways that are consistent with how we would expect them to react to us, given how we see ourselves." Self-concept "as it is developed, presented and validated in interaction defines the nature and type of the interpersonal relationship (Nicotera, 1993, 9)."

In other words, a teacher may see herself as very approachable when students have questions because she sees herself as caring and nurturing. Support for that self-concept occurs when students frequently ask questions of her and seem at ease. However, if, in the following semester or quarter, students remain afraid or embarrassed to ask questions of her, that does not lend "self-concept support" to that particular vision she has of herself.

Given the latter case, the teacher would need to rethink her perception of herself (i.e. alter her self-concept somewhat) or would need to alter her perception of that setting so that it is more consistent with her self-concept. She could do this by saying, for example, "I had a really quiet class this quarter," or "This new textbook we used this year was written so much better than last year's which is why they didn't need to ask as many questions as I
normally get," or even admitting that she, the teacher, had in fact been less approachable than usual by saying, "I believe that all the work I put into chairing several committees this quarter has affected my sleep, and made me terse with students." As long as the emphasis is on this quarter being the aberration, it still allows the teacher to maintain her self-concept, because this quarter is viewed as the exception to her norm; the norm for her of being approachable remains unaffected by one bad quarter on her part.

How this translates into the role of self-concept support in friendships is that, for example, a lower level FR (such as level 1 or 2) may not respond at all to this teacher as she discusses her concern with them in the teacher's lounge. Or they may respond with comments like "We all have a bad quarter" or "We, as teachers, have all become less approachable over time because we are older and more set in our ways," or "Come on now, you were never all that more approachable in previous quarters," or even just "Don't worry about it." People may be responding to this teacher in a way that they believe is appropriate given how they perceive her. For example, they may actually see her as a cold or distant person in general and are commenting in ways that are reasonable given that belief. On the contrary, if the teacher does really truly see herself as
being readily available to her students, the people with whom she interacts who support her self-concept by saying things like, "I can see why that might bother you if students see you as being unapproachable, but every student I know in your class this quarter speaks highly of you; it could be that teaching has come so naturally to you after teaching for a while that you don't need to think about making an effort to be approachable to your students -- it's just a part of your routine and reputation," or even "Yes, I'm the same way, but I know it's all those late night committees we work on. When I started working on the committees, I was always grouchy because I only got three or four hours of sleep on most nights, but -- trust me -- after your first quarter of committee-time is behind you, things will go back to normal." These comments, in that they support the teacher's self-concept, are indicative of the types of things this teacher would need to hear from level 3 or 4 FRs or level 1 or 2 FRs who are on their way to become a higher level FR.

Nicotera (1993, p.7.) argues that self-concept "is composed of self-object relationships [and] are divided into three classes... the identity self includes self-object relationships which label what an individual is; evaluative self [involving] relationships which declare one's feeling about oneself and the behavioral self which prescribe appropriate behavior for [the other two] selves." In the
previous example, the person's: identity self is "I am a teacher;" evaluative self is "I am an approachable teacher;" and behaviorable self is "Because I am an approachable teacher, I should find out why my students this quarter seem less responsive than usual and try to remedy that." Most researchers of FR and MRs support the notion that FRs and MRs can progress and develop through later stages if and only if self-concept support is there. Further, effective communication is vital to the maintenance of self-concept support and, in turn, to the development of FRs and MRs (Alexander, 1973), and cultural influences are significant on how that self-concept support is articulated and, in turn, interpreted; according to Cushman Valentinsen, and Dietrich, (1982, p.96.) and Nicoter (1993, p. 8-9.), respectively:

Human actions that take place within a standardized communication situation require common intentions, an established set of rules for the cooperative achievement of those intentions, and a procedure for manifesting the variable practical force the actors feel for participating in the coordination task. Those communication standards may or may not remain constant across time, goals, and actors but the established set of rules is not necessarily a unique set: different rules are used by different actors, with different goals, at different times depending on, amongst other things, the communication situation in which the rules are being enacted.
The function of these interpersonal communication systems is to regulate consensus with regard to individuals' self-concepts; structure is provided by the standardized code and network rules that guide how and when we can obtain consensus in regard to preferred self-object relationships. In interactions, individuals propose identities for themselves and others. These identities are negotiated in interaction; an individual learns how he/she is and what [can be done in] presence of certain others. Thus the self-concept as developed, presented, and validated in interaction, defines the nature and type of the interpersonal relationship. This logic has led [theorists] to postulate that 'reciprocated self-concept support serves as a necessary basis for establishing any interpersonal relationship.' (Cushman et. al., 1982, p.96, 104.; and Nicotera, 1993, p. 7, 9.).

Though this author accepts the general theory of the role of effective communication in relationships (both FR and MR) as posited by Cushman, Nicotera, and their associates, and also agrees with them in that "self-concept support and [filters or stages of] interaction are [viewed as] the generative mechanisms of relationship formation and growth, (Nicotera, p.6.)," the author also echoes the concerns and beliefs that Nicotera brings to a reading of Cushman, et. al. Specifically, Nicotera's theory is utilized in this study because Nicotera's theory is consistent with other theories, particularly seminal works like Cushman's, but is richer in that Nicotera has benefitted from: (1) increased attention to "the importance of cultural comparisons;" (2) investigation of variables
(both EV and IV) that have an impact on the individual's self-concept support and progression through the varied stages of FR and MRs; and (3) advocacy of other methodological approaches to seeking understanding of these issues, (particularly those cited as common problems, some of which are summarized on page one of this document).
1.D. REVIEW OF RELEVANT FR AND MR LITERATURES

Though stages or filtering in the MR and FR processes is known to occur, the number of stages through which one must pass in order to move from an initial acquaintance to a best friend (in FRs) or from casual date to spouse (in MRs) is not known. In fact it may be a bit presumptuous of theorists to assume that one jumps through stages, like jumping through hoops, as one moves into their best friend’s or spouse’s life. However, despite that rather presumptuous notion, theorists have assumed that advancing a level of FR or MR is like jumping through a series of invisible hoops. The number of those hoops or stages is what is most disputed.

Though Nicotera argues that there are four such stages in FRs and MRs with the following linguistic items as markers, theorists, especially in the 1970s, identified as many as ten or as few as three stages. Here, again, are the levels of FR and MRs as they were identified by Nicotera, et. al., (already discussed in the previous pages) with two minor alterations of word choices:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL #</th>
<th>Name of the level in FRs.</th>
<th>Name of the level in MRs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>acquaintance</td>
<td>casual date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>casual friend</td>
<td>steady date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>good friend</td>
<td>companion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>best friend</td>
<td>partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.2: Linguistic Markers of each of the four levels of FRs (Friend Relationships) and MRs (Mate Relationships) as used in this project and elsewhere.

Nicotera’s levels grew out of Parks’s (1977) and LaGaipa’s (1977) levels for FRs. Though LaGaipa used different names for the comparable levels (LaGaipa used social acquaintance, good friend, close friend and best friend as names for the levels of FR) and Parks actually used more levels of FR, ten in all, in his discussions, Nicotera’s categories emerged out of that earlier tradition of conceptualizing friendship as a series of phases or steps. LaGaipa’s influence on Nicotera is obviously more significant than the influence of Parks. According to a variety of theorists, Parks’s categories have been too numerous to be of real use to most researchers, and considerable overlap exists between categories in Parks’s theory. Along with Nicotera, Korn (1993) offers a reasonable discussion of Parks’s categories, suggesting they are numerous and less well-defined than LaGaipa’s (and Nicotera’s). Given, then, the already rather challenging task of distinguishing between as many as four levels of FRs,
and MRs, it seems that adhering to Parks's categories would possibly hurt this study more than help it, given that even regular (former) users of his categories agree regarding the overlap of the categories as well as their unmanageability.

The only real adjustment to Nicotera's, Korn's and LaGaipa's articulation of the four levels of FRs and MRs that has been made for this project is the altering of word choices for level 3 and level 4 MRs. Whereas Nicotera (1993), Korn (1993) and LaGaipa (1977) use language that reflects the heterosexual bias of their own research interests, the discussions presented here will use terms that are more applicable to the group being investigated in the case study, gay males.

Though it is possible to find gay men who refer to themselves as a "fiancé" or "spouse" while engaged in a level 3 or level 4 MR, terms that are more frequently used in that population seem to be "companion" or "partner/lover," according to several gay publications (See Vickers, in The Dayton Spectra, Nov., 1995, Vol I:8, 17, for a sample of these terms used in context. Also consider Califia, 1992, for a discussion.)

To many (both heterosexual and homosexual) "spouse" has come to signify a legal term as much as, if not more
than, a descriptor of an emotional level or descriptor of a level 4 commitment in a MR. As the legal benefits afforded to heterosexuals in a level 4 MR are still not granted to homosexuals in a comparable relationship, the term "spouse" is probably not the most accurate descriptor of a homosexual level 4 MR. A similar argument could be made for use of the term "fiance" to describe a level 3 MR in the original research (See Korn (1993), Nicotera (1993) and LaGaipa (1977) for an explanation of these levels, in detail, as well as DeShane (1992) for an understanding of how the homosexual long term MR is consistent with their original arguments; inconsistent only in their choice of words as descriptors).

In one sense it may not matter what "word" is used to designate the level 3 or 4 MR given that concerns here are changes in, amongst other things, communication at differing levels of the MR. However, in that there are some who might argue that the gay MR is so drastically different from the non-gay MR, it seems important to point out to them that research suggests definite similarities in levels between each group. In fact, Nicotera's original theory itself suggests that within different cultures or subcultures, the people involved in the MR or FR may refer to those levels with different linguistic markers; however, that does not adversely affect the general theory of FR and MRs. In a
sense, it supports it in that the existence of any linguistic marker or label to the people in that culture or community suggests that the marker is there for a reason. Use of "companion" and "partner" as markers of distinction within the gay community, for example, is significant in that there would be no need for their use and distinction if there were not some different level of the MR to distinguish. Additionally, these markers have been used by non-gays as well who have less than traditional relationships (Kurt Russell, the actor, for example, regularly referred to Goldie Hawn as his companion in early stages of their relationship when the two were continuing a long-term monogamous relationship but living in separate homes, but over the last several years, since moving in together, refers to her as his partner in interviews suggesting that even though no marriage has or is likely to occur, the two are in a relationship that is emotionally, physically, and communicatively the same as a marriage, differing only in the ceremony, legal/court documentation thereof. The same seems to hold true for actor Tim Robbins and actress Susan Sarandon.).
1.E. PR AND MR (FRIEND AND MATE RELATIONSHIP) THEORIES

Though many theorists agree that levels or stages of FRs and MRs occur, little agreement exists about whose theory of friendship or mate selection formation patterns is most sound. Ten significant theories have emerged which seem "comprehensive theories that are clearly applicable to ... the communication variables that affect, influence or determine our friendship and relationship formation patterns (Korn, 1993, p. 16.)." One of the most significant of these theories for FR formation is the uncertainty theory. Though Duck's similarity theory (1976, 1973, which attempts to "solve the discrepancy between the paradigms 'birds of a feather flock together' and 'opposites attract' to name but two) and Wright's (1978) cost-benefit theory (which used a model based loosely on economics) are widely used, Berger and Calabrese's (1975) model of uncertainty is most consistent with the view of friendship presented here (as well as being supported by other theorists like Duck, 1993; Nicotera, 1993; and Duran, 1995).

The uncertainty model treats FR development as a series of "uncertainty reduction episodes." People seem to feel that the better they are at predicting the person's behaviors, the more likely that person is able to move to higher levels of the FR. Just as important is the desire to
be able to predict things about that person and to be able to have them predict your behaviors or at least your ideal self's behavior. This is why, for example, close friends often are able to finish each others' sentences, know what the other is thinking, and capable of "pushing all the right buttons" to make that person angry. This predictability is a crucial element of Nicotera's general theory of FR and MRs in that it moves an individual through various levels of the FR process by giving elements of self-concept support. It is also consistent with the ways theorists believe other relationships develop. For example, Kerckhoff and Davis's (1962) filter and stage theory has been used for explaining all types of interpersonal relationships, not just FRs. Additionally, their theory has been so widely received that the filter and stage theory of MR is still considered to be the most useful theory to explain MRs, favored over psychoanalytic theory (Jedlicka, 1980), based on Freud's (1922, 1921, 1920, 1919, 1916, 1914, 1912) and Jung's (1919, 1916) work, as well as Indvik and Fitzpatrick's (1986) relational theory, Baxter and Bullis's (1986) turning points theory, assortative mate theory (Vandenburg, 1972), marital quality theory (Cahn, 1987), and Winch's complementarily theory (described by Udry, 1963). It is, in fact, the theory accepted by the fields' most respected researchers from Nicotera to Cushman; Knapp to Lewis; and Gibbs to Murstein. That theory of MRs, the filter and stage theory,
is also the theory utilized here for MRs and is consistent with the FR uncertainty theory which also recognizes the importance of the development of self-concept support as a precursor to the advancement through those filters to reach the next stage or level.
Before person X can have a friend relationship (FR) with a person Y, it is necessary obviously that Y be a member not just of the universal population, U, but also of some setting or circumstance, S, in which some form of communication, C, is occurring between X and Y, most likely a dyadic occasion. Then, according to Nicotera (1993, p.20.) that dyad of X and Y may:

enter into a friend or mate relationship (if X and Y) perceive each other as having the basic attributes of a friend or mate (as dictated by the culture) and must provide self concept support to each other on those variables.

If the relationship is to deepen, then person X and Y must:

perceive each other as having increasingly intense levels of a set of key variables (as dictated by the culture) and must provide self-concept support to each other on those variables.

Those attributes at the basic level are known as the entry variables; they are the necessary conditions under which X and Y are willing to initiate a FR or MR. That set of "key variables" that are found in person Y by person X, and vice versa at the increasingly "intense levels" of the FR or MR are known as the intensity variables (IV).
Intensity variables are the necessary factors that must exist if that FR or MR is to advance to higher levels of the FR or MR.

Many theorists attempt to identify those variables that serve as EVs or IVs. Moemeka (1993) in a study of the most frequently identified EVs and IVs by both subjects in surveys and theorists in a meta-analysis of the literature base identified six significant variables: intelligence, humor, trustworthiness, caring, honesty, and tolerance. These six were deemed as most significant because they were not only the most cited in each study but also were all cited 3/4 the time according to both theorists and actual subjects commenting on both FRs and MRs. Further, there was a large difference between the sixth place item (intelligence) and the seventh place item (responsibility, which was cited slightly more than half the time in each study, 51.8%), but considerably less difference between it and the top five cites (trust, ranked highest was cited 79.6% of the time, and the sixth highest was still cited over 74% of the time.).

Though these studies are all done within American culture, evidence suggests that these variables in Western culture are becoming more relevant and salient in other cultures. Nicotera (1993, p. 220.), writing on why
Responsibility is no longer the most valued trait in Nigerian culture has observed along with Ju (1993), that it may no longer even be an EV or IV in that culture:

Responsible--traditionally highly valued--is neither a crucial nor highly valued variable according to [various] measurements. Humor [seems to] have replaced Responsible as a valued trait. Authors claim that encroaching Western values are at the root of such change.

Meanwhile, traits like humor are commonly acknowledged as an EV or IV in FR and MRs, in practically all cultures (Davis, 1988; Davies, 1990; Zehnhoff et. al., 1988; Palmer, 1988; Ziv, 1988, 1986; Baudin, et. al. 1988; Consigli, 1988; Nilsen, et. al., 1988; Kolesaric, 1988; Spalding, 1985; Adler, 1986; Dorinson, 1986; Fuchs, 1986; Mintz, 1986; Nevo, 1986). Though no trait has been treated as nor assumed to be a universal (that is, a necessary trait for both FR and MRs regardless of country, culture, community, and setting) the trait of humor is deemed as a crucial variable in the development of FRs and MRs according to the literature. Still very little micro-analysis of the EVs and IVs has been done on humor.

Granted, humor itself has been researched a great deal. An entire group of researchers known as humorologists have emerged who study humor for humor's sake. No theorist
however has studied humor and its role as an EV and IV in FR and MRs until now. At first one might wonder why such an analysis is significant, and then wonder further as to why, if it is significant, it has not been studied for its impact in FRs and MRs. Very good reasons exist for this oversight in the research on FRs and MRs.

First, humor has always been difficult to study for a host of reasons which will be explained later as PTH and STH (Psychological and Sociological Theories of Humor) are explained in a later section. Second, humor was not generally considered related to communication competence in the 1960s when many of the communication competence literatures were having influence on the modern day theories of FR and MRs. This needs to be considered further.

Most research on FR and MRs, particularly any approach using a theory that includes, (as do most), EVs and IVs as prerequisite markers for the advancement of the FR or MR into a higher level, grew out of communication competence literatures of the 1960s - 1980s. And, that competence literature has grown as a result of others' research of FR and MRs.

Specifically, Kerckhoff and Davis (1962), credited for the early development of filter and stage theories, were
grounding their work in literature bases that have also led to some of the current day communication competence literatures. Nicotera (1993) argues, for example, that her research on FR and MRs, particularly the traits that serve as EV and IVs, have significant implications for communication competence. And though, as Nicotera acknowledges, "the majority of the traits that commonly serve as EVs and IVs (in American cultures) are all traits of varying levels of competence (p. 43.)" the one trait that frequently appears as an EV and IV in FR and MRs that is not deemed relevant to issues of communication competence is "humor." Though Nicotera advocates a greater micro-level understanding of how the most common traits serve as EVs and IVs, she is especially concerned that not enough is known about humor in general and the impact of a culture's humor on FR and MRs. This is echoed by Cushman, et. al. in F.X. Dance (1982) and has been echoed by researchers in competence (Specifically, Duran has made arguments for studying humor as a part of competence as early as 1983 and as recently as 1995.) but such research has not been conducted.
1.G. HUMOR TERMS/DEFINITIONS: A SYNOPSIS OF HUMOR LITERATURES

Thus far, in this chapter, the following positions have been taken:

1. Communication has a significant role in FRs (friend relationships) and MRs (mate relationships), and Nicotera’s general theory is a reasonable way to conceptualize that communication.

2. Nicotera and other theorists agree that filter-stages theories have, as a common thread, a consideration of self-concept support, and demand attention to the role of EV (Entry Variables) and IVs (Intensity Variables) in advancing through a series of four stages of FRs and MRs.

3. Humor, though frequently cited as an EV and IV, has not been studied on the micro-level as have the other five most common variables. Though good reasons may seem to exist for this oversight, stemming from the history of FR and MR research with roots in communication competence literatures, long before humor was "added" as a possible trait worthy of consideration in the communication competence literature, good reasons do exist now for understanding humor on the more micro-level as it functions as an EV or IV in FR and MRs.

4. In that the research on FR and MRs has overlooked humor somewhat it has also overlooked the need to understand FRs and MRs by methods other than just survey which has generated the preponderance of the theories about FRs and MRs thus far. Nicotera advocates a study using a participant observation method, which (as will be shown later, in chapter three, on method) is practically necessary for an understanding of humor in FR and MRs.
This now finally leads to a need to understand the literature bases on humor. In reading subsequent sections in which PTH and STH (Psychological and Sociological Theories of Humor) are discussed, it is necessary to keep some of the following research themes that emerge in humor research in mind. Specifically it is necessary to distinguish six common research themes in humorology, and then to offer definitions of other terms used for the purpose of this study.

1. Humor type refers to whether the humor segment can be classified as a pun, sarcasm, wit, ridicule, snapback, cattiness or the like. It is generally treated as if it is independent of other humor research themes.

2. Humor form allows researchers to distinguish how the humor segment is transmitted. Humor forms include verbal, nonverbal, suprasegmental, conversational, literary, pictorial, cartoon, comic strip, and a variety of mediated forms.

3. Humor content refers to the topic or subject matter of the joke. It is a synonym of humor subject.

4. Humor context includes the culture, community, place, time, setting/event, shared background, and existing relationship which exists between parties.

5. Humor role is the communicator's intended function for the humor. That is, a communicator may say or convey the humorous segment with the intent of changing the receiver's position on a debate, sharing information, ridiculing a belief or person, or even just for making the receiver laugh or feel amused. Humor role is used synonymously with humor purpose.
Humor function is related to humor role except that humor role is closely related to the sender's intent, whereas humor function is more related to "the result" or what happens. Though humor function is often the same as (or similar to) humor role, the two are different when mis-communication occurs.

Along with the research themes in humor, defined above, another term requires definition and explanation at the present time, humor segment. The humorous segment is the communication, verbal or nonverbal, which is treated as if it is a complete thought, action, or set of ideas such that at least one of the following (usually, two or three) seems true:

1) The communication is amusing, playful, and/or funny.
2) The communication is treated by those exposed to it as if it is funny.
3) The communication seems as if it is intended to be funny.

The humorous segment is the codeable action, statement or communication, whereas the humor role is the communicator's reason or intent for offering that humorous communication. The humor function is the effect of the humor on the audience member(s). Clearly the humor segment must, in order to be treated as if it is 'humor' or potentially funny and amusing, rely on some humor context (setting, time, knowledge of communicator, background information on key constituents of the segment, etc.) in order to be
treated as a 'humor segment.' The following example from David Feinberg (1992) may help illustrate the concept of 'humor segment' and how it relates to some of the oft-researched humor themes. Columnist David Feinberg (August 13, 1992, p. 96.) writes:

My T cells recently dropped below my IQ. It's a good thing I'm not Quayle or I'd be legally dead.

The humor role for Feinberg is, as he puts it, (p. 96.):

to deal with AIDS... Once you joke about something you appropriate it; you attain a certain amount of control over it.

The humor function, for some of his readers, was (p. 96.):

[to joke at the expense of others by] ... acting inappropriately, disrespectfully, and without dignity.

It could be that mis-communication has occurred between Feinberg and his reader, because the reader did not have the entire humor segment available. Though it isn't necessarily possible to articulate all elements of the humor segment, identifying as many as possible can help the reader understand the end of the humor segment (printed above) better. Those elements which the reader probably "got" include:
1. T cells often drop very low when an HIV+ person becomes ill; so much in fact that the Center for Disease Control considers the HIV+ person to have "AIDS" when the T cell count falls below 200.

2. Though a low T cell count is detrimental to anyone, the low count is most relevant to the HIV+ person because only if a person's immunity is extremely low (as in HIV+ people) does the T cell count ever get close to that low count of 200.

3. Typically, given #1 and #2 above, a gay man talking about low T cell count knows that he is discussing a concern of all HIV+ people, many of whom are gay men.

4. IQ stands for Intelligence Quotient, a test that allegedly measures intelligence where 100 is considered normal; 150 is considered gifted or genius; 50 is considered moronic or practically mentally retarded.

5. Quayle which refers to Dan Quayle, former Vice-President, is known to be non-sympathetic to gays and/or the HIV+ population. Quayle also is not exactly known as the most intelligent politician (His misspelling of potato and his confusion of an astronaut and alleged murderer were well reported by the media.).

These contribute to the final "punch line" of the humor segment as written by Feinberg and were likely part of the humor segment as it was read by the reader who accused Feinberg of being insensitive to people living with AIDS or HIV, many of whom are gay and his regular readers. What the reader did not know, a sixth element of the humor segment, is that Feinberg himself was HIV+, but had not shared that yet with [all of] his readership. Feinberg, after coming out about his own health status, can "get away with" joking about T cells more now than before because a necessary element of the [future] humor segment[s] has been provided.
Future quips or "punch lines" will have their own, possibly unique, elements which combine to serve as a humor segment. However, knowledge of Feinberg's HIV status is, probably, a necessary element of Feinberg's future humor segments' punch-lines, particularly those which relate to HIV, AIDS, and his own health status.

With important terms from the humor research defined, it seems useful now to define other terms, (from the literature on communication in friend and mate relationships), and to present Nicotera's views on humor in interpersonal relationships which leads to the articulation of this project's purpose and research questions.

Nicotera and associates argue that a micro-level examination of humor, an EV and IV in FRs and MRs, is warranted to support their more macro-level claims and their theory of communication in relationships. PTH can explain why humor's use is important to communicators; whereas, STH shed some light on some of the norms and rules of humor. Taken together, a PTH and STH can help us understand humor-as-variable in FRs and MRs. The distinctions above of the six common themes in the humor research are useful as organizers in the process of sorting through the field note data and the chapter on humor (That literature review appears in chapter two.). Those six themes emerged from the
literature on humor (discussion forthcoming) and as a result of the need to discuss humor in FRs and MRs. They also prove useful in the process of formulating the purpose and research questions to be answered in this project:

1.G.1. **Purpose.** "To determine how humor works communicatively as both an EV and IV in FRs and MRs in a marginalized population."

A series of **research questions** guide this study so as to address that purpose.

1.G.2. **Research Questions:**

a. Does humor function as a variable in relationships and their development, and if humor does function as a variable (EV, IV, or both) then how does it function; i.e., what purpose(s) does it serve?

i. If humor is a variable, then is it an EV, IV or both? And, how/ why/ what does it contribute?

ii. Does humor serve different purposes in MRs when compared to FRs, and if so what are those different functions of humor?

b. Do certain types, forms, contents, or contexts of humor influence humor’s role and/ or function as an EV or IV in FRs or MRs? If such an influence does seem to exist, what is that influence?

c. As a FR or MR increases in intensity, how is humor affected? Is there an observable increase in the amount, intensity, or intimacy of the humor?

d. Is the opposite of "c" true; that is, does an increase in the observeability of more frequent humor, more intense humor or more intimate humor indicate anything about the FR or MR using it?
CHAPTER 2

HUMOR HISTORY

This chapter is a general history of humor research relevant to interpersonal communication and rhetorical studies and what, given the existing humor research outside of these fields, rhetoricians and interpersonal communication scholars may not have considered:

A. An overview of humor with special attention to:
   1. An intro to humor,
   2. Humor's early history,
   3. Humor's link to communication, &
   4. Contemporary communication scholars' treatment of humor featuring an introduction of PTH and STH

B. A general introduction of the psychological motivating factors of humor according to PTH

C. The sociological implications of humor and humor's rhetorical/interpersonal role according to STH.
   1. General beliefs and criticisms of STH
   2. Humor in speech communities
   3. The role of humor in marginalized communities
   4. STH applied to one community in particular: the humor of gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities
II. A. AN OVERVIEW OF HUMOR

The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with enough information about humor research in general to create a foundation for the discussion of the two major approaches to the development of theories of humor, PTH and STH, Psychological Theories of Humor and Sociological Theories of Humor. PTH, STH, and how they complement and conflict each other will be discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter.
II. A. 1. AN INTRO TO HUMOR

A significant amount of research that has been produced about humor has rhetorical implications. Humor research has examined theories of what humor is, who uses it, for what ends, on what occasions, how humor serves these functions, how to use humor in speaking for persuasive or informative ends, humor's use as a tool for gaining insight about the people who use it, humor's role in small groups or communities, and the rules which govern humor. Researchers' conclusions about humor sometimes converge to key areas of agreement, but, for the most part, significant disagreement still exists in many areas of humor research. One area of agreement, either in conclusions drawn about humor or the initial assumptions researchers have made in order to study it, is that humor is rhetorical, communicative, and clearly involves a model of "who says what to whom under which conditions with what effect for what ends."

This in itself has placed humor in a position to be examined by communication scholars, particularly those interested in rhetoric and rhetorical theory. Furthermore, the wide-ranging and fragmented research about humor necessarily puts communication researchers in positions where they need to assemble a wide array of humor research,
most of it occurring outside the field of communication per se, but dealing quite clearly with communication issues.

It seems as if most people researching humor have tried to do at least one of the following:


3. Explain why a communicative act is humor (Ziv, 1986a; Condon, 1966; Raskin, 1944a; Rothbart, 1976; Foot and Chapman, 1976; Palmer, 1987; Grotjahn, 1957; Bailey, 1976).


5. Articulate theories of the content of humor (Harris and Rabinovich, 1988; Spalding 1985, 1968; Eilbirt, 1991c; Mintz, 1986; Friedlander, 1986; Rivlin, 1986; Raskin, 1944d, 1944e, 1944f, 1944g). Cole and Phillips, 1991, are noteworthy for showing the importance of humor and providing examples of humor content.

However, many of these same researchers argue that despite all the work in humor research, the main agreement about humor is that it is indeed worth studying because it
is significant, but the way it is studied needs to be improved as many researchers "reinvent the wheel" every time they research humor. Consider specifically Wilson (1989, 1979, p. 9.) who lamented:

In view of 2000 years of pursuit, the genius of many of the pursuers and the pervasiveness of humour, the results seem disappointing. Humour is everywhere but seems to defy examination. Theories of its nature seem facile or simplistic and are themselves laughable. For the onlooker at least, the general impression is of absurdity pursuing itself in a gentle cycle of fatuity. Even stranger still, theories seem to echo each other in substance as well as in their apparent weaknesses... Authors [humor researchers] have been dispersed through time, across cultures, across disciplines, and have been unaware of, or chosen to ignore, each others' efforts. Denied the foresight of others' hindsight, theorists have repeated earlier generalizations, discovering them anew. In repetitive, subjective originality stale platitudes have been refluxed as fresh insights.

Wilson argues that most theories on the form of humor can be placed into three major theories: Relief, Conflict, and Incongruity with the latter of these categories being supported most often. At the same time, even widely-discussed theories like incongruity theory do not explain why a segment of conversation or a joke or a prank can be incongruous and funny while at the same time poetry or paintings and other art forms can be incongruous but not funny. Consider the following examples which appear on post cards sold at a local card shop:
1. A picture of a naked man being chased by a nurse with boiling water in her hand as a doctor appears standing in the doorway of the office is sub-captioned with the phrase, "No, No Nurse Shlevel, I think you misunderstood me. I asked you to PRICK HIS BOIL!"

2. A picture of John F. Kennedy appears with the sub-caption reading "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

3. A picture of a dog appears with a glass window through its stomach and a sub-caption reads, "How much is that window in the doggie?"

4. A picture of the music group The Byrds is sub-captioned with lyrics to their song Turn Turn Turn (... a time to plant a time to reap... a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together)

5. A picture of guys spitting into a jar labelled "TIPS" that is sitting on top of a table in a bar is sub-captioned, "Dyslexic who appreciate the work done by their bartender."

6. A picture of soldiers standing near a sign that reads "Be All that you can be" is sub-captioned with "You’re old enough for killing but not for voting, and You don’t believe in war, but what’s that gun you’re toting. Think of all the hate there is in Red China; then take a look around at Selma, Alabama. You can leave here for four days in space but when you return it’s the same old place.

7. No picture appears only the sentence, "I’d give my right hand to be ambidextrous -- Anonymous."

8. A picture appears of dilapidated buildings with obscene graffiti spray-painted on their sides and trash strewn about the road as a cop stands firing his gun from behind his police car door and a bloodied body lies on the street as people, adults and children, watch from windows and doorways drinking from liquor bottles and shooting needles into their arms. The caption reads, "Oh, Say, Can YOU See?"

Figure 2.1: Samples of eight incongruous segments: humorous or not. (Examples of incongruous communication that is not necessarily funny or "humorous.")
Incongruity theories, arguing that a segment of material (Segment could be verbal, nonverbal or a combination of each.) requires some incongruity to be perceived as humor, are not useful when applied to the examples in Figure 2.1, because, though each is incongruous, not all are considered humorous, not even by the humor researchers.

Though widely supported, no theory, incongruity or otherwise, can explain (1) why that incongruity works to create humor (2) what distinguishes incongruity in humor from incongruity in non-humor (3) why people are affected differently by the same incongruous material or (4) why some incongruous material is perceived as funnier than other incongruous material. Ultimately, agreement has been somewhat rare regarding what is humorous and what should count as humor, specifically what should count as a humorous segment (Recall the working definition posited in chapter one.).

If we consider the eight postcards described earlier, we see that all are incongruous. At least one of the following four incongruity conditions is met in each (Holland, 1986):
1. Some part of the verbal image does not match the nonverbal.
2. Some part of the verbal image does not match some other part of the verbal image.
3. Some part of the nonverbal image does not match some other part of the nonverbal image.
4. Some part of the verbal, the nonverbal or both does not match some other part of our knowledge of the way the world works.

At the same time, we could agree that not all are equally funny. We could also agree that perhaps some are not funny at all and are not even intended as such. We could also agree that if we all individually tried to rank these eight post cards in order of most funny to least funny, we would not find universal agreement among those rankings and in fact might be surprised at exactly how much people’s assessment of their funniness differs. We would likely find that our own individual assessment varies from one day to the next, and that actually seeing the post cards (rather than hearing them described) would affect our judgments of their degree of funniness, and we would likely discover that who shows us the cards may affect these judgments as well.

Yet, at the same time, if humor is so subjective and if there are no absolutes about humor or its use, then how do the people working in the card shop know which of these incongruous post cards belong to the card section on "humor" and which belong to "miscellaneous post cards? (Ziv, 1992)"
Granted, even store workers' decisions are arbitrary (presumably) but the placement of cards in the shops is quite consistent with where these cards are filed in a different store, under different ownership, that sells post cards over two hundred miles away. Cards numbered 1, 3, 5, and 7 above were all in a section labelled "humor" or "humorous." Cards numbered 2, 4, 6, and 8 above were all in sections labelled "miscellaneous" or "other." However, incongruity theories of humor which are the most often agreed upon, can not account for the differences in these examples or others like them (Wilson, 1979).

Is it possible to come up with a theory or set of theories which unite examples 1, 3, 5, and 7 above while at the same time exclude examples 2, 4, 6, and 8? -- Who knows?. Is it necessary? -- Maybe not. Is it useful? -- Some might argue not. However, the history of scholars who have tried to resolve these issues and others as they relate to our use of humor does suggest that it is important to uncover answers to any of these and other questions about humor. After all, if humor weren't important would it have gained the attention of such scholars as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Hobbes, Descartes, Kant, Schopenhauer, Freud, and Campbell?11

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Further, the fact that we do have SOME agreements about humor; what is and isn’t humor, when a joke is or isn’t appropriate, what subject matter is or isn’t appropriate, and so on, lets us know that there is a definite set of rules or beliefs that we have about humor’s role in human communication. We have just been unsuccessful in the articulation of those rules. We have notions of its effectiveness vs. its ineffectiveness and one person’s competence in using humor (telling jokes, for example) vs. another person’s competence. See section II. C. for a related discussion or, most notably, the work by Gruner (1978).

A review of the research about humor which is "dispersed through time, across cultures and across disciplines" (Wilson, 1979, p.9.) is necessary to get to that point of understanding humor’s role in effective communication as an EV (entry variable) and IV (intensity variable) in FRs (friend relationships) and MRs (mate relationships). This is advocated by Nicotera (1994) and others; it is discussed in the previous chapter.

At this point, turning to that disjointed and widespread humor research is necessary. Though almost every humor researcher tries to create different theories and models of humor, two patterns consistently emerge as being
the most prevalent: the psychological theories approach and the sociological theories approach. Certainly an offshoot is a theory which embraces both approaches which will be the theory adhered to in this conceptualization of humor and will be discussed after discussing the individual theories of the psychological and sociological separately. Though approaching humor from a theoretical standpoint embracing both approaches is not widespread, it certainly is not uncommon as more recent research in humor tends toward that direction (Mindess 1994, 1985; Ziv, 1992). Further, as we are examining humor's role in our communication patterns, it is necessary to note both the psychological motivations for humor and the sociological manifestations (Koller, 1988). After all, psychological theories explain that we need to engage in humor as an innate need as it serves even necessary biological and physiological functions; sociological theories consider the manifestation of that humor most of the time, specifically the need for the society at large to "enforce" limits on how that humor manifests itself and the implications of not complying with these rules or norms (Freud, Hertzler, 1990; Davies, 1990; Raskin, 1985). Both theories are relevant for communication scholars because the sociological theory is concerned about the communication of norms and rules in the societies involved, and the psychological theories explain why there is a need to engage in attempting humor (even bad humor at
times) despite our knowledge that by engaging in it (by assumption in the theoretical approach of the sociological approach) we, indeed, embark upon a great risk.

One could almost argue that not only are there social norms prohibiting certain jokes but there are also social norms which prohibit one from abstaining from humor; that is, not engaging in humor. (See Mindess, 1994, 1988 and, to a lesser degree, Cosar, 1959.). Regardless of whether or not one would wish to go that far or not in arguing for humor's communicative importance, it is clear that many factors influence our need to engage in humor and how to do so. Before discussing the human need to engage in humor, as depicted in PTH (Psychological Theories of Humor), and how that human need is met and regulated by STH (Sociological Theories of Humor), let's begin with a general review of the earliest humor-research history. That research, mostly, occurred before the PTH and STH approaches formally emerged. Yet at the same time it is that history of humor-research which significantly influenced PTH and STH as developed by contemporary researchers in the area of humor. After that review of early humor history, a discussion of humor research in communication (rhetoric and interpersonal mostly) will follow, leading into the broad perspective of humor fostered by PTH, STH, and their combination.
II. A. 2. HUMOR'S EARLY HISTORY

There seems to be little disagreement among researchers that humor has been employed ever since humans began using symbols; some argue it has existed even before symbols but became more prominent as symbols and symbol-systems such as language developed; still, others have argued that humor is not merely a human phenomenon.12

Undeniable and clearly documented uses of humor go back to mythological heroes like Oedipus and Theseus. Not only were their uses of humor documented, but also documented have been the high value placed in their times on joking in everyday situations.13

Joking was perceived as being necessary to show group membership, and the ability to be successful at utilizing particular kinds of humor, especially riddles, was seen as a way of appearing "knowledgeable," and those who displayed such knowledge, by either creating clever jokes and riddles or understanding them, were seen as having higher status within their groups than those who did not see the humor or get the joke.14
Riddles, in the day of Oedipus and Theseus, were social events which allured or persuaded others, through humor, to gain knowledge and insight. This seems to have had an impact on how scholars in the field of communication have examined humor. From Aristotle, and some might argue the impact can be traced back to Plato\(^5\), through the last half of the twentieth century\(^6\), humor has been linked, with varying degrees of success, to persuasion, informing or teaching, a tool for identification, a way of negotiating or directing group behavior, and as something that is clearly important for successful interpersonal communication.
Since it is with Greeks like Oedipus and Theseus where humor scholars begin to consider humor's functions outside of mere entertainment, then it is no surprise that these same scholars turn to the philosopher Aristotle for some of the earliest descriptions of humor and its role in both entertainment settings and daily communicative rituals.\textsuperscript{17} As a result we are, as an audience, supposed to be looking "up to the characters" in tragedies but "down on the characters" in a comedy (Holland, 1982).

This link of humor or comedy, as suggested by Aristotle, to tragedy is more than just a curious ad hoc example. Our unconscious link of the tragic with comic is perhaps the most obvious explanation for much of what many psychologists have focused their attention upon -- from the increased use of the tool, humor, by humans who have discovered they are terminally ill to the perceived schizophrenia of patients who fail to use the tool, humor, in accepted ways\textsuperscript{18}. These similarities will be discussed more in the section regarding psychological uses for humor, but for now let it stand that Aristotle's link of comic and tragic, though questioned by a few researchers, has had enough grounding to serve as a basis for psychoanalysis using humor and fodder for linguists, particularly
historical linguists, who have researched the words used to define some of the parts and descriptors of humorous and entertainment events. Some agreement amongst linguists about humor seems to support the belief that humor is not just "a joking matter, something frivolous, light, not to be taken seriously" but rather something so important socially and rhetorically as to make the joker seem superior when humor is executed well, and inferior, when not delivered or executed well. All of this seems to support that which, intuitively, we've come to know: humor's rhetorical functions merit close examination, and Aristotle's initial examination of humor has had an impact on how humor has been studied since, particularly by communication scholars.

Humor's relation to tragedy has been a theme in which communication scholars have been relatively uninterested, especially when compared to humor's relation to wit, sarcasm, and persuasion. Because humor as a rhetorical device has long been acknowledged, many scholars have been interested in indicating kinds of humor, and from those typologies assessing what are the "highest forms" of humor (Cicero as discussed in Murphy 1983).

Many have outlined how to achieve these forms of humor concentrating more on humor as an end product, rather than as a tool to reach some end (Sprague and Stuart, 1992).
Despite this trend, work investigating humor's relation to persuasion has examined humor as if humor is a useful tool to be used to enhance persuasion, but much disagreement exists in this area.

An examination of the work of those researchers in rhetorical theory who have articulated rules for achieving humor should include references to or contributions from Campbell (1776), Aristotle (c. 350 B.C.), Quintillian (c. A.D. 95.) and Cicero (c. 55 B.C.).

Humor research and how humor has been treated by communication scholars continue to show and reflect the directions of the early humor research. Though what we know in the area of humor has vastly increased, particularly due to contributions from the fields of psychology and sociology since the late 1800's, communication scholars (Gruner 1984, 1975; Duran 1992, 1983; Devito, 1993; Tubbs and Moss, 1994; Knapp, 1995) still seem to treat humor much like Aristotle and Cicero, with an emphasis on humor's role in persuasion, its relationship to wit, and to a lesser degree education and socialization, as well as displaying an interest in a rules-approach to humor, whether that entails listing how to use humor, identifying types of humor, or outlining the conditions necessary for humor.
Mercier (1960) has argued that the distinction between humor and wit may not be as important as previous literature seemed to suggest. Citing some of the different psychological explanations of humor (See section in III. B.) Mercier argued that previous research treated humor and wit as separate entities, distinctions in kind, when in fact their difference was merely one of degree. In contemporary uses of the terms wit and humor, wit is a specific type of humor distinguishable from other types of humor like sick humor or ethnic humor. Wit, argues Mercier, has a "stronger grounding in reality" when compared to sick humor which can only be perceived as funny if "we acknowledge the degree to which the humor is not grounded in reality."

Mercier’s argument has received support.

Mercier (1960) and Gruner (1985) have argued that the modification in understanding of the terms wit and humor has become necessary given humor’s traditional usage prior to 1682 and the fact that humor’s earliest research was being done, obviously, outside of contemporary American society. This cultural significance may not seem to matter at first, but there is significant agreement that humor depends on a time, place, culture, community, event, and a social event or social relationship. Gruner (1985), argued that humor
may be "less purely intellectual" in general, when compared to the specific kind of humor evoked from wit. Wit differs from most of the other types of humor in that other types of humor seem very connected to pathos whereas wit lacks the "sympathetic quality" of most of these other kinds of humor. Gruner's position in this debate enabled him to place sarcasm in its rightful position in the humor research.

Gruner, treating humor as the general term, argued that we could understand a great deal about humor, particularly its relation as an entity to other areas of rhetorical concern, notably persuasion. He argues that we can do this by focusing close attention to specific kinds of humor and understanding them first, before drawing conclusions about humor and persuasion in general. Specifically, Gruner wanted to examine sarcasm -- hitherto not placed in the humor and wit continuum/debate -- as a form of wit, and consequently a recognized form of humor, to see if sarcasm enhanced the persuasiveness of messages. Early attempts to link sarcasm to persuasiveness failed and Gruner redid experiments, modified the methods, changed the subject pool, enhanced the quality of sarcasm and even the obviousness of the message, and yet, repeatedly, Gruner failed to link sarcasm to persuasiveness except in cases where subjects were actually told beforehand that what they were about to read was sarcasm. Then and only then did
sarcasm work, leading Gruner to believe that sarcasm can be persuasive when subjects are aware that what they are hearing is sarcasm²⁸ (not earth-shattering), but it also showed that relatively few subjects, mostly students in experimental design settings, understood the intended messages of sarcasm.²⁹

Experiments by Gruner and others which did not result in sarcasm in the persuasive speech being perceived by subjects were numerous. Even when researchers were controlling for the suspected variables of: the age of subjects; the familiarity with subject matter; the degree of hotness/ debatability of the topic; and the absurdity of the arguments, subjects' perception of the sarcastic message varied.

Even when Gruner presented Demure Proposal, regarding the banning of nursery rhymes on the grounds of their violence (arguing against censorship), a speech that he and others perceived to be the most absurd argument if taken literally, students in advanced speaking classes missed the sarcasm and often times the point of the speech itself. Though it could be argued that advanced speech students would or should be familiar with sarcasm in a persuasive speech, speech students, even in advanced courses, are sometimes urged to avoid humor, given its potential to
alienate audiences, to boomerang, to cause the message to be
taken less seriously or its potential to harm the ethos of
the speaker. Even when humor is treated in speech texts,
or communication texts in general, it is typically suggested
as a means of getting the audience's attention, more than as
a rhetorical tool in persuasion.

Though the work attempting to link sarcasm with
persuasion does not seem to have led Gruner to a position
where he was able to link his intuition with his results,
his work does, when compared and contrasted to other
studies, suggest some possible conclusions, which are not
out of line with rhetorical theory thus far:

1. Humor may enhance persuasiveness if and only if the
text has the potential to be read as sarcasm. This is
influenced by:

(a) the social situation (those around are perceiving
it as humor and there is no reason to expect that
others are forbidden from reading the situation as
humorous),
(b) the target of the humor,
(c) the obviousness and strength of the sarcasm, and
(d) the subjects' familiarity with the source of the
humor (who/which allows his/her message to be
perceived as sarcasm at that particular time in that
particular place), to be read as sarcasm.

2. Humor (esp. sarcasm) may be received and understood by
some subjects as it was intended to be. Other subjects
may find it humorous for reasons other than what was
intended, and others will not see humor at all.
3. Humor is a social activity, and as such it becomes difficult to study humor when removed from the small groups and/or communities in which it occurs naturally.

4. Humor, if it is to succeed, requires that the listener consider the intent of the speaker by, perhaps, calling upon a rather complicated set of rules for understanding and interpreting humor.

5. Humor, particularly specific forms of humor which may be limited to certain groups or communities (Sarcasm is restricted to an educated community, by definition, according to Gruner.), needs to be "learned" and "directed" or it will be missed or misunderstood. Humor must have a way, according to Gruner of being "introduced, explicitly, as humor" in order for people not familiar with the rules or possibilities within those communities (i.e., college students not accustomed to the use of sarcasm throughout a speech) to be able to interpret it first, as humor, and consequently (in all likelihood) as persuasion.

6. Humor in everyday situations must be essentially "set up," to borrow a phrase from professional comedians/comediennes who work to "set up a joke," in order for the "punch line" to be considered funny. In this case the set up involves text, prior knowledge of speaker, people laughing in the surroundings and so on, and the punch line in Gruner's example is "censorship is even more absurd than the proposal being set forth."

7. Humor depends on nonverbal communication and paralinguistic cues like stress and intonation and depends on these cues so greatly that sometimes, though not always, humor is not "gotten" without them.

8. Given the repeated efforts by researchers to link persuasion and sarcasm, many scholars seem to intuitively believe that humor, specifically sarcasm, should be able to be linked with persuasion in some plausible, rational way.
Another result of the studies attempting to link persuasion and humor (usually sarcasm) is that humor, including but not limited to sarcasm, has also been linked to a lesser degree with speeches to inform or to educate in general. Thus far, links between humor and information-recall are limited. Though researchers agree that humor makes the presentation of information potentially more interesting when presented to students, the subjects in the studies, disagreement exists as to the extent that information presented in this form stays in short-term or long-term memory. There are also some who argue that even if some research suggests that humor can enhance long-term memory and general understanding (Paulos's work with disinterested math students), that students potentially become too accustomed to humorous presentations, only to be even more bored when a future lecture or presentation is not filled with humor. Still, most seem to agree that humor has some impact on both persuasive and informative presentations but much disagreement seems to exist regarding what that impact is.

Another result of the Gruner-esque studies of the 60's and early 70's is that it led to studies (Gruner, 1978) of humor's relation to other phenomena besides persuasion (and more recently informational speeches). Gruner concluded that subjects' ratings of how much they enjoyed
humor segments increased significantly when the subjects were exposed to the jokes in groups. This could explain why, in previous studies when Gruner did expose subjects as a group to sarcastic persuasive messages, subjects missed Gruner's intended sarcasm but still liked the speaker who presented it (the influence of others around enjoying the speaker). It also could explain why subjects who saw sarcastic messages in persuasion when in isolation (Gruner, 1978 and Reid, 1971) did not get the sarcasm and strongly disliked the speaker (No other subjects around to encourage smiling or laughing). Malpass and Fitzpatrick (1959) reached a similar conclusion but by measuring overt reactions like laughter and smiling. Consequently, they (1959) concluded that in small or large groups the laughter or enjoyment of some in a group serves as a catalyst or 'social facilitator' of smiling, laughter, and enjoyment in others. Furthermore they (Malpass and Fitzpatrick as well as Gruner) have argued that this occurs when the humor is presented to the group as a group in the form of speeches, television shows, or comedy routines which all subjects are exposed to at once. The same was not found for humorous texts that subjects read on their own such as cartoons, perhaps because, quite simply, people read at different speeds and reach the punch lines or humor at different times, thereby not serving as a catalyst in the same way.
that a humorous presentation presented orally might achieve.

Much has been published about rules on how to use humor especially in introductory communication texts, public speaking texts, and the earliest work on humor by Aristotle (Rhetoric, notably cross-examination in arrangements of the proofs), Cicero (De Oratore, 55 B.C.), and Quintilian (Institutio Oratoria, c. A.D. 95) as well as various times throughout the history of rhetorical theory. Where Painter (1978) broke tradition is by focusing on understanding and describing the rules based on observations of how humor was used successfully in a particular setting as opposed to traditional rules set up as prescriptive guidelines on humor’s use based on theories which emerged at times before humor’s link to communities, socialization, and group settings was known or considered. Humor typologies abound, but the use of humor as a marker (lesbianism) for community-membership was relatively innovative in the communication discipline. Furthermore, research like Painter’s has been mirrored, though not often, in other fields, both since and prior to her study, with other communities. Humor seems extra-significant to communities, particularly an oppressed minority community or subculture such as that found in the lesbian bar setting, discussed by Painter. Much of it has to do with a need for
socialization among in-group members in general, but also a great deal has to do with the importance, psychologically, of oppressed subcultures creating a potentially unique form of humor, which can help oppressed group members socialize with each other, and to some degree assert their own selves as well as their subculture within the larger culture. This leads us, now, to a consideration of the psychological role of humor.
II. B. PTH: PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF HUMOR:
(SPECIAL ATTENTION TO ADVANCES IN AND THE TREATMENT OF THE SUBJECT OF HUMOR IN PSYCHOLOGY)

Whereas communication scholars have been, frequently, concerned with a link between humor, wit, and rhetoric, psychological research of humor seems more interested in discovering: (1) what makes something humorous, (2) why judgments of humor differ so greatly amongst subjects, (3) what humor does for individuals in general but particularly in times of stress, (4) the role a sense of humor plays in coping, particularly in the terminally ill and in those who engage in comedy professionally, and (5) how humor can be used as a marker to discover things of interest to psychologists, particularly to psychoanalysts, and the links between humor and schizophrenia (Bokun, 1986; Mindess, 1985), marriage relations (Dececco, 1988), and general coping strategies.

This section will include a brief discussion of PTH's influence on the public speaking text, followed by some of the most popular PTH (such as Incongruity, Freudian Release, Superiority/ Degradation and Play Theories), concerns emerging from the debates over PTH (such as why do humor judgments differ so much from one person to another), and a more detailed discussion of incongruity, the most popular PTH.
Researchers and authors in the field of communication like Sprague and Stuart (1992), give prescriptive rules or advice to public speakers regarding how to use humor. This was mentioned in passing in a previous section but the theoretical grounding for their advice comes more from the fields of psychology and philosophy and how those researchers have built upon Aristotle's original ideas regarding humor. Many who advise students on how to speak actually are including suggestions which are one to four hundred years old; many of those rules are, themselves, influenced by work that is over 2000 years old.

Kant (1911) and Schopenhauer's (1891) incongruity theory of humor can explain why exaggeration, understatement, irony, anticlimax, and word plays work. What each has in common is an element of surprise or the unexpected. Schopenhauer says that humor is a tricking of the mind, "a victory of perception over thought," making this theory one which concerns itself with the "mental or intellectual components of humor". This theory has been most influential, and a more detailed discussion and critique will occur later in the chapter.

Other theories explain humor from other perspectives. Psychologists, including Freud (1928), explained humor via a
theory of release or relief, arguing that humor and laughter give us moments of freedom from the rules and burdens of our everyday lives. To Freud this included our aggressive and sexual drives. More recent research on humor and laughter have caused some to also include, as Mindess et. al. (1985) have noted, "constraints of conventionality, rigors of logic, and the straitjacket identification with our own egos."

In varying times of humor's history, the 1600's and the 1800s, Hobbes (1651) and Bain (1888), respectively, supported a theory of humor which stressed the emotional dimensions of humor, much in line with what Campbell did in the field of communication, placing humor in line with pathos (Campbell, 1776). Hobbes and Bain advocated, specifically, the superiority/degradation theories. This school of thought highlights the emotional need to laugh as a sense of putting down something else to feel superior ourselves. In this line of thought, we enjoy jokes and comedy and experience humor because we get a "peculiar pleasure from seeing someone else disparaged or ridiculed."

Mindess et. al (1985) have uncovered other theories of humor which are lesser known and not cited or considered as much in other humor research as the three mentioned above. These theories consider humor a "reversion to childish
innocence and irreverence" (Eastman's form of play theory, 1936), "an antidote to inflexibility," reminding us of the silliness which exists in the stubbornness of ourselves and those around us (Bergson, 1911) and that humor when done well strips away our "veils of pretense, exposing the truth of human nature" (White, 1953).

What Mindess and others argue is that none of these theories in isolation can explain all kinds of humor or joking behavior, a concern echoed by others including Palmer (1987), Holland (1982), and Gruner (1978). As a set of theories, however, they seem capable of explaining all kinds of humor encountered by the research done by Mindess. Though Mindess seems to find relief in knowing that all the jokes he and his followers discovered could be explained by at least some of the theories, they did find it troubling that some jokes could be explained by only one theory whereas others could be readily explained by two or three. From this experience and other humor research they created a typology of jokes: nonsense, hostile, philosophical, sexual, sick, ethnic, social satire, demeaning to men, demeaning to women, and scatological. Because different theories explained different dimensions of humor, they discovered that certain contents of humor which emphasize, for example, a group's superiority to another (e.g., jokes demeaning to men or jokes demeaning to women), were best explained by
degradation theories but nonsense jokes were best explained by incongruity theory. Using these theories as a guide, and a huge collection of jokes and humorous material, they outlined what they perceived to be ten reasonably distinct categories of humor content. Their categories were not just influenced by theories of humor but also by humor typologies which have been formulated, justified, and modified through the years. Previous category schemes like those articulated by Mindess can be traced back to the 1960’s, notably Kappas (1965) and Williams (1980).

Mindess, thus, argued that there was no need to favor one model of humor in general over another (For example it is foolish to argue that incongruity humor is superior over degradation theories, a debate actively pursued by some.). Rather, it is more useful to say that we engage in all kinds of humor, and that certain kinds of humor are better explained by one theory than the other. Their argument parallels discussions of method in most disciplines: Method A is not superior over method B but it may be for answering Question C while inferior if answering Question D.

What Mindess and others, who subscribe to a belief in the validity of this analogy between humor theories and methods, have done is merely shift the area of disagreement. It seems logical that some theories can explain certain
jokes but not others (hence, the disagreement that has existed and been debated for over a century now), but then a new dilemma arises: how to match the theory with the jokes or humor and how to uncover the categories for which they have argued. Is it possible to make the categories inclusive enough to include all kinds of humor while at the same time (1) making the categories distinct enough to be considered useful, (2) keeping the categorizations limited to a manageable number of categories, (Some of the seemingly narrow humor categories such as the one-liner have been broken into twenty-six categories in and of itself ranging from acrimony and bitchery to nemesis and zany. (Williams, 1980)) and (3) excluding non-humor that would otherwise fit into the category as it is defined?

Some, who have either supported Mindess's research, inspired it, or merely developed it indirectly, have acknowledged these concerns. After all, using one of Williams's categories with his own examples he considers "bitchiness," (no longer a term used by humorologists because of its sexism and used even less as a category due to changes in how categories of humor are discussed), a category itself citing the following examples (Williams, 1980, p. 15-19):
1. A cartoon shows two well-dressed women in a restaurant, one wearing a (pearl) necklace and the other with exaggerated large teeth biting down on them with the caption "And how would you know with false teeth?"

2. Queen Caroline whose relationship with her husband King George II was long-established and considered relatively good, reportedly asked her husband while at her deathbed to remarry so that he might continue to be happy. His response was that he could never marry but would take mistresses. "That shouldn't hamper your marrying," she quipped.

3. Bette Davis, noticing an up-and-coming starlet receive all the attention at a neighboring table in a restaurant, was reportedly so angry and jealous that when the other party came to leave, Ms. Davis's voice rang through the restaurant, "There goes the good time that's had by all!"

4. Dorothy Parker, the writer, was discussing a mutual acquaintance with a friend who tried to highlight his (the acquaintance's) stronger points after discussing something he had done or said to women at the work place, of which they disapproved:
FRIEND: You must admit he is always courteous to his inferiors.
PARKER: Where does he find them?

5. Margot Asquith expressed her own star quality, as the wife of the Liberal Prime Minister, when she met Jean Harlow:
HARLOW: Why, you must be MargoT Asquith (The stress on the T was Harlow's and presumed to be intentional.).
MARGOT: No, my dear, the T is silent like in Harlow.

Williams, though writing before Mindess and obviously not addressing him specifically, makes a case that has been made since (1980, 14), "What distinctions in humor are important? If we are to subscribe to the belief that multiple theories are necessary for an explanation of humor, and that these theories are each a part of the whole, then why are certain theories applied to certain kinds of humor while other theories are used for other kinds of humor?"
Mindess does not seem to address this argument specifically but he does indirectly. To Mindess, the above five examples could be called "bitchiness" or "cattiness" if one wants (Williams, 1980), but Mindess would also argue that this is not a difference that makes a difference. Mindess considers the social situation and relationship involved whenever possible. Clearly a problem exists in Mindess's own admission that it is impossible to know all of the social relationships of subjects but at the same time he argues it would be a shame to throw away what we do know of these relationships and the apparent intent of the humor just because we can not possibly know everything. Mindess likes to look, when possible, at the "whole" of the humorous exchanges in subjects. When giving subjects jokes to uncover initial character descriptions of subjects, he typically removes the "context" of jokes to gauge their relationships to the joke as a joke. When he takes that knowledge and applies it to the "situation" at hand, (say, a wife/husband relationship and its problems) he does consider relationship and social situation as an integral part of analysis. Seeing that a subject enjoys sarcasm does not necessarily say the subject is overly sarcastic in other situations nor the victim of it. Answers to these large, perhaps more important, questions come from being with the subject or having the subject come up with jokes involving "self" and some "other." (Mindess has argued that humor can not be
measured just by what subjects laugh at but also who they laugh with and the kinds of humor they create, or share.

As for the kinds of jokes described by Williams, Mindess examines these kinds of jokes differently; they do not all represent "bitchiness," when considered in context. In situation #1, the exaggerated features in a cartoon add to a nonsense or silly kind of humor while in situation #2, knowing the two have a great relationship almost suggests endearment or concern. Knowing that Davis is jealous in situation #3 allows us to see the comment as hostile while Parker's comment in situation #4 is more like a comment meant to be demeaning to a man and perhaps demeaning to men in general. This is accented by the fact the joke is said by a woman to a woman regarding mistreatment of women. Situation #5 may be philosophical or hostile: Margot may not like the target of the joke because of a frustration in not having people in general pronounce her name correctly, leading to a philosophical grounding of "I'm more important than an actress and people should be familiar enough with my name to say it correctly, particularly if I am to know the name of actresses and remember them correctly." There also could be some other kind of frustration involved which is more personal, in which case it parallels the Bette Davis example.
The above paragraph, in which Mindess's approach to examining humor is highlighted, shows two things: (1) Mindess's approach to humor involves consideration of the speaker's intent whenever possible, an understanding of the social situation, the creation of meanings, and the relationships of the interactants involved and (2) the subjectivity of assigning humorous events to categories, like selecting a theory to analyze humor, makes the forming of reasonable arguments regarding this topic difficult.

Mindess addresses this concern by (1) becoming involved closely with the users of humor before drawing conclusions, (2) considering closely what research they have about the influencers of subjects' sense of humor (notably, profession, social class, race, age, sex, sexual orientation, life experiences, social memberships, relationship between teller and listener, and the like) and (3) comparing subjects' humor in one situation to the kind of humor used in other settings or in other relationships; comparing also can be done between different researchers as well as different social events engaged in by the subject.

Mindess, before using humor in his oft-cited and oft-applauded research, assembled a significant amount of seemingly disjointed research regarding humor, being one of the few to take into account what makes something humorous,
why judgments differ, what affects a subject's humor judgement and considering how knowing all of this can be of help to anyone, particularly, in psychoanalysis. Knowing some of the responses of an expert in the area of humor research, let us keep in mind how Mindess deals with some of the issues in humor research as we examine the research, mostly from psychology, which examines humor's relation to the subject. This includes a wide range of ideas, but typically, and unfortunately in the view of Mindess, ignores the social role of humor, particularly in naturally occurring social situations and groups. It also ignores intent of a joke (Consider Williams's example #2 above.). Furthermore, keep in mind that because Mindess attempts to treat humor holistically, he considers, quite seriously, the treatment of humor in other disciplines and by other researchers in general, making his view of humor less narrow, potentially more informative, and intriguing as a potential way to study humor. This will be the approach used to understand humor's role as an EV (entry variable) and IV (intensity variable) in FR (friend relationship) and MR (mate relationship) communication in this study. It is an approach, a way of seeing and understanding humor's role in communication, that has not just been done by Mindess; rather, it is indeed the approach advocated by Wilson (1979), amongst others.53
Since the goal of this research is to show the role of humor as an EV and IV in FR and MR communication, research about humor is of utmost importance. Further, since Mindess's approach to humor is being adopted for this study, all related lines of humor research are considered. To ensure that Mindess's approach to humor is consistent with, or better than, others' approaches, let's consider the research history of humor prior to Mindess, by beginning with Aristotle.

Though Aristotle's descriptions of comedy have had an important impact on the study of humor, the element of humor that he missed is the social one: the potential for one person's enjoyment of humor to serve as a catalyst for the enjoyment of humor in others. This social element was alluded to earlier, but will be discussed further in a later section. Let us begin with what Aristotle did include and in turn contribute to humor research, most notably, laying the foundation for formal incongruity theory.

Aristotle argued that comedy and humor were the result of the juxtapositioning of opposites, citing the link of the humorous play to the tragic play as an area worth further research. Cicero argued for Aristotle's tragic-comic link as a way of understanding humor in his discussion of Julius Caesar. Moliere did the same in stating that "the faults
of all mankind," become, in comedies, rendered "agreeably on
the stage." Eastman agreed with Aristotle's notion of
incongruity when he expounded on why humor works, as a
reaction to Freud. Eastman's claims were that jokes mix
disappointment with pleasure, allowing people to "make the
best of a situation," calling the act of humor, ultimately,
"an act of aggressive resignation." Koestler calls this
"going down one train of thought while seeing the other path
simultaneously." John Allen Paulos, who has studied humor's
use in the field of mathematics, has used this to explain
such common math jokes and puzzles as the vase/two faces
picture, the front vs. back of the cube design, and the
student who didn't know his nines-tables. These "jokes" are
often used in math classes in elementary schools to increase
(or initiate) students' interest in mathematical thought.
Similar kinds of math humor are employed in algebra courses
and even university math courses, with one of the most
famous "jokes" being the proof that \(0.9999\ldots = 1\).

Though incongruity theories, largely influenced by
Aristotle, did influence a great deal of humor research,
they also sparked another kind of research which looked at
humor from a completely different perspective.

As Holland (1982) points out, critics of incongruity
theory as an explanation of humor and critics of the
reductiveness of any theory for explaining humor posed the question, "If all humor is merely incongruity, then how could one appreciate the richness in "Don Quixote" or any classic comedy as opposed to a series of mere puns?" Along with this problem with incongruity theory, there is another, "Why do people's responses differ?" Holland says we would all have to be "alike, like pigeons on the grass," a result of the impersonal stimulus-response model of humor. It is this recognition that prompted research which questioned Aristotle's focus in studying humor. Holland argues that studying whether comic stimuli "cause" comic responses is not nearly as important as studying the conditions necessary for that response to occur\(^6\). For example, we must take into account Campbell's observation that an old joke is not funny; the reason is that it is tough to have the incongruity if you're aware of the incongruity at the outset. Campbell's observation was one that is reemphasized by Holland: there are necessary conditions for humor, conditions ignored by incongruity theories.

Along with 'not having heard the joke before,' being a factor in increasing humor's potential, an existing context will influence humor's potential as well. The time of the joke is also important. Eastman (1936) argued that we can only feel humor "in playful situations, not in times when we are to take the situation seriously." Updike (1970)
referred to laughter brought forth by humor as a “sign of
danger past or dismissed.” Were the danger still eminent,
laughter and humor could not occur. Holland illustrates
this concept quite simply by saying “tell a joke to the
victim of a mugger lying bloodied in the street; you won’t
get a laugh.”

Humor then is a kind of “play” to Holland, complete
with rules. He compares engaging in humorous exchanges with
friends to playing a game, taking part in a ritual, drama,
and perhaps even love, law, war or poetry:

One can also define the formality of play
psychologically, for example, by these two criteria:
objectivity -- one’s emotions and sympathies are
unengaged and isolated -- the logic of the play, game
or joke applies only to that situation and therefore
need not be applied realistically. More simply
stated, the conditions for the comic are compactness,
mechanism, and exaggeration. Think of tournaments or
chess or courtly love. If rules and distancing define
play, then I can understand Bergson’s claim that “our
laughter is always the laughter of a group.” It MUST
have a social significance.

Furthermore, Holland acknowledges, getting the joke or
riddle is a sign of group membership and perhaps even status
within small or large groups: riddles and jokes are ways of
knowing and showing knowledge. He acknowledges that
historical linguists place the word “riddle” historically,
as a word which meant “counsel” in its original usage, and
argues "it still does." This is consistent with Mindess’s approach to humor research.

Another position argued by Holland is that the context of a joke may be more important than the content. After all, given that tragedies and comedies are so similar (Aristotle), we can view tragedy as "comedy slowed down." Along with how subject matter is presented, timing influences humor being perceived as humor instead of tragedy. What may be hilarious as humor in one moment (Consider The First Family Rides Again, an album which made fun of the Kennedy family in 1963 and was immensely popular.) can be considered tragedy or bad taste later in time (Kennedy’s assassination in November of that year abruptly halted sales of the album). Holland has argued that manner of presentation and timing are important elements of joking; Haig has updated this using a communication model citing that all of the elements are important, "Humor depends on who says it, how, when, where, and with what intent." He is quick to point out that one’s joke is another’s insult, and that joking depends a great deal on what you know about the people with whom you joke. Advising those who use humor in therapy, he argues that it can be very good, but just as risky too, given the doctor’s "authority" over patients. He adds it is even more risky depending on the patient and the joke, "Never," quips Haig,
"joke freely with the patient diagnosed as schizophrenic or paranoid." Even in less clinical situations like managing small groups in SYMLOG, Bales and Cohen (1979) suggest humor is a great way to bring opposing forces in a group together, but how the humor is negotiated and acted out is crucial to determining its potential as an influencer. Coates, (1972) of the National Science Foundation wrote in Crime and Delinquency of the importance of humor in group settings, particularly when there is an agenda or reason for the group to be together. He has advocated greater study in the area of humor used by the police, given humor's value and presence in group settings. Furthermore he writes of humor's therapeutic role in decreasing stress as well as its potential for "control," a 'structure' for humor -- in the words of Ralph Slovenko, who wrote the introduction of one of Haig's books (1988), "The potential value for humor in relieving stress should be made prominent in the minds of those responsible for controlling crowds and demonstrators." (xi.). At the same time, however, he acknowledges the difficulty in all this, recognizing that humor is often an "instantaneous and spontaneous act in creativity," and as a result it becomes "obvious that one could not reduce these humorous situations to mere formula or prescription." Haig adds that if we were to try to reduce humor to rules, formula, prescription, or description, we would have to do
so in places where humor is most clear, when sharing it with others.

Though we certainly can enjoy a cartoon, play, book, television show or song on our own and find it humorous, we seem to enjoy these things more when they can be shared with others. This is one variable in humor -- social interaction's role -- that was not considered by Aristotle, but has been heavily emphasized by others since then, including Mindess.

Obviously, experiencing humor at the same time as someone is one way that we share humorous events, but we can also (and do) enjoy humor when we are alone, often looking forward to sharing it with others. A recent resurgence in popularity of blonde jokes caused many to want to be the "first" to share the latest "new" joke, and we all know as news events occur involving people like Pee Wee Herman, Jeffrey Dahmer, Ross Perot (after his withdrawal from Presidential candidacy), Former Vice President Dan Quayle (especially after his misspelling of 'potato' and his criticisms of The Simpsons and Murphy Brown as being television shows responsible for the decline of family values) and, most recently, O.J. Simpson, that it is a very short period of time before jokes emerge, and many people,
not just the professional comics, work at coming up with jokes, and others take part in the joking behavior.

When Dan Quayle came down against the values in the television show Murphy Brown, just a few months after the Bushes criticized the Simpsons for the same reason, comedians like Carson, Leno, Letterman, and Rivers picked up on it immediately. Soon political candidates were doing the same; Clinton and Perot both used the situation for humor. Clearly they were doing so to mock their competition in an election year, but even moreso, Haig would seem to argue, they are taking part in a ritual like most comedians (and Americans!) that particular week.

The humor seen in Quayle's statement has a socially uniting function: people who disliked Quayle could feel vindicated and superior. At the same time, people who approved of Quayle who could simultaneously see the humor in his statement when pushed to its extreme could at least be united in their feelings that the jokes were funny. Furthermore, they could laugh at the media, for making too much of a story out of something so simple; in a sense, the onslaught of unfair jabs and jokes became what was laughable. They could laugh at the media-hype, and find themselves laughing with Quayle, and each other as well.
Milking the humor from a situation for all it’s worth is no different from spending as much money as one can on fireworks and picnic supplies on the Fourth of July, taking time to look for or make the most clever costume for a Halloween party or overcharging one’s Visa and American Express cards at Christmas time, to buy the best gifts possible. Gruner (1978) in fact compares humor’s rules to the rules of family rituals like Fourth of July Day family outings, calling humor another "societal ritual."^62^”

This belief is echoed by Wilson (1979, p.231.), who argues where you find societies, communities or groups of people together who are different enough from each other to have in-group and out-group conflict, is where you find humor. Argues Wilson, (1979), show me a place that is a Utopia and I’ll show you a place with no need for humor. This argument seems extreme^63^, and at the same time the argument is to some degree moot given that no such Utopia exists, but it is interesting to see that humor is being linked with not just the tragic but also the social. This will be discussed in greater details later in discussions of community and community humor.

These attempts to understand humor as a phenomenon in its own right speak to the importance of humor to our everyday lives and to humor research in general.
Furthermore they represent agreement that humor, when studied, can be broken into parts with each part or type of humor capable of providing information about both humor and the people using it.

Now consider a less-tapped area of STH research, humor in a speech community. But before discussing the role humor plays in bigger contexts, (the purposes it serves in groups or in communities), a general look at STH, sociological theories of humor, is useful.
II. C. STH: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF HUMOR

The purpose of this section is to introduce STH, the Sociological Theories of Humor. Along with providing information about STH, criticisms of STH are discussed and addressed. An approach to humor that embraces both STH and PTH emerges, ultimately, with heavy influence by Mindess (1992, 1985) and others.
II. C. 1. GENERAL BELIEFS AND CRITICISMS

Whereas the psychological approach to humor argues for the intrinsic value of humor, particularly to individuals under stress (all of us!), the sociological approach to humor argues that greater relief comes from the sharing of humor, particularly humor about our own individual tragic situations. You know you are recovering from some event when you can joke about it, seems to be the consensus amongst researchers who hold the sociological approach to humor, but even until then one likes talking of one’s own tragic events, following the old adage "misery loves company". At the same time another adage states, "Laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone."

Following the humor/tragic relation, sociologists agree that laughing is like crying (The observable, physical actions are much the same too) except that laughing, joking, and engaging in humor are simply more inviting than tears. We may let down our emotions with a significant other, if we are inclined to cry at all, but in larger groups we employ laughter to deal with the turmoil in our lives. Humor, then becomes panacea, given it provides our bodies with natural healing, (Langevin and Day, 1972, in Goldstein, Gruner (1978), Holland (1982), p.76.) and it fulfills our social needs: we engage in humor with someone.
Psychological Theories of humor, also, cite examples of individuals who have used humor to get over things but concentrate on people using humor to get over things by themselves (Cousins, 1974, and Hertzler, 1970) in order to accent the psychological over the sociological benefits of humor. Furthermore, psychologists have argued that the real experts in humor, the comedienne and comedians themselves, got over the foibles in their own lives on their own before making their humor social70. An argument that has been levelled against the sociological approach is that we examine the sociological role of humor more easily because we can observe people exchanging jokes and laughing. Just because we don't see the recovery occurring in individuals engaging in humor alone does not mean that humor is not therapeutic in its own right, regardless of its being shared with others72.

Arguments like this may emphasize the importance of the ability of an individual to attempt to heal oneself by using humor, but they do not diminish in the least, any argument supporting a sociological perspective. For one, those who have most often been cited as people who used humor to "self-help" cite reruns of The Three Stooges, situation comedies like Golden Girls and Fawlty Towers, and of course classical comedies as significant in their healing72. Though no one may be in the room with subjects as they read
books, plays or short stories or watch movies or comedies on television, a socially humorous exchange, consistent with our definition of communication, is occurring between text and reader. Furthermore, the point of view that says the writer of a text or deliverer of the comic line need not be depressed to have come up with humor has been levelled by some who favor a socially interactive approach to humor. Writes one author, it may be true that everyone in the audience of Joan Rivers, Roseanne (Barr) or Dick Gregory attends the show or performance to overcome their problems as "a neurotic, narcissistic Jewish housewife," "an overworked, overindulgent, underpaid housewife," or a "black man dealing with the oppression of white man and the expectations of black women"; however, no social exchange is afforded to the comedy-makers on the stage. What do they get from the performance, other than just monetary awards? The response to this from a communication perspective is that audience feedback is itself a social exchange worth considering, but most arguments as this being a socially humorous benefitting experience for comedians and comedienne is that these are performers who have undoubtedly done some work on the issues which trouble them. Continuing to laugh at their foibles is part of the continual work that they do, and doing it with an audience present is social and an important step in their recovery. Even comic performers who seem capable of making us laugh at
the apparently most devastating of tragedies do, typically, have a period of time which passes between their own tragic events and their abilities to joke about them. Rivers waited four years before being able to joke about her husband Edgar after his death. One gay author (Feinberg, Aug., 1992) waited two years after testing positive to HIV before writing about AIDS in a humorous manner and another four years to write about AIDS in a humorous way as someone who is "out" about his HIV status. Letterman regularly jokes about issues "too soon" and questions the audience, "Is it too soon to be joking about this?" acknowledging awareness of the sensitiveness of the joke and its poor timing while at the same time almost recognizing a need to bring up such taboo topics.

One psychological argument that does have merit is that humor does something for us as individuals even when we are alone, perhaps without us even realizing it. Even though we can observe social exchanges of humor and validate humor's existence there, we can only hope to, at best, speculate on humor's psychological benefits. Still, it may be necessary to consider those benefits too. We could not accurately assess psychological benefits without following subjects around throughout their everyday routines and essentially getting into their heads to discover what a joke is doing, but at the same time we can not ignore the most simple
discoveries in the areas of psycho- and neuro-linguistics which have discovered, from brain-mapping studies, that such things as incongruity, even not humorous in effect or intent, affect which parts of the brain register significant amounts of activity\textsuperscript{78}. It is not the least bit unreasonable to argue that incongruity of the humorous type also has at least some psychological affect; in fact it is presumed by many researchers given the work of physiologists and biologists\textsuperscript{79}.

This, however, needs to be examined more closely. For if it is true that humor has a value which does not depend on social settings; that we are capable of taking advantage of humor's psychological catharsis when alone, then we face some obstacles in explaining where that humor comes from. Some have argued that, perhaps, very young children may get humor that is psychologically beneficial that does not depend on others\textsuperscript{80}. These children, around the age of two or three, when language has not begun to reach its fullest potential for its use in humor, can laugh as part of social situations at something funny, but at the same time they will laugh when they are manipulating toys. Though some have tried to explain this as a kind of perceived superiority over toys, all agree that this humor with self, independent of others, becomes less frequent through time. Even psychologists who speak of humor as a natural defense
discuss that defense as something that may be innate (the ability to call upon laughter, just like tears to release endorphins in the body and release stress from self). They also seem to agree that how that innate humor functions, differs from individual to individual and how the perceived appropriateness of the humor's manifestation is learned. Thus there are innate properties in all humans to engage in laughter or joking as a means of dealing with stress, but at the same time how, when, or how often we call upon that ability is a learned trait. Not only do we learn how to call upon our humor and what kind of humor to use in particular situations but we learn those rules, necessarily from, a society, a culture, a community and even our families. In fact even animals that engage in human-like humor (review footnote 52) can do so by learning the norms of the human 'culture' by whom they are surrounded.

Thus, sociologists' concerns with how people use humor in groups or communities seems very much in line, to some degree, with the psychological approach to humor. Further, it should be noted that the STH and PTH are not in conflict with each other; rather, STH and PTH have proven useful for looking at different aspects of humor. In addition, though both are relevant to understanding humor from a communicative standpoint (either interpersonal or rhetorical roles of humor), the STH is the other important starting
point for a discussion of how humor contributes to effective interpersonal communication as an EV and IV, entry and intensity variable, in FRs and MRs, friend and mate relationships. This will be discussed in a later section while also addressing the implications of STH for this study.
II. C. 2. RESEARCH REGARDING HUMOR'S ROLE IN SPEECH COMMUNITIES

Given the broad topic of humor, research studying its place in communities must narrow the topic down significantly and make some assumptions which, to those who favor other approaches like psychological ones, might seem dubious. The specific assumption that is made by most research linking humor to communities is that humor, above all else, is a social phenomenon. Humor has meaning as humor only when being exchanged between parties; the further assumption made in community-studies of humor is that there is something shared between the people who engage in humor beyond just mere humanness. Humor exchanges are particularly significant in communities because these communities share a context for the use of symbols, including the use of humor. Thus humor, though significant even when not being used in specific communities, seems more significant when those engaging in it share communitas.

Two arguments have been raised against these kinds of assumptions. The first is that this kind of view ignores people's potential to engage in humor alone. The second is that it suggests intentionality (to some) which is not necessary for humor to occur; after all we can find someone who is not intending to make us laugh just as funny as the
This then brings us to an important consideration, to what extent can we engage in humor with no other person around. Certainly we can: the author of the play, book, television show, song, etc can be considered the other person, and a social "exchange" of sorts occurs, though it is the viewer/reader who has the role of observer/listener without much chance of immediate response back. We still often compare these times when we witness something funny in our isolation to humor in group settings. Consider a few examples from television: the maid on "The Powers that Be" doing household chores in a nun’s habit as her boss asks her why she is dressed that way. We may be tempted to giggle, watching the show on our own when the maid replies, "mix-up at the cleaners ma’am." We may also laugh out loud at classic comedy sketches like Lucille Ball’s Veta-vita-vega-meal skit or Carol Burnett’s classic "Gone with the Wind" takeoff, as Scarlet comes down the stairs wearing curtains saying, "I saw this in the window and I just had to have it!" These episodes may bring us laughs, but they seem to produce even more when we watch them in a group (Compare, for example, one’s own laughter in a theater to your laughter in your home watching television alone.). In fact

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when we see television shows at home that are extra funny we often describe the scene to friends by using a phrase like "It was so funny I laughed out loud!" to highlight the funniness of the show; it was so humorous I laughed almost as much as I do when in a group. (After all, we would not likely say about humorous banter at a party that we almost laughed out loud, because we probably would laugh out loud as a norm in the group.\(^3\)).

Gruner (1978) recognized another humor possibility, laughing at someone when there was no intent for us to be amused.\(^5\) Haig also makes this distinction between laughing AT and laughing with\(^6\). Bergsen (1900, in Wylie Sypher's Comedy, 1956) seems to partially address this difference as does Holland (1982). According to Bergson, humor "demands a momentary anaesthesia of the heart\(^7\)."

Holland uses this to explain why we laugh at someone, say, falling on the ice. Holland says seeing someone fall on the ice is funny because we can laugh WITH the person, knowing the person is safe and knowing that we have done the same ourselves. We would not laugh if the person were obviously hurt more than usual, and we would probably be less likely to laugh had we known someone who had been debilitated by such an accident, but we can laugh when we know all is well. Holland typically makes the analogy to
playing a game, "we are allowed to feel playful," he argues "because we do not fear for the other." Furthermore, the "humor" of the fall becomes social in another way too as we describe the incident to friends to get them to laugh, saying something like "When he fell, he got back up so quickly to make sure nobody saw him; he didn’t even seem concerned that he might have been hurt." We also carry that humor with us so that we can look at our own falls (both literally and figuratively) with humor when they occur in the future. Laughing at ourselves essentially becomes a kind of intrapersonal communication. (Morreall, 1983, Mindess, 1985, Goodheart in Whimsy VI, 1988.).

Malpass and Fitzgerald (1959) observed overt reactions of subjects exposed to humor and found that humor was better enjoyed in groups as opposed to solitude. Subjects' ratings of humor conferred this: they perceived jokes as funnier when they heard them with a group. This research by Malpass and Fitzgerald has been cited by Reid, (1971), as a potential explanation as to why some of the early work by Gruner has produced different results from other researchers, discussed earlier. Gruner typically gave subjects humor which lacked context and typically had people judge the funniness of the humor in isolation, whereas many other researchers have done humor-judgment tasks in
classrooms without the subjects being isolated from each other.

Coser (1959) studied how patients used humor in a hospital setting, noting that complaints put in the form of a joke (what Gruner refers to as a jocular gripe) made patients feel more secure about potentially dangerous and stressful incidents in the hospital. This observation was not surprising, given all the research in psychology studying humor, and the research in therapy since then, suggests humor plays a major role in both healing and dealing with stress. What Coser noted that is possibly more interesting, and often ignored, is that such complaints were usually made to someone, and Coser found that as the size of the small group increased, so also did the likelihood that the "complaint" would be put in the form of a joke. Patients occasionally griped in joke form when speaking to one other patient, but almost always used a joke to express gripes to a group. Joking with others reminded patients that they shared some common bonds and common enemies like the doctors, the nurses, and the phlebotomist. The importance of communicating about a common enemy has been pointed to as instrumental in forming group cohesion (Devito, 1990, Bormann's fantasy theme analysis 1972, 1973, Bales's work with SYMLOG, 1979). Consequently the laughing at a common enemy proves to be just as useful.
Gruner, in discussing Coser’s research, argues that in addition to this, a jocular gripe from person A is an invitation to person B and Person C to add their jocular gripes. Gruner calls this action "an invitation to communicate, to interact with one’s poor fellows all caught in the same insecure boat (1978, 222)." This is perhaps what we see occurring with the Dan Quayle jokes discussed earlier: Carson’s, Letterman’s, Leno’s, and Rivers’s jokes are an invitation to others like Clinton and Perot as well as the general public to joke about the Vice-President of the United States during a time when the economy seems so bad, and our tolerance of politicians is quite low. Gruner summarizes his discussion of Coser’s work by quoting Coser, herself, directly:

humor allows the participants in a brief span of time and with a minimum of effort, mutually to reinterpret their experiences, to entertain, to reassure, and communicate; to convey their interest in one another, to pull the group together by transforming what is individual into collective experience, and to strengthen the social structure within which the group functions. Whereas Freud points to the psychic economy that humor makes possible for the individual the contribution it makes to social economy should be stressed -- a contribution that should not be underestimated in groups whose membership is continuously changing, and especially in the transient little subgroups that are formed for short spans of time each day in wards and sitting-rooms. In such a shifting and threatening milieu, a story well-told which in a few minutes entertains, reassures, conveys information, releases tension, and draws people more closely together may have more to contribute than carefully planned lectures and discussions toward the security of the frightened sick.
Davis and Farina (1970) argue that humor has a role in determining what gets talked about. When people laugh at a taboo joke, they allow such joking to occur in the group; when no one laughs it gives a "potent sub rosa of communication." Sometimes laughter can be communicating more than just acceptance, then, of a topic; it can designate acceptance of the individual. Davis and Farina suggest that if a new member in a group makes a joke that is not very good, people might still laugh if the person is liked by the group. In cases like this, "Laughter implies acceptance of his offering and by extension -- acceptance of him." Similarly, people may try to keep from laughing when a disliked person tells a joke that they really do perceive as funny.

Fine (1983) declared that humor had great significance in groups when the prerequisites for humor are met. A joke must be comprehensible, inoffensive, functional (support a group goal), supportive of the accepted hierarchy, and triggered by an event. Fine does not, however, indicate what that significance is or what humor's potential significance may be, and this leads us to additional research done in communities.

Community-humor research as done by Coser has been done other times as well with everything from salesclerks to high
school males telling dirty jokes. Research on joking amongst female salesclerks found that clerks engaged in joking and humor regularly during times when no customers were present. Research also indicates that the longer the time period the greater the percent of joking, and the greater depth of the jokes. Clerks began by joking about the weather, sharing humorous scenes from television and movies, sharing humorous stories about themselves (such as something simple like "something stupid I did this morning" or funny things she or friends did when partying the weekend before), making jokes about the appearance and mistakes of celebrities (such as the bloopers of politicians, and a local news announcer coming into the store without his hairpiece), as well as general joking about their superiors and the customers before joking about more private matters such as dating or family and eventually making fun of each other (clerks on other shifts, part-timers vs. full-timers, and eventually making fun of close friends from the same shift in front of other friends on the same shift.). Researchers in small-group communication would agree that such a process is common, given the more revealing or personal kinds of communication (in this case, humor) developed after time (Nicotera, 1994)\textsuperscript{103}. It also exemplifies, though not mentioned by the authors, the role that humor had in solidifying in-group humor trends by
making fun of varied out-group members: the other shift, the part-timers, people in power, the employees, and men.

Joking about the opposite sex has also been researched by Mindess who discovered a significant percent of the butts of jokes in silent films were people in power and the other most-targeted group was women. At first the targets look very different but given that the films were made by men, in an even more sexist time than today, men may have perceived women as being powerful given that women had the power to deny the men’s sexual interests. Male power was, in a sense, subverted somewhat due to the men’s own sexual needs and desires. Humor (particularly put-down humor) concerning the opposite sex has also been discovered in the gay and lesbian communities where put-down words, phrases, and jokes are used as humor rather often. It seemed that gay men used more short, quick derogatory put-down slang to talk about women, and lesbians, in particular. At the same time, women have used more putdown jokes such as "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle," and "What do you call something that does the work of five men? A woman." Hayes (1981, in Chesebro) found that lesbians in the gay/lesbian community were also quite clearly kept as an out-group to gay men by the significantly high number of vocabulary terms to talk about sexual acts, roles, and fetishes, as well as the multitude of nonverbals as well.
Pollio and Edgerly (1976) found that men and women differ in how they respond to humor, finding men far more likely to laugh out loud in a social setting than women, who tend to smile more than laugh. Both groups were found to engage in both laughing and smiling more often when group size was increased, and both groups rank (in the top 5 attributes) a sense of humor as an attribute necessary in friends and mates (Laner, 1988 in DeCocco). Laner also found that despite humor being one of the most important attributes to all people regardless of sex or sexual orientation, humor's importance is more significant in the self reports of gays and lesbians than it is in the self reports of non-gays. Laner found the observed behaviors of these groups consistent with self reports arguing that even though humor has a significantly more observable role in gay and lesbian interpersonal relationships than in non-gay ones, humor is so important to non-gays that even they rank humor high in reports of its importance to them in mate-selection behind honesty, affection, intelligence and looks.

Sacks (1974) examined "the sequential organization of the telling of a dirty joke in conversation. For the organization of the joke and also of its telling we find that there is a single most decisive feature: the joke is in the form of the story." Sacks argued that telling a joke involves three parts: the preface, the telling, and the
response. Sacks argued for the significance amongst high school males of setting up or prefacing the joke. Merely telling a joke is potentially uncool; it may flop or it may be something that the others have already heard. Consequently prefacing is particularly important and is typically done by using phrases such as 'a real dirty joke,' 'something wonderful,' 'a really weird thing,' and 'wanna hear what my sister did?' Sacks also found a significant amount of participation by subjects during the telling. Obvious participation included intent listening, follow-up questions such as 'then what happened?' and chuckling at minor peaks in the development of the joke. The final stage or response was normally met with laughing, comments on the story or joke, the telling of another joke, or the prompting by the listeners for the teller to 'tell another one.'

Jokes' significance in the lives of these upper middle class white high school male students pales in comparison to the significance it has in less mainstream or underprivileged groups (Davies and Ziv, 1993). This is not just true of America's oppressed groups. Carrier (1992, 1976) wrote of the role of humor in certain facets of Mexico's gay male community. Specifically, notions of machismo or macho-ness emerge in the jokes that some homosexuals tell about other homosexuals targeting "the behavior of the effeminate passive [gay] male" in the macho
Hispanic culture (Carrier, 1976, p.98. in Dynes and Donaldson).

Writing on another culture, Jones (1974) explained the importance of humor in Trinidad. He called humor:

a way of life. It is the currency of social exchange and the vehicle of psychological and cultural organization. There is no idea, event, emotion or person who can rise above the common denominator -- humour. In some ways it makes Trinidad one of the most egalitarian of societies. Not power, education, prestige or good looks can elevate you above the equalizer -- humour. It can brutalize you if you are weak and humble you if you are strong. It can ease the tension of a confrontation or heighten the enjoyment of a happy time. It educates the masses and keeps the few in power educated to the prevailing mood of the people.

Other examinations of humor have looked at what humor does to help a community in general. Jones and Liverpool (1976) describe humor's significance in Trinidad communities:

Humour is no joke in Trinidad, because if you cannot appreciate it, you do not belong. The eternal sustenance of this humorous way can be found in the calypso. The quick tongue, bon mots, social and political satire, and general sharing of relief from tension are all part and parcel of the legacy of calypso humour.

Trinidad humour has its own prototype, the "ample vehicle of Trinidad calypso".
Calypso emerged during slavery and with the catalyst of Carnival, brought humor to everyday Trinidadian life, with a thoroughness rarely seen except in societies and groups where its need is just as great.

Going on, Jones and Liverpool (1976), cite Mindess, (1971, p.23.), "In the most fundamental sense, humour offers us release from our stabilizing system, escape from our self-imposed prisons. Every instance of laughter is an instance of liberation from our controls," before taking Mindess's comments and going even further, "Humour has become, in Trinidad, the stabilizing system and the basis of control in the society. Laughter has liberated the citizenry from some of the oppressive consequences of the Archiving Society [making it possible now for] the dominant activities of this society to be intrinsically rewarding." (Emphasis is in the original.). In general, we see in Trinidad what others have argued: humor is essential in establishing and maintaining boundaries (Martineau, 1972) as well as in establishing, teaching, and persuading others to follow the norms and values within the groups (Reik, 1962, Hayworth, 1928, McComas, 1923).

Humor has been linked so closely to communities that a stranger or member of an out-group has been known to decrease laughter when humorous events are held constant and to decrease the amount of attempts at humor as well whereas
addition of an in-group member increases the number of attempts at humor and the amount of successes. Pollio and Edgerly, (1976, in Chapman and Foot) have said of humor, "One fact remains clear: the social event of humor allows for the cathartic release of aggressions, hostilities, and taboos and provides for a private--public affirmation that such activities are acceptable, providing an appropriate balance is maintained. This special balance is provided, of course, by those whose appreciation of humor is most similar to our own whether they be the comic actor, the comedian, the story-teller, the fool, and finally, the naturally occurring witty person."

Hertzler (1970) argues that laughter is a social therapeutic agent useful for eleven different kinds of situations. These are considered humor roles and, unless mis-communication occurs, humor functions as well. The first, laughing together as a tonic and lift suggests, "Tension is demobilized as the laughter drains off of that which has been too rigid, or routine, or depressive or repressive providing members new freedom and expansiveness." Agreement comes from Montagu, (1960) and Sully, "The joined laughter fuses them with a sense of well-being; it restores and enlivens and brightens them. Group tone is heightened."
Laughing together and at oppressors is another situation where humor is needed. "Laughing together on the part of members of collectives suffering adverse conditions has been a sustaining factor through the ages... Often in a tense dominator-dominated situation, the disadvantaged, the confined, the oppressed the exploited, the condemned have also obtained some relief from laughing AT those responsible for their plight. In most instances it has been the victims laughing WITH each other wherever they had any kind of communication with each other as they laughed at the controllers and the socially favored (Cosar, 1959; Mindess 1992)."

Gallows humor, Hertzler's third situation, is the kind of humor engaged in by people in the most life/death threatening situations who can not express themselves freely; it is "the savage and often obscene humor of the sufferers of precarious or dangerous situations. those causing the situation are ridiculed with irony, invective, and sarcasm. Gallows humor provides humor from or a way of living with the idea of death." Examples of gallows humor include the humor of concentration camps, death row prisoners, soldiers on the front line. It is a "weapon of the mind in the struggle for its preservation." (Duncan, 1962 citing Obrdlik). As a defense to "everyday threats" humor is what helps us get through simple daily annoyances
ranging from taking a test to realizing one's keys are still in the car, just as the door has closed shut. Somewhere between gallows and everyday threats humor is "laughter as means of coping with the forbidden." This includes talking or humor about taboo subjects. Funny incidents which involve bathroom or scatological humor fit in here as well as sexual humor. If we have a euphemism for a topic, then we must simultaneously have "comic obscenity to provide forms of relaxation of the taboos imposed by society on discussions of anatomy, erotic, and scatological behavior. Comic obscenity eases the naughtiness of the acts as the laughers laugh about them together. It is also a way of overcoming shock and terror [as well as shocking or terrorizing another for effect]. Obscene humor makes all evil laughable, making the evils which drive us seem less evil than before.

A sixth type of situation is the use of laughter as an easer of social situations. This included laughing at those in power or with perceived power: bosses, masters, clergymen, prison guards, dictators, presidents, vice-presidents, doctors, lawyers, professors, parents, children, and mother-in-laws. Hertzler also offers the laughter of students in a class at their OWN confusions, the laughter in a choir at their OWN mistakes, or the laughter of the team
at their OWN mistakes as potentially related given these 
errs and mistakes are related to or based on the powerful
"figure" of expectations, which are set by the teacher, the 
choral director, or the coach
d.

Social provision is given for licensed ridicule; this is humor that "pokes fun" but can be done because of the close ties already established between subject or butt of the joke and the jokers. This includes Washington’s Gridiron Club political putdown extravaganza as well as cities’ comparable events for local celebrities. It also includes roasts and in some cases monologues of comedians (Joan Rivers, for example, can put down Liz Taylor more strongly than another comedienne because the two are close friends.) and in-group humor about other in-group members. An African-American can tell a joke to a Mexican which involves a put-down of both cultures. People in the group can make fun of the group itself to others in the group (One feminist telling another feminist the joke, "How many feminists does it take to screw in a light bulb? -- Answer: That’s not funny!) but only if each is in the group AND each is aware of this. This kind of humor is potentially the most useful for having a group grow through the use of humor, but also the potentially most offensive when it backfires and is the kind of humor most at issue among subcultures.
The eighth, totalitarian laughter, includes laughter from those who are the victims telling jokes making fun of the totalitarians or those outside the society joking about both totalitarianism and the people oppressed by it.\textsuperscript{110}

The ninth, laughter at the scapegoat, stems from the need for some to have a "target." This includes humor against minorities, but more often than not it is humor that is directed because of a particular social situations occurring at that time (For example, Japanese jokes were more prevalent at war time than now; Jewish jokes would be told this way in the KKK; and gay jokes had a resurgence in popularity as AIDS has grown\textsuperscript{111}).

Humor as self or group therapy is mentioned by Hertzler (1970) as another social use of humor; though he provides only examples of in-group humor in the African-American community. He could also add to that jokes told by people about their own appearance\textsuperscript{112}, since appearance is not one of those things people like to acknowledge influences their judgment of people but does (See Janus and Fisher's "Pretend the World is Funny and Forever" in Healing Power of Humor.). People enjoy hearing comedienne/comedians laugh at themselves because it puts them at ease, and allows them, perhaps, to laugh and make fun too\textsuperscript{113}. 

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The last role and/or function of humor in the social setting, according to Hertzler (1970), is as strategy. This includes political humor, and most sarcasm and wit. It also includes more recent additions to this area: humor as strategy includes inviting participation/ learning the norms (Lesbian humor as discovered by Painter), changing the norms by allowing humor to be prevalent (Trinidad calypso humor), and finding others who are potential members or users of the same kind of humor\textsuperscript{14} (gay cruising of soldiers on leave, as discussed by Berube (1983), in the section on bisexual, gay and lesbian communities’ use of language and humor\textsuperscript{15}).

It is reasonable to believe in the prevalence of humor in communities. Likewise, humor serves many purposes, not just in the kinds of situations in which humor may be useful for social membership, but also in cases where humor has the potential to be crucial in determining one’s potential as a member in the community at hand. Humor communities, particularly subcultural communities, have been known to share humor types, forms, contents, contexts, roles, and functions. At the same time their humors differ significantly from each other and the mainstream culture, partly out of different needs, and perhaps, as a way of maintaining distance from the mainstream cultures and other subcultures which oppress it.
What seems relevant now, (and, what appears in the next two sections) are two different discussions: the first, a brief acknowledgement of the research regarding some marginalized communities' use of humor; and the second, a discussion of available research on the marginalized community considered in this study, the gay and lesbian community. That second discussion will certainly highlight the research available on the humor of that group, but, since a lack of significant research exists relating gay humor to the research questions at hand, that discussion will also feature examples of the language of that community, with special attention to what researchers have highlighted, much of which is in the literature regarding the history of activism in the gay speech community as a social movement.
II. C. 3. HUMOR IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Myrdal (1944) has argued, "When people are up against great inconsistencies in their creed and behavior which they can not or do not want to account for rationally, humor is the way out. It gives a symbolic excuse for imperfections, a point to what would otherwise be ambiguous." Hertzler (1970) seems to take that point of view when he argues a similar point, ending by saying that this could explain why "American Negro Humor, when expressed within that community (page x.)" by in-group members to each other, provides both self and group therapy. It also, as white America sees not just the existing racism but also the utter foolishness of it, may explain why white people engage in racist humor whether they are or aren't racist, regardless of their perceptions of their own racism (Douglas, 1989). A significant amount of humor discussions in communities in the first two-thirds of the century seem to deal with issues around Black or Negro humor. W.E.B. Dubois once called Negro humor "a reaction from tragedy, a defense mechanism, an escape into pride and dignity;" In part it supplies those inner pleasures and gratifications which are denied in broad outline to a caste-ridden and restricted people. James Weldon Johnson (in Philip Sterling's "A Meaning of Laughter," in Sterling's Laughing on the Outside: The Intelligent White Reader's Guide to Negro Tales and Humor),
called the ability to engage in humor and to laugh "the salvation of the American Negro. It has done much to keep him from going the way of the Indian." Much of this humor has moved into mainstream America as "an African-American contribution." The earliest uses of the music form, rap, were for humor or nonsense and silliness, on the surface merely a form of play. At the beginning, rap was viewed by many, both inside and outside of the community, as a form of play which belonged to that specific community. Now it is used to communicate more "serious" political statements than before; rap isn't just for humor or novelty anymore (Whitburn 1990).

Davies (1990), as well as Ziv (1988), examined humor of various communities and subcultures and found it possible to recognize similarities in the way some subcultures were mocked by others and popular "stupid jokes" which seem to exist in many countries, with varying targets. Whereas the U.S. typically makes fun of Poles, Mexicans make fun of Yucatecos, the Irish make fun of the Kerrymen and the Irish serve as the butt of stupid jokes for the English, Welsh, and Scottish. Davies (1990) finds that the same is true when the butt(s) of the jokes are canny or shrewd, comparable to jokes told about Jewish people in the U.S. -- the formats are the same but the tellers and the butts of the jokes differ. She found some of the exact same jokes
being told all over but just with the teller and target
being different, recognizing the relation between all of
these groups, and in some cases trying to explain why or how
the targets/victims emerged. Subcultures and other groups
have used these forms to make fun of other cultures, of the
mainstream culture, and at self. Other researchers have
concentrated on linking joking targets to each other. Fuchs
(1986) had related sexist humor to Jewish jokes, and sexist
humor has the potential to be linked to gay humor.

Wilson (1979), author of *Jokes: Form Content Use and
Function*, who argues that a group's humor may be indicative
of how a group sees itself, how it sees its enemies and
peers, and how it relates to those other groups, says that
understanding what passes as an effective joke in a
community can say a lot about the group and the way its
members communicate with each other on a variety of levels.
Specifically, Wilson, who believes "joking is essentially
conservative, and ridicule or sarcasm shows an unattractive
face of conservatism, funnelling abuse and malice downward
through the social pyramid (p. 79.)," argues humor is a
"powerful conservative because its effects reinforce
existing ideology, power, status, morality, norms, and
values within a society." He goes on to say, "People
ridicule deviants, subordinates, those with mental or
physical abnormalities, members of minorities and out-

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groups. And in the privacy of their own racial minorities, the middle class deride and scapegoat the lower strata, [resulting in] a cumulative burden of abuse for those with the least status (p. 79.)."

Dell Hymes (1974, p. 158.), citing influences by Edward Sapir, argues for studying humor in communities in general:

There are of course also emergent meanings as when unexpected concurrence of two or more relations, intended or imputed, produces humor, irony, and other effects. Further the full meaning depends on additional characteristics of what is present, done and said -- intonation, tone of voice, gesture, and local norms of interaction and interpretation such as whether an addressee has or does not have the option of ignoring a putative insult or as when by responding "you must be joking" one conveys that joking is not the apparent interpretation. Such creative aspects of language use seem to require even more clearly an analysis of social meanings and social contexts. One may not need to know all the contexts and categories of a community to discern the essentials of its patterns in these regards, but one must know the dimensions on which contexts and categories contrast.

Though Hymes (as well as Sapir) recognize that knowing and understanding some facets of a group or speech community is necessary to do an effective study within a group, particularly when studying the group's use of humor, they also recognize the challenge that this presents to a researcher. In general, the person who researches the humor within a specific group, culture, or community must have
some knowledge of how other groups (whether similar or not) have been studied and on what researchers agree regarding those studies. When the group under focus is a group which, for whatever reason, has not really been adequately studied before, formally, then the researcher can at least benefit from paying attention to research about the group's experiences, heroes and villains, and use of language in general. First, this gives the researcher useful background knowledge. Second it gives the reader of the findings some useful background as well. Most importantly, perhaps, is that the information the researcher can gather about the group is often information group members may already know. Thus, the knowledge helps frame, in some cases at least, some of the group's talk which in turn has obvious implications for the group's use of humor; both how they joke and what they joke about, when acting as members. Given this, and the relative lack of information about the following:

1. Humor as an EV and IV in MRs and FRs
2. Humor form, type, content, context, function, and role in a community like the Gay/ Lesbian/ Bisexual community

it seems useful not just to discuss the humor of gay people but also to show some of the history in which that humor emerged. The next section does that by highlighting some examples of early chants used at gay pride/ liberation marches which, though they are not humor per se, have been
linked to humor by people like Whitburn (1990) who have researched humor and music/rhythm and rhyme schemes. Also in that section are discussions (Berube, 1983) of the gay community and its humor during World War II, significant in that the time period pre-dates the late 1960s, which many credit as the start of the modern day gay rights movement (Katz, 1976; Ziffer, 1987, p. 72.; and Musto, 1993 are just three of many authors who credit The Stonewall Riots of 1969 as a significant starting event in the modern day gay rights movement. Others like McQueen et. al., (1987, p.50, 72.) point out the emergence of Advocate in 1967 as a national gay publication and its increased success by 1969 as another factor in the growth of gay culture and gay unity across the U.S.). Humor in more contemporary gay settings is also discussed; notably the gay and lesbian consciousness-raising studies of 1973 done by Chesebro, et. al. as well as Painter's (1978) and Ringer's (1994) research.
II. C. 4. LANGUAGE AND HUMOR: (AS A PART OF) THE EVOLUTION OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN SPEECH COMMUNITIES

Though Painter (1978) was not examining humor's role in communication, per se, she naturally stumbled upon it when trying to understand how the lesbian bar community worked. Understanding humor in the community seems to help one understand the general communication in the community and, as more than one author has suggested (Ziv, 1988; Mindess, 1985), maybe the community itself. Further, Painter's decision to study a marginalized population/group like a lesbian community had to inevitably lead to a discussion of humor since many argue that humor is most significant to groups that have been oppressed or ostracized by the society at large and to the individual members of those ostracized groups (Spalding, 1985; Davies, 1990).

Examining humor in a community is a useful way of understanding the humor of its members better. Let us now look at researchers' discussions which involve humor's role in the gay and lesbian communities, even though (as with Painter, 1978) the influence and importance of humor was discovered serendipitously. Many authors, articulating what constituted a gay community or a gay speak, inevitably ended up finding a lot of talk taking the tone and form of humor (Berube (1983) and Ringer (1994) are especially noteworthy and Berube's work in particular is discussed in this
section.). They did not attempt, as it was not their goal, to understand that accidentally-discovered humor in any great detail. Nor did they attempt to understand why humor emerged as significant, why that was the case, or what made humor a part of the subjects' effective communication. Even so, they did seem to achieve the following three accomplishments, which is significant for this study and will be discussed in this section further (Citeable authors are numerous, many of whom are mentioned in the next several pages.):

1. Each account of humor being found important in communities, when humor was not the main reason for investigation, argues for an importance of humor in general in communities. Humor is so intricate and vital to communities so as to occur again and again in community descriptions, even when humor is not being pursued as a topic per se.

2. A few accounts of humor not being the main focus of investigation could be perceived as argument that the reason humor is not under this focus of investigation is because it is unimportant. However, the accounts in this section when considered together with the information discussed in other sections on humor as well as what we know, vis a vis the
previous discussions of humor, argue against that view. Essentially humor is crucial to effective communication and in communication performance and -- as is most important here -- as an EV or IV in FR and MRs.

3. The following examples, some from academicians, others not, show humor as important to the people who write and study about it. But, more importantly, humor is of value to the people who simply use it, engage in it, and perhaps take it for granted as a vital part of their identification with their community (or communities) and their daily in-group communication.

Painter (1978) writes as if humor is something that is just "uncovered" as a tool in coming out, not as if humor were the subject of inquiry from the beginning. A few indicators point to this.

One indication was the structure of the dissertation, citing the study as one which would shed light on ethnography and ethnomethodology, not humor\textsuperscript{116}. The second was to understand lesbian talk in lesbian settings taking part in "coming out." A third indication was the lack of a review of literature on humor, at least not a very significant review of literature compared to her discussion of the methodology. A fourth, though weaker reason, is that
Painter's subsequent work dealt more with coming out than humor. In trying to pinpoint whether Painter's discovery of the significance of humor in the lesbian coming out process was unique to the groups of women that she encountered in one bar in the mid-1970's or not, let's consider other research which supports the feelings held by Painter, that 'coming out as a lesbian to members of the lesbian community does not guarantee acceptance, but learning the group's in-group use of lesbian humor facilitates the coming out process. Proper use of humor is essential for a lesbian to act communicatively with other lesbians when speaking as lesbians.'

Publications, targeted toward the gay/lesbian/bisexual readership, are important to the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities, and humor's presence in these publications is significant as well. Humor emerges important in gay cartoons, editorials, letters to the editor, and in the personals sections of gay publications (Lamer and Kamel, 1988, in DeCocco). Even in a so-called unbiased "news" story, humor is used to not just make a point but to potentially disguise information from the non-member of the GLB (Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual) communities. In fact, the humor in the GLB communities is so important that researchers and psychotherapists such as Jones and Bates (1988), McWhirter and Mattison (1988), DeCocco and
Shively (1988) and Whitney (1988) have argued that humor plays a role in gay male coupled relationships that may be greater than the role it has for non-gay males or females. Researchers argue that getting jokes, creating jokes, and being able to get over jokes is an important priority in the in-group humor of this community (Koller, 1988). McWhirter (1988) argues that this creates a potential problem in a developing gay male coupled relationship if one member is more out than the other or if one mate has not been out very long. Degree of outness is not just an issue because it represents, often, different levels of partners' maturity but also different perceptions on the part of the partners in terms of their long-term goals, the way they view the coupled relationship, how they spend their time, with whom they spend time, and "how they communicate with friends and others, especially when one partner engages in campy humor in inappropriate places or ways... or one partner continues to engage in bar-jabbing [humor especially short sarcastic punches of wit] with the other partner in more private moments, when the second partner feels that the jabs are inappropriate, he can not jab back, or feels compelled to jab back." According to McWhirter, jabs in the form of humor do lots of things in lots of different people, but in many coupled relationships they prompt the people involved, the jabber and jabbee, to think a lot about the subjects of the jokes. Furthermore the witty return-jab gets thought
about, and the two people in this couple tend to self-
analyze the subjects of their own jabs, the motivations for
making those jabs and the return jabs from their partners
too much (several researchers discuss or allude to this in
DeCocco, 1988).

Unlike their heterosexual counterparts, gay men in the
monogamous relationship tend to meta-communicate often: to
talk about their talk, which is rendered difficult by the
ways many gay men become accustomed to talking about
problems and communication issues, notably by the way many
gay men use humor-jabs with in-group members (DeCocco,
1988). Though talking about how their partners communicate
sounds like a good thing for all people in any coupled
relationship, McWhirter argues that the way gay men become
accustomed to speaking to each other in humor-jabs leads to
humor-jabs in potentially less useful places like in the
paired relationship. This leads the couple to discussing
how each felt hurt from the jabs, but gay men inevitably
revert to jabs as the jab is as much a part of the language
of the community as is syntax, morphology, and phonology
(Radford 1989; Levinson, 1984, and Hock, 1991). This leads
to gay men repeatedly processing "their feelings and
behaviors to the death causing relationship fatigue and
distress ... in fact, gay men have a tendency to over-
communicate with each other." (McWhirter and Mattison, 1988, p. 253.)

The communication of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities as it appears in GLB publications is mostly influenced by the humor of the gay male. Though these newspapers were intended, perhaps, for a readership that includes both males and females in the community, a significant amount of the writing was done by males, accustomed to the jabbing described by McWhirter, et. al.19.

Though we lack specific information about humor’s impact on the gay male20, we do know that this in-group humor or this unique sense of humor (Mindess, 1985) has at least a partially-traceable history21.

Though the next few pages are as much about the language of social movements in general and the gay rights movement in particular as it is about "humor", it is useful background for the researcher and the reader to have for a couple of reasons. First, it helps serve as a partial background of the GLB (gay/lesbian/bisexual) movement. Second, it illustrates some of the group’s use of language and humor before the present time, both of which seem important given the discussion by Hymes (1974) as presented in the previous section.

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Martin Baum Duberman, (1986), in About Time: Exploring the Gay Past, traces gay communities throughout time, uncovering humor throughout. He excerpts from an article in Current Psychology and Psychoanalysis, printed in December, 1936 with a description of a humorous exchange between gays in a Greenwich Village restaurant culminating as one announced to friends, "That queen over there is camping for jam (p. 111)!"] The author intended the description to be one which put down gays: describing their exaggerated fashion, girls who dressed like their brothers and pansies/boys "in high-pitched voices, seen with make-up, heavy mascara, rouge and lipstick (111)." He goes on to make fun of the "wide-spread use of strange slang among these human misfits (111)." He even makes fun of their slang, as they have fun with each other. The earlier phrase, "That queen over there is camping for jam!" was treated this way by the observer (111-112):

I was puzzled. Investigation showed that neither royalty, the wide open spaces nor the household delicacy were involved. The statement meant that the ringleader (queen) of a group of homosexuals was making a play (exhibiting camping) for a young boy (jam-virgin).

Eric Garber writes of homosexuality in 1920’s Harlem in T’ain’t Nobody’s Bizness: 129.
a renaissance of Black culture made this poor and crowded neighborhood a vital, busy hub of creativity. Many of the key figures who made the renaissance possible were lesbians and gay men. Then as well as now, sexual minorities played an important role in the formation of urban minority culture.

Garber writes that the tall blond Iowan author Carl Van Vechten was one of the key people responsible for the influx of White tourists calling him "everything a sophisticated Manhattan dilettante should have been: witty, talented, and homosexual." This influx of tourism led to a thriving of the general gay and lesbian community in Harlem as many white homosexuals stayed, and soon tourists were coming not just to see the "escape to a primitive, exotic black community where the neighbors were uninhibited, passionate and animalistic" but also the growing homosexual community of "pansies, sissies, bulldykes, and bulldaggers with their freakish ways".

Though disputes and conflict existed between Harlem's heterosexual blacks and the homosexual whites members of the different subcultures did attend each other's events. Drag balls, part of gay subculture for years, moved into Harlem and went from being "clandestine private events to lavish formal affairs attended by the thousands." Writes Garber, "The Harlem balls in particular were anticipated with great excitement by both Blacks and Whites."
Eventually, these events became so popular that gays and
lesbians in Harlem joked that they were "THE people and that
what they had was THE life." This was done, in part, to
respond to the negative terms used by non-gays or outsiders
from Harlem. It was also to assert community for all who
lived in Harlem, but was more commonly used by the gay men
than any of the others. At Edmund's, "drag queens," recalls
entertainer Ethel Waters, "borrowed my gowns and had fun in
the nightclubs". Gay men seemed to attend many shows in
Harlem but went to have fun as gay men, since their own bars
and nightclubs were "dives, catering specifically to pansy
trade" and in bad parts of town. Artist Brian Nugent is
quoted by Garber as remembering the places well, "It [one
gay speakeasy or bar in particular which had no doorman to
keep the uninvited away] catered to rough queers . the kind
that fought better than truck drivers and swished better
than Mae West." Gays used their community's humor a great
deal at other places and social events from the drag balls
to rent parties.

Lavitsen and Thorstad in The Early Homosexual Rights
Movement (1974) trace, from a historical perspective, the
serious development of the homosexual rights movement
between 1864 and 1935. Though they present a chronology of
significant events to the movement during that time, they
also included pictures and sometimes humorous
correspondences between gays and lesbians as important. Included are pictures of one woman in male drag as well as a male in female drag. A picture of Baron von Teschenberg, a leader of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, is shown (He is in full drag; that is, dressed like a woman.) with the note he included which indicated his choice to a gay male friend to have that picture included in a yearbook:

Being thoroughly convinced of the justice and importance of your endeavors, not out of vanity or other self-centered motives, I send you this picture, which reveals my true nature, gladly putting it at your disposal for publication along with my name in the Yearbook.

George Mosse, writing on Fascism and Sexuality in Nationalism and Sexuality (1985), describes the definition of homosexuality in 1937 as something which went "beyond the performance of sexual acts. Himmler built up the ever-widening nineteenth century definition of homosexuality which had stressed the contrast between homosexuality and manliness, sickness and health, and thus extended the performance of a sexual act into a judgment about all aspects of a homosexual's personality" and interpreted homosexuals' 'lack of caring and frivolity regarding the matter' as signs they did not care what people thought of them nor who they affected and offended with their talk, laughter and mockery, as well as their outlandish activities both in private and in public (private referring
specifically to the sexual act, public referring more to what contemporary accounts call "camping it up."\(^{129}\).

The humor of gay men has made it possible for a gay man to disclose his gay-ness to another gay man who knows the community humor in mainstream settings while at the same time being discrete about the disclosure, unlikely to be detected by the non-member or the non-accepting non-member.

From an article in *Mother Jones* from February-March, 1983, by Allan Berube, came a description of what happened after World War II to vets who had engaged in homosexual behavior while fighting in the war, many of them discovering their own homosexuality in the process. Back in the states the war was portrayed as being necessary to fight all the evil elements of the time. McCarthy, of course, raised this to new heights in 1950, but meanwhile the boys overseas were not just engaging in homosexual acts, they were taking on lovers, significant and emotional relationships with other men. The same was true for women. Love letters from a Women's Army Corps Sergeant to a 20-year-old stationed there were discovered by the young woman's mother who threatened to reveal "that scandal to the world\(^{130}\)," charging that this vice must be running rampant since her daughter was not like that when she entered, saying "The WAC is full of homosexuals and sex maniacs\(^{131}\)." Though much of gay or
lesbian life was treated as a result of the "situation" more than as a burgeoning community, cities where soldiers went on leave found their gay bars flourished at leave-times. Bars like Black Cat Cafe and the Techau cocktail lounge, gay and lesbian establishments in San Francisco, catered to the military, and soldiers would attend the bars in uniform even when other bar options were nearby (Berube, 1983).

Berube's intent in writing to describe military gay/lesbian life during the war was to highlight the trauma of some, who had to watch their lovers die in gunfire and felt the need to remain silent about their feelings in a 'private closet' and to show the happiness of others, who spoke of how lucky they were to be accepted unquestionably in their units, while being out. Despite this stated goal, he dedicates an entire page (in the seven page article) to 'camp life.' He described briefly the underwear advertisements featuring cute, good-looking boys next door which some men kept and hung up alongside bunkmates' pinup girls, and seeing women dating women like they were experiencing dating again, all over again, but also for the first time. He also writes specifically in the section of the impact of gay men's humor for allowing such openness to occur. The kind of humor which sprung from the gay men (camp, in Berube's words, a play on words with the title of the section, "camp life") allowed them to find each other.
when they wanted to remain secretive and allowed them to reach out, (through entertainment), to heterosexuals, when they didn’t care what others felt or just felt comfortable enough to let themselves BE themselves. Humor thus allowed gays and lesbians to receive slightly greater acceptance from non-gays and allowed gays to find "others" when they were with a crowd of people they didn’t know or when they were cruising while on leave. Berube goes on to write about the role of humor in making contacts:

On many bases gay men found it easy to meet one another. Some of these gay men used their campy sense of humor to entertain other GI’s as well as themselves. Drag shows-- an army tradition as old as peeling potatoes-- were so popular that Life magazine ran two pictorial features on them during the war. Of course not all GIs in drag were gay but many of these shows reflected a gay ‘campiness.’ Straight and gay GIs alike remember them as a welcome relief from the drab, horrible rut of military routine.

In 1943, Norman Samson-- who served in the army air corps' Special Services in Georgia-- and two of his buddies put together a comedy drag routine as part of a musical drag show on their base. Wearing gowns donated by a women’s dress shop in Savannah they sang:

We’ve got glamour and that’s no lie.
Can’t you tell when we happen by?
Isn't it campy; isn’t it campy?

This 'female' trio ended their act by lifting their dresses and roller-skating off stage Bea Little-style.

Berube goes on to discuss how homosexuality became a bridge, a way of meeting others easily, and making friends as well as discussing how gay GI’s, in need of release and
in good moods (probably because they were on leave), were the most outrageous, the most campy, and having the most fun in the bars. Burt Miller, currently a college instructor in San Francisco, was one of the naval officers quoted. In 1944, when he was 21, he went to the bar part of the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles and discovered:

about 75% of the men were in uniform -- and I asked myself 'Can what I think is going on in here be going on?' I stopped to find out and sure enough I was right. I was in that bar every night. It was there I learned that there could be a comraderie, that people who had initially had nothing in common but their homosexuality could come together, like one another, and talk. That just utterly astonished me. I'd never seen it before. I don't think the outside world knew it, and I don't think most gay people knew it yet. I'm sure that thousands of men had the same experiences I did-- discovering that there is a gay society.\[133\]

Miller's real discovery of a 'gay society' was not a place; it was not the location of The Biltmore. The gay society was the people, mostly in the military, mostly very different from each other who shared: (1) a desire to meet new people; (2) a desire to get to know old friends even better; (3) a knowledge of in-group humor manifested in the talk of gay military men, a talk that spread to the gay bars; and (4) the hope of having fun.

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Gays across the country, and the world for that matter, were making use of humor in political activism as well. Weeks (1977) in *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the 19th Century to the Present* discusses GLF, the gay liberation front in the early 1970's. Quoting one of the GLF founders speaking on the intent of GLF, he uncovers "fun" as a part of what they are engaging in when demonstrating:

> We want to give GLF demos a different role to straight demos. We want to have fun as well. We want our revolution to be enjoyable.

He also acknowledges this community humor in other sections by giving examples, one of which is from a GLF flier regarding the theme for a gay vigil in Grosvenor Square:

> The theme for the Gay Vigil at Grosvenor on Thursday, June 27 is BALLOONS -- BRING BALLOONS -- FROCKS -- AND LOVE

Weeks mentions that these kinds of handouts, fliers, posters, and chants got the points across but remained light and fun in the process saying, "GLF added its own distinctive colour to the political ritual." He also cited examples of chants involving what could be argued as a form of humor given the simplicity of the rhyme in a very
repetitive tune full of simple things like sequences of even and odd numbers with other, mono-syllabic rhyming words:

Two, four six, eight,
Gay is just as good as straight
Three, five, seven, nine
lesbians are mighty fine

Though the chant may or may not be considered humorous to all of us, some have linked silly, novel sounding tunes to humor\textsuperscript{134}, and the same tune/rhyme scheme has been used in subsequent gay pride marches with clearly humorous effect. According to one gay newspaper, favorite chants one year, directed toward former President Reagan, included: "Two, four, six, eight, Ronnie thinks his son is straight" and "Two, four, six, eight, being gay is really great; three, five, seven, nine, malls are where we spend our time\textsuperscript{135}." The first is sarcasm directed at Reagan, whose son has been rumored to be gay, though the President was never supportive of the gay community's needs. The latter is humorous because of the emphasis on something silly and frivolous associated with teens, and often times young girls, but being chanted here by adults, with pickets, most of whom were male\textsuperscript{136}.

Chesebro, Cragan and McCullough\textsuperscript{137}, (1973), discussed "The Small Group Technique of the Radical Revolutionary: A Synthetic Study of Consciousness-Raising," and in the
process described eight conversations amongst gays as illustrative of consciousness-raising episodes with three of them involving humor, two of those conversations being comprised completely of humorous banter. These numbers are not scientific, obviously, and quantifying humor was not their goal. On the surface the numbers seem fairly small, only 37.5% of the talk involved humor. However, at the same time, humor’s significance is fairly large given that the groups were goal-oriented; furthermore, close examination of the humor shows it models not just humor, but humor most often described as "camp." Examination also suggests that these humorous examples (which I considered humorous if the researchers coded/indicated ‘laughter’ in the printed text) may not really be the only ones. Two conversations include comments that could easily be considered joking or attempts at joking. But, perhaps, because subjects did not know each other prior to the sessions, no laughter occurred even during joking times, when people did not know, yet, what could or could not be laughed at. After all, significant time was spent just getting to know each other, not even having been told that others in the group were gay and lesbian only that "the purpose of the session was to take part in a gay-liberation consciousness raising session;" this could have limited humor in early sessions. The researchers note that a fair amount of the early time in group familiarity (three different groups of five took part)
was just in uncovering information about each others’ identity, people sharing personal stories or making judgments based upon others’ mannerisms, dress, and language choices, perhaps not a context in which humor would likely occur. Other inhibitors like the laboratory setting, as well as subjects knowing they were being watched and tape recorded could be considered inhibiting, but here are portions of some of the humorous exchanges, which clearly use humor, (Different letters denote different speakers. L indicates laughter; LL indicates loud laughter.):

A: I was waiting in a gas station all alone for five minutes
B: (David) Reuben says that’s plenty of time - three or four minutes. /L
C: How does Reuben know? He thinks all fat people are homosexuals or very small people who like food. /L
A: Reuben says some of the world’s greatest chefs are faggots. /LL
C: Gore Vidal, in reviewing Reuben’s book, did note that Reuben himself is portly. /L
Another humorous exchange regarding homosexual images continued for about five minutes:

A: They had a take-off on the Aqua Velva commercial in "Dynamite Chicken" This character comes out and says "I want to be an Aqua Velva Man," Then the director says "Do it with some balls!" Then the actor yells "Props! Props!"
B: Cool!
C: Did you see the latest "Love American Style"? It has a man at work who keeps getting letters signed Ducky-Poo -- He starts comparing handwriting and then the boss (/L) comes out and says, "You’re doing a fine job." And then he says, "I thought you were going to say, for a second, that I wasn’t doing enough." /L
D: That’s Love, American Style. /L
B: The other night on Carol Burnett, Gay-Gay comes on stage and Annette Fabre said, "Where have you been?" And he says "Oh, I was just out cruising the neighborhood."
C: Wow! No doubt about it!
Humor seems to appear as significant in a great number of accounts or descriptions of the gay community, even when members are involved in goal-oriented or serious behavior like protests. Humor also seems to link members together, and in at least one case humor seemed significant in linking members with non-members. Humor also seemed a useful tool in some cases of "coming out" to another, probably a stranger, much the same role humor seemed to play in the lesbian bar community examined by Painter, discussed earlier. Finally the type of humor seemed to differ from humor described by Painter and different from humor in other minority or subcultural groups, which was discussed in a previous section.
II. C. 5. CAPSULIZING RELEVANT STTHs: IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDY

Given that humor has the potential to cause subjects to like the presenter and not just the presentation (consistent with Osgood’s congruity scales model\textsuperscript{141} as well as Burke’s identification and consubstantiality work\textsuperscript{142}), it is no wonder that communication scholars taking part in studies involving participant observation are recognizing humor’s importance in groups. Painter (1978), for example, had specific purposes of (1) shedding light on ethnographical studies and participant observation as a method and methodology as well as (2) understanding better the process of becoming perceived as an in-group member in an established community setting, and (3) understanding specifically, the process of "coming out" in a lesbian bar setting. Painter’s findings shed light on these stated goals as well as on the incidental topics that she discovered to be important while engaging in participant observation in the lesbian bar setting. One of those discoveries in the lesbian bar setting which proved significant to coming out as a lesbian and likely group membership in general was, quite simply, humor. Though other important features of group membership were outlined and discussed, including but not limited to: nonverbal cues like proximity and apparel, activities like dancing, pool, and conversation, subjects of discussion like dating, coming
out to other lesbians, coming out to friends and family, uncertainty of others' lesbianism, and others' stereotypes of lesbians, a significant emphasis was placed on humor's role in the setting\textsuperscript{143}.

Though one might argue that the apparently overwhelming amount of humor and joking which took place could be attributed to the bar setting more so than in-group community membership in general, Painter documented humorous exchanges in follow-up interviews held outside the bar as well as presenting support for 'lesbian-humor's significance to lesbians' being somehow different from joking which occurs in other bars. Though joking certainly serves socialization functions as discussed earlier (and more in depth in section III. C.), in both lesbian bars and other bars as well, rules for joking in a lesbian bar AS A lesbian differed significantly from Painter's other experiences with humor in the general population. In fact, joking was so different that some jokes in the bar, if removed from their original contexts, would sound more like threats.\textsuperscript{144} At the same time, if we recall Gruner-esque works of the 1960's and 1970's, those who lack that (in-group) knowledge will miss the sarcasm, and potentially view the statement as a threat or as a statement of fact about lesbianism.

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It is believed that the joke/ statement, and others like it, serve to create stronger in-group ties, perhaps because the humor used provides both knowledge of lesbianism, and to some degree perhaps some persuasion. "It is acceptable to make such jokes because WE know of its untruth, but we can use it to make fun of those who don’t possess such knowledge (p. 99)." Thus the joke encourages a better understanding to a lesbian of (1) one aspect of the lesbian community in general, (2) the acceptability of making jokes against those who lack knowledge of the community and (3) one way in which she may act in order to be perceived as a lesbian by other lesbians:45.

This research by Painter is significant not just because it examines humor’s socializing role46 (also considered in varying degrees by Hertzler (1970), Davies (1990), Fuchs (1986), Wilson (1979), and Coser (1959), which will be discussed later in the areas of sociology and community humor), but because it treats humor as something which itself has been not just "a" result but "the result" of an investigation of the research question, "How are lesbians socialized in a lesbian bar?" Furthermore, Painter went on to explain a set of rules necessary for understanding joking in the lesbian community, treating humor and joking as something important enough to be studied by communication scholars regardless of its potential link.
with the traditional topics of wit, persuasion, informative speaking and education. Furthermore it focused attention in the latter part of the study on stating specific rules for a specific humor community, something never done in that manner before, regarding humor. That study, coupled with other research topics discussed in this chapter, has very significant influence on everything from the way the research questions for this study were formulated to the method used to answer them. Also significant have been PTHs and humor's link to communication. The latter of these is so significant and has such a link to STHs, to questions about method, and to the research questions, that it is reprinted here (Williams, 1996, p. 50.):

Much has been published about rules on how to use humor especially in introductory communication texts\textsuperscript{147}; public speaking texts\textsuperscript{148}; and the earliest work on humor by Aristotle (\textit{Rhetoric}, notably cross-examination in arrangements of the proofs), Cicero (\textit{De Oratore}, 55 B.C.), and Quintilian (\textit{Institutio Oratoria}, c. A.D. 95) as well as various times throughout the history of rhetorical theory\textsuperscript{149}.

Where Painter (1978) broke tradition is by focusing on understanding and describing the rules based on observations of how humor was used successfully in a particular setting as opposed to traditional rules set up as prescriptive guidelines on humor's use based on theories which emerged at times before humor's link to communities, socialization, and group settings was known or considered.

Humor typologies abound, but the use of humor as a marker (lesbianism) for community-membership was relatively innovative in the communication discipline\textsuperscript{150}. Furthermore, research like
Painter's has been mirrored, though not often, in other fields, both since and prior to her study, with other communities\textsuperscript{151}. Humor seems extra-significant to communities, particularly an oppressed minority community or subculture such as that found in the lesbian bar setting, discussed by Painter.

Much of it has to do with a need for socialization among in-group members in general, but also a great deal has to do with the importance, psychologically, of oppressed subcultures creating a potentially unique form of humor, which can help oppressed group members socialize with each other, and to some degree assert their own selves as well as their subculture within the larger culture\textsuperscript{152}.

An actual humor summary occurs in the next section. However, the passage above is worth repeating (originally in section II. A. 4.), because it provides a useful link between the sections of this chapter on humor to the next chapter on method, as well as to each other.
II. D. SUMMARY ON HUMOR

Like doing any research on humor, providing a literature review regarding humor or engaging in an academic discussion of humor, doing a "summary" of humor is also difficult. In fact, doing a summary of "humor as an EV or IV in FR and MRs" is impossible, per se, given that humor has not been researched as such despite the encouragement of people like Duran (1992, 1983) and Nicotera (1994) as well as Mindess (1994, 1988). Yet, even though humor as an EV and IV in FR and MRs has not received the amount of scholarly attention that it should (See chapter one for support/ explanation of this claim.), a lot of research has been done about humor itself; much of it described in this chapter.

First, a history of humor research, largely influenced by early rhetoricians, was presented. This is important in that those early rhetorical philosophers have influenced the more contemporary PTH (psychological theories of humor) and STH (sociological theories of humor), theories which are important background information for the researcher of humor.

PTH, or psychological theories of humor, typically concentrate on a couple of research goals. One of these is
the role that laughter or a humorous release has on the person who uses it. Humor is an alleviator of tension and stressors in our everyday lives. Invoking humor is not just good self-help advice given to patients in, for example, clinical or psychotherapy sessions, it is also a catalyst for endorphins which bring about a physiological change to one’s body, putting the person’s body and the person’s mind more at ease. A second goal has been to come up with an explanation or model as to what makes something humorous as well as why people’s opinions about what is humorous differ so much.

Though incongruity theories have been widely accepted by a few researchers, most agree that not even the most accepted incongruity theory is all that useful at explaining what makes something funny. The element of “surprise” or a “riddle” is commonly referred to, but not all surprises, riddles, or incongruities are humorous. Likewise some forms of humor are more easily explained by incongruity theories. Similarly PTH have not been completely successful at explaining, except in the most obvious of cases, why people’s opinions about what is humorous (our senses of humor, if you will) differ so much.

Third, humor research involving STH, sociological theories of humor, has been discussed. Researchers agree
that humor is interpersonal moreso than intrapersonal. Though one can certainly make oneself laugh or laugh at self, it is typically when interacting with others on interpersonal levels when people engage in the most humor and are most likely to show outward expressions of their humor-enjoyment by laughter. Though sometimes we laugh at something or someone, we usually laugh with someone. Humor is, thus, most interesting when it is shared with others in our FRs and MRs. Further, as engaging in humor often does involve a level of risk (In telling a crude but humorous joke, one never really knows what others' reactions may be.), humor seems important enough to us socially to cause us to take risks regarding our humor, particularly in FRs and MRs. Our humor also differs, we know, when interacting with different people or in different groups. Humor also differs, we know, between cultures and/or subcultures; particularly when a person is a member of a marginalized population or historically-oppressed group(s). Yet a great deal remains that we do not know. Specifically, though we know that we vary our humor when acting with different people, in different groups, or as part of various communities, we don't really know, specifically, how it differs. That is, do we just change humor content (what is joked about) or do we also change humor type? Does humor context influence humor role and humor function; and if so how? A host of questions could be asked.
Of course, though, for this study not all questions will be (or can be) asked and answered. The ones targeted here are those introduced in the overview as the first chapter, in which humor's relationship to interpersonal communication research on EVs and IVs in FRs and MRs was introduced. Those research questions, as well as the general purpose of this project, are reprinted here as a convenient reminder; the method used to answer those questions is discussed in the next chapter:

**specific purpose.** "To determine how humor works communicatively as both an EV and IV in FRs and MRs in a marginalized population."

A series of research questions guide this study so as to address that purpose.

a. Does humor function as a variable in relationships and their development, and if humor does function as a variable (EV, IV, or both) then how does it function; i.e., what purpose(s) does it serve?

i. If humor is a variable, then is it an EV, IV or both? And, how/ why/ what does it contribute?

ii. Does humor serve different purposes in MRs when compared to FRs, and if so what are those different functions of humor?

b. Do certain types, forms, contents, or contexts of humor influence humor's role and/ or function as an EV or IV in FRs or MRs? If such an influence does seem to exist, what is that influence?

c. As a FR or MR increases in intensity, how is humor affected? Is there an observable increase in the amount, intensity, or intimacy of the humor?
d. Is the opposite of "c" true; that is, does an increase in the observeability of more frequent humor, more intense humor or more intimate humor indicate anything about the FR or MR using it?
CHAPTER 3

ON METHOD AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter, chapter 3, is to present epistemology and:

A. discuss, in general, the process of choosing the method, and provide the rationale for that choice of method,

B. explain what method is used for this project,

C. highlight potential criticisms of the method,

D. give specific information about data, its collection, and the setting as well as about the process of making inferences.

Before exploring the four divisions listed above in depth, methodological and epistemological must, of course, be addressed.

On method, epistemologically speaking, it is necessary to discuss how theory will emerge from a study, given the methodological considerations (in this case, for participant observation). Theory emerges from an analysis of the field
notes, from interviews, and from various literatures. Theory and the purposes of research are defined and articulated in a variety of ways depending largely upon the social scientist's perspective while writing and upon the over-arching goals of the research. In this project, theory is generated through discovery as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and is referred to as "grounded theory." Glesne and Peshkin (1992, 19) argue that the Glaser and Strauss position is critical of "the positivist's conventional deductive approach to research" and that it opposes "the focus on verification for theory development and the a priori definition of concepts and hypotheses." Glesne and Peshkin (1992, 19) highlight the Glaser and Strauss position by comparing their grounded theory to the positions held by positivists and interpretivists:

Glaser and Strauss, [in The Discovery of Grounded Theory], propose an inductive strategy whereby the researcher discovers concepts and hypotheses through constant comparative analysis... [They do, however,] accept the positivist's position that the ultimate function of theory is explanation and prediction.

Where Glaser and Strauss depart from the positivist position of Homans (1964) and others is in how they view strategies for research. Positivists favor (Glesne and Peshkin 1992, 19):
objective observations or measures that produce empirically verifiable results; they view theory as a set of propositions that explain and predict the relationships among phenomena... The ultimate goal of this form of theorizing is to develop universal laws of human behavior and social functioning.

Denzin (1988, 49), primarily an interpretivist himself, elaborating on the definition of positivism posited by Homans in 1964, argues that Homans’s definition of theory:

refers to a set of propositions that are interrelated in an ordered fashion such that some may be deducible from others, thus permitting an explanation to be developed for the phenomenon under consideration.

These positivist views of theory are akin to the mathematician’s formal proof, the physicist’s experiment, and the early rhetorician’s syllogism and enthymeme. The grounded approach to theory supports theory that is capable of explanation and prediction but recognizes that not all theory can emerge from tautologies and proofs.

Yet a different view of theory, interpretivism, exists which argues that theory can have a sense-making function for the reader and the researcher. Such an interpretation requires more than just the bare reporting of acts; it also requires the description of and the probing of "the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations, and
circumstances of action (Denzin, 1988, 39)." As such, interpretivism originates in phenomenology and provides understanding of "direct lived experience instead of abstract generalizations (Glesne and Peshkin, 19)."

Though the approach taken here has been consistent with grounded theory, some aspects of interpretivism have been necessary as well, particularly when examining some of the humor functions and humor roles, as these facets of the humor research are concerned with speaker’s goals and intentions, which require a level of sense-making on the part of the researcher. That is, it may be possible to offer predictions and explanations regarding humor functions as humor functions relate to the apparent effect that the humor has had or could have on the audience or receiver. Humor role, however, is more related to the speaker or sender’s motives for communicating the humorous message. As it is not possible to "get inside the minds" of communicators, the participant observer must necessarily do some level of sense-making for both self and reader to help interpret the "likely" intention of the speaker. This is done by social scientists in a variety of ways, but is done quite often in this study by two basic ones, dependence upon field notes’ thin and thick descriptions and reliance on subjects to comment on intentions during interviews, both formal and informal.

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III. A. THE PROCESS OF CHOOSING METHOD AND THE RATIONALE OF CHOICES

This section will discuss choices in method selection as they are generally dealt with by the social science practitioner so as to highlight not just what method is used for this research, but also to provide information for the consumer of this research about how methodological decisions were made for this project.

Consequently, this section appears in two parts: the first dealing with the general process of method selection, and the second section dealing with the rationale for the selection of method for this particular study.
III. A. 1. THE PROCESS OF METHOD SELECTION

In *Social Research for Consumers*, Babbie (1982:xv) indicated that he was following up his earlier text, *The Practice of Social Research*, which had become "the standard in its field since it was first published." Babbie's goal was to introduce the reader to methods in social science research, and consider each method's strengths and weaknesses. Though Babbie placed greater emphasis on statistical-based methods for generating and analyzing data, as do many researchers, he did discuss qualitative field research as a method growing in importance and acceptable for "its own form of rigor and depth of analysis," including a checklist for increasing rigor and analytical depth in such studies (1982, 215-6).

In fact, an enormous amount of support exists for field research which does not use traditional statistical measures such as survey research, scientific experiments, content analysis, and the like. Most people have come to the realization that no method is more superior when compared to another method; only that a particular method may be better than another for a particular line of inquiry. It is this view that is supported by this author; further, it is the view that Babbie himself states as important. Despite his preference for quantitative research, he does argue that
non-quantitative field research would be appropriate, for example, "if you wanted to undertake research on communication systems in gay bars." Babbie and others articulate specific ways that such field research should be done. Specifically Babbie says (p.197.)

Field research often begins with work far from the field-- in the library for example. If you wanted to undertake research on communication systems in gay bars, you might want to do a little research before simply leaping into action. There have been studies on various aspects of the gay community and you would profit from what has been done before. Often this initial library review will lead to interviews with others interested in the topic... Eventually the field researcher goes to where the action is and observes it directly... And because you were present at the scene of the action, you would need to make a decision whether to observe only or to participate in what you are studying. A major source [of data] is simply what the observer observes directly. You would notice things you might not have anticipated, and would have missed, if you had relied totally on predesignated questions. In addition to direct observation, the field researcher quite often interviews people.

Babbie goes on to give an overview of field research, a discussion of the three major problems in qualitative field work research, a discussion of making knowledge claims as a result of the collected field research data and details about other less intrusive measures.

Babbie does not claim to be the expert on field research. However, his discussion of field research as a method of data collection in his outline of various
scientific methods available to social scientists is useful for a couple of reasons. First it presents field research in comparison to other social science research allowing the reader to see the benefits and the drawbacks of each approach for her/himself. Second, and most important for this study, Babbie presents a nice approach for organizing a discussion about any method. In particular, Babbie's discussion suggests that the field researcher's justification and explanation of method should be outlined in a manner similar to the following outline:
I. Discuss the project itself.
   (For this study, this was done in the previous two chapters.)

II. Discuss the method.
   A. Establish the fit of the method to the study.
   B. Give an overview of the method, (e.g., field research).
      1. Process
      2. Rationale
   C. Acknowledge the criticisms and issues (of field research).
      1. Validity and reliability
      2. Generalizeability
         a. Researcher subjectiveness
         b. Thoroughness: it is too specific
         c. Sample concerns & deviant cases in the domain itself
      3. Personal involvement
         a. Problems with all 4 types of participant observation
            i. complete participation
            ii. participant as observer
            iii. observer as participant
            iv. complete observer
         b. Implementation
            i. initiation, organization, and gaining entre
            ii. identifying issues and concerns
            iii. gathering the info and data
            iv. reporting
         c. Follow up
            i. maintaining relationships
            ii. leaving the field
   D. Making knowledge claims: the logic of inference
      1. Descriptive
      2. Causal
         a. Making & supporting valid causal relationship claims
         b. Common errors in causal relationship claims
            i. provincialism
            ii. hasty conclusions
            iii. questionable classification
            iv. questionable cause
            v. suppressed evidence
            vi. questionable facts
            vii. false dilemma
            viii. inconsistency

III. A. 2. RATIONALE: CHOOSING FIELD OBSERVATION AS METHOD

Babbie says field research is appropriate for the study of "ongoing events whose future course can not be predicted with any certainty, collective behavior [like] rallies, riots, panics and, more generally, the study of interactions among people (p 198.)." Bruyn (1966, 27) argues that field research methods are necessary to study "a particular phenomenon without preconceived notions about the phenomenon."

Barker (1969, 40) and Eidenberg (1973, 11) agree about the importance of field research, and Patton notes that "what people say is a major source of qualitative data" but argues also that there are (1984, 30):

limitations to how much can be learned, however, just from what people say. To understand fully the complexities of many program situations, direct participation in and observation of the program may be the best evaluation [sic] method.

Patton goes on to argue that Howard Becker is "one of the leading practitioners of qualitative methods in the conduct of social science research," and that Becker argues that:

Participant observation is the most comprehensive of all types of research strategies. The most complete form of the sociological datum, after all, is the form in which the participant observer gathers it; an observation of some social event, the events which
precede and follow it, and explanations of its meaning by participants and spectators, before, during, and after its occurrence. Such a datum gives us more information about the event under study than data gathered by any other sociological method.

Along with Patton (1984, 1980, p. 30.) and Becker and Geer (1970, 133), support for field research comes from its earlier users and influencers. Garfinkle (1967), Gold (1969), Powdermaker (1966) and Liebow (1967) are often credited with early articulation of the goals of field research or providing "classic exemplar" (Babbie, 201), and Max Weber (1922) is given credit for prompting early discussions foreshadowing the support of field research methods.
III. B. THE METHOD USED FOR THIS STUDY

This section will provide information about data collection for this research project, so that the reader may keep these goals and constraints in mind when reading subsequent sections in this chapter on method. Though a literature review of relevant participation literature occurs elsewhere in this chapter, several cites appear in this section as well, as a convenience for the reader. Goals of this section include:

1. How one should study humor; which method to use
2. What population should be studied and why
3. Which locations will be considered and why
4. How locale & goals influence data & collection
III. B. 1. HOW TO STUDY HUMOR: WHAT METHOD SHOULD BE USED?

The research question asked significantly influences, almost dictates, what someone should do in order to answer it, and how to go about it. For this study, the goal is to focus on humor as an EV and IV in FRs and MRs (Entry Variable and Intensity Variable in Friend and Mate Relationships). In doing so, we recognize that humor is a subset of the characteristics of human adaptability, that adaptability is itself a subset of communication competence, and that communication competence is a significant influencer of our FRs and MRs.

Since research on humor suggests a need to examine, more closely, the role of humor in marginalized populations, (Mindess, 1994, 1992, 1985) it may be most beneficial to study such humor as it is naturally occurring: to highlight the humor patterns of the members of a specific group in their own environment (as opposed to a laboratory controlled setting). This would make it possible to see the specific uses of humor by that population and in turn to articulate some of the many functions of humor in the communication competencies of the members of that group and highlight the potential function of humor to us all, especially as an EV or IV in FRs and MRs. The articulation of these functions of humor to a population may be useful in its own right, but
a subsequent discussion of why (and the way that) humor is used to perform these functions within the targeted population will lead to a discussion of humor's link as an EV and IV to our FRs and MRs and, on some level, humor's role in the communication competence of us all. Shedding light on humor's rhetorical functions, humor's relation to communication competence and performance, and, most importantly for this study, humor's role as an EV or IV in FRs and MRs.

To answer these research questions, the progression shall be to:

1. Gather data: take notes of the humor that is used by the members of the group in question.

   (Data collection will be done in an environment in which group members, members of a historically-oppressed group, may be speaking as members of the group, that is, in an environment in which they are the majority, for a change.)

2. Interpret data: serve as a translator to the reader.

   (Explication of notes from data collection may be of interest to the reader, but my role will be to translate as well, helping the reader understand the humor as a member.)

3. Analyze data: help reader see patterns in the humor/data and attempt to explain what is significant about these patterns as well as what they tell us about humor and/or the group.

   (This is detailed in chapter four.)
4. Validate conclusions: return to informants to ensure my perceptions of their humor usage are consistent with their perceptions of how they themselves use humor as part of their communication competence as member(s) of that group.

An additional goal is to ensure that my perception of what constitutes a humor segment is indeed humor and a complete segment (i.e., that I'm not missing a pre-existing context necessary to read/understand/interpret the humor).

Another goal as well is to check my notions about which relationships are FRs, which are MRs, and what level relationship exists (i.e., level 1, 2, 3, or 4 as discussed in chapter one) against theirs.

5. Respond to points of disagreement: discuss those areas of my analysis which seem inconsistent with subjects' perceptions.

(Subsequently, it may become useful to address potential reasons for those differing interpretations of the events emerging from the data as well as to discuss the potential representativeness of the data collected to what subjects' perceive to be common humor exchanges/talk that might appear in comparable environments.)

6. Discuss implications of this study for future researchers.

(This is done in the last part of the fourth chapter, after all results have been presented and discussed.)

This method (of gathering, interpreting, analyzing, validating, responding, and discussing) is consistent with participant observation methods and is discussed more in depth elsewhere in this chapter (Shaffir, Stebbins, and
Turowetz, 1983; as well as Schatzman and Strauss, 1973; are particularly noteworthy.

Given the desire to understand the humor in its naturally occurring setting within the given population, it is necessary for the researcher to place her/himself in those environments in which such naturally occurring talk is taking place. Furthermore, consistent with the nature of the data collection process, the setting must be a place in which humor is allowed to occur as part of that naturally occurring talk. Finally, the context and setting should ideally involve some level of potential stress or risk (i.e., Since people can "get away with" more regarding their use of humor with their closest friends, and less with the lower level friend and mate relationships, engaging in certain humor types or contents, for example, is not as "safe" as doing so with long-established FRs or MRs, which is more stressful or risky and, at times, even anxiety-causing.), consistent with what many humor researchers have argued (Cosar, 1959, 1960; Mindess, 1992; Ziv, 1988; and Koeller, 1982) produces the richest samples of humor, the most important uses of humor, and the widest array of functions of humor. Elaboration on humor and humor researchers' ideas occurs in the preceding chapter; a discussion of the method of participant observation occurs in this chapter, but the following paragraph may prove
useful background for this and subsequent sections
(Williams, 1996, 50):

As for concerns expressed over the researcher's level of involvement with increased participation in the field that is being studied, these critics seem to be ignoring that even more distant methods of data collection (questionnaires, for example) also have biases. The researcher inevitably makes selections regarding what to include in the questionnaire, how to incorporate it, and so on. In such cases, the researcher is imposing her/his perceptions, a priori, even before the data is collected. At least in field research, perceptions emerge from the visible "real-world" situation itself. The researcher may impose organizational impositions after the data are collected or midway through the stage of data collection, but the researcher enters (as do many) with the intent of minimizing biases; in some ways, one could argue, the researcher is doing less imposing research than those using other methods.

Though participant observation is oft-criticized because of the researchers' perceived imposition in settings and involvement with subjects, participant observation is still, nonetheless, necessary at times and is really a viable methodological option. Further, a great deal of support exists for participant observation claiming it is, in many ways, less intrusive than other methods. Clearly, there are times when PO (participant observation) is appropriate. Appropriateness of PO as a methodological choice is determined by a number of factors. Eight factors
which emerge as significant, in this study specifically, have included:

1. the research question being asked/ the researcher's goals;

2. the background literature that is (or isn't) available to the researcher trying to answer the research question;

3. the population being studied and the reason for its selection;

4. the location/ setting being considered and why it was chosen;

5. the location's and the research question's potential influence on the data and its collection;

6. the apparent lack of other more conventional methods to get an answer to the questions posed;

7. the possibility of defending the method to a readership of both academics and the interested nonacademics who might examine the research; defending the method of PO not just as a useful method for the study but by highlighting how other methods would be less useful than PO. Consequently, if PO can be justified, PO may be a reasonable method; however, even to the casual reader or to the hardest quantitative scientist, justifying PO as not just A reasonable method but as THE most reasonable method (over other apparent options) makes it possible for the researcher to be vindicated by choosing the PO method;

8. the ability of the researcher to defend his research both before and after the fact, particularly around issues of validity, reliability, generalizeability, and the issues most specific to field methods like PO such as degree of involvement, procedural issues, entering and leaving the field issues, and being able to form reasonable causal inferences from notes which server as descriptive data.

Participant observation is chosen for this study for reasons that include those listed above, some of which are
derived from Schatzman and Strauss (1973, p. 18, 108, 128, and 129). The justification of PO for this study, thus, uses the eight factors listed above as a way to organize the discussion of PO in this study. The first two of those factors were described in chapters one and two, respectively; the remaining six are discussed in the other sections of this chapter. An outline of the remainder of the chapter is presented on the next page; it is reprinted from the previous section as a convenience for the reader. Advocated by Babbie (1982), the outline is a useful way for the social science practitioner to organize a discussion of methodological decisions. As Babbie is less familiar, perhaps, with PO than other methods, Babbie is not used as the only influence. Specifically, portions of the outline in boldface are not included in Babbie (1982) but are discussed in Guba and Lincoln (1985), Patton (1980), Murphy and Pilotta (1983), Shaffir, Stebbins, and Turowetz (1980), Schutz (1984, 1967), Gold (1969) and Schatzman and Strauss (1973). They will be discussed in this chapter as well.
I. Discuss the project itself: (done, here, in chapters 1 & 2)

II. Discuss the method.

A. Establish the fit of the method to the study.
   1. How one should study humor (the current section)
   2. What population should be chosen and why
   3. Which locations will be considered and why
   4. How location and goals of the study may influence the
      data and its collection

B. Give an overview of the method, (eg., field research).
   1. Process
   2. Rationale

C. Acknowledge the criticisms and issues (of field
   research).
   1. Validity and reliability
   2. Generalizeability
      a. Researcher subjectiveness
      b. Thoroughness: it is too specific
      c. Sample concerns/deviant cases in the domain itself
   3. Personal involvement
      a. Problems with 4 types of participant observation
         i. complete participation
         ii. participant as observer
         iii. observer as participant
         iv. complete observer
      b. Implementation
         i. initiation, organization, and entre
         ii. identifying issues and concerns
         iii. gathering the info and data
         iv. reporting
      c. Follow up
         i. maintaining relationships
         ii. leaving the field

D. Making knowledge claims: the logic of inference
   1. Descriptive
   2. Causal
      a. Making/supporting valid causal relationship claims
      b. Common errors in causal relationship claims
         i. provincialism
         ii. hasty conclusions
         iii. questionable classification
         iv. questionable cause
         v. suppressed evidence
         vi. questionable facts
         vii. false dilemma
         viii. inconsistency

A discussion of which population is chosen and the reason
for that selection follows.
III. B. 2. WHAT POPULATION SHOULD BE STUDIED AND WHY?

At this point, an understanding of humor as an EV and IV in FRs and MRs would be facilitated by a case study in which the following specifications are met:

1. The population studied is a historically-oppressed group.

2. The group is interacting in a situation/setting in which the reasons for their oppression are not factors in inhibiting their communication patterns as members of that group.

3. Humor used by group members is allowed to emerge naturally.

4. Humor has at least some potential risk involved: members are familiar enough to joke with each other as members. However, not all members should be too familiar or close (This is to avoid the risk of studying humor in a clique as part of an idiolect, as opposed to a marginalized population, as distinguished by McMannis et al., 1987), implying that humor will occur in talk at varying levels of subject-closeness.

Some additional requirements emerge by both the nature of the study and the nature of the researcher's role in the population:

5. The researcher should be able to be viewed by subjects as if a member, so that the researcher's presence does not inhibit or distort the data which is naturally occurring humor/talk.

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6. Enough research about the group in question must be available so as to understand how humor works for the group. In other words, if we are to understand how humor helps the group deal with its marginalized status in society, that status should be relatively clear and well-studied. If we are to consider humor's use by members as a way to deal with issues within the group, an understanding of what those stressful in-group issues are would be very useful in understanding how those issues are managed by members.

7. The setting of the talk must be one in which subjects not only are free to talk as members, but also should be a place deemed significant (directly or indirectly) by group members.

8. The possibility of asking subjects about their humor as well as their FRs and MRs, and the levels of each.

It is important to note that various groups exist which meet these qualifications. Some of the groups who have experienced significant oppression historically include: African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, Jewish Americans, nonnative speakers, the terminally ill, the elderly, gay males, bisexuals, lesbian women, and women in general. There is also a reasonable amount of research on the oppression faced by some of these groups, the problems which have emerged due to that oppression, their problems within their own populations and at least some of their uses for humor. Perhaps future studies like this can concentrate on these other populations, but the population to be considered for this case study will be the gay male population. Reasons for
this selection follow, some of which have been alluded to earlier:

1. Historical oppression of male (as well as female) homosexuals is well documented and still continues today (Bum-Lipitz, 1984; Rivera, 1991; Vickers, 1995; Bono, 1996).

2. Social settings for gays and lesbians are common enough that it is possible to study subjects in their own environment (Eidenberg, 1973; Berube, 1983; Painter, 1978).

3. Of that set of potential gay (or lesbian) settings, many if not most of them are environments in which humor is not only allowed to emerge but is actually quite common. Settings like gay bars have been historically important for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, and seem to have been especially significant and important to gay males (Shane, 1992; DeCocco, 1988; Berube, 1982; Eidenberg, 1973).

4. Of that set of environments in which gay males engage in humor, gay bars have been known to be significant. Also, use of humor in this kind of environment (meeting new friends, meeting potential dates, meeting potential threats to dating, dealing with individuals who are less inhibited from alcohol) certainly has been known to have the potential
to cause at least some moderate stress amongst participants (Shane, 1992; DeCocco 1988).

5. Researcher blendability is high since some "gay bars" are known to have patrons who could be gay, non-gay, or bisexual. These bars are also known to include both sexes, people from various socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. A researcher certainly has the potential to blend into the setting, and can likely do so in a relatively short amount of time. Though note-taking has the potential to be difficult since notebooks are not a part of the normal gay bar environment, note-taking is still a possibility. In fact, both overt and covert note-taking is possible, and are discussed in the next sections. Furthermore the ethical issue of covert versus overt note-taking is a potential issue which will be addressed later in method.

6. A wealth of research supports three significant assumptions here: (1) gay males are certainly a part of an oppressed group, (2) a gay male in his home-turf (such as a gay bar) is also a member of a group which has its own in-group issues and ways of speaking about them: dating, racism, sexism, and gender-issues, as well as issues of sexuality, sexual diseases, culture, power, and differing ages, backgrounds, financial situations, and so on.
Research on humor in general is common as is, to a lesser degree, the humor of gay males as well as lesbians (Mindess, 1992; Berube, 1983; Painter, 1978; Eisenberg, 1973).

Some research has even attempted to label segments of gay humor by specific names like "camp." This is not too significant in its own since this is not a study just of camp; rather the label camp and the tendency for researchers to attempt to put a label on gay [male or female] humor clearly suggests a potentially rich set of data available by studying the humor of these groups. For this study, the discussions of "camp" suggest a need to better understand the humor of gay males in gay male settings, not a need to fit all of that group's humor styles into preconceived notions (of some researchers at least) of camp (Berube, 1983; Chesebro, 1987; Ringer, 1994; Musto, May, 1993).

7. The setting of the gay male bar is an important place not just for humor potential but also because the gay male bar is treated as a significant setting by gay males (Berube, 1983, 1982; Eisenberg, 1973). In any gay male community, with its shops, stores, styles, norms, and meeting places, it is consistently the gay (and lesbian) bars which are most successful (Dyer, 1979). The bars are the meeting place for gays (and lesbians) in every region.
from smaller cities or larger towns to huge metropolitan areas. Though bars are not common in every town or city, if a town has any popular gathering place for gays and lesbians, it likely has a significant gay or lesbian bar nearby. Importance of bars to gays and lesbians is supported by looking at which establishments in gay communities make the most money, serve the most people on a regular basis, and how wealthy many of the bar owners become as their businesses thrive (Hinkle, 1987, 6). Bars are so significant that lesbians frequently mention the bars as one of the five most common places where they have met their significant others and gay males report that gay bars are the most common place for meeting their partners. This all suggests that the gay bars are important to both gay men and lesbian women, and may be even more important to gay men given the frequency in which gay men rank the bars' significance in their social lives as well as the longer history of successful gay male bars, the larger number of gay male bars, and the better financial success of gay male bars (over lesbian-oriented bars) (See Chesebro, 1995 as well as the previous chapter, specifically section II. C. for more detail.).

Though the point of whose bars are more successful or significant to its patrons is not all that important what is important is that the gay bars catering to gay males are
certainly settings of interest for this study since these bars are treated as if they are significant by the patrons, most of whom are gay males, the group considered in this study.

8. As a male doing the study, the researcher’s ability to blend into the mostly male bar is high. The length and nature of the study dictate that subjects (traditionally referred to a respondents in PO studies) come to know me and I come to know them. This allows for potential follow-up via the subsequent interviews with selected respondents. Interviews are especially useful in this case regarding clarification of:

1. humor contexts, roles and functions
2. humor segments
3. the EE’s (interviewee’s) relationship with a person P
   a. does the EE see P as part of a FR or MR?
      (1) if yes, then what level and how long
      (2) if no, then why not and was P a part of such a R at one time?
   b. has the relationship changed over the course of the study, and if so how, when, why?
4. their perceptions of humor-deviants (See Why Helen Laughed by Mindess, discussed in a later section.) and their perceptions of the type of relationship shared between person X and Y -- is it an FR or MR and how is this known?

It is hoped, now, that reasons for studying this particular popular population, the gay male bar community, have been sufficient to justify this study. What follows is a look at why the community in Columbus, Ohio serves as an equally reasonable subgroup worthy of consideration.
III. B. 3. WHICH LOCATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED AND WHY?

The locales under focus shall be three gay bars in Columbus, Ohio referred to here as Garage, Eagle, and Tradewinds. These three are selected because they have a rich history in terms of their significance to the gay community in Columbus. Each has existed for nearly two decades, and has been a regular and significant contributor to events of concern to the gay and lesbian community of Columbus. All are centrally located, allowing patrons to move from bar to bar frequently, if desired, while at the same time representing different facets of the gay male community. Names of the bars are the real names, as anonymity would be difficult to achieve, realistically (The three bars chosen are the only ones centrally located, within walking distance of each, the only bars of this type to exist for close to twenty years in the city of Columbus, and are described rather precisely in gay publications like The Gay People's Chronicle, News of the Gay and Lesbian Community, Gaybeat, and the national publication Damron's Guide and, to a lesser degree, Drummer and Advocate.). Though individuals within the bars will have anonymity protected; the thick description of setting that is advocated for doing PO studies would inevitably "give it away" that the author here is writing about these three
locations. Therefore, anonymity of the locales is not a reasonable possibility.

Garage tends to cater to a younger and trendier crowd, Tradewinds to the leather and Levi patrons, and Eagle to the more mainline/middle of the road gay male crowd. (Each is described in Damron's Guide, as well as other publications mentioned in the preceding paragraph; personal observations appear in the next chapter, one of which appears in this section as background.). Columbus is chosen because it is large enough to have an existing gay community, small enough to have relatively limited options in terms of gay bars (making it more easily managed by the researcher), and has been singled out by both gays and non-gays as a city of significance for gays (and lesbians), according to several publications (Some are mentioned in the previous chapter, but mainstream publications like Newsweek (March 12, 1990) have supported this also.).

The times and nights of visits were varied as were the locations of the researcher within the bar. Care was taken to get a sampling of bars' flavor by avoiding the tendency to show up just on Saturdays or Sundays or at certain hours and times of day. Also, within the bars themselves, there are different flavors or atmosphere or clientele. In Tradewinds, for example, one part called the PX is set aside
from the rest of the bar. A separate archway makes PX even feel like it is distinct from the rest of the bar as does the atmosphere within. The PX part is smaller than the rest of the bar, contains bar stools arranged around the bar like the rest of the nightclub, but no video or music. Dance music can usually be heard from the adjoining portion of the bar, but it blares less. In the dance portion, next to PX, patrons can sit on chairs, dance, stand and watch people dance and the music videos, or go up a set of six stairs and overlook the entire dance floor part of the bar. Still, yet, the other part of the bar typically referred to as the front is the main entrance. It features video games, pool tables and a jukebox (with more country than dance music), a reading room where newspapers are available (mostly gay), along with barstools around a bar, and a bench which runs alongside one wall where people can sit if they choose not to sit at the bar.

In essence, I as a researcher, at one point or another sat in practically every seat and stood in a variety of spots when gathering field notes. There were certainly some places that I favored over others (For note-taking, eg., it was easier to write while seated or when a table was available.). The bar at which many people sat had a flat surface which made it convenient for writing, but it was usually filled quickly. Seats on the bench became almost as
good, and after each part of the bar had been experienced became, along with sitting at the bar, preferred spots.

Each bar has various theme nights: Garage has a progressive music night; Eagle has singers and bodybuilding contests; Tradewinds has country music nights, leather club nights, disco nights, and various shows from drag to musical. Other events influence bar patronage: holidays such as New Years Eve, community events of significance like Gay Pride Day, and community rituals like Sunday Softball or volleyball.

Reasonable attempts were made to include a visit to each bar at least once or twice on its nights of significant events over the 43 month period of observations. Initially it was not unlikely to go out to collect data early in the night so as to be able to spend some time in each of the three bars. This was useful in that it made me familiar with the bars early on in the study. However, one night at Eagle a group invited me to take part in a conversation as a researcher. They knew I was taking notes and writing a school paper and one quipped "Get it published and make me a star, child." Another chimed in saying, "You’ll need to know how to spell that one’s name correctly -- it’s B-I-T-C-H" Time there was well spent that night. Subjects were very at ease with me and said so both directly and in their
actions. On one occasion two of them went to play video games and lay their shirts on the bar stools to save their seats and asked me to watch their seats and shirts. I knew that trust was established. More importantly I learned that a one-hour visit to a club was not necessarily enough time to be visible in the club and establish trust and in turn gather field notes. I began to visit just one club a night but to stay longer than just an hour. Exceptions were made, for example, if a club was virtually empty on one night; then I usually ventured to another. However, I no longer forced myself to move from one bar to another just so I could get an equal amount of time in each. Quantity of time and the equal distribution thereof between the three bars became less important than the richness and availability of the data (i.e., the ability of the researcher to be treated as a member and as a researcher, simultaneously, by respondents; which led to greater freedom in communicative exchanges, particularly the use of humor in such conversations). Also on a more pragmatic level, bars raised or initiated cover charges for entry which made it more costly to "bar-hop" on a single night. This was avoided when it was decided that I as researcher could get better notes when staying longer in a single location; it was also more economical.

In a previous section (How should one study humor: what method should be used?) it emerged that a method of data collection such as participant observation seemed acceptable since the goals of understanding humor's use by members as members in their own environment almost naturally excludes methods involving lab settings or surveys. Though one could argue that there are other ways to observe the natural setting in which the researcher does not serve as a participant and researcher simultaneously, some goals in this study seem to suggest a need for the researcher to eventually at least be perceived as a member, as a participant in the community. Membership or perceived membership does not require that the participant observer contribute too much to conversations (Some contributions could distort or influence the data of humor/talk.). However, given the social element of humor, the researcher can not effectively be present in a situation and not be acting like a member (Mindess, 1994; Holland, 1982). If groups of people are laughing the researcher seems to be standing out more if he/she does not laugh than if he/she does. Some level of passive participation may be necessary to be perceived as a member (Some ethnographic research
suggests that it is not possible to observe a population without being at least a passive participant. Schatzman, et al. seem to support this, 1973).

If we accept the need to be perceived as a member as an important factor in uncovering relevant data, then it seems equally important to make sure that the researcher serving as participant does not adversely affect his/her surroundings. Otherwise, there is no real benefit, perhaps, to being perceived as a member or participant in the group. This then leads to the issue of note-taking.

The researcher's degree of blendability (of being perceived as a member) is undoubtedly going to be quite hindered if he/she is in a bar and obviously taking notes. Furthermore, other ways of taking notes such as by tape-recording are extremely problematic given noise levels within a bar and the inappropriateness of recording peoples' voices, particularly when those voices may be gay males who may wish to remain anonymous or do not perceive themselves as "out. (Chesebro, 1987)" Similar issues arise with note-taking.

Covert note-taking protects the integrity of the data, but at the possible cost of the researcher's ethics. Overt note-taking, though, influences the data too much. For this
study, the goal will be one of compromise between the two approaches. Initially, notes were taken very discreetly. Though not easy to do this in a bar, it is certainly possible to do so with some degree of discretion. It is not uncommon for people to write down a phone number and pass to another customer. Stacks of papers and pencils are available in several locations within each bar. Furthermore, earlier in the night when patrons are coming in for a happy hour after work, some patrons do sit at tables or at the bar and do things like reading newspapers or working crossword puzzles (Each bar has newspapers available, catering to the gay and lesbian communities.). During these times, note-taking could be done but only if the researcher pretends to be doing something like the crossword while eavesdropping on another conversation. Taking part in the conversation oneself would likely call attention to the researcher as ‘researcher’ rather than as ‘patron’ since the other interactant would be more likely to be aware of the other (the researcher) and to, in turn, be more aware of what he/she is doing. There is also some obvious ethical problems in this approach where subjects are not only not aware that notes are being taken but are probably not even aware that someone else is listening.

A compromise between overt and covert note-taking has been reached for this study in the following way:
1) At first, taking notes was a covert activity so as to maintain the integrity of the data;

2) Later, taking notes became overt so as to make sure subjects are not unaware of the fact that research is going on;

3) Eventually some respondents/subjects were interviewed, especially when clarification was necessary.

Though data obtained from covert notes can be considered as data for the study, examples reported shall be those only of subjects aware that their words could be reported as samples of data later on. If then those covert notes were not used what purpose could they serve? According to Mindess (1992, 33):

Use of overtly-taken notes for analysis and reporting is probably most ethical but also potentially more compromising regarding the richness and accuracy of the 'data' which is formed by those notes. Covert notes, despite ethical problems (and sheer practicality), are probably most beneficial to the researcher in a substantial number of PO [participant observation] studies. The true task becomes striking up the balance between note-taking methods... A covert/ overt approach is useful at times. Though not commonly advocated, this approach is not easily dismissed either. It is useful for the researcher who wants to assure himself [or herself] that overt notes have not altered the talk of those around him [or her]. This can be done by referring back to covert notes during the process of overt note-taking and also during theory-building or when drawing conclusions near the end of the study. The mix of covert/ overt [has also been useful] when a researcher has decided, after beginning the research with covert note-taking, that overt notes are necessary for practical reasons or unanticipated changes in the setting, or even to clarify information for the researcher [or readers]. A researcher may decide that interviews would be useful at the end of the study, difficult to explain
or do with respondents who were unaware that they were covertly being studied.

Consultation with some respondents will occur after analysis of the data. This serves as a way to check my perceptions against theirs as well as to make sure subjects are not, in hindsight, reluctant for the data to be used and explained as part of the research.
III. C. CRITICISMS OF METHOD

The three problems of field observation pointed out by Babbie are problems acknowledged by more regular practitioners in the field. Those problems of validity/reliability, generalizeability, and researchers' personal involvement will be discussed in this section.
III. C. 1. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The first of these issues of validity and reliability is not an issue unique to field research. However, establishment of validity and reliability is quite different in field research from other methods.

In general, validity is treated as being the degree to which measurements actually measure what the researcher has claimed they measure. Validity is seen as a measure of the "fit" of method to hypothesis; it is closely aligned with notions of "truth value" and "applicability," according to Guba and Lincoln (1985). Validity is, in essence, the degree to which the researcher is measuring what he/she claims to measure. Reliability, on the other hand, is concerned with the degree of replicability and consistency of the study (Holsti provides a great discussion of validity and reliability, but reliability in participant observation and other field work methods is better understood via Schatzman and Strauss (1973) and to some degree via Shaffir, Stebbins, and Turowetz (1980)).

including Babbie, regard validity as being relatively easy to achieve in field research, especially when compared to other more "scientific" methods. If we are wanting to understand, for example, the role of humor in the gay male community we could obtain no more useful data than that naturally occurring talk of members of that community. (Mindess, 1992; Nicotera, 1994). Granted, going into the community to collect data poses other problems for the researcher (Field work is often more time-consuming than traditional methods and the uncertainty of "what to look for" or "how to fit in" can be unsettling.), but no one could reasonably argue that someone whose goal is to understand, for example, humor's functions in the gay community is making an error by going into the community itself as much as possible for the purpose of obtaining and analyzing naturally occurring talk.

Reliability, on the other hand, is more difficult to establish in field research; though certainly not impossible. One concern about the reliability of field notes is that another researcher in the same setting at the same time might observe completely different talk, obtain completely different data, and potentially derive reasonable, but different conclusions. Where is the reliability in that? In addition some have argued how a researcher's own reliability could fluctuate over time and
how independent researchers seeing the exact same thing could record (and interpret) it in field notes differently (Holsti, Bales and Cohen, 1979).

Further, it is difficult for a researcher to know what information should be recorded in notes. At the same time, it isn’t possible to write everything (Bales and Cohen, 1979) even in lab settings or when interactions are recorded. For one, a person who makes an utterance within a group is not just communicating with the semantic words that are uttered, even though the speech act may be the most obvious event to record (Hymes 1981, 1974). The speaker is using tone, pitch and pause in ways which can be noted but are difficult to reproduce in notes. In addition, other suprasegmental linguistic features combine with traditional nonverbal behaviors to create a myriad of recordable "events" from one speech segment. Add to that the influences of our verbal communication like accent, phonemics, phonology, and dialect, and you have even more events to code from a technical standpoint (McMannis, 1987; Chomsky, 1957; Chomsky and Halle, 1968; Grice in Hymes, 1981, 60; Hymes, 1981, 1974, 1962; LeHiste, 1972; Ladefoged, 1982, 1962; Labov, 1979; Labov and Waletzky, 1967; and Williams, 1989).
Second, in communicating, we typically do more than just pay attention to the literal wording of a message. We share a context for talk making some literal descriptions of the utterance not as meaningful as they may be to community members. Consequently, it is possible that many segments of subject interaction which seem of limited interest to the researcher turn out to be of greater significance for in-group members of the community.

Third, when one person is speaking, other group members are communicating as well. People talk over each other at times; they interrupt; they pause or stammer; they themselves display nonverbal communication, and coding of everything is impossible.

Fourth, when one person is speaking he/she may delete important parts of the talk if there is a close relation to the person being addressed. In this situation, communicators need not express a complete meaningful constituent for the other person being addressed to understand. In fact humor in naturally-occurring talk sometimes involves these omitted segments of talk implying that even if one could write down everything that is seen and heard, it would not be enough to fill in those "gaps" which are only "gaps" to the researcher. To those involved in the communication those perceived "gaps" AREN'T there
because the listeners fill in those naturally occurring gaps intuitively. Grice’s maxims of language and communication indicate that we as humans using language fill in gaps so often in our conversations that we do not always realize what was said exactly, verbatim (developed in various texts by Grice in the 1960s, summarized especially well by Hock (1992), Levinson and Radford (1987) and McMannis, et. al., 1987). We don’t need to. Rather, the goal of the listener becomes not to listen to what the person is literally saying; rather, there is always the goal of understanding, considering the INTENT of the person doing the talking. As friendships and relationships strengthen or as communicators share increased levels of communitas, the greater the number of "gaps" that will appear. With those increased gaps though, the only loss of understanding in the communication may be from the outsider or observer, not from the actual communicators themselves.

Fifth, observers’ presence changes the setting; so the reason given for going in-field to begin with (witnessing naturally occurring talk) has been altered. And though there are different kinds and degrees of observation, different problems are associated with each. The four types of participant observation in field research are generally referred to as (1) complete participation; (2) participant as observer; (3) observer as participant; and (4) complete

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observation. The first three of these four types of participant observation involve different degrees of involvement on the part of the researcher. Nonetheless, in each, members of the targeted group are aware, on varying levels, that they are being studied. The last, complete observation, is problematic for other reasons. Some complete observation is done in the lab setting, behind one-way mirrors, for example, but that removes subjects from the natural setting of their everyday talk. Another form of complete observation involves the researcher going into the field for research but going out of one's way not to be detected by those being studied. This has, in some studies, been done by studying a group that one is already a part of, working to get accepted as a member for the sole purpose of studying it, or by flatly lying to people being studied, indicating they are there for the purpose of studying A, B, and C, when in fact the researcher is studying X, Y or Z. Other field research has made use of eavesdropping; subjects were not only not aware that they were being studied but were not even aware that their conversations were being heard. Though some degree of reliability is enhanced, clear ethical issues emerge.

These difficulties in establishing reliability, however, do not mean that field research is void of a standard of measure for reliability. Several have outlined
necessary steps to maintain reliability in field observation research (Patton, Guba and Lincoln). At the same time, Schatzman and Strauss (1973, vii) caution that no "how-to" field research manual could ever be written because:

The properties of field research do not lend themselves to extensive prefabrication; natural fields and research foci and objectives are much too diverse for such an undertaking. Only through the reading of many books, monographs and articles dealing with research and certainly through actual research in the field will the reader be able to formulate an adequate conception of "all" that is involved; then he will be able to develop ways of managing the many standard and contingent situations that arise in this kind of work.

This is consistent with one social science tradition, according to Schütz (1967), Walsh and Lehnhart (1984) and Max Weber (1922 in Henderson and Parsons, 1957, and Shils and Finch, 1949).

Reliability can be enhanced by support from social science research that is similar to the subject of the study. Subjects' insights themselves may be useful, but not to the extent of documented research by scholars who are observing from the outside. Subjects may be most useful for confirming correctness in researchers' assumptions but of virtually no help to a researcher linking field notes to "science" (i.e., social science research). Reliability is also increased by:
1. involving another social scientist in the setting;

2. engaging in breaching-behavior (breaking apparent norms of a group to test hypotheses;

3. serving as a translator for a visiting "non-member;"

and

4. making extensive use of notes of description, rather than notes of evaluation. An example of this distinction is that the researcher strives for objective accuracies when they are present, for example, to give the dimensions of the room, reasonably, rather than simply saying a room was big or small. Similarly, a respondent would be better described as appearing to be in his twenties, rather than saying just "young."

Evaluation should occur only from looking at the notes; evaluations of the goings-on should not be reported as notes. This is important because one's evaluation of the phenomena will differ from another's evaluation of the same phenomena. If replicability and repeatability is a factor in social science, then the notes are the data and remain the constant for future researchers to peruse. Researcher's notes become important for the researcher her/himself; reliability is enhanced by comparing the notes taken before theory emerged to notes taken afterward. Initial notes eventually become useful to "test" a hypothesis that has emerged during later notes (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973, is noteworthy as may be Mindess, 1992.). Further, reliability is enhanced by making use of different types of participant observation within the same study.

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One author, for example suggests that you don't expect to get an accurate drawing of a house by looking at one side of it; you move to different locations, different sides, front as well as back, inside as well as out, if you want a more accurate rendering. Further, you may return to the house many times if your drawing is made in a studio and the house is out of sight, and when looking at it, sometimes you will stand further away to see it as a whole but other times you will move in almost as close as possible to see different details. Field research is similar to drawing the picture of the many-sided house.

One establishes reliability by returning to the field as often as needed to get a reliable picture. And, since there are different levels of participant observation -- degrees of closeness to the object, if you will -- one can return to the field and observe at different distances. Covert notes, despite the ethical concerns, can prove useful for a researcher as an initial note-taking experience. The data maintains its accuracy because subjects are unaware of the researcher and therefore more natural. Covert notes can also serve as a point of comparison for when the researcher returns to take notes more overtly. A researcher wishing to avoid the ethical problems of reporting data that was collected in secret can still use the covert notes to help in theory building but can limit that which is reported to
the overt notes. Further, as there are different degrees of overt note-taking, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer, and complete participation, reliability can be enhanced by progressing through each type of participant observation (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Mindess, 1992). Additional reliability is enhanced by "moving around" as well. The researcher examining the gay community, for example, would not want to look at what goes on in just the pride rally or just in the most popular bar unless the researcher was researching the pride rally itself or what makes the bar significant. Instead the researcher looking at, as in this study, humor in a gay community will go to a variety of established settings that are frequented by a wide array of members of the gay community. In this study, the bars were chosen because, for the gay community, gay bars are the central point of community activity for almost all members (Eidenberg, 1973). Consequently, a sample of bars representative of the community in general would be appropriate. Reliability comes into play by the researcher serving the role of justifying the rationale for such decisions, describing the bars as best as possible, and the community itself. This makes potential reproduction of the research easier. Likewise, the role of changing locale is important within the settings as is the description of what each bar's physical makeup is like and where the researcher is within the bar.
Though reliability is not established in the same way as in more common social science research, reasonable reliability is established for the field research practitioner and to the informed consumer of the research.
III. C. 2. GENERALIZEABILITY

Let us now turn from issues of reliability to issues of generalization. Babbie raises three issues of generalizeability the first of which relates to researcher subjectivity, described earlier. The other two have not yet been addressed. First, one concern is that field research’s comprehensiveness makes it so field specific that it may render itself ungeneralizeable by its very nature. In the example of humor in the gay male bar setting, for example, ‘what does knowing about the humor in that group in that location at that time tell us about humor in the general population?’ would be a concern. In fact to what extent is this at all generalizable?

This concern is dealt with in a couple of ways. First, as similar research had been done (Mindess, 1992, 1985) with the "population at large" generalizations to a general population have already been attempted. The purpose here is to isolate members of a community who, though they may use humor "for different purposes from the mainstream population" (Eidenberg, 1973) can be observed using humor as an EV or IV in FRs and Mrs. This, coupled with a discussion of the known uses of humor in the more mainstream population and the literature on FRs and Mrs in general, can still be useful in answering the questions at hand. (See the end of
chapter one or two as a reminder thereof.) Reliability, thus, becomes establishable by replication in other settings, perhaps even in settings where other marginalized groups could be studied, depending, of course, upon that researcher's goals.

In this case, the goal, by definition, is not to understand "how everyone uses humor;" rather, to understand the potentials for our use of humor by studying a group who is known to use humor in significant ways. The goal of the research remains to identify a hole in the literature and fill that hole; the generalizeability comes from that research in conjunction with other comparable efforts (i.e., replication of Mindess's research on what he called the mainstream population, with a marginalized population like gay men.).

The other generalizeability concern is not the ability to generalize from in the study and outward, but rather the degree to which generalizeability is possible even within the specified domain. For example, what can one do to ensure that the viewed population is representative of the group declared as the target group -- a gay bar community in Columbus, Ohio? Even when studying people's talk in groups, by definition more than one person is involved, how does one ensure that their talk is representative? Are they talking
in ways that is representative of, for example, the normal talk of gays in a gay bar or is the talk more representative of the talk that goes on in that particular clique (as related to idiolect in linguistic research (McMannis, et. al., 1987), this refers to a group with so much knowledge of each other that their speech no longer mirrors the way of talking of others around them, even in their own community. It no longer even mirrors the way they communicated with each other just several months ago)? In short, many chances exist for sampling errors.

One thing that can be done to guard against this is to ensure that a wide mix of people are represented in the data; people who seem to be strangers engaged in communication, good friends' communication; couples' communication as well as a variety of people representing varied ages, appearances, styles of dress, and interests. In addition, special efforts should be made to speak to "heros and villains" "celebrities and commoners" and those that one would expect not to fit in (In the gay bar for example, non-gay women acting as members of a gay male bar become, though not representative, certainly significant.). Such variety, not just sheer quantity is useful to avoid the problems of deviant or unrepresentative cases. Regarding humor in field research, Mindess (1985) discusses the possibility of deviant cases in "Why Helen Laughed," and how
to notice the deviant case and make it work to the researcher's advantage. Specifically, the deviant case can be useful for three important reasons:

1. The researcher can see how others react to and interact with the deviant case;

2. The researcher is becoming 'as-if' a member when he/she can spot the deviant cases and is remaining effective as a researcher if capable of pinpointing what factors contribute to make person X, the "deviant case."

3. The researcher, in Mindess's case at least, has been able to entertain more variables than before by interacting with the person labelled deviant. In Mindess's case, specifically, Helen laughed at jokes about a particular New York eatery not because they were necessarily "funny" but because she "had eaten there before, and it's true." (1985, 88) This led Mindess to consider variables like context, previous experiences of respondents, and the degree of "truth value" in the jokes told as potential factors; factors he'd not considered as seriously, before.
This section is concerned with the specific issues attributed to a researcher's inherent relationship to the subjects, the field notes/data, and in turn the results and conclusions inferred. Three specific concerns arise in field research often. The first of these relates to the perceived removal of objectivity by virtue of being, at some degree, more of a participant. The second is the issue of implementation; that is, if we believe that moving the informants or subjects from their natural gathering places will taint data, then, by definition of what the researcher has deemed 'important' we must ensure that the researcher's presence on the scene (in the gay community, for example) will not taint the data in the same way or create problems of its own. The third, discussed most often by those engaged in field research, calls attention to the ethical issue of terminating the research. Though gaining entre is given attention often, the importance of exiting the field properly has been given short shrift in many studies involving field research. Ethical concerns are inherent throughout the entire process of field research, and will be addressed throughout, where applicable.
III. C. 3. a. INVOLVEMENT ISSUES (IN PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION) AT DATA COLLECTION STAGES.

In the case of this study, examining humor's role as an EV or IV in FRs and Mrs, it is clear from the research on humor, particularly humor in communities as discussed by STH, that moving subjects from their home environments alters the natural-occurring form of humor. Further, as the group under study, gay males, have been known to use its "own kind of unique humor" (Eidenberg, 1973, 5) which "blends traditional uses of humor with unusual undescrivable humor, making it difficult for the outsider to know when one should be laughing and for what reason." (Eidenberg, 1973; p.5, 135-6.), we would not even, necessarily, see all that is so rich about the humor in the communication competence and performance of a gay male. Painter (1978), who studied the humor of lesbians in the bar, noticed differences in humor in that population when she compared what she heard "after being accepted as if a member" to what she heard when she first went to the lesbian bar and was "perceived as an outsider, who went to the wrong bar." Consequently if, even in the home setting of the lesbian community, one can be perceived as a member or non-member and that perception can influence what members are willing to share, then how could we expect subjects who are not even in their home
environment to feel comfortable enough to talk as they normally would in that environment?

Further, some (Eidenberg, 1973; Cheseboro, 1992; and McMannis et. al, 1987) have argued that gay men, like others, code-switch (joke in different ways at different times depending on everything from interactants present to the contexts like day, time, and location.) their humor within the gay community itself. Shane indicates that gay men, in more intimate settings, do not usually use the same form of humor that is considered appropriate and acceptable (perhaps, even necessary) in the gay male bar; what makes one think that the humor of the gay male bar would emerge in the lab setting or in questionnaires?

As for concerns expressed over the researcher’s level of involvement with increased participation in the field that is being studied, these critics seem to be ignoring that even more distant methods of data collection (questionnaires, for example) also have biases. The researcher inevitably makes selections regarding what to include in the questionnaire, how to incorporate it, and so on. In such cases, the researcher is imposing her/his perceptions, a priori, even before the data is collected. At least in field research, perceptions emerge from the visible "real-world" situation itself. The researcher may
impose organizational impositions after the data is collected or midway through the stage of data collection, but the researcher enters (as do many) with the intent of minimizing random subjectivity; in some ways, one could argue, the researcher is doing less imposing research than those using other methods.

Within participant observation, there are different degrees of participant observation (Gold, 1969). Most arguments in this section, thus far, have been against using "complete observation" as the sole means of data collection for this PARTICULAR project, though elements of complete observation data collection can be useful, especially when combined with other approaches. The other three "shades of observation" are all useful for this kind of work, and each has been used at various stages of data collection.

The complete participant role was incorporated at the early stage of "covert-note-taking" for the purpose of ensuring that later overt note-taking methods do not conflict with what one would expect to experience if not taking notes in the setting. When this data collection process of complete participant ended was when I, after 13 months as a complete participant researcher, departed from the covert notes, displaying note-taking more clearly.
At that point, and for the next nine months, the participant-as-observer role was in effect. Though subjects at this stage were not told directly that their use of humor was under study it was obvious that I as researcher was writing down parts of the talk that occurred around me. Questions about what I was writing were generally responded to with a statement such as "I’m doing a paper for school about what is talked about in bars." Though this was not a "lie" I was careful at that stage not to indicate that "humor" was the primary focus of the paper. Further, I was not just writing down the segments of humor talk, I was also trying to take detailed notes about other kinds of talk and interaction (Subjects’ first introductions to each other, for example, turned out to be very significant later.).

This was important given the research in humor about subjects’ relationships to each other being influential in "how later exchanges of humor take form and what its effect is to be on the listener" (Mindess, 1985, p.111). As suggested by practitioners of field work, as much as possible was written in the early stages, not knowing what would turn out to be relevant later. Further, it was known, vis a vis the literature review, that there was a great likelihood that knowledge of non-humorous exchanges would be important for later analysis of data, not to mention providing some necessary groundwork for the subjects’ building of jokes later.
During the next 43 months the role of observer-as-participant was followed. Subjects could not just observe that I was engaging in research; many expected me to do so. At least one bartender at each of three bars was moderately aware of my research as were three bar-owners. At two of the bars, bar-backs knew of my research and countless regulars at each bar knew that I was making notes of conversations. In the earliest months of this stage, I was careful not to share details about the research but did take part in chit-chat such as responding to questions like "How long have you been here-- did X show up yet?" or "Is that guy that was sitting here before new? I haven't seen him here before?" At this stage, I was still treated as a member, in fact, as an informed member because I was able to remember details and names and kept myself moderately informed about significant events to the individual bars, the Columbus gay community in general, and media coverage of events of in-group interest that occurred outside of the city or state. One bartender joked that he liked it when I sat near his part of the bar because I "answer[ed] all those annoying questions so I don't have to... you know this job would be a lot easier if I didn't have to talk to these people."

Though criticism may exist of my degree of involvement in the research process, those same concerns may be
alleviated by knowing that notes taken during the first year were constantly referred to so as to ensure that subjects' conversations were not being altered as a result of the researcher's presence. Another side of the criticism is that some practitioners of participant observation argue that this combination of levels of participant observation does nothing to enhance reliability. In fact, it makes it tougher for the researcher to move to the middle levels of "observer-as-participant" and "participant-as-observer" after being a complete participant. However, despite the difficulty attributed to making this switch, making the switch is not impossible and can be done successfully depending on the researcher, the subjects, and the goals of the project (Patton, 1984, 132-3).

In this case, for example, subjects who become aware that overt notes were being taken originally were concerned only inasmuch as the notes would be made "public" or "who I would tell." When moving to the observer-as-participant and participant-as-observer stages, note taking did become obvious, but concerns in that stage were the same concerns that subjects had when they realized that previous notes were taken. Concerns about their identities, privacy, and who would know what, especially when it came time to reporting conclusions and giving samples of the data, were expressed. Assurance was made that identities would be
protected and that if any doubt of appropriateness in the reporting emerged, that subjects could be contacted or that they could contact me as it came time to report data and findings.
III. C. 3. b. IMPLEMENTATION-CONCERNS

Implementation of field research methods involves many stages, some of which are dealt with simultaneously by the researcher. For convenience, and linearity in the explanation of the implementation-process, this section is broken into four parts:

i. initiation, organization and entre
ii. identifying issues and concerns
iii. gathering information and data
iv. reporting

Though an infinite amount of concerns about the implementation of field research exist, these four areas seem to be most significant, and give a good overview of some of that which the researcher does in the process of implementing her/his field research.
III. C. 3. b. i. INITIATION, ORGANIZATION AND ENTRE'

According to Shaffir, Stebbins, and Turowetz, (1980, 23), the first problem faced by the field researcher is securing permission to do the study, gaining access to people you wish to observe and talk to. This first phase of the research process accompanies another research requirement: developing rapport and thereby gaining initial acceptance from informants and respondents. Upon entering the field, the researcher often faces different forms of resistance and suspicion.

"Getting in," also referred to as "Entry" or "Gaining entre'," is an important part of field research. It also is recognized as a difficult step in any field research but particularly when the research involves as does this study and a large portion of other fieldwork studies, "communities and [ostracized] subcultures [with no] authoritative positions (Shaffir, et.al., 1980, 27)" or "urban public places with a distinct normative structure (Karp, in Shaffir et. al., 1980, 27 and 82)."

Further, as the methodological criticisms typically go in the debates over field research, these are precisely the situations in which field research is used. Thus, critics concerned with the corruption of data because of subjects' removal from their specific environments, raises even more concerns to critics. One of the most common criticisms made
of a field research study relates, consequently, to concerns over entre'. Another very common concern relates to what the researcher's presence may do to the data. These concerns are put forth in question form:

1. First, if we are concerned about corrupted data, who is to say that the researcher's presence in the setting of subjects is not as corruptive as would be other methods?

2. If field observationists point to the "getting in" stage as the most difficult stage and at the same time the most important stage in field research, then shouldn't there be greater attention paid to verifying that entre' has, indeed, been gained?

To address the first of these questions, I believe it unlikely that even the expert field researcher would argue that her/his presence has absolutely no effect on the subjects. On the contrary, many field researchers argue that their presence is necessarily felt by subjects. If the researcher's presence makes absolutely no difference, then perhaps participant observation is not necessary after all. After all, if the group's talk is not affected by an "outsider" then chances are that what gets discussed in that
group is not community-specific or overly private, and of course there is the possibility that the researcher is already "too much a member" which is why her/his presence is unobtrusive. Practitioners of field research argue that becoming too much of a member at the earliest stages makes it difficult, later, to step back and analyze the talk of subjects.

The assumption made by a field researchers is that her/his presence -- not as a member of the group, but as a researcher-treated-as-if-a-member of the group -- necessarily makes a difference. The goal of the field researcher is to do all that is possible to account for that outsider-ness and in most research to come as close to membership as is reasonably possible without adversely affecting the researcher's ability to step back and exit later on. To argue that this approach to research corrupts data more than, say, survey research is to ignore that the researcher's questionnaire is also an imposition of researcher onto subject, just in a different way from field observation.

As for another criticism about field research, the difficulty in gaining entre and in "knowing" when one has succeeded in gaining entre, experienced field researchers have addressed this, especially in the last two or three
decades. Douglas (1976), for example, argues that the initial stage of understanding has a three-step sequence of events. To Douglas, discussions of "getting in" necessarily include "testing;" that is, effective field research is not the result of the researcher feeling that he/she "got in" but rather constantly verifying that the researcher got in and remained "in." Douglas advocates "interaction-effectiveness" tests which require the researcher to periodically joke with members as a member, successfully anticipate the responses of participants, pass as a member of the group in other settings, and to be able to recognize when a subject commits an error in communication performance. The third part of getting in, to Douglas, involves putting the observed phenomena together with an understanding of the reality-as-member to form a well-thought "symbolic, rational totality (1976, 124)." Thus, even though "getting in" is not easy, it is possible to do so successfully and even the novice researcher has excellent advice on how to do so successfully, and the amazing successes of researchers who have done field work form a respectable precedent for being able to gain entre'.

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III. C. 3. b. ii. IDENTIFYING ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Another issue in fieldwork research centers around the degree to which the researcher is capable of identifying the issues central to the group and/or setting at hand while at the same time not overlooking other, potentially important, data and ensuring consistency throughout the researcher's role as researcher.

Guba and Lincoln (1985, 303) write that after gaining entre the field researcher must concentrate on:

identifying the concerns and issues on the minds of stakeholding audiences, as well as the value frameworks within which those concerns and issues operate. [This includes] identifying audiences, selecting respondents to serve as information sources, collecting and analyzing information to yield the concerns and issues, inferring value frameworks and testing the data for rigor.

Guba and Lincoln argue (p.92.) that naturalistic inquiry is:

a two-step process: identification of the concerns and issues of the audiences involved and collection of information bearing upon those identified concerns and issues. Each step poses its own convergence problems.

Though Guba and Lincoln were writing more specifically about naturalistic inquiry within a business for the purpose of understanding employees' perceptions of problems in a program, the same two-step process occurs in a study such as
this one, an investigative study of humor's function in the communication competence of a member of a historically-oppressed group like the gay male (bar) community.

Whereas a business or formal organization may have "problems" listed at the outset for the researcher to flesh out, the lack of a leader or authority in the gay bar system makes such a specific list less attainable. However, as research on humor, and samples of gay humor in already existing literature were available before entry into the field, the researcher has been able to articulate, to some degree, the "problem" or research question to be considered.

The problem is at least two-fold. First from a communicative theory standpoint, research on humor's role in the adaptability function of our communication competence in general is lacking, despite two scholars' push for articulating that link (Duran 1992, 1983 and Mindess 1994, 1985). Consequently, humor as an EV or IV in FRs and MRs is not understood. This is a problem which can at least be partially addressed by undertaking the study articulated in this dissertation. Propositions that have been explicated, in previous sections and chapters throughout this research process, that lead to the articulation of that as a problem follow:
PROPOSITION 1: Duran argues for inclusion of humor in his CAS and in communication competence research. (Research in and out of the field of communication is consistent with his intuitive claims: humor is an adaptor in communication, a part of a person’s communication competence, but the communication competence literature does not typically consider humor as an aspect of competence. As a result, research on EVs and IVs in FRs and MRs, which grew out of the competency literature over the last couple of decades, is lacking.

PROPOSITION 2: Mindess (1994, 1985) not only agrees with Duran but makes the first and only other significant attempts to put humor with competence, but certain problems exist in his research (Most notably, Mindess’s assumptions about humor in a person’s communication competence is not influenced by factors such as sexual orientation.).

PROPOSITION 3: Much of the research in humor suggests the humor of marginalized populations is different from the humor of the "mainstream population, (as defined by Mindess)" and that this different form of humor emerges most commonly in subjects’ communication in the communities themselves, not necessarily in labs or when speaking to non-members.

PROPOSITION 4: Some problems of the gay male have been articulated in the literature on homosexuality and humor. Code-switching between traditional humor, the humor of gay males in general and the humor of the gay bars in particular have been articulated as shifts with potential benefits (Berube, 1982) and with detrimental hindrances (Shane, 1992) to the gay male in adapting within the society at large, within the gay community as a member, and within relationships. Though Shane is not successful at articulating what those differences are in these facets of the gay male’s humor, she does recognize that some men are more successful at using the caustic humor expected in gay communities. Men who are not competent at varying their humor in the varied contexts and facets of gay life are less accepted and more likely to be depressed than competent gay humor-communicators. That depression, brought on by various factors, is often linked to (as is depression in the communication competency literature) displeasure in their FRs and MRs and the ability (or lack thereof) to sustain them.

PROPOSITION 5: As Shane articulates the problem of adjusting to gay male humor, it falls squarely in the middle of communication competence research, (a la’ Duran and Mindess who did not consider gay male humor as an entity in its own), and an important link is forged between the humor of a
gay male’s communication competence, the humor of a non-gay’s communication competence, and of course, communication competence per se, all relevant to humor as an EV or IV in FRs and MRs.

PROPOSITION 6: Though Shane points to the difficulty in grasping gay humor as an influencer on a gay male’s feelings of self within the gay community, she does not attempt to clearly understand what those differences between the gay males’ humor and the nongays’ humor truly are. Shane suggests that Mindess’s articulation of forms and uses of humor is necessarily an incomplete picture of humor in communication competence because it can not account for a significant amount of gay males’ humor, but goes no further.

PROPOSITION/ SUBGOAL 7: A more complete picture of humor in FRs and MRs and, to some degree, communication competence would be created by supplementing the work of Mindess with an in-field examination of humor in gay males’ communication competencies in a setting or program in which that humor takes its more diverse forms and functions.

PROPOSITION 8: Because gay male bars are historically significant to gay communities, serve a wide faction of the gay male community, include free exchanges of humor in general, and are indicated as locations (according to the literature Berube, 1983; Eidenberg, 1973; Shane, 1992) as places where men are required to use humor differently in order to adapt, accomplishing the SUBGOAL 7 above is achievable by doing field research in a community’s gay male bars.

PROPOSITION 9: As Columbus, Ohio is representative of cities in America with gay communities, (See Newsweek, March 12, 1990 for support of this statement by a non-gay publication and Damron’s Guide, (1994, 1989) for support from a national gay publication. Additional support could be found by Columbus publications like the gay-oriented Gay People’s Chronicle, November 24, 1995 and a more mainstream newspaper, Columbus Alive, January 24, 1996.) its three longest-running, most successful, and largest bars (Eagle, Tradewinds, and Garage) form the primary program for conducting research about the problem/ question of articulating differentiating facets of the gay male’s humor, significant for our more general understanding of that humor’s significance as an EV and IV in the FRs and MRs.
The second part of this problem-articulation involves not just contributing to theory and communication literature, but also to discuss these differences in humor between the gay and non-gay populations in such a manner that the gay male (or non-gay) who wanted his/her humor to be accepted by the gay bar community (and in turn to experience greater acceptance by the gay male community) could do so, by examining the differences in style or content of the humor as reported in the results section of this study.

Guba and Lincoln (93) discuss the problems at this stage of note-taking and becoming organized as problems of convergence, and articulate three types: categorizing, prioritizing, and exhausting. **Categorizing**, the process of organizing field notes into systematic categories, creates potential problems because (93):

No infallible procedures exist for performing it. Since this process is highly intuitive, it is often viewed as 'merely' subjective and hence not likely to lead to results worthy of serious consideration.

At the same time, however, useful guidelines exist (93-94):
A first step is to look for recurring regularity in sources... Once a preliminary set of categories have been developed, certain systematic checks should be made. If a certain category is to be defensible as encompassing a single concept all the items within it ought to 'look alike'... The category system is thus a dynamic entity, constantly changing and improving. Categories [should be] unidimensional, [having] internal homogeneity and the evaluator will go back to the field to flesh out the categories. Finally the evaluator should strive for an appropriate level of discourse for the categories on which he does settle.

Prioritizing, the process of determining those categories "most worthy of further exploration (94), is a potential problem because it is a process which lacks "hard and fast rules," according to Guba and Lincoln (94), "but the evaluator should keep certain things in mind:"

[Though] the number of respondents who mention a particular issue or concern is not sufficient criterion for assigning priority, that index can nevertheless be useful in the sense that... one would not wish to eliminate a concern that received frequent mention. [Other] concerns ought to be retained because they have the property of opening up areas of inquiry not otherwise recognized or because they provide a unique leverage on an otherwise common problem. [Further], rejection of a concern or issue on feasibility grounds may be painful [but] necessary [but] materiality must serve as the basis for the initial cut.

The third process of exhausting the categories requires the researcher to make sure the articulated categories
"constitute a necessary and sufficient set (94)." Again Guba and Lincoln provide useful guidelines:

The set should have internal and external plausibility. Viewed internally, the individual categories should appear to be consistent; viewed externally, the set of categories should seem to set forth a whole picture.

The set should be reasonably inclusive of the data that exist. Inclusiveness is partly indicated by the relative absence of unassignable cases. The set should be reproducible by another competent judge... there are multiple levels of reality and different investigators may choose to peel the onion of reality to different levels depending on the purposes, interests, experience, and expertise that they bring to the task. Two independent observers need not devise the same set of categories. The second judge ought to be able, however, to verify first that the set of categories makes sense in view of the data from which they emerged and second that the data have been appropriately assigned within the category system.

The set should be credible to the persons who provided the information that the set is intended to assimilate. This property [is often referred to in the literature as] contextual appropriateness.

Along with the convergence problems discussed above, problems of divergence arise as well. Guba and Lincoln articulate three ways to minimize divergence problems: strategizing, developing inclusion and exclusion criteria, and forming closure. These three actions help the researcher know what to include, what to exclude, how to begin, how to end, and how to know when to begin or end. A model of strategizing (98) and four aspects of closure (100-101) are articulated by Guba and Lincoln as well as Barker and Wright (1955) and Eisner (1970). Perhaps most
significant at this stage in the research process is developing inclusion and exclusion criteria. Seven elements are posited by Guba and Lincoln (99):

1. Include information that is germane to the area and not excluded by boundary setting rules.
2. Include information that bridges already existing info items.
3. Include information that identifies new elements or brings them to the surface.
4. Add information that reinforces existing info but reject it if the reinforcement is redundant.
5. Add information that explains the already-known.
6. Add information that exemplifies the nature or evidence of a category.
7. Add information that refutes or challenges the already-known.

Advice like this allows the field researcher to engage in her/his research while avoiding some of the most common criticisms of the method, the philosophical grounding and the intellectual roots of her/his approach. Though no researcher is free from difficult methodological or philosophical assumptions, suggestions on how to avoid typical pitfalls in the naturalistic data collection can help the researcher avoid errors of convergence and divergence.
III. C. 3. b. iii. GATHERING INFORMATION AND DATA

One concern of the field observer should be what to consider as "information" that is worthy of gathering and reporting.

Four types of information are generally discussed in field research literature as necessary, information that deals with: description, responses to issues and concerns, values and standards. Guba and Lincoln (1985, 360-361) articulate more clearly what is involved at each part of this gathering information/data stage.

**Descriptive** information should include description of subjects' appearance, mannerisms, dress, nonverbal communication, suprasegmentals, race, sex, socio-ethnic background and age whenever possible. The general demographic data can be an influencer in the subjects' talk. However, if this link exists in the researcher's mind, a priori, the field research method may not necessarily be the best method of inquiry. Nonetheless, the descriptive information is useful for the connoisseur of the field notes to help in the establishment of a reasonably shared picture of events. Even general descriptions like, for example, the lighting in a bar, the time of day, the day of week, the size of the crowd, the bar's location, the subjects'
position and the researcher's locale in the setting are all important aspects of descriptive information, especially in the earliest stage of note-taking and when returning to confirm hypotheses.

Responsive information is important after reasonable articulation of the problem or research question has occurred. It involves beginning to assess causes, consequences and contraventions of events and is typically followed by information dealing with respondents' values.

Value information may begin emerging in the initial setting of data collection but often is most clear in the follow-up interview where the researcher not only tries to "guess" the subjects' values, but rather to discover as completely as possible the subjects' values and "the degree of conviction with which those values are held. (361)."

Information about standards in the research come from a variety of sources and are influenced by the kind of evaluation involved (formative/summative, formal/informal, written/unwritten). Options include consensus building techniques, expert opinions, professional literature, local needs assessments and the researcher's own analysis of local values.
III. C. 3. b. iv. REPORTING THE RESULTS

The reporting of all this information will also be done according to existing guidelines and suggestions by experts in field research, according to Denny (1978), Wolcott (1976) and Guba and Lincoln (1985), who suggest that the way the researcher reports findings should be influenced by which of the four common levels of inquiry were used. Though three of those four levels: ethnology (the most encompassing report of the group), ethnography (complete account of the culture-sharing group), and story-level (journalistic reporting not testing theory and lacking in depth and involvement) are levels of inquiry worthy in their own right, the case study is most relevant for a couple reasons.

First, a case study is "a microcosm... the intensive examination of a unit (Guba and Lincoln, 1985, 371)" and is typically "the best of the available types [of inquiry] (370)" because it is more thorough than a story-level but not "too large in scope (370)" like the ethnology or ethnography. Consequently a case study provides enough information for understanding but is not so detailed and "into the group" that the results become ungeneralizeable, and in turn less useful for the social scientist.
Second, as this specific study as described in previous sections and chapters has been articulated, the focus of this research is not to articulate the relationships among the target group (men in a gay community bar) nor to provide a complete culture-sharing account of the group. That might be the goal of a researcher studying the sociology of gay men or a scholar in a gay studies department. As the focus of this study is on humor as an EV and IV in FRs and MRs and the investigation thereof is using the gay male bar setting to get more "at" that information, we might say that the study uses the population and setting to generate theory and hypotheses that extend way beyond the bar, the gay community, the city of Columbus, and so on. Rather, the info shows the potential use of humor in the communication competence of us all, by illustrating its existing use by gay men as an EV and IV in that setting. Thus the goal here is to chronicle, render, teach and test in which the case study is the most appropriate level of inquiry.

As the described study involves doing a case study, the method of reporting results involves six common guidelines for what to include in case study reports (375-377):

1. Thorough (or "thick") description, mentioned before.
2. Grounded data which emerged from the setting.
3. Written "pictures" credible to the subjects and readers.
4. Focused description of the range of data, simplified by the researcher.

5. Illustrated meanings which direct the reader's attention -- the essentials, integrated by the researcher, with the residue removed.

6. Enough detail to allow the reader a vicarious feel for the setting: a vehicle for transference of wordless knowledge.
Though many issues raised about the researcher's personal involvement with subjects in field work research are issues which are discussed by Guba and Lincoln (1985, see earlier sections in C. 3.), other issues exist as well. Specifically the issue of proper exit from the field is not considered by Guba and Lincoln, but is a valid concern.

Letkemann (1980) suggests that exiting properly is as important as entering properly, and the processes are related, "How one leaves the field depends a great deal on how one entered it (292)." He points out that exiting is to be thought about long in advance, even before gaining entre. Letkemann (1980: 293) tells the field researcher to begin the process by asking her/himself, "How would I like this experience to end? Do I wish to cultivate ongoing associations or should all relationships be research-dependent?"

These are important questions to ask because "Participant observation research includes a unique form of interaction between the researcher and the subject(s) (Roadburg, 1980, 281):"
Neither party has any control over the fact that the termination of the relationship coincides with the termination of the research. If individuals wish to maintain a relationship after the research has concluded, it will no longer be a research-subject relationship but will be based on different criteria.

Specific "conditions which precipitate problems" are:

based on (1) the degree of interpersonal friendship or closeness between researcher and subjects; (2) the degree to which the researcher has suppressed personal ego with respect to the role of the scientist; (3) the degree to which the subjects have confided in the researcher; (4) the types of experience shared by the researcher and subjects; (5) the conditions of the agreement established before the research began, and (6) whether the research was carried out alone or with colleagues.

It is likely that the more involved with subjects the researcher becomes, the greater the difficulty of breaking relationships. This can be explained on the basis of two elements: the length of time spent with subjects and the degree to which relationships develop between the researcher and each subject. [That second condition] involves the dual roles of the participant observer. Indeed the scientist must remain objective. But, at the same time, the scientist is a social being with an ego, sensitivities, needs, and failings. Conflict in those roles can be a problem in a participant observation situation, and the degree to which one has managed to separate them will have an affect on breaking relationships with subjects.

Despite the difficulty in exiting a field, one can do this successfully if: he/she withdraws gradually, indicates a time period for completing data collection, and provides a
reasonable estimate of when the finished report/dissertation could be made available to subjects.
III. D. DESCRIPTIONS AND CAUSAL INFERENCES

This section deals with "tools" the researcher uses to organize, and in turn understand, data. This involves effective note-taking at the first level, codes and shorthand. At the next stage, inferences must be made about what the data "mean" and specifically which data form that interpretation of meaning. It is at this level where specifics in the data lead to a researcher making generalizations. This leads to some discussion of making inferences in field research and potential pitfalls or faulty inferential leaps.
III. D. 1. DESCRIPTION

Many aspects of note-taking have been described in previous sections, particularly the more difficult issue of knowing what will prove noteworthy and when enough notes have been taken. For this particular research project, covert note-taking, the most difficult for getting a large quantity of notes or for getting exact quotes, was used only as a test for later data collection. Since a researcher's presence, it could be argued, could adversely affect data covert notes were returned to when flushing out questions and to guarantee the subjects' behaviors did not drastically change when they knew they were being observed. Though I did not expect any real difference between subjects' behaviors (The environment is, after all, a social setting anyway; no real secretive acts occur in a bar.) in the presence of note-taking, I did believe this approach of covert and overt notes would alleviate some criticisms of the data for having a "researcher's influence." Additional benefits occurred in that long before formal note-taking began, entre was already firmly established. I was comfortable in the setting, very comfortable taking part in conversations at a multitude of levels, and had reasonable expectations of data collectability. Also, names of many subjects were already known, facilitating note-taking. Common abbreviations emerged in the note-taking as certain
topics came up often and certain words were used frequently. The men often used words and phrases, some of which may be viewed as derogatory by many, like: queen, fag, faggot, hag, bitch, fairy, very, get it girl, cocktail, and you better not go there which came to have standard abbreviations q,f,f't,h,b, fy,V, gi g!, ct, and Ubetr-gt. Additional abbreviations emerged, nicknames for parts of the bar were used, and abbreviations from linguistics, such as phonic transcription, were used on a few occasions to designate exaggerated pitch, duration, pause and the like.
III. D. 2. CAUSAL INFERENCEs

The more difficult task, for the most part, was not note-taking. Though different bars were surveyed with different note-taking constraints, and I made sure to vary the nights of the research to incorporate some sense of "randomness," (regarding flow of clientele, especially), within the gay bars, these and other note-taking efforts were not nearly as difficult as assembling data and making inferences.
III. D. 2. a. VALID INFERENCING

Though making valid inferences is necessary in making a research project such as this useful, specific rules on what constitutes a valid inference or guidelines on how to make such inferences do not exist: the rules for valid inferencing will be determined by the evaluator as the grounded theory emerges. The data is not only useful for making inferences but is also sometimes critical to assessing "what constitutes a reasonable or acceptable inference." This is why follow up research, targeting the values of the researched can be useful to the researcher: such visits combined with expert opinions of other researchers, for example, help lead to valid inferencing. In addition, though each field experience differs and no formulae exist for making such inferences, much discussion of the kinds of mistakes made in this inferential reasoning process has occurred and are listed in the subsequent section. Also included are ways that their effects have been (and usually can be) minimalized.
III. D. 2. b. Invalid Inferences: Minimizing Such Errors

Though it may be impossible to tell the researcher what to "do" when it comes to making inferences, it is useful for the researcher to know common errors that other researchers have made in inferential logic so as to know what kind of errors to "avoid" in the process. Scriven (1967) argued that the researcher's goal is not just to throw out the information-in-note form to the reader. Reporting is the goal of the journalist, but the scientist must make conclusions, and the field researcher becomes the scientist who is best positioned to be able to make such conclusions reasonably.

Kahane (1980) and Babbie (1982) discuss several of the most common mistakes in making inferences about field notes. The first of these errors, provincialism, may be the most common because anyone --even an experienced researcher -- has a tendency to interpret events according to his/ her experiences, points of view, and belief system. Errors such as this can be avoided somewhat, and following the paths of previous researchers helps the researcher to, at least, avoid previous mistakes. Additional inferential errors can be minimalized as well. Following is a list of other errors, a brief description of each, and questions I and
other researchers have had to ask so as to help minimize the effects of such errors or prohibit their occurrence:

1. False Dilemma Occurs when a researcher creates an either-or issue, assuming that there is no other explanations that occur in the middle ground.

Am I as researcher really illuminating theory through my discussion or am I simply masking other valid theories from my audience?

2. Hasty Conclusion Occurs when one makes a conclusion that does seem valid, but does not consider other possibilities and equally reasonable explanations.

Does that conclusion seem more valid than other possible conclusions?

3. Inconsistencies Occurs when the researcher blatantly contradicts her/himself

Have I examined my own conclusions for conflicting arguments and data as well as sought an outside readership to assist in catching such potential conflicts?

4. Questionable Cause Occurs when the researcher assumes that the presence or absence of A causes the result B.

Have I made a causal link, including examining whether: some other factor C caused A and B; A caused some factor X and then X caused B; or that B's presence after A could be incidental.
5. Q’ble Classification  Occurs when a researcher has not provided necessary, complete and mutually exclusive categories or errs in judgment regarding the placement of data.

Have I scrutinized the categories I have created and how I organized data within each?

6. Questionable facts  Occurs when the researcher tells the reader why something happened without providing justification for that knowledge which could not be obtained from mere observation.

Have I provided the reader with all the necessary information so that they could make their own conclusions and that they could see how I came to make mine?

7. Suppressed Evidence  Occurs when the researcher has not considered all available evidence and/or reports only evidence which blindly supports her/his theory.

Have I done all that is reasonably possible to acquire information about the subjects, the theory, and the data gathered in field notes, and done a fair job in presenting all this to the reader, even if it means reporting evidence that did not fit.

Though it is certainly not possible to guarantee that all errors are avoided and that a research project is mistake-free, it is nonetheless reasonable to believe that the researcher minimalizes such errors by being aware of them in advance. Also, the researcher can help future researchers by articulating her/his own doubts about the
study; specifically, drawbacks or limitations of the study (a discussion which follows the next chapter in which presentation of relevant data and discussion take place). Thus, care to avoid errors in inferencing is made by studying other researchers' works and benefitting from their own discussions about their difficulty in inferencing and experiences in the field. Additional care is taken to acknowledge perceptions of how one's own research could have been improved and to make such suggestions for future researchers. Such a discussion occurs in this document after the discussion of results. This leads now to a discussion of those results and, in turn, the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter's purpose is to present a discussion of some field experiences with note-taking and present and discuss sets of data and the ramifications thereof. It begins with a brief overview of the first three chapters, leading into the following goals:

4.A. share information about subjects, note-taking, sample talk & the writing, reporting and analyzing of notes which formed most of the data;

4.B. present, discuss and summarize various sets of results;

4.B.1. (1)present, (2)discuss and (3)summarize/pose theorems/conclusions regarding: the first set of results, including a comparison of Mindess's method and humor chart to the method used here, the different subject pool and the revised chart depicting humor style, humor class and the categories within each;

4.B.2. (1)present, (2)discuss and (3)summarize/pose theorems/conclusions regarding: the second set of results, including the role of humor level growth to relationship growth: humor-as-filter in effect:

4.B.3. (1)present, (2)discuss and (3)summarize/pose theorems/conclusions regarding: the results, in general, introducing the role of humor in the gay nightclubs: the coupled vs. the non-coupled gay male, and to answer the research questions posed in the previous chapters.

4.C. present, discuss and summarize, in general.
4.A. OVERVIEW THUS FAR:

(WITH AN EXPLANATION OF NOTE-TAKING, CATEGORIZING & SORTING)

Before a discussion of the different sets of results, a short overview, of what has been presented, thus far, appears.

After analysis of field note data, conversations with respondents and months of introspection and revisions, it occurred to me that what I had uncovered in doing the research is not just information about humor and its use but also information about how the humor changed as relationships changed -- a humor-calculus, as it were. Granted, the underlying research from communication and interpersonal research indicated that we would expect humor to change, with some element of predictability, as the relationship of the people who engage in it, intensifies. However, specific changes had never been tracked or observed in the naturally occurring talk of subjects or respondents.

In the words of Nicotera and her associates, a beginning level friendship (FR1) has the ability to transform through various friendship stages until the highest level friendship (FR4) or 'best friend' level is achieved. Comparably, the mate relationship has been believed to move through its own stages moving from MR1 to
MR4. Findings of this study are consistent with this interpretation and way of describing relationship growth.

Certain variables or factors have been either assumed to be variables which influence the filter or stage process or proven to be such. That includes a set of attributes like trust, respect, intelligence, sense of humor, and several other attributes as well: all are believed to have a significant impact in determining whether a FR1 becomes a FR2, a FR2 becomes a FR3, a FR3 becomes a FR4, and how quickly such changes occur. Many of those same variables (including humor) also determine whether or not the MR1 moves to MR2, the MR2 moves to MR3, and the MR3 moves to the MR4. However, the impact these variables have on the filtering process of FRs and Mrs is realized in different ways, in different types of relationships (FR2 is different from FR3; MR2 is different from FR2; and MR1 is different from MR2, for example.). Some of these influencing variables have been examined rather closely, a micro-examination influenced largely by work on the research of communication competence in and around the 1970s. Not all influencing filter variables have been so analyzed however and humor has been, perhaps, the most significantly overlooked variable, but perhaps one of the more significant variables in the filtering process. Despite the good reasons which might explain the humor-oversight in friend
and mate relationship studies, and despite the research on humor in fields outside of interpersonal communication which suggests that humor should be studied for the role it plays as a filter variable in friend and mate relationships, no such analysis has occurred which remains true to the goals of FR and MR research and to the research of humorologists. These humorologists, or humor researchers, have articulated ways to study humor that maintain scientific rigor and establish reliability and validity, given the potential for errors, like those that have been made in a great deal of humor research in the past.

This project has attempted to understand humor's role as a filter variable by concentrating on the naturally occurring talk of members of a marginalized population (gay men in the gay nightclub) and examining how that talk, specifically the humor segments within that talk, serves as a precursor for advancement through higher-level relationship stages. The population was chosen vis a vis the research in humor suggesting a greater richness in the humor of marginalized or historically-oppressed groups particularly when group members speak as members. Also considered was the work by interpersonal communication scholars like Nicotera, who advocate examining friend and mate relationship stages in cultures (subcultures, non-western cultures, etc.) other than those that have been
typically examined in friend and mate relationship literature.

In that the stated goals of this research project remain in line with that described above, the reader should expect to find over the next few pages analysis, hypotheses and samples of field notes which combine to form what can best be described as the results of this study, given that I as researcher had specific questions which emerged from early field notes and grounded theory and those questions seem to be answerable at this time. Of course, interesting issues and questions emerged while the research was going on, a common phenomenon in field work and participant observation studies, and those emergent questions and issues are discussed as well, particularly since they offer information regarding the subject of humor at hand. They also introduce what seems like an under-explored area of research and thought within the area of friend and mate relationship, specifically being, how those filter variables are affected when a friend or mate relationship dissolves or changes in a less-than-traditional manner. 'Traditional' in this sense is treated as meaning the typical filtering-forward process assumed by Nicotera and other researchers of FR and Mrs, who have argued and or assumed that a FR3, for example, had to be immediately preceded by a FR2 friendship which had to have been immediately preceded by being in a
FR1 level friendship. "Less-than-traditional' is used then to describe that FR3 which may have come after a dissolved MR or as a result of a FR4 having dwindled some over time. This less-than-traditional manner of filtering through relationship levels is given rather short shrift in the relationship literatures, and perhaps for good reason; it isn't exactly common and certainly hard to determine or measure; that is, if people engaged in a FR4 move apart, talk less, or even have a disagreement and spend less time with each other are they really moving backwards through the filtering process to a FR3 or FR2 or FR1 or are they simply just experiencing a tiny hump in the relationship that ends up being resolved and results in the FR4 level friendship being maintained? Assumptions made my researchers suggest they have a desire to explain away such anomalies, but in the speech community that was observed for this research, such changes did occur frequently enough to warrant attention. Such changes also provided useful information about respondents' use of humor as a cue for their perceptions of the stage of the relationship in which they were engaged. Another example of an issue that emerged is that Nicotera and others seem to make the assumption that if a dyad is in, for example, a FR3 relationship and that the relationship is mutual. That is, if Nicotera says they are in a FR3 (based on the couple's own responses) then they simply are FR3s. However, no attention is given by Nicotera
to a dyad whose friendship is less easily gauged. For example, George described Ben as his "best friend" one night at one of the nightclubs where I did follow-up interviews (Several such interviews took place in and out of Columbus; this one at RickyJay’s Pub, a leather/Levi bar like Columbus’s Tradewinds that is located in Sarasota, Florida.). Ben, however, described George as "a bar-nuisance bar none" and referred to him as an "acquaintance" and was as serious about his description of George as George was of Ben (rj 062896+). In this case, then, George says there is a FR4 between he and Ben, but Ben sees the relationship as an FR2 at best, but as an FR1 most likely. Such relationships are troubling for research, note-taking and the Nicoteran assumptions because the relationship is really more of a non-relationship even though some research has suggested that this friendship would be a FR2 or FR3, the result of taking the average of the self-reports (not a common research habit but one that has certainly been done by at least a handful of previous researchers according to Nicotera, 1991).

Such situations or non-relationships are troubling to deal with as researcher; much of the FR and MR research would treat them as outliers or anomalies and ad hoc exemplars and give their ‘relationship’ minimal attention. This study however will discuss the few incidences of when
this occurred -- not, necessarily with the hope of making any important generalizations about such non-relationships but rather to provide information (for those interested in such dyads) regarding how the theory, hypotheses, and generalizations made by this researcher about humor can be shown to hold true for humor of people engaging in such dyads.
4.A.1. SUBJECTS/NOTE-TAKING/SAMPLE TALK:
WRITING/REPORTING/ANALYZING

Compliance with and adherence to field notes proved useful several times for interpreting humor that was a part of a "cruising" regiment, in which a patron of the nightclub was attempting to "pick up" or meet another patron for the purpose of a sexual encounter at some point in the future. The first excerpts from field notes (See Sample #1, 2, and 3.) is indicative of how men talked about the possibility of having a sexual encounter or relationship with another. In this excerpt, as in all excerpts from my field notes, names are used to help distinguish patrons. However, no real names appear except in some of the acknowledgements; not all people quoted here are acknowledged in the acknowledgments pages and vice versa. Some prefer not to be identified by real names in a rather public document like a dissertation; others mentioned in the acknowledgment pages but not quoted in the text were mentioned because they were helpful in a very general way (background info, introductions to others, insights, etc.) even though none of their direct quotes from field notes were used for the appendix of this document. These closer sources were intentionally avoided in making my points using my field data because, at latter parts of the data collection, research, and writing process, they would likely have had awareness of the nature of my research, and
I was concerned that their talk could become biased and perhaps less representative of the talk of other patrons. Though the talk did not seem to be biased or different, now in hindsight, the decision to omit some of their direct quotes from this document did not affect my ability to support hypotheses and conclusions (Hundreds of talk samples existed, even without the inclusion of their talk.).

Notes were taken of their talk so that I could refer back with hindsight and realize that even if they were aware of the direction of the research, that it still did not affect how they talked around me. In using names from field notes, no first name will be repeated. That is, in the opening sample, Alan and Burt have a conversation about Carl. In a later sample, Burt also has a conversation with Alan and Dave and later with Dave and Ernie. This allows the reader to know that the person given the name Burt by me as researcher in Sample #2 is the same as the Burt discussed in this first sample from field notes; in this case, knowing that Burt is the same person in each conversation is useful for the researcher and reader, but this is done even when there is no apparent need for showing that the same person is talking (i.e., The Alan in conversations 1, 2 and 3 are all references to the same person; the Dave in conversations 2 and 3 is the same person as well.). Additionally, each citation includes the bar’s name (tg = Trends/Garage, te =
the Eagle, and \( tw = \) Tradewinds, all of which are in Columbus, Ohio. Bars outside of Columbus, locations of some of the follow up interviews, include the bar’s name, the city, and a brief description of the bar.) and the date. Thus a conversation which took place in Tradewinds on the fifth of January in 1992 would be cited as \( tw010592 \).

Specific times were recorded in field notes and are listed in cites when necessary for explaining a point or for clarification for the reader.

As a night’s visit may have involved note-taking beginning at 11 P.M., for example, but ending at 1 A.M. (two different days technically, but the same researcher visit) the citation is always for the same day, the earlier of the two, with a + sign denoting the conversation took place after midnight, in the A.M. of the next day. A.M. and P.M. are not designated as the + is always used for A.M. and all other times are P.M. (The only A.M. hours that the bars are open are from midnight to 2:15 A.M., though on special occasions, The Eagle would remain open until 4 A.M. All times are standard time; I always had a watch but the time on my watch was always 15 or 20 minutes different from bar clocks as they intentionally keep clocks turned ahead, commonly referred to a "bar time" or GBT (Gay Bar Time) or Gay Standard Time.
Three samples of talk follow to illustrate the format used for the field notes which are reprinted in this document. Other samples of talk appear in the appendix but are referenced in the text where relevant. "See Sample #1, 2, 3" would refer the reader to the conversation samples numbered one, two, and three in the appendix. Those three samples are printed here as well. They also help illustrate the importance of both thick and thin description necessary for later sense-making practices. Those three examples help set up a later sample when Burt uses humor to try to help him pick up Carl; the samples 1, 2, and 3 help in the sense-making process in that they help one understand a motive for Burt's humor and contribute to sense-making, regarding speaker's intentions and humor's roles. Words appearing in all capitals are words that were emphasized by the speakers themselves and were recorded in field notes as such. When a speaker was yelling or speaking entire phrases loudly, this too was noted. However, those instances are marked by parentheticals rather than putting entire quotes in capitals. The colon symbol "::" is used in places to denote added length or duration of the sound which preceded it. For example, "lo:ve" would indicate that the speaker held the vowel sound for a period of time longer than one would expect from a native speaker's regular pronunciation. Transcription of these long sounds was done whenever possible but are, admittedly, arbitrary from the acoustic
phonetician's point of view. However, such information as it is presented and used here is primarily to share with the reader (and to remind me a researcher) a "flavor of the moment" or "conversation snapshot." They are not, as far as I could tell, indicative or even related to the subject matter here, even though some linguists, particularly phoneticians, might argue that it is a topic worthy of subsequent study (Someone with a casual interest in this area of research would do well to read introductory texts like McMannis et. al., 1987; and Akmajian et. al., 1982. The more sophisticated researcher of phonetics, speech sounds and linguistics would do better to examine Johnson, Ladefoged, and Lehiste, 1983.).

A second way that sense-making or interpreting can be done is by asking subjects to help interpret their own feelings and actions. Clearly, asking the subject herself or himself to make such conclusions is problematic because the researcher becomes limited, not just by her or his own perceptions and thoughts, but also by the subjects' perceptions, thoughts, insights, and judgments. Though problematic, asking a subject to explain the reason why he or she uttered a particular joke or phrase is not completely useless either. Though this author does not put great trust in such method (self-reports) for reasons discussed in the previous chapter on method, it is still clear, nonetheless,
that this has been done successfully before by researchers. In this case, relatively innocuous questions like these were able to be asked, and the subject's response was trusted:

1. "I didn't get it; could you explain that [joke]?
2. "What's so funny; what's he laughing at?"
3. "Did you just meet him?"
4. "How long have you been friends?"
5. "When did you start dating each other?"
6. "Do any of your best friends ever come out and join you here at the club? And if so, could I meet them?" (And, if not, why don't they?)

Questions like these help when doing the interpreting, and subjects' responses can generally be trusted. Only on two occasions did a subject's response seem inconsistent with my own sense-making process, which I did by primarily examining my own older field notes. Consistent, then, with much of the research on friend and mate relationships, subjects' own self-reports have been used to determine the level of friend (FR1 through FR4) and mate (MR1 through MR4) relationships in which the coupled subjects were involved.

Sample #1: Alan has just introduced Carl to a group of friends, including Burt. Carl has just walked away, and Burt has asked Alan a few questions already about Carl (tw010592 #11:29).

Alan: You got it bad, don't ya?
Burt: What, I can't ask questions?
Alan: Please! Oprah asks questions. All of a sudden you're Morly fucking Safer!

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Sample #2: Burt has offered to buy himself and Alan a beer and has returned with the two bottles. Alan occasionally said something to his other friends, though inaudible, but mostly is talking to Burt. Two of the friends leave to dance, and Dave joins in with Alan and Burt’s conversation (tw010592 @11:55).

Dave (to Alan): This one still going on about Miss Thang?
Alan: Yea she’s in love.
Burt: O, I am not. I don’t even know him or that much about him. Do you know him well (to Dave)?
Dave: Well enough (laughs, deep in tone, looking up from his beer for the first time in about three minutes, grinning at Burt)
Alan: Well I don’t [know him] yet. Tell me why you call her Miss Thang.
Burt: (talking to Dave, over top of Alan) Oo Bitch I know that laugh. He did you didn’t he?
Dave: Get a grip, ladies.
Burt: So you weren’t with him? He didn’t do you?
Dave: Well,... I was with him, but he didn’t do me. I did him.
Alan: (very loud) O my God, O my God O my God. (Alan turned around, full 360 degrees twice, and slaps Dave lightly on the shoulder.)
Burt: Aw I can’t believe that.
Dave: Well it’s true, missy, and trust me she is a MISS Thang in the bedroom, a real do-me queen. There ain’t no MISTER about her.
Alan: My Lord, Dave was top with someone. The room is spinning; I just.. I just have to sit down. (Put his hand to his head and sat on an empty stool).
Burt: Damn I guess I won’t be having his kids then, huh?
Dave: Not without a turkey baister.
Alan: Well you know, (grabs Dave’s arm, but was clearly speaking to others as well as he was still very loud) Burtrude [rhymed with Gertrude, and I found out later that it meant ‘Burt’] borrowed mine for Christmas; don’t think I’ll be gettin’ that back anytime soon.
Dave: I don’t think I’d want it back.
Burt: Oh, I gave that back to you at the party. Don’t go there.

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Sample #3: The corner of the bar where the original five patrons had been when I arrived to the bar at 11 were still in that vicinity, nearly two hours later. Carl has just returned and put one hand on Alan’s left shoulder and his right hand on Dave’s right shoulder as if to hug them both. (tw010592+ @12:45).

Carl: You queens still holdin court here?
Dave: Well Burt’s been holdin somethin else.
Burt: O God tell the world.
Carl: I’m surprised someone as cute as you doesn’t have someone around to hold on to you. Excuse me (Carl walked away, tapped Burt a few times on the shoulder before leaving and stood in line to get a drink.).
Burt: (to Dave and Alan) Damn is he strong. You sure he’s a bottom? I mean you’re absolutely positive?
Alan: He was bottom.. with Dave. Dave. Dave was top; doesn’t that mean anything to you?
Dave: Hey I don’t know if he’s an exclusive [bottom] or not.
Burt: You don’t think he’s exclusive [bottom]?
Dave: That’s not what I said; I just don’t know. The topic never exactly got discussed.
Alan: Aw for God’s sake let it go. Carl has been with DAVE. Doesn’t that mean anything to you? Them goods are damaged! Give it up Burt.
Dave: Well, sounds like Burt is quite willing to give it up.
Humor categorizing for the purpose of this study followed rather closely to Mindess’s (1992, 1990) suggestions with the only deviations being those presented in section 4.B.1. Common humor segments emerged in some of the humor types. Within humor class one, common examples of philosophical humor were those like Beau’s, "Hey I say why commit to one when there’s another better one nearby?" in sample #8. This was said after Jeff had made a joke that made light of Beau’s promiscuity; Beau’s attempt to say something witty or clever was necessary and by being a joke which disparaged no one fit it more into the category of philosophical.

The other, nonsense humor, was typically puns; the kind of humor that begs an audience to moan at its inaneness or silliness. Added to this were the examples of drag names which had no real parallel in Mindess’s studies since heterosexuals never made comments like Bobb’s "Oo drag name!" Using such jokes, almost a pun made with a person’s (drag) name and something that someone had just said was so common that many are listed in an appendix at the end of the document. Some turned out to be the real drag name of some men in the Columbus (and elsewhere) gay community or the names of one-time-only drag queens at a city-wide charity
event known as 'Bat-n-Rouge' in which men play softball while wearing women's clothes. Also included in HCl were humorous events or scenes from plays, movies, or television shows that people had seen. Matt, for example, shared funny lines from the program King of the Hill quoting Peggy Hill about husband Hank’s constipation; Bobb, Cris, Greg and Tony often quoted AbFab, Cybill, Golden Girls, Powers that Be, Friends, Seinfeld, Roseanne, Murphy Brown, Ellen, Mary Tyler Moore, Rhoda, The Nanny, Third Rock and The Simpsons quite often as well as favorite characters like Bernice Clifton and Suzanne Sugarbaker on Designing Women, Hyacinth on Keeping up Appearances, Laverne on Empty Nest, the Church Lady, the cheerleaders, Mary-Catherine Galligher and the fabulously gay duo from Saturday Night Live, and Mrs. Sloakum on Are You Being Served? Such humor and quotes were recorded as nonsense except in those cases where lines were not being 'requoted' but rather recycled. For example, when Rose said she felt bloated on Golden Girls, and Dorothy responded with "Well, that explains the puffiness," this was nonsense humor when Bobb shared the line with Cris. It became hostile when Bobb recycled the line to make fun of Cris’s weight gain calling him "Puffy Rose." This link between shared media situation comedies and being able to both 'quote lines' and 'use them as one’s own' is what helped someone like Bobb turn HCl material into a HC3 or HC4.
event which resulted in, eventually, Bobb and Cris increasing their own friendship levels.

Sick or scatological humor was consistent with Mindess's use of the terms exclusively; he compared them to the type of bodily function humor enjoyed by teens or pre-teens. The best examples could be found in shows like *Beavis and Butt-head*, and examples from field notes included Beau's comment to Marc (See sample #6) about Marc having a "bleedin' ol' pussy," or nicknames given to the subject, Brad, which ranged in explicitness from "Chewbacca ears" and "PukeButt" to "Cum Junkie" and "Scat queen." Others like Cris had nicknames like "Towsha" which was an acronym for "Tall one who shaves her/his anus." These nicknames were sick or scatological whereas a nickname for Bob, "Marcia Marcia Marcia" and "Little Mr. Furman," and "Little Power Queen" were more silly or nonsense being based on television characters and news events as opposed to bodily parts and functions. Other examples included "Little Miss Nothing," "Princess Tiny Meat," and "Burning Bush," nicknames which referred to men's body parts. There were numerous examples of this type, encountered also by Cheseboro (See chapter 2.), though his research did not include any classification or coding of humor as that was not his purpose in that (1991) study.
Ethnic and other forms of hostile humor fit into HC3. The disparaged in hostile humor were almost always part of a larger subgroup themselves (Targets included the overweight, the effeminate, the ill, the old, the young, the unattractive, the uneducated, various ethnic groups, bisexuals, non-native speakers, nerds, geeks, and those who danced or dressed poorly.). My first entrance into tg, a bar known as 'The Garage,' led to one of its patrons who called himself "Phyllis" to walk over, look me up and down, snap his fingers and scream 'Guess you don't know where Lazarus [a clothing and department store in Columbus] is,' making fun of my flannel shirt which was appropriate attire at tw or te but not tg. Also included are Sample #4's comments from Joe, Greg, and Marty about the racial mix at one of the bars and Gary's jokes (not included in the document) which were both racial and hostile toward People of Color, including words like "Spook," "Nigger," and "Jigaboo." Though some of his comments were recorded they were done so before anyone was made aware that I was pursuing this project and subjects did not know that they might be quoted. As such and due to the language of his speech and its lack of necessity for making theoretical claims within this study, none of these comments are repeated here. Suffice it to say they remain consistent with Mindess's categorization schemes recommended in 1992. Similarly, sexual humor was at times more graphic than one
might expect. One subject referred to his anus as 'Grand Opening' and several had mentioned a friend names 'Feather,' 'Skinny Elvis,' and 'Fat Elvis,' which turned out to be dildos. Beau often made comments like, "Wanna fuck a cissy?" and Marc referred to an ex as his "Favorite little fudge-packer since Ben and Jerry." In order to be classified as sexual humor, the humor had to be about real people, known to others. That is, Suzanne saying "We put a man on the moon... I say we can put one on you too" to her lesbian friend on Designing Women is not sexual when Dex, Timmy or Kim are sharing funny lines they'd heard on television, but it would become sexual if told to lesbian friends Sharon, Eddi, Jill and Helga standing nearby as if the comment were one of their own. Likewise, Miles being told by Frank after entering a gay bar on Murphy Brown, "Don't pick up a quarter if you drop one in here; you may be picking up a date for the evening in the process." is not HC4 when I share the quote to you as a quote form that show. When reworded and paraphrased by Dex as "Grab that quarter down there; I'm in the mood for some loving," it clearly becomes part of HC4 as it is no longer nonsense or about people removed from the situation, but rather to someone about a real person existing in the here and now. It should be added that even tough Mindess did not cite or use Bales's and Cohen's 1990 SYMLOG notions, some of his categorization requirements are consistent with what Bales referred to in
his discussions of the differences in F-communication and B-communication.

These rules of thumb guided the categorizing of humor segments or jokes throughout this research. Categorizing and sorting were done by hand. Although computer sort programs were available, (programs like NUDIST and other content analytic programs like it), hand-coding was chosen for a couple of reasons.

First, the large amount of notes which would have to be entered by hand made the process more time consuming than necessary. With 43 months of field notes, many of them taken before programs like the NUDIS*T Sort was available, much of the coding and sorting was already underway before I had access to the technology.

Second, coding notes on computer would be difficult pragmatically. Suprasegmental features like pitch or duration are not handled by any of the existing computer sorts (at least, not yet), and the suprasegmentals and the non-verbals did prove useful when trying to understand the humor AS humor.

At the same time it should be added that nothing was lost, in this case at least, by doing the coding by hand.
Notes were written in the margins of field notes when it came time to sort the data. Early attempts at sorting were difficult. Originally, I was struck by the use of male and female gender pronouns and the possibility of some rules or norms existing which could address that more linguistic focus. An F or M in the right margin was used to mark pronoun usage at first, as was the use of blue and pink highlighting pens, but such pronoun markers seemed to tie to relationship types and relationship levels rather early. As such, the original markings were re-coded using fr and mr in the left margins and relationship level (numbers 1 - 4) in the right margin. When doubt existed a question mark was used or a hybrid code. A "2/3," for example was used to indicate that one person considered the relationship a level 2 but the other seemed to treat it more like a level 3. Such coding was invaluable as I tried to add to Nicotera's FR and MR literatures.

The actual results are discussed in the next section. Specifically, the results are broken into three sets. The first two appear next (in this chapter) as they relate most to the research questions at hand. The third set of serendipitous results appear at the beginning of the fifth chapter, after chapter four and, in turn, after the discussions of the answers to the original research questions have been completed. Let us now turn to the
presentation of those first two sets of results and the answering of the research questions from chapter one.
4.A.3. HOW RESULTS WILL BE PRESENTED

The discussion of results is broken into numbered subsets; after which the conclusions are discussed in general, as is the implication of the study for theory and for future research.
4.B. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Mindess et al. had argued that humor's content, the subject matter of jokes and humor, was potentially indicative of people's age and maturity. His ten primary humor contents (sexual, male-demeaning, female-demeaning, hostile, ethnic, sick, scatological, nonsense, satire, and philosophical) were certainly used by most, if not all, people in his studies. At the same time, he discovered that people had a preferred humor content, that is, even though Sally may rate jokes as being funny in each of the above categories, she would likely rate certain categories consistently funnier than others and/or would share those preferred humor segments in observable settings. As such, he enunciated a preferred humor style among various participants based on responses to jokes in the ten categories he identified. What he found was that certain humor styles clustered around certain humor contents; that is, people who preferred jokes about sex also preferred jokes that demeaned men or women, and vice versa. Subjects who enjoyed ethnic jokes tended to also prefer hostile humor and vice versa. People who preferred sick humor usually seemed to enjoy scatological humor and vice versa. People who preferred nonsense humor also preferred satirical and philosophical humor, when they were able to understand the satire, and vice versa. From this emerged four different
humor clusters HC4, HC3, HC2, and HC1 (The terms are his; the abbreviations mine.). As such, someone with a HS4 (humor style 4) would have a statistically significant preference for jokes that were part of HC4 and so on. This is best capsulized by the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humor Style</th>
<th>Humor Class</th>
<th>Humor types in the humor class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS1</td>
<td>HC1</td>
<td>Nonsense, Satirical, Philosophical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS2</td>
<td>HC2</td>
<td>Sick, Scatological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS3</td>
<td>HC3</td>
<td>Ethnic, Hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS4</td>
<td>HC4</td>
<td>Sexual, Degrades-Males, Degrades-Females</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: Initial Chart; Humor Styles, Humor Classes and Humor Types: Mindess's original schema for The Antioch Humor Test.

What Mindess did with this information included coming up with attributes which fit his researchers' notions of people's humor preferences. For example, people who scored low in their liking/tolerance of ethnic humor were considered "socially sensitive, highly concerned," and devoted to "fairness and consideration of others," who are prepared to "give help and sympathy and expect to receive help and sympathy from others." People who scored medium/moderately high in ethnic humor ratings were labelled "realists" who "appear to be unsentimental and take pride in rejecting illusions." People who scored high/extremely high were considered "cynical and insensitive" with the probability of being "socially crude, ready to accept

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stereotypes as accurate,… [and] racially bigoted (Mindess, 1991, 39)."

Certainly people who preferred such jokes over all others (HS3) enjoyed jokes from other classes as well (HC1, HC2, and HC4), but Mindess argued that in cases where the preferences were overt (statistically significant) it was reasonably possible to not just put certain attributes and adjectives to subjects but also to predict certain, more definitive demographic attributes. For example, younger subjects (pre-teens) were considered almost exclusively HS1s. Teens were mostly HS2s though some limited HS3s, HS4s and HS1s were observed. Subjects in their twenties or thirties fit better into HS3, though the number of HS4s was rather high as well; some HS1 and HS2 were also observed. People over forty were predominantly HS4, though many HS3 were found as well. Later studies with retirees found as many HS1s as HS4s, the two predominant humor styles with those subjects.

Mindess suggested that it might be that as people grew older their humor styles expanded. That is not to say that all people move from HS1s to HS2s, then to HS3s and so on. Rather, at the very earliest of ages, our first experiences with humor are nonsense like the riddles and rhymes and knock-knock jokes which were probably the first humor
segments we shared with peers and parents. As we grew older and matured (all at different rates of course) our humor repertoire began to expand. As such, even though the majority of teens fit into HS2, some have matured and come to prefer humor more fitting with HS3 or HS4. Still others remain partial to jokes in HCl, not necessarily due to any slower maturity than others which permitted them to move up to HS2 but rather due to exposure and understanding of HC2 jokes, but still preferring those in HC1. As such, people, as they reach adulthood, become more diverse in their humor preferences which is why, for example, a fifty-year old is more likely to be a HS4 than would a twenty year old, and also somewhat more likely to be an HS4 than another humor style. However, our level of certainty regarding that person's status as an HS4 should be minuscule when compared to our level of certainty that the five-year old will be of HS1. With age and experience comes greater diversity and sophistication as well as a greater range of choices for humor contents. This is, thus, a conclusion that has been inferred by associates of Mindess (Mindess, 1991, 39).

Acknowledging the problems of pencil-paper tasks and statistical research on issues like humor, Mindess also included an examination of jokes that subjects volunteered to tell either to researchers or in observed rooms with other subjects. As such, some level of doubt certainly
existed regarding the conclusions he could make with he, himself, indicating how useful it would have been to have data from these same people if they didn't know that their humor was the focus of research. An additional impact would have existed if these subjects involved had all been closer to each other, or at least knew each other well enough to want to talk to each other. Some, for example, never talked at all while in the wait room and some of the small groups of six or seven subjects never engaged in enough humor or significant banter to make their comments useful for the study. Had these same quieter subjects/groups taken part more often in the joking, one can't help but wonder if the results would be different.

Clearly, the method used here (See earlier chapter.) is different from that used by Mindess. Also different are the goals of this research. Yet, Mindess's insights of humor's relation to demographic information such as age are very useful when combined with the Nicoteran research on friend and mate relationship discussed in an earlier chapter and the samples of talk in three gay Columbus nightclubs, some of which appear in the appendix of this document.

Findings from this study indicate that age may or may not have an effect on humor styles (Subjects' ages were not always known and certainly not all that varied, with
patron's known ages ranging from 18 to 72; only six people however fell out of the 21 to 53 range.). Age did not seem to significantly impact the humor; though at one point that was considered. In particular, humor at tg, the first location visited, tended to include an awful lot of hostile, nonsense, satire and ethnic humor. At te most humor could be classified as sick, ethnic, hostile and sexual. At Tw, humor was far more varied (as was the age of patrons) and was mostly scatological, sexual, hostile, satirical and sick. If we believe that increased age of patrons has an influence, we would find these categories not all that surprising with the greatest diversity in humor contents at tw, the bar with the widest range of ages and the oldest median age. We would expect the least diversity at The Garage given that its patrons' ages are much lower than ages at te or tw. At te, median ages fall between tg and tw except on some Thursday and Saturday nights when te advertises itself as having "college night" and allows under-21 year old patrons to the bar, referred to by several patrons of tw (and two patrons of te) as "twinkie night" and "chippie night." More than a dozen tw patrons spoke of te in past tense as "I used to go there," or "Do you remember when we first walked over from te to tw?" People at te speak more of having "grown... tired of tg" and feeling "afraid to go into tw; it's a leather bar." Several customers at te suggested they feared the "old men hitting
on me" or "leather and the S&M sex" even though they'd never been to tw, and even though such images were more stereotypical than factual. For example, some of these conversations which took place at te, particularly those on a Wednesday night, were said by patrons who were at te on a night advertised as "cruise night" suggesting far more of a sexual connotation at te than the leather would at tw. Also, on those same nights, no men at tw were even wearing leather, and even te has "no cover for men in leather on weekends" with a few exceptions, obviously encouraging at least some patronage typically associated with tw. What men at tw are really saying when they talk about "being over" te is that they have found more of a niche or feeling of fit at tw than they currently feel at te. What patrons of te mean when they talk about tw, particularly those who have never ventured inside, is that they feel a sense of fit at te. Similarly, men at tg predominantly indicated that they went to tg only, with a sizeable minority also reporting going to te. The majority of patrons (spoken to or listened to) at tg indicated they'd never been to tw, and the majority of those indicated they'd never even been to a gay bar, in any city, other than tg. Many had indicated that they've been to te but as one pointed out "It was scary" and several indicated "Yes I've been to te but only on Sundays." (tg is closed on most Sundays.).
So what is really going on in these particular nightclubs which makes many patrons come to view them so differently? Clearly age is not the most significant factor, though some could argue that it is a possible one. Additional information like arrival patterns to the clubs is significant. At tg, very few people entered alone; the majority enter in groups larger than two. At te, most enter the bar solo; this was especially true on Wednesday's cruise nights, but even if one discards all notes from Wednesdays at te, one still finds a greater number of people entering te alone than at tg. At tw, people seldom entered in groups with a few noticeable exceptions like "pride day" or "club nights," which cater to many groups and gay organizations outside of the city as well as within. Half the time, patrons entered solo and nearly half the time they entered in pairs. Unlike people entering solo at tg or te, patrons of tw who entered alone or in duos almost always ended up meeting or expecting to meet someone out; that is, groups of friends had contacted each other indicating that friends should meet them out. Thus, tw contained, as a rule, not just older patrons but also younger patrons with rather established, sometimes long-lasting, friend or mate relationships. Several people spoke of "I came out because Stan told me to meet him here," or "Chris and Dan are going out when they get back from the party and I haven't seen them in a while." On some occasions, people came out to see
friends and mates with whom their ties had been severed, "My roommate just called to let me know Newman is out and driving a brand new car; so, I figured this was a good time to track down the bitch and get back the 200 bucks he owes me," and "My boyfriend cancelled our date because he was sick again, and if history is any indicator he always comes here and meets other men to make his colds go away; this time we're [the person speaking and his two friends] gonna catch 'em."

The sentiment of many people, not just at tw but at te and tg as well, is that you go to tg to talk with the friend you went out with, go to te to make a new friend, and go to tw to run into old friends. Regardless of which bar the patrons were in, and regardless of their age, what affected humor content the most was the level of the relationship shared by the speaker and listener(s). People who were newly introduced generally joked in ways consistent with HS1: nonsense jokes and satire, particularly about non-gays. As a pair of people eventually came to see each other more often at the clubs, started introducing the new acquaintance to other friends and generally stand near or talk to the person more often, comraderie was strong enough that humor contents started to branch out more. Humor segments started to include more sick humor and scatological; the latter is especially true if the two are starting to date or beginning
an MR2 relationship. Sick humor or scatological humor was never shared on the first night of meeting, at least not within my earshot and note-taking. As relationships intensified, humor repertoires expanded. Greg, for example, introducing Joe, came to introduce him not just as "Joe" but as "my friend Joe" "New York Joe" or "Joe, a friend of mine." It seemed that such introductions did a few things.

First, it indicated that the person Greg was standing near was 'just' a friend and that Greg's status was single if the person he is introducing Joe to is someone he, Greg, has his eye on. Second, it indicated a level of commitment to Joe; that is, even though I, Greg, am single and may be interested and available, Joe is close enough to me as a friend that I want to share that information with you and also let you know that there is the possibility that Joe and I may have ridden down to the bar together, meaning it would be awkward if you wanted to get together with me tonight unless I could ride with you, since Joe drove.)

On a more personal note, these introductions also made it easier for me as a note-taker to sense-make the level of the subjects' friendships. Greg, introducing Joe in such a way, indicated the sentiment that Greg felt between he and Joe, being in a FR3 level friendship. Similar introductions by Joe or even complimentary behavior which
reinforced Greg's sentiment would be enough to confirm that a level 3 FR did exist between Joe and Greg. At this stage Joe and Greg would joke about certain matters rather privately. Greg, as a rather good friend and informant of mine by then was comfortable enough making a variety of jokes about a variety of subjects; Joe did the same. These jokes included a range of hostile jokes about various people: gay and straight, in the bar and out, as well as national personalities and even issues of race in some dyads.

Sample #4: Greg and Joe one night were joined by Marty who was friends with Greg, but just meeting Joe for the first time. As Joe shook hands with Marty, (te012994):

Joe: You look surprised man. Seen a ghost?
Greg: Yea we're the ghosts in this bar tonight [That night, like many Sundays, included a sizeable black and African-American population at te., probably about 1/4 or 1/3 the club though the portion on non-Sundays is closer to 1/20]. (All chuckled a bit.).
Marty: Well you are the first white guy I've been introduced to tonight.
Greg: Aw but you're not complaining I hope; I know how you fancy dark meat.
Marty: Oh I do not; don't start spreading false rumors to people. Hell, I don't even know why I come out here on Sunday nights anymore.
Greg: Same reason we do, I bet. Garage is closed and tw is dead after midnight.
Marty: So where do all those good looking white men go on a Sunday night?
Joe: Back to their girlfriends, child. [All laugh].

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The three gentlemen, all white, continued talking, especially Joe and Marty, as they shared a common interest in sports and discussed the Super Bowl. Very limited joking occurred until Joe joined back in and told an ethnic joke, demeaning to blacks and African-Americans, and all laughed.

Sample #5: Even a pair of friends one of whom is white and the other black shared ethnic jokes with each other though certainly less often than were told by all-white groups of males about non-whites. The majority of the jokes took place in te, mostly on a Sunday, one of the bars’ busiest and most crowded nights. Common joking between a white friend Ed and a black friend Andy included (tw 070596):

Ed: Andy, look there’s that guy [a black patron who both had watched on the dance-floor earlier that night. He had danced shirtless and was very athletic in build.]
Andy: (turned to see the guy) That is not him, not even close. My God all of you people really do think that all of us people look alike don’t you. [Both laugh.]
Ed: (pauses a while and looks again) No I’m not wrong that is him. Look again.
Andy: (looking again) Yea that IS him. He looked better far away.
Ed: No, you just don’t recognize him with his shirt back on. See how you are?
Andy: And how did you know him so well.
Ed: I’d know the butt anywhere.
Andy: O and see how you are
Ed: (interrupting) And before you say it, no I don’t think that all of your butts look the same. So don’t even say it and don’t even flatter yourself! [puts hand on hip and waves his hand in front of Andy].
Andy: Bitch, I’m gonna tell him you’re in the KKK and you won’t ever have a chance with him, unless he’s into something sick and twisted like that.. if that’s the case, he deserves you.
Ed: And I deserve him.
Four humor styles, preferred subject matter of humor segments, emerged amongst the gay men in the Columbus gay nightclubs. Humor categories remain somewhat similar to the original categories put forth by Mindess but have been altered, partly due to the nature of the population. For example, jokes demeaning to women are interpreted very differently when uttered by non-gay men (See Davies, Holland, and Mindess, 1991.) than when uttered by gay men. Also gay men frequently told jokes demeaning to men which has an added level of significance given that non-gay men told such jokes so rarely, according to Mindess et. al., that they practically dismissed them as ad hoc examples. Likewise, non-gay subjects in other studies told anti-gay jokes, but such jokes have a different meaning, somewhat, when told by gay patrons in a bar and the anti-straight jokes told somewhat often in the gay bars raised that subject matter to a level significant enough to merit attention. Capsulizing, we can summarize the information, vis a vis the field notes, as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style/Class</th>
<th>Categories of humor content in the humor class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS1</td>
<td>HC1: Nonsense, Philosophical, Satire-B, Satire-g/R^, S^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS2</td>
<td>HC2: Sick, Scatological, Satire-g/Rk, Sk, Satire-L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS3</td>
<td>HC3: Ethnic, Hostile, Satire-gays/Sk, R^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS4</td>
<td>HC4: Sexual, Satire-gays/Rk, S^</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2: Revised Chart: Humor Styles, Humor Classes, and Humor Types: Adapted to meet the need of studying a marginalized speech community formed by patrons of the gay male nightclub.
4.B.1. RESULTS, PART ONE;
REVIEWED CHART: HUMOR STYLES AND CLASSES

The previous table merits discussion for many reasons. One question any reader may have is "What is the significance or value in having such a chart?" Another is "How did the chart emerge; specifically what constituted classification of humor as nonsense vs sick? And what merited the assignment of some types of humor (like ethnic and hostile) to the same category as was made by Mindess, et. al. (1991) but led to assigning a different humor type (satire) to different categories? Perhaps most important to a scholar of communication, vis a vis this projects' stated goals is "To what extent does this provide relevance for a scholar of communication and or someone interested in the role of humor as an entry or intensity variable in friend and mate relationships?"

This last question, though probably the most important of the questions above, will be addressed in detail later when Mindess's Humor Style and Class (with minor revisions vis a vis the table I've constructed above) are linked to the stages of friend and mate relationship according to Nicotera's theory incorporating entry and intensity variables (1992). The other questions are answered next, however, in that answering them will help lend greater...
credence to the answering of the question linking humor class and style to stages of friend and mate relationships.

The significance and usefulness of a chart depicting humor styles and classes in conjunction with categories of humor content was best articulated by Mindess (1991). He argued that, in the general populations which he studied, it should be possible to argue that jokes which he delineated as nonsense and philosophical actually must have more in common with each other than his (and others' before him) original categories of humor types would indicate. That is, it would seem impossible or, at the very least, highly unlikely, that he would have discovered these same results unless there was truly something which bound these categories to each other.

For example, subjects who favored nonsense over other types of humor shared a statistically significant preference for philosophical humor as well. No other statistically significant links emerged between either of these categories and any other. Similarly statistical significance was evident for linking sick and scatological humor with each other, but not with other humor types. Ethnic humor was statistically significant when compared to hostile humor. This led to four humor classes which the preceding chart capsulizes. What the chart does not show, but adding
credence to its utility, is that Mindess found similarities when comparing a subject's preferred humor style with a variety of personality traits, demographic information and details about the relationship of the people engaging in the humor. Specific details and a discussion of each seems tangential and rather lengthy for our purposes here. However, the reader is referred to Mindess, et. al (1991) for an overview of his work (chapter 1), the questionnaires used (chapter 2), categories and scoring (chapter 3), analysis and data (chapter 4), discussion of humor class's relationships to personality, intimacy levels, and demographics in each of the four humor classes and styles he postulated (chapters 5 through 8), and a discussion of implications and theory in the remaining chapters. The chart he posited is significant in that, for the populations he studied, the charts indicate which humor type preferences united subjects together to others of their humor class and which categories made them distinct from each other. For Mindess, one use of the chart (in conjunction with chapters 2 through 4 of his book) was to be able to make reasonable predictions about subjects and eventually patients in psychotherapy, given their responses and reactions to a variety of humor types. Clearly our purposes here are different.
The chart posed in this document differs somewhat from Mindess's classifications as well; those differences are justified in the next section. Also different are some of the goals of this study. Whereas Mindess writes with an eye to humor's role in therapy (particularly in publications after his 1991 work), he did in essence contribute to science by establishing a high level of predictability within his study. One set of predictions he was able to support was that a dialogue containing a very broad variety of humor styles is most likely a dialogue involving people of different humor styles or of people who do not know or feel comfortable with each other yet. However, people who share a humor style are more likely to stick to that style when around others who have that as their own preferred humor styles. The degree of certainty of this prediction increased if the people who shared humor styles also shared other experiences as well (like a friendship or previous contact in his interactive studies). This suggests something as much about communication as about psychology or psychotherapy: humor that is shared by a subject is not just influenced by what he or she thinks is funny but also by what he or she thinks other people will perceive as funny and also influenced by the kind of communicative relationship that exists between sender and receiver. What Mindess does not address (as it was not one of his goals) is
how that communicative relationship is linked to humor
styles. That is, Mindess suggests the following:

Let A, B, C, D, and E be people of HS4.
Let F, G, H, I, and J be people of HS3.
Let K, L, M, and N be people of HS2.
Let vowels (A, E, I, O, and U) be friends with each other.
Let others (consonants) be people who have not met yet.

Then it is reasonable to anticipate the following via

Figure 4.3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP I MEMBERS &amp; HC COMPARED</th>
<th>GROUP II MEMBERS &amp; HC COMPARED</th>
<th>HOW GROUP I COMPARES TO II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A E /HC4/</td>
<td>B C /HC4/</td>
<td>I &gt; II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A E /HC3/</td>
<td>B C /HC3/</td>
<td>I &lt; II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A B /HC4/</td>
<td>D E /HC4/</td>
<td>I = II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A B /HC4/</td>
<td>O P /HC1/</td>
<td>I = II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A K /HC4/</td>
<td>B L /HC4/</td>
<td>I = II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A K /HC3/</td>
<td>B L /HC3/</td>
<td>I = II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A E /HC4/</td>
<td>O U /HC4/</td>
<td>I &gt; II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A O /HC1/</td>
<td>A P /HC1/</td>
<td>I &gt; II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A O /HC1/</td>
<td>A O /HC4/</td>
<td>I = II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A O /HC2/</td>
<td>A P /HC2/</td>
<td>I &lt; II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3: Group Membership and Humor Classes: A Comparison

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It is clear according to Mindess et. al. that the presence of a pre-existing relationship influences the type of humor which people share. Specific details are missing. Mindess compared subjects by the presence or absence of some pre-existing relationship: it could be good or bad; friend, mate or acquaintance; FR1, FR2, FR3, Fr4, MR1, MR2, MR3, or MR4: Mindess did not attempt to distinguish the kinds of relationships that subjects were engaged in: only the presence or absence of a pre-existing interaction. In light of Nicoteran research on friend and mate relationships and entry and intensity variables as communicative factors in those relationships, one sees that Mindess's preliminary studies would benefit greatly if consideration of the kinds of pre-existing relationships amongst subjects had been considered. That is a consideration in this study and is discussed later. Suffice it to say that Mindess's charting of humor types was significant for a variety of the conclusions made in his seminal 1991 work but at the same time not a "definitive list" for a few reasons. The most obvious oversight, from an interpersonal communication perspective, is the one described earlier in this paragraph: Mindess ignored that there are differing degrees of pre-existing relationships. The biggest oversight to humorologists, including Mindess himself, was the absence of attention to the population itself.
The population, though reasonably sampled, did not distinguish subjects by race, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation even though these groups are believed to use humor in ways that may or may not be like a 'mainstream population.' Mindess did consider subjects' age, gender, and education (which had been believed to influence how people use humor and which emerged as true within Mindess's work), but none of the variables, deemed important by others who study humor, were considered. The impact of such an oversight, points out Mindess, is probably a small one. This may be true on one level, but Mindess's creation of categories presupposes a purely heterosexual sampling. That is, the man whose preferred jokes and humor style is one that is demeaning to women is likely to be described as someone who demeans women due to his own unhealthy marriage to a woman or due to the man's perception that women have more power than he does in that women have power to withhold sex from the man. The gay man who prefers those same jokes may still be a sexist but clearly the analysis of the sexism has to be different.

The gay man, for example, may hold it against heterosexual women because they have more dating options than does the gay man. The gay man's anti-woman comments may be directed more at lesbians than at heterosexual women because of the conflicts which emerge within a lesbian-gay
community. The comment may also be viewed by some gay men as a form of self-deprecation given societal stereotypes of gay men assuming women's roles. It may also be seen as an anti-straight joke, more so than an anti-female joke when told about heterosexual women. Clearly, other interpretations could exist as well.

What is important here is that Mindess's sampling of the general population likely included gay men, however small or large in number. However, gay men likely did not joke as gay men in the environments created. And, even if the gay men did joke as gay men, their humor was evaluated as if they were non-gay joking as such by the researchers. One may or may not expect gay humor to differ that drastically from the humor of their non-gay counterparts, but clearly people would have to (and should) anticipate that at least some differences will exist. This leads to the significance of the chart introduced in this document when compared to that of Mindess. This chart, specifically, describes humor types within a gay male community when gay men are acting as members. Modification of Mindess's original chart has been made as a result of the 43 months of field notes, subsequent analysis and categorizing. Modification has been necessary because the chart introduced in this document does illustrate a best fit for notes obtained. Creation of four categories of satire was
necessary in that satire, within this population at least, was a very dominant humor type and people at various times when interacting with different people used very distinct types of satire. The differences in satire seemed to be based on three variables:

1. Whether or not the subject of the satire (also known as "the butt of the joke") is known to the speaker, receiver or both
2. Whether or not the subject of the satire is a gay male, lesbian female or non-gay
3. Whether or not the sender and receiver are in a FR or MR and at which level

The difference between Mindess’s chart and the one created for this research highlight some differences between the humor of Mindess’s notion of the general population and the joking of gay men as gay men in the gay nightclubs of Columbus, Ohio.
4.B.2 RESULTS, PART TWO:
HUMOR LEVEL GROWTH AS A FILTER IN FR AND MR

Whereas one result of this study was the supplement to Mindess's original categories (See the chart in the previous section.), another result is the relating of humor styles to levels of friend and mate relationships, which is detailed in this section.

Recall that friend and mate relationship levels were depicted by Nicotera et al., as shown in Figure 4.4. Equally important for this study is that Mindess's humor styles can be similarly depicted (See Figure 4.5.). This leads us to examine the next diagram (Figure 4.6) in light of the work by Nicotera, by Mindess, and by this author. The concentric circles in Figure 4.6 not only combine the other two diagrams, but they also depict how humor styles affect FR levels and vice versa. A comparable argument can be made (and will be later) about MR levels and humor.

Figure 4.4: Nicotera's Friend and Mate Relationship Levels.
Most important to scholars in communication or to humorologists may be the justification of the diagram below. That discussion follows the diagram which capsulizes "Results, Two."

Figure 4.5: Mindessian Venn Diagram of Humor Styles.

Figure 4.6: Humor style as an entry and intensity variable.
Friendship is treated as a socially-constituted construct; that is, what members of a community view as necessary elements of friendship are necessary but not always sufficient elements of friendship. Further, as "friendship" and its definition varies (at least somewhat) from culture to culture or even subculture to subculture, at times, it is necessary for us to consider the perception of friendship relationships amongst members of a shared community and to consider the humor of community members when they act as members. It is for this reason that (See the previous section.) the original Mindess chart has been altered for this study -- to enhance the validity of this study.

On one level it seems intuitive that changes in humor styles and friendship or mate relationship levels would be somehow related. Mindess’s research on humor, Nicotera’s on relationships and my own data collection and analysis of the humor of men in gay nightclubs all combine to form what I loosely referred to as a humor-calculus for relationships earlier in this chapter. It is now useful to analyze that notion further.

Though the term "calculus" has a variety of meanings to people, mathematicians typically refer to it as the branch of mathematics which focuses on how relationships and
functions change, generally across time. As such, a humor-calculus for human relationships is possible to create or define. Just as mathematicians have devised and made use of theorems, postulates, definitions and rules like the fundamental theorem of calculus, the definition of the derivative, the product rule, the chain rule, the power rule, the quotient rule, and implicit differentiation, so also is it possible for this author to present at this time the following results of this study so that these theorems of a human-relation humor-calculus may be used by future researchers of humor, relational communication patterns, or even marginalized populations like the gay male bar community.

**Theorem 1.** Though friendships progress in different ways at different rates, all move through the FR levels in an orderly manner (That is, if two people are engaged in a level 3, FR they must have, at least, experienced some periods of time engaged in level 1 and level 2 relationships.)

Note what this theorem does not say is that FR3 relationships MUST be immediately preceded by FR2 relationships. Consider, for example, the stages of five different friendships observed in the gay nightclubs of Columbus over the four years of data collection:
Definition 1. Routine relationship development shall be defined as those relationships which progress in increasingly intense manners with no 'falling back' within a relationship and no 'switchover across relationships.' Routine relationships are called routine because they follow a mathematically-progressive intensity level, routine in that the relationship goes from 1 to 2 to 3 to 4; they are not necessarily the way that a large majority of observed relationships developed. In fact, only about half of those relationships could be defined as 'routine.'

Definition 2. Falling back refers to a decrease in the intensity and closeness of a friendship; that is, a decrease in the relationship level's number. Falling back can be by one level (eg., an FR3 --> FR2) or by multiple levels (eg., FR4 --> FR1). Unlike relationship growth which must pass through intermediate levels before increasing to the highest levels, falling back may be EITHER gradual or sudden. A sudden falling back typically occurs, however, only when a sudden catalytic events causes the change.

Definition 3. A switch-over across relationship occurs when either what has been a friendship relation becomes a mate relation or when a mate relationship becomes a friendship relation. When a switch-over occurs, the level number may remain the same or fall back.
Postulate 1. Though there are certain predictable factors about the observed relationships, no predictability about the length of stay at any of the levels is possible. It is certainly clear, while it is occurring, that a relationship is near its end or ready to fall back, switch-over, or even dissolve altogether. However, there is no way to gauge this when the pair have just moved to the new level, only when the level or relationship is nearly over. No mention of a relationship’s progression through the various levels is to be taken as any indicator about the length of time spent at any of the levels. Level duration certainly seems reasonably tangible from the field notes but no predictable variants emerged.
Thus far the following has been illustrated in section 4.B.:

1. Joking about a particular humorous content (in this case, "top" or "bottom" - ness) may be done in a variety of ways, in a variety of humor styles, though not all styles may be equally suitable for the particular content and context for a particular audience. The same may be true regarding single or coupled status.

2. Since it is possible to invoke different humor styles for sharing a variety of humor content, and since those styles vary in terms of their suitability, then the style one chooses:
   
   a. may be a (maybe even, 'the most') successful style, causing the humor role and function to be the same.
   
   b. may not necessarily "fail" but may not necessarily be the most successful style, causing some level of confusion about the potential success of the communicative act (the humor segment, in this case).
   
   c. may be an unsuccessful style, the humor segment and humor function are virtually opposite entities.

3. The degree to which communicative success is met (that is, the degree to which humor role matches the sender's message function) has an effect on how receivers of the message see the sender, particularly her/his sense of
humor and, to some extent, her/his communication competence.

4. Since communication competence is aligned with others' perceptions of the speaker or sender of a message and to the sender's self concept, then chosen humor styles will have an effect on all of this.

5. Successful use of humor styles influences how the receiver perceives the sender and her/his competence, which, of course, is a factor in friend and mate relationship growth since perception of a speaker as having been "successful" inevitably supports that speaker's self-concept.

6. Unsuccessful communication or mis-communication may lead the receiver to make assumptions about the speaker, whether right or wrong, that may affect how the listener reacts to the speaker, inevitably leading to further mis-communication since the original speaker receives a message or messages from the listener reacting to the mis-communication, but the listener's response or reaction was a misreading of the speaker's original message to begin with. Thus, humor, like any communication can become "mis-communication," but due to some of humor's ambiguous nature at times (See chapter two.) invoking humor may increase the
amount of mis-communication if not used well or understood by all within the community in which it is shared and the context in which it is intended.

7. Since mis-communication is possible, maybe even likely, when humor is invoked, and one runs a communicative risk when using humor, humor’s presence in an exchange is a significant communicative marker of any one (or more) of several events. In this study alone, humor was used to demonstrate in-group knowledge, ability to follow norms within the speech community, the type of friendship shared by speaker and receivers in the communication environment, the type of relationship shared by speaker and the butt of jokes who are not present in the environment, the types of humor the speaker is likely to enjoy, and, as will be shown in chapter five, subjects’ couple-status.

It may be useful now to take these discussions and samples of talk and apply them more directly to this project’s purpose and research questions, repeated below from chapter one:

The purpose of this project is to mesh [this] understanding of EVs and IVs in FRs and MRs with an understanding of humor to add to the theory of FRs and MRs in interpersonal communication as well as to contribute, specifically, by showing the ways that humor works as an EV and IV in observable developing and sustaining FRs and MRs by a population in a specific setting.
Purpose: "To determine how humor works communicatively as both an EV and IV in FRs and MRs in a marginalized population."

The series of research questions guiding this study include:

a. Does humor function as a variable in relationships and their development, and if humor does function as a variable (EV, IV, or both) then how does it function; i.e., what purpose(s) does it serve?

   i. If humor is a variable, then is it an EV, IV or both? And, how/why/what does it contribute?

   ii. Does humor serve different purposes in MRs when compared to FRs, and if so what are those different functions of humor?

b. Do certain types, forms, contents, or contexts of humor influence humor's role and/or function as an EV or IV in FRs or MRs? If such an influence does seem to exist, what is that influence?

c. As a FR or MR increases in intensity, how is humor affected? Is there an observable increase in the amount, intensity, or intimacy of the humor?

d. Is the opposite of "c" true; that is, does an increase in the observeability of more frequent humor, more intense humor or more intimate humor indicate anything about the FR or MR using it?

These will be addressed individually.

a. Does humor function as a variable in relationships and their development, and if humor does function as a variable (EV, IV, or both) then how does it function; i.e., what purpose(s) does it serve?
Yes. Humor functions as both an Entry Variable and Intensity Variable in all friend and mate relationships as observed in the gay nightclub population in Columbus, Ohio. Answers to the subsequent research questions help reveal humor’s purposes and functions.

i. If humor is a variable, then is it an EV, IV or both? And, how/ why/ what does it contribute?

Humor is both an EV and IV. Humor is an entry variable in that one must follow the speech community’s (unspoken) norms about how to engage in humor. Norms can be about humor type, humor content, humor context, and so on. Norms are not universals, necessarily, about how to joke but are very context-sensitive.

Sample #14: tw061595
Jack: You saying you’ve been with a woman?
Dale: I was married for thirteen years.
Rory: Really? I didn’t know you were married that long.
Jack: Thirteen years of that? Spearing for fish? Guess that makes you very experienced at being top
Rory: She’s drunk, Dale. Dismiss her.

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Jack’s friend makes an attempt at humor referring to his other friend and that person’s "top" or "bottom" -ness, but does so at the inappropriate time. Jack indicated his friend had messed up not necessarily because he said something that could never be said in the manner he said it, but rather the timing: Jack’s friends knew Jack but not each other, making it more difficult to engage in riskier humor; further, no one was joking at the time; in fact, Jack was listening to a friend with whom he had not spoken in a while about that friend’s years being married to a woman. Likewise, Kent’s successful ‘pick up’ of a person he’s just met is done via humor; by sharing humor segments about his own ability to be both top and bottom he is joking at an appropriate level for their current stage of relationship (MR0 or MR1) while at the same time reasonably pushing up to the next level:

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Sample #13: 070393

Kent: So each Christmas my parents come over and I’ve hung my [greeting] cards all around the place but I have to put the faggier ones up really high so mom doesn’t snoop and read what everyone wrote inside. So I’m in the kitchen and I hear this voice from the living room, "Kent what’s a TOP?"
Theo: O NO::: [laughing]
Kent: So I’m thinking she’d been in the garage and found my ex’s letters and was reading them but here I walk into the living room where I must’ve had 130 cards hanging up. But now there’s 129 hanging and one in mama’s hands. [A couple walk by.] There’s the two who sent me the card [pointing]. Cris and Scot, you won’t believe what happened over the holiday with the folks. [Introductions are made by Kent to both Scot and Cris. The five of us are there: Scot, Cris,
Theo (who Kent had just met that night), Kent and me. Kent repeated part of the story for Cris and Scot’s benefit and picked up where he’d left off.

Kent: Just my luck -- the one card that fell was the one they sent me.

Theo: Some naked hunks on the inside, huh?
Cris: No I just made a joke about Kent’s latest ex...
Kent: And then he writes, "Congratulations for being a Top." So here’s mom reading it, not even knowing I’m gay, and how the hell do you explain this one?
Cris: So you came out to them?
Kent: No: I said that this is the name of the degree I got in June (Kent had gotten an M.A. that summer and was working on a Ph.D.)
Scot: Holy shit. And they bought it?
Kent: Way too well. Cause when I went home to visit them; it was a Sunday. Dad says Mr. Deluca said to tell you congratulations. And I asked him why. Dad says he was congratulating me for earning my top degree -- Dad was telling everyone at church. [laughs from Scot and Cris]
Kent: Can’t you just see my dad going down the pews, "My son’s a top. My son’s a top. Yoo hoo my son’s a top!"
[laughs from Theo also]
Scot: well girlie girl you finally done made your pa-pa proud.
Cris: Well maybe back in Pig-farm, U.S.A. no one would know what the hell it meant.
Kent: oh yea? The whole time I was home, Skippy from the church choir was way too friendly.
Scot: Ah, your dad may actually get you a date out of this. Too bad more people didn’t know!
Kent: They do. The story gets better. I pick up the local newspaper that week and see a blurb in the newspaper about me becoming a Top!
Cris: You’re kidding.
Kent: No I got it at home [turned to Theo] You’ve all got to see it. It’s a riot.
Cris: Well, Kent isn’t someone -- in your town, even -- gonna pick up on that.
Kent: You’d think but my sister came over for dinner; she has her degree and she knows it’s called an M.A. but said the letters must stand for something. So I’m thinking of some abbreviation to come up with in a nanosecond and I blurt out ‘it stands for toward the Ph.D.; TO the P.’ [more laughing]
Scot: It’s like he lives in St. Olaf (A reference to Rose’s hometown in The Golden Girls; its residents are notorious for their stupidity).
Humor is an intensity variable as well. Examine the humor and talk of Dann, especially in samples 16 through 19. When first meeting and joking with Sean and his friends, his humor fulfills the necessary entry level needs of not being out of place, and further changes over time as his relationship with Sean intensifies and moves through to a level 4 MR. Humor was able to be more direct when poking fun at each other, but more significantly changed drastically in terms of its anti-gay satire, with his and Sean's tendency (but only while together) to share jokes demeaning to gays, especially gay men (This serendipitous result is discussed in greater detail in a subsequent chapter since it is not directly related to the original research questions posed for this study.). As the relationship decreased in intensity and eventually fell apart, humor types went from HS4 to HS1, at least when the two were present in the bar together. Anti-gay humor segments stopped completely; this was true regardless of whether the speaker and the former MR4 were out together or separately.
ii. Does humor serve different purposes in MRs when compared to FRs, and if so what are those different functions of humor?

Humor serves, primarily, the same entry level purposes in both MRs and FRs. That is, one demonstrates a degree of competency in her/his communication in many ways, one of which is via humor. As such, humor is an entry variable in both FRs and MRs. Humor may or may not differ significantly at the entry level stage in FRs and MRs; such findings seem somewhat inconclusive. However, subject matter of the humor at entry level stages of a FRl and MRl is different, when compared to each other. However, that may be related to the broader issue of single-ness versus coupled-ness being a surprisingly strong factor in subjects’ humor. That is, people meeting a relationship-approachable and relationship-available person are necessarily single as is the person being approached (Some would argue that one may be looking for a new partner while at the same time being coupled, but such does not follow the definition posed by Nicotera. Even so, notes strongly suggested that coupled males trying to pick up a new partner still did tell numerous anti-straight jokes, consistent with the humor of single gay men.).
Humor at the entry level stage of mate relationships was closely uniform, but entry level humor in friend relationships seemed to vary more from person to person. Several reasons may exist for this. One is that there may be an influence of location, age of subjects, or even years out. Most coupled, especially long-term couples, were at te and tw; very few were at tg. It could be that I as researcher just had a harder time getting couples to open up more at tg; I certainly did meet couples there but such were rare, and these couples tended not to come out to the bar at all when dating. Another factor may be that, because the crowd at tg is so much younger than that at te or tw, patrons have had less time to 'find Mr. Right' than patrons at te or tw, who tended to be older. Also, older patrons at tw and te reported being much more sexually active years ago than what they seemed to be now. As such, that un-coupled male at tg may not want to be in a relationship and, as such, one sees fewer MRs at or above level 2 at tg. Certainly the younger age of tg patrons contributed to a few other possible explanations. Several subjects in the notes over the course of the 3.5 years of note-taking reported living at home with their parent(s), only two of which were ever seen at te or tw. None of the other five were seen in te or tw; and, in fact, the two who were seen at te and tw actually went to tg more often. Youth influences finances, how often subjects could go out to the bar, living
arrangements and dating, the quantity and quality of gay friendships and the number of years 'out of the closet.' All of these contribute to dating and MR level growth. Clearly other factors may influence the variety in the humor segments of single gay male subjects than just their status as being single. Some younger subjects, after all, did not yet have exposure to the joking patterns and humor segments of others in the bars -- they may not have learned the norms yet and certainly were not following them.

Because of those differences in humor amongst the single gay males, it does seem more difficult to give specific functions of their humor other than expressing singleness, expressing the degree of closeness to people in the immediate environment, and demonstrating humor competence at the entry level stage of their friendships. Humor functions within mate relationships seemed far more telling. The humor style being shared with friends in the presence of the significant other is very telling of two things:

1. The intensity of the mate relationship (vis a vis the humor type: is all humor light and nonsense or does it also include some humor from the other humor classes like sick, scatological, etc.?); and

2. The degree to which the man seems to feel that he and his partner have assimilated to heterosexual norms. This can be ascertained by the amount of distancing that is done (from other gay males) in the humor content that is shared between he and his lover.
Though these humor functions seem clear, it should be pointed out that these humor functions are not always related to humor role. That is, subjects are not very good at gauging why their humor helped them ‘pick up’ someone or make new friends, when asked, directly in interviews, after they had successfully done so. As such humor’s role in these cases is unclear as subjects can not explain why they said what they did; at the same time, subjects were very good at explaining why something didn’t work (Recall Jack’s comments when one friend fails to pick up his other friend.). This suggests to this researcher that these humor segments are not ad hoc or accidental and coincidental; at the same time, they are not always necessarily planned and conscious efforts.
b. Do certain types, forms, contents, or contexts of humor influence humor's role and/or function as an EV or IV in FRs or MRs? If such an influence does seem to exist, what is that influence?

Most humor forms in this study were verbal communication. What linguists refer to as suprasegmental aspects of verbal communication (like tone, pitch, duration, volume, etc.) did seem significant, albeit these suprasegmental features are treated by communication scholars as one aspect of nonverbal communication. Significant about those suprasegmentals (treated here as an aspect of nonverbal communication) is that many were used by subjects engaging in nonsense humor of humor class 1. This in itself is not all that unique because many people telling silly and nonsense humor segments do so in attempted dialect or altered voice. Significant here is that one subject's sarcastic comment "He's jutht tho: butch" is difficult to code in that it is both sarcastic but fits novelty or nonsense requirements as well as used by Mindess (1990) and this researcher. In this study, it seemed that subjects put such voice, higher tone and lisping into satirical comments to (possibly) take some of the viciousness of some of the satirical comments down a little. That is, Dann's joking in Sample 19 with his soon-to-be-ex Sean nearby fits clearly into nonsense (as defined by humor researchers) humor:

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Sample #19: Dann, Sean and Duke have been talking about an episode of The Nanny (television show) which had aired in which Fran was attracted to a guy, also a nanny, who turns out to be gay, and are swooning about an episode of Roseanne, recently repeated (te031195):

Dann: (to Sean) Too bad you weren't home again last night: you missed it.
Duke: That scene when she’s getting interviewed; isn’t that classic?
Dann: I like that...
Duke: (to Sean) the lady says to Roseanne that [her friend] she is so damn perky I want to run a knife through her skull (sic.).
Dann: Roseanne says, 'I can see why you're in personnel... you're nuts."
Duke: Cause Roseanne tells the woman (interviewer) that she really likes Phil's wife (the perky woman discussed earlier) and the woman from personnel says 'I didn't say I didn't like her," and then Roseanne says 'O I must've taken that knife-through-the-head comment the wrong way before.
Dann: She was just so serious through it too.
Duke: Almost as good as a drag queen could do it (be nasty, rude).
Dann: You know who the interviewer is, don't you?
Duke: Can't think of her name but she does Carmen San Diego.
Dann: Damn you're good.
Sean: You too [are] like a couple of Peggy Bundies sittin on the couch, eatin' bon-bons, and watching tv all the time.

Dann, while joking about characters on television, is not doing something unique. Cris often shared "dreams he'd had," while Greg joked about his students, Bobb shared funny stories about his customers and the people with whom he worked, and Matt also created humor segments relying heavily on people that were unfamiliar to friends at the bar like men from out of town, bosses, and friends that rarely came out to the bar. Many of the people discussed had no 'real names' in the stories; only nicknames like 'miss burning
bush,' 'little miss nothing,' 'the fan dancer,' 'helium heels,' 'little maggot,' 'the bloodsucking leeches,' 'the parasite,' 'cuntarina,' 'one night Stan,' 'the complainer,' 'demon spawn,' 'princess,' 'rude guy,' 'kato' and 'Ritz cracker.' These nicknames, when the people's real names aren't shared or necessary, are convenient for creating humor, because like the sharing of the funny dreams one has had, the tv shows one has seen, and funny tales about friends the other person doesn't know provide convenient step levels for growing FR and MRs. Sharing something funny from Golden Girls ([Blanche, you've been] under more men than a nautical toilet.) is nonsense because it is about characters removed and non-existent: the character Dorothy says this to the character Blanche but the people who play these roles are playing roles only: Bea Arthur would not say that to Rue McClanahan in that context. At the same time, Beau or Marc in a gay bar or at a party with friends saying this to each other allows the friends to move to higher levels of friendship as they are engaging in humor as a part of a higher humor class. Blanche hearing this from Dorothy makes for good tv, perhaps, but Marc saying this to Beau makes for a funny moment at a party but also, because it is shared knowledge between Beau and Marc, allows the joke not to be purely nasty as it may seem at first but rather a mix between hostile and nonsense, which appear in different humor levels and humor classes. This is what helps gay men
advance through humor levels like this: biting satire mixed with nonsense and silliness. Consider the frivolity of ‘coming up with drag names’ common amongst many subjects observed over the period; friends would even call up leaving messages on others’ answering machines and were made fun of if the names they derived were seen as bad:

----------------------------------------------
Sample #21: messages from Bobb on the answering machines of two different friends and one of their comments, from an interview that same week. Messages were left on 039193; 05-96, 042397

Bobb: Oo Chris. Lovely drag name, ‘Dressa Drawer.’

Cris: [Bobb] comes up with the worst names: who the Hell names a kid Dressa? If she weren’t a little florist queen I’d really start to wonder if she was really one of us [gay] or not.

Bobb: Doll I just heard the best line on Cybill. Call me back love if you wanna hear it.

Bobb: Girlfriend, it is just so wonderful that a girl can come back after a long hard day and watch Golden Girls. It’s back on cable. It’s great and I get it. And you don’t... Bitch!

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By sharing the line from Cybill with the friend, Bobb can say it to that friend later, sounding ‘bitchy’ to those around but simultaneously creating an in-group of Bobb, his friend and anyone else who had heard the line from Cybill. "Take a psychic moment from Dionne Warwick, and just walk on by." Interestingly, this same line appeared in that month’s
Sari, a gay publication which includes that editor's "favorite phrases of the month." This may also explain why pop culture, classic comedies and old movies are so valued especially by the community. Knowledge of these helps one move humor to new levels by conveniently helping each other cross to higher levels of humor; it also becomes necessary to get some people's joking. Another bar, Union Station Cafe, features old black and white movies and mixed Bette Davis scenes with its music videos. One may be watching a dance video by Thompson Twins only to see a scene come on from Mommie Dearest, hearing everyone in the bar scream in unison, "No more wire hangers" or from "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane," hearing the crowd scream, "But you are in a wheelchair, Blanche, you are in a wheelchair." When Cris (See sample 21) was dating someone who was in a wheelchair briefly, Bobb quipped, "She [Chris] just wanted to be able to say, 'But you are in a wheelchair, Michael, you are in a wheelchair.'" Pop culture, though not uniquely gay of course, has taken specific holds on gay populations and that hold seems inherited by the non-gay population later. A fellow grad student has a sticker with the Wizard of Oz quote, "You're not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy" a new sticker but a line heard by Berube during World War II in the gay bars of San Francisco as is the recently re-popularized T-shirt:
Aunt Em,

Hate you. Hate Kansas. Taking the dog.

Love, Dorothy.

Though funny, such humor segments are much more than humor. They are tools for helping FR and MRs grow in the gay community. As elements of pop culture, they are safe and non-insulting, but at the same time they afford listeners a chance to segue into higher humor levels, and in turn higher friendship levels. Dann’s ‘sick’ joke about Pee Wee Herman and Jeffrey Dahmer in sample #17 is certainly somewhat safe since the hearer of the joke (Sean) probably has no real tie to either person:

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Sample #17: (tw111191)

Dann: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to PeeWee [Herman]?
Sean: O God this is gonna be good. I don’t know; what?
Dann: Quit playing with your food.
Sean: That is so good.
Dann: I thought you’d like it. The bad thing is that I’m half-afraid to share it with my sister now.
Sean: Why? She didn’t know any of [his] victim’s did she?
Dann: You mean Pee Wee [laughing]?
Sean: No, I mean .. [laughing a bit] O cute; I get it.
Dann: No, I mean because I just came out to her and it’s probably to soon to tell a joke about a gay man.
Sean: You mean gay ‘men,” don’t you? I heard they both might be gay.
Dann: No, I didn’t hear that. Damn; there are going to be so many jokes out there to tell now.
Sean: So many jokes; so little time!
Dann: And I had to come out last month and [can’t share them with] my sister now.
Sean: There’s another reason not to tell people: you never know when a Cannibalistic Queen is gonna start an all protein, and dark chocolate, diet.
Dann: And when PeeWee is gonna go to a theater and discover a friend that isn’t animated.
Sean: That’s right. And people say I stay in the closet to hide from corporate America; it’s not. I just wouldn’t be told the good jokes [at work] if they thought I was gay.
Dann: You’re probably right. Plus they’d be afraid that you were like Dahmer or something ...
Sean: Yeah, you’re right. Like I’d chop them up and eat them or something ...
Dann: Exactly ...
Sean: like I have that much fat in MY diet
Dann: Straight people can be stupid.
Sean: Yea, I’m surprised more of them aren’t caught in movie theaters spanking their Hank. [laughs. Dann joins in the laughter.]

Further, the above topic is safe given the timing and the fact that everyone around at that time was telling Dahmer and Herman jokes (Prior to that time period, Blond jokes were the norm and more recently "Heaven’s Gate" jokes are popping up.). It afforded Sean the chance to create his own humor segments which immediately led to humor that was closer to home and more self-disclosing in nature ultimately leading to anti-straight jokes by which time he and Dann were coupled.
Surprisingly, nonsense humor proved an important humor type and suprasegmental nonverbal communication an important humor form. This is done by coupling what is generally labelled as a form of satirical humor with an aspect of nonsense humor. It seems as if blending or blurring the line between humor classes helps blur the lines between friend and or mate relationships. Those filters, discussed by researchers in interpersonal communication, clearly include adaptability to humor. This adaptability includes being able to change the way one jokes or shares humor segments and also to change the way one sees the other person’s humor segments. Yes, the talking that will continue about how Ellen came out on her situation comedy on April 30, 1997 will continue, but as such the sharing of the funny parts of that episode is also an invitation for the other person to segue into other humor classes above or other than nonsense, perhaps even joking about his own coming out experience, getting not just a different type of humor but also humor at a different level of intimacy. Altering of voice and degree of self-animation of the stories can help the most sincere heartfelt humor segment seem even more humorous than what it may really be. See Kent’s story about his dad wearing poppers and his parents learning about his topness:
Davy: Kent, tell Evan what your dad did; Evan, you’re gonna die this is too good.
Kent: Well Mom and Dad visited last weekend and
Evan: Wait. Do they know your gay?
Kent: O Go:d no. No No No No No:
Evan: Ok go on. I’ll bet this is a story about forgetting to de-fag your apartment.
Kent: Well kinda. I actually had everything [pictures from a 'gay' party, gay newspapers, pornography, etc] hidden, I guess, but my dad came out of the bedroom saying that he hoped I didn’t mind that he borrowed some of my cologne. Well, I told him that I don’t mind. But then I got to thinking... I don’t have cologne in the bedroom; I keep it in the bathroom. So I go into the room and sitting on the dresser is my new but now half-empty bottle of poppers. My dad is wearing it behind his ears! [all laughed]
Evan: that would have to burn; wouldn’t it?
Kent: I guess but I bet he and mom had the best sex they’ve had in the last thirty years though.
Davy: You should’ve taken ’em to Tradewinds to disco dance [Laughing]
Evan: You better not make fun... [he] may have a monkey on his ear, now
Davy: Really. Before you know it he’ll be brushing his teeth with coke (cocaïne) and trying to style his hair with X (short for ‘ecstasy,’ a popular upper at some clubs).

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Kent: So each Christmas my parents come over and I’ve hung my [greeting] cards all around the place but I have to put the faggier ones up really high so mom doesn’t snoop and read what everyone wrote inside. So I’m in the kitchen and I hear this voice from the living room, "Kent what’s a TOP?"
Theo: O NO:: [laughing]
Kent: So I’m thinking she’d been in the garage and found my ex’s letters and was reading them but here I walk into the living room where I must’ve had 130 cards hanging up. But now there’s 129 hanging and one in mama’s hands. [A couple walk by.] There’s the two who sent me the card [pointing]. Cris and Scot, you won’t believe what happened over the holiday with the folks. [Introductions are made by Kent to
both Scot and Cris. The five of us are there: Scot, Cris, Theo (who Kent had just met that night), Kent and me. Kent repeated part of the story for Cris and Scot’s benefit and picked up where he’d left off.

Kent: Just my luck -- the one card that fell was the one they sent me.

Theo: Some naked hunks on the inside, huh?
Cris: No I just made a joke about Kent’s latest ex...
Kent: And then he writes, "Congratulations for being a Top."
So here’s mom reading it, not even knowing I’m gay, and how the hell do you explain this one?
Cris: So you came out to them?
Kent: No: I said that this is the name of the degree I got in June (Kent had gotten an M.A. that summer and was working on a Ph.D.)
Scot: Holy shit. And they bought it?
Kent: Way too well. Cause when I went home to visit them; it was a Sunday. Dad says Mr. Deluca said to tell you congratulations. And I asked him why. Dad says he was congratulating me for earning my top degree -- Dad was telling everyone at church. [laughs from Scot and Cris]
Kent: Can’t you just see my dad going down the pews, "My son’s a top. My son’s a top. Yoo hoo my son’s a top!"
[laughs from Theo also]
Scot: well girlie girl you finally done made your pa-pa proud.
Cris: Well maybe back in Pig-farm, U.S.A. no one would know what the hell it meant.
Kent: oh yea? The whole time I was home, Skippy from the church choir was way too friendly.
Scot: Ah, your dad may actually get you a date out of this. Too bad more people didn’t know!
Kent: They do. The story gets better. I pick up the local newspaper that week and see a blurb in the newspaper about me becoming a Top!
Cris: You’re kidding.
Kent: No I got it at home [turned to Theo] You’ve all got to see it. It’s a riot.
Cris: Well, Kent isn’t someone -- in your town, even -- gonna pick up on that.
Kent: You’d think but my sister came over for dinner; she has her degree and she knows it’s called an M.A. but said the letters must stand for something. So I’m thinking of some abbreviation to come up with in a nanosecond and I blurt out ‘it stands for toward the Ph.D.; TO the P.’ [more laughing]
Scot: It’s like he lives in St. Olaf (A reference to Rose’s hometown in The Golden Girls; its residents are notorious for their stupidity).
Tales such as this become a part of humor folklore (Fordyce, 1996); even the outside researcher can repeat some of them after a while much like how all of Al Bundy's family in "Married with Children" can articulate his story about how he 'once scored four touchdowns in a single game of football at Polk High.'

Sample #22: told on several occasions, the first of which was recorded on 090292

Kent: So mom asks me again why I'm never having kids and I just say 'think about it mom; think about it,' really serious and all. She got quieter and asked 'You were dating someone seriously last year weren't you?'
I told her 'yes' and then she says, 'when you came home at Christmas-time last year, you'd just broken up didn't you?'
And I said 'yes, yes,' feeling relieved and impressed because my mom not only must have figured out I was gay but she also knew that I'd been seeing each other and when we broke up. So just when I'm start to think my mom is so insightful and feelin' all proud of her an' all, she up and says, 'she was colored.'
(different people on different occasions): 0 god what did you do? Did you tell her?
Kent: I said 'she was neither, mom' and when she asked 'neither what?' I told her, 'neither Black nor a she.' I still think it took a couple minutes for her to figure out what I was saying.

Sample #23: Many told stories of someone named "T.A." though the same story was told about someone named "T.J." and "J.T." and nicknamed, 'Ms. Funt' on four separate occasions. I never met the person, and most telling the story even had not met the person though a woman named Sharon, his former roommate, assured the men one night that he did exist, and the story was true. The story was repeated with slightly
different endings like 'Smile you’re on candid camera,' but the remainder of the story was told with very little variety. It was first recorded on 12/13/90.

(various): So he has to do this project for school, making a video, and he kept putting it off because he was so stressed about wanting to come out and all so he killed two birds with one stone and videotaped his coming out. Hysterical. They started getting rude with him and he yells out, "Come on Come on; work with me work with me! If you don’t start behaving, I’ll have to recast you and find nicer people to play my parents." They must not have known the camera was on; I guess telling them he was gay wasn’t the 'worst thing he could say;' it was, 'I'm gay and this moment is my class project,' So the worst thing isn’t saying 'Mom, Dad, I'm gay.' It’s saying 'Mom, Dad, I'm gay. Now smile for the camera.'

Some have argued the ritualistic process of coming out is a binding tie for many homosexuals (Fordyce, 1996). The stories often told about this event have led people to believe this; however, people’s willingness to share such semi-sensitive moments with, at times, virtual strangers, while injecting many humor segments is telling. So also is the willingness to share others’ coming out stories, if funny enough. I would argue it is the humor in the stories that is significant more so than the story or the coming out; after all many fit in well within the gay male bar community who are not out, or for that matter even gay or male. They don’t all share this same life experience, and no two ever seem to share the experience in the same way either, but many, even straight women at the bar, come to use humor like gay men. Straight women of Color, in particular, fit in well within the community with many
(including both gay men and people of Color) claiming the joking of gay men is like the joking of Adult Black Women with the only real difference being that gay men’s scapegoat targets seem to be other gays and/or straights whereas African-American Women tended to use humor concentrating more on the differences between the sexes. No real scientific evidence exists for these claims; though it seems an interesting avenue for future pursuit.
c. As a FR or MR increases in intensity, how is humor affected? Is there an observable increase in the amount, intensity, or intimacy of humor?

Not surprisingly, the longer and more stable the FR or MR, the more likely it is that the researcher heard them sharing more humor from HC3 or HC4. Friendships that qualify as level 3 or 4 did not even require that the blow of the jokes be softened. Commenting on their allergies, Bobb and Cris both remarked they were feeling 'all stuffed up' prompting Scot to joke about their weight, 'that explains the puffiness.' Prior to moving into the level 4 FR with Bobb, humor segments Scot would share were more of the nonsense vein. Bobb had dropped something glass which broke and smashed, prompting Scot to ask, "Lose an ear-ring, Dearie?" As the friendship matured, the same event prompted the following comment, "Well you dropped 12 ounces [of a beer bottle], but you should really be dropping 12 pounds [of weight]." Joking is necessary within the culture, but knowing how far one can and should go is a skill negotiated by the level of the FR or MR in which the people are engaged. In fact, the humor segments, the nastier the better it seems, are expected. The person who is the butt of the joke will act disappointed if a quip does not follow the easy target.
Sample #24: Dave and six other friends are standing around talking; Herb having just mentioned sending [Christmas] cards to his ex.

Dave: I really never kept in touch with most of my exes.
Kent: Well... Christ, Dear. Don't you have a day job too?
Kurt: Yes, but the free clinic IS the whole way across town.
Bern: Was that their choice or yours?
Bobb: And I never counted all the grains of sand that lie on the beach, what's your point?
Dave: What, Herb and Blaine, no retort?
Herb: Some things are just more tragic, than funny...
Blaine: There were just so many choices, I got confused.
Damn, I'm just a'cramping up here.

Another difference is that what are seemingly quiet, private moments while in earlier stages of a FR or MR seem more a part of the couple and their friends as time goes on.

Sample #25: McG met his future lover, Jimm, in Cleveland, having gone up to visit with a local leather club and several other friends. In their room during the night, which they shared with a couple of friends including one nicknamed [Auntie] Rick, Jimm was heard saying, "Give me that Sweet Ass" prompting nicknames like "Sweet Ass McG."
Soon thereafter Jimm has come to visit McG. for July Fourth Holiday, surprised to know that his quote was well-known even among bar patrons who hadn't been to Cleveland that weekend. During his visit, Jimm was on crutches, wandering through the bar, which made it even more clear that he had coined McG.'s nickname

Kent: Welcome to Columbus, Gimpy; get any of that swee::t ass?
Jimm: 0 god, no.
McG.: Guess I got a new nickname now.
Kent: What was it before?
Auntie: Ankles!
McG.: You stop.
Kent: I'm getting a beer; you want one, Hopalong.
Sample #26: Similar physical conditions required friends to comment to Kent, who was yellowish in skin color, supposedly from hepatitis.

Kent: Bobb and Cris, this is Danny’s friend [pointing to Jimm]. Bobb, Cris, I’d like you to meet Forest Gimp.
Jimm: Or you can call me Jimm.
Cris: And you can call her Jaundice Bergen
Bobb: Or Helen Yeller.

The guy who appears on crutches or having jaundice is supposed to be made fun of by close friends, right to his face in the gay male bar but only if the appropriate level of friendship is respected and the way of joking is appropriate. Notice Bobb and Cris would likely be in the wrong to make a joke about Kent’s deteriorating liver or sexual activity which may have led to him acquiring hepatitis. This would be more hostile, but possibly acceptable in private company (just the three of them). With the presence of a new person like Jimm, the blow is still there but softened by a more ‘nonsense’ form of humor, invoking female names for Kent.

Two non-gay friends of Kent also made fun of his yellow appearance, comparing him to the yellow character on Star Trek using similes like "You look like Datta" whereas Cris and Bobb referred to Kent as ‘her’ and just called Kent by the names of Jaundice Bergen and Helen Yeller, much more metaphorical than a simile. Gay men’s humor tended to use
more metaphor than simile, but of course it would be
tangential to make any claims about this since: (1) it isn’t
directly related to the task at hand; and (2) there is no
information about the use of simile versus metaphor in the
joking of non-gays (or gays) to which these conversations
could be compared. Further, gay men did use more similes
when joking with new acquaintances than they did as the
friend or mate relationships developed. This may be related
to humor in that, as a couple grows in closeness either as
friends or mates, jokes can be truncated as can normal
everyday slang. Take for example the phrase, "That’s the
pot calling the kettle black" which metamorphised in
different friendship dyads in different ways:

Phil and Marc would often say, "That’s the pot calling
the kettle obergine" while Beau and Jeff went one step
further, "pot. kettle. obergine." and Bobb came to use the
phrase adding a sing-song tone and the words "Yoo Hoo,"
becoming 'Yoo Hoo! Pot Kettle Obergine." Another line of
etymology came due to the show "Friends," borrowing from
Phoebe, "Hello kettle; this is Monica; you’re black." Cris
and Bobb have recently used "Monica, where’s your kettle"
and even "[sing-songy] Monica!" or "Shut up, Mon!" to mean
the same thing. As such a long established FR4 like Kent’s
and Cris’s can convey the quip, "That’s the pot calling the
kettle black" by just sing-soning the name ‘Monica’ and the
point is clear to them as well as Bobb and a few others. This is not uncommon, really, as Chriss used initials frequently like "CB," "TBTBB" "CBB" "DWW" "TPT" "GOP" "FB" "DQ" "BBBB" and "KKATM" (cute boy, too busy to be bothered, can't be bothered, decent white woman, trailer park trash, gross old pig, fat boy/bitch, dizzy/drag queen, blond, blond, blond, blond, and Kill kill, all the men, respectively.), and also used the word "chicken" when wanting a friend to rescue him from some guy that would not leave him alone, "Joe, I want you to meet Bob and Kent. Hey guys are we still gonna grab a chicken sandwich after the bar closes? And, O... I gotta tell you this joke about why the chicken crossed the road." Bobb and Kent were expected to say something like 'You have to come dance with us. Now.'

At first glance, this does not seem to relate to humor, but when one considers that this shared knowledge allows for many more jokes and allows them to be shared without others' knowledge, it is significant. It was not uncommon to be greeted by Cris saying, "Chicken Chicken Chicken Chicken!" which sounded, probably, like the squawking of a lunatic, but the immediate circle of friends understood and laughed with Cris. Likewise, Bobb could say something like, "Why do men stay in bad relationships?" and Kent and Cris would say something like, "Pot. Kettle. Obergine," or "Monica," and they make a sarcastic comment to Bobb about his own
relationship in a safe and humorous way, while at the same time obscuring the joke to others who may be within earshot since the phrases or the word 'Monica' would not be interpreted as "That's the pot calling the kettle black." Thus humor helps us advance to higher levels of relationships by pushing the current levels of conversation and allows us to make such commentary to each other, once we've progressed to that newer level, in ways that are undetected to those around, while at the same time remaining very pointed and direct within that inner circle of friends.

Unlike some other conclusions, this one is certainly not unique to the gay community; we all have the potential to simultaneous obviate and disguise our commentary to friends via humor. The closer we become to those friends and significant others, the more intimate and intense that humor is able to become.

Regarding the other research question about whether or not the amount of humor actually increases or not is difficult to do via this study. Certainly intensity and intimacy levels increased as relationships moved forward from level 1 to 4 and decreased as they moved from level 4 to level 1 (i.e., as relationships dissolved or seemed to fall apart and end). However, participant observation methods make it difficult to gauge whether the amount of
humor shared increased or not. For one, we must remind ourselves that couples' conversations were heard only in the environments specified and discussed in chapter three. It is difficult -- nay impossible -- to say that the same patterns were necessarily repeated while away from these environments. For example, would we expect less of the more private humor segments to be shared (phrases like, 'Yoo Hoo! Pot. Kettle Obergine' and 'Monica') when a dyad was talking and the crowd was not present? That is, if Kent and Cris did not feel the need to disclose this comment somewhat while sharing it with Bobb, would they say what they did in the same way?

This doesn't, of course, take away from the fact that the simultaneous obviating and disguising of this material while mixing with the crowd does occur and does serve vital purposes, but it makes it difficult, maybe even foolish or impossible, to try to quantify this. Even in limiting the focus, as researcher, to the settings described, it is difficult to quantify the humor and determine if people shared more or less humor segments as time went on. Certainly, field notes do suggest this. That is, while in the bar and dating each other, Sean and Dann seemed to laugh together far more while they were living together as a couple than at any other time. Certainly time periods of when they began dating and progressing from a MR1 to MR4 saw
steady increases in humor, predictable even. And, of course, they shared less humor as the relationship started to end.

The same is true of friendships that grew and fizzled. Kent and Dave shared lots of humor as the friendship was growing and peaking but none after the friendship faded. The same is true of other friendships like Alex and Kent, Alex and Neal, Tomm and Matt, Ryan and John, Bruce and Bion, Steve and Kent, Mark and Randy, Brad and Randy and so on. However, despite the existence of several couples dissolving a friend or mate relationship to use as examples, it was difficult to really concentrate on the humor after the breakup because most couples (whether former FR or former MRs) did not interact with each other at all after these disolvements. As such, can we say there was less humor shared? Sure, I suppose; but not because of anything that relates to humor; moreso relating to people just removing themselves completely from the field of approachables and the universal population of the gay male night club. Also as friend and mate relations grew and intensified and more humor seemed to be used, could there be other factors contributing to this? Looking just at my field notes as data one would be inclined to think, as I did at first, that the amount of humor definitely increased over time: it's easy to quantify -- just by looking at my own field notes.
However, at the same time, I am keenly aware that my note-taking skills improved over time. For one I got more practice each time I recorded data. Second, I became let in on many of the jokes as time went on, partly by my sheer presence and partly by subjects who served almost a double duty in latter stages of note-collection as both subject and informant/translator.

Third, could it be that I was recording more humor that subjects were using, not because they were using more humor, naturally, but rather they were using more humor because they felt more comfortable with my own presence (and others) as well as the obvious knowledge that I was clearly writing things down as people talked? Even Mindess who advocates this method for researching humor recognizes that even participant observation will exert some level of influence on subjects. But given that, why do we do it? To Mindess (and others) we do it because the amount of influence which this researcher’s presence may present is still much less than the influence of more controlled settings and quantitative methodologies. Mindess, of course, was making these arguments (as would I) not about all types of research but certainly about all types of research involving the humor of people speaking as members of a specific community. In essence we know from Gerry Philipsen that a Teamster
'speaks like a Teamster in Teamsterville;' so it does follow that a gay man would 'speak as a gay man in gay-bar-ville.'

Presence of an outsider may have some effect on nuances of subjects' talk in these kinds of environments, but not nearly as much as it would removing the speakers from their community into foreign settings and environments.

Thus, conclusions about the increase in the quantity of humor are conclusions this researcher feels less comfortable making. It certainly seems that way given field notes and is not really inconsistent with what we might expect given the research on humor, but is much more difficult to measure for all the reasons discussed in the preceding paragraph. Increase in the intensity (increased humor levels) and the intimacy (more 'private' jokes) of humor was quite clear. Both increased consistently as relationships moved through levels 1 to 2, 2 to 3, and/or 3 to 4. It is also true that these decreased as relationships fell from level 4 to level 3, level 3 to level 2, and/or level 2 to level 1, even if we take into account that an 'ex' friend or mate may have interacted less with subjects. Just examining their humor from when they did interact still leads to the same conclusion. Further, the very non-traditional friendship, alluded to in chapter one which does not follow traditional patterns of friend and mate growth follow similar patterns.
The friend relationship of Kent and Alex grew to level FR3 or FR4, eventually dissolving completely to FR1 or FR0 (essentially they appeared to be virtual enemies or even strangers for a time). Alex’s increased visibility as he started dating David, a friend of Kent’s at the time, prompted them to be around each other, and though the two engaged in only lower level forms of humor during those awkward early moments, the sign that they were truly coming to view each other as close friends again was that their humor reflected less of the mere nonsense types of humor and moreso a variety of humor forms including those put by Mindess (and this author) in the higher classifications of humor like satirical, philosophical, scatological, and sexual. It was as if they needed to learn how to joke with each other again, and that this proved as important to their friendship re-growth as anything. The same can be said of nontraditional mate relationships like that of Cris and Jim, Bobb and Lyle, Brad and Cris, and so on.

Reacquainting oneself with the person’s humor is a way to really reacquaint oneself with the person, certainly something supported by PTH (psychological theories of humor).
4.D. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The last research question posed at the end of chapter one is:

d. Is the opposite of "c" true; that is, does an increase in the observeability of more frequent humor, more intense humor or more intimate humor indicate anything about the FR or MR using it?

This does become, ultimately, the question worth answering, especially from the viewpoint of the researcher or the scholar interested in the generation of theory and the creation and establishing of (new) knowledge. As a researcher, it proves useful to test, in essence, what seems to be aspects of a theory that has been alluded to throughout this chapter. Establishing predictability is necessary for scholarly endeavors and scientific approaches to research.

By saying that humor increased in intensity and intimacy within relationships observed during the course of this study, and by arguing why such needs exist in those relationships, this researcher is also arguing that these humor segments when used in successful acts of communication serve as 'markers' of the relationship stage of the individuals involved. This is, of course, a broader claim.
Humor intensity:

So far we can say that the presence of a FR4 or MR4 implies that subjects have shared and continue to share humor from HC4 whether HS4 is their preferred humor style or not:

If there exists FR4 or MR4, then --------> existence of H from HC4

Of course the contrapositive is true:

Total lack of H from HC4 ---> the lack of a level 4 relationship

Humor intimacy:

Increased closeness of a couple allows for more humor intimacy; that is, more ways to simultaneously reveal (to each other) and conceal information (from outsiders) whether in private or in the presence of others by truncated jokes (referred to commonly as 'inside jokes'):

increased H intimacy --> increase in level of FR or MR
decreased H intimacy --> decrease in level of FR or MR

and of course the contrapositives:

Lack of increase in FR or MR level --> no increase in H intimacy
Lack of decrease in FR or MR level --> no decrease in H intimacy
The statements above seem justifiable from the research and its discussion; contrapositives follow naturally. What doesn’t logically follow, but seems true nonetheless are the following (with two or three exceptions which are explained below):

If the humor types being shared by a pair fit into HC1, HC2, and HC3, but not into HC4, then that couple is most likely in a FR# or MR3

If the humor of a pair fits almost exclusively into HC1 and HC2, but hardly, if ever, into HC3 or HC4 then that couple is most likely engaged in a FR2 or MR2.

If a pair’s humor is almost exclusively from HC1 and not from HC2, HC3 or HC4, then that couple is either in a FR1 or MR1 or have HS1 as their preferred humor style.

Just as important as the claims this researcher is making (above) are the claims that are not being made. Note, for example, that a couple (whether FR or MR) that shares humor from HC1 should not be assumed to be, for example, in a FR1 level friendship as opposed to a FR2, FR3, or FR4. For example, consider a card Cris sent to "one of his best friends" which featured two mice on the front, one saying to the other on the front of the card, "Dinner and a movie? I’ll drive y’all" with the print inside reading, "That’s the night that the mice went out in Georgia." The humor is certainly of the type silly and nonsense (the mere pun as some humor researchers have disparaged and everyone from Cicero to Gruner has devalued) and within HC1.

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However, knowing that the friend to whom Cris sent the card is a music buff as well as a card buff, and that the friend enjoys HCl humor a great deal might lead one to believe that the gesture is more than just a FR1; of course, Cris’s handwritten comment to the friend within the card, "This card seemed to hit that fine line between funny and dumb that always reminds me of you -- I swear I don’t mean that bitchy..." shows the mixing of HCl humor with a higher humor level form. This merely shows that Cris enjoys sharing many forms of humor with his close friends. If Cris never shared that higher level humor with his closest friends and vice versa, it would be a very different statement. Thus, it is not the presence of HCl humor that is all that telling, but rather that absence of HC2, HC3, and HC4 humor.

Another statement that is not being made or implied is that the humor within a MR and FR is the same. However, it varies more in the way people share humor content rather than humor type. That is, there seems to be no real difference in the humor types of a dyad involved in a FR3 when compared to a couple engaged in a MR3, for example. (Thus as researcher I was able to accurately determine the level of relationships in an out-of-town accuracy test with 100% accuracy* by concentrating on humor type only. Whether
that relationship was FR or MR was harder to do by just examining the humor, although humor content seemed to be a greater determining factor.). The FR3 and MR3 differ in other ways:

If the friends in the FR3 are both single satirical humor is most often against non-gays.

If the friends in the FR3 are both in a coupled relationship, satirical humor is most often anti-straight.

If one friend is in a MR but the other is not the satirical humor is more mixed; in fact more about mutual friends and mutual enemies, regardless of their gayness or straightness.

Another difference is how subjects joke about themselves in friend versus mate relationships. As the level increases to a 3 or 4, humor segments about sexual activity seem to differ as well, although not surprisingly.

If the friends in a FR4 are both single, joking about sexuality involves both self and other. If the friends are speaking of sex and or past relationships, it’s not uncommon for Frank to leave a message on Chuck’s answering machine, "when you get dressed and come home, give me a call, slut" and Chuck to respond back with a put down of Frank or a follow-up involving self-deprecating humor, "sorry it took me so long to call you back but the team kept requesting encore performances," or a third possibility like, "please, I make Debby Boone look like a slut." The quality of the humor segment in terms of its funniness may be more
important than what is actually said with the one clear exception discussed earlier: humor segments usually take on anti-straight satirical topics.

Friends involved in a mate relationship tended to use humor differently depending on who was present. The coupled male’s humor was more anti-gay if his other half was present and within earshot than if his other half were not there. Further, (though not surprising) the coupled male tended to avoid joking completely about his own sexual activity and past if his other half were present, although both he and his partner might joke about their own life together sexually. This probably serves many purposes from alleviating the jealous of one’s partner and his past and exes, not to mention affirming themselves more as a couple by talking about (some of) their sexual life rather than his or his.

If the dyad included a coupled male and an un-coupled male, humor tended to use sexual humor, almost exclusively, that targeted the single male. Not surprisingly the coupled males did so as it disparages other gay(s). The single male seems to allow and encourage this joking, perhaps enjoying the attention or maybe even helping the friend (whose partner is standing within earshot) by avoiding the bringing
up of something that may be sensitive to his friend, in
front of his friend's lover.

These conclusions and ensuing theory were tested by
consulting with subjects-turned-interviewees for a check of
reasonableness, mostly in terms of assessing the levels of
the friend and mate relationships I witnessed as observer.
The better test came by visits to other locations and
attempting to predict friendship level just by knowledge of
subjects' humor (its type and content, specifically). A
visit to Bretz and Hooterville Station in Toledo, Leather
Stallion in Cleveland, RickyJay's in Sarasota (Florida), a
new bar in Columbus, Ohio (not part of the original data-
collection), and comparable bars in Columbus, Georgia,
Monterey, California, Denver and Chicago and four private
parties, all of which had predominantly gay men in
attendance afforded me a chance to test the above claims.

This also afforded me the chance to establish a
predictive validity. Predictive validity, to the
quantitative researcher, may be referred to by some other
name by qualitativists but is an inherent element of social
science research. Being able to transcend from the
"experiment" to "the real world" was a goal of this
researcher as well and was done by making use of gay male
humor in other settings and making predictions.
This was necessary for a couple of reasons. For one, though the gay male population in Columbus is estimated to be somewhat sizeable, the gay male bar community of Columbus became somewhat small enough that as researcher I came to either know most patrons or at least know enough about them to gauge who their friends, mates, exes, and the like were just by what I heard from informants or overheard from subjects. Thus, I'd be influenced by too many factors other than just humor in gauging and testing my theory. Further, some of these same subjects, though I saw and knew of them, were not approachables as a researcher. A couple seemed to come out only for the purpose of meeting someone, and would leave immediately thereafter. Others would have been unapproachable as some of my interviewees, informants, and subjects were somewhat enemies of some people, making approachability unlikely. Further, some were much less likely to speak with a researcher present for a wide range of reasons ranging from one being married to a woman, another being a future politician, one a prominent business executive, another a well-known Columbus celebrity, and another a well-known athlete. Clearly any descriptors beyond this would be breaking all sorts of norms and expectations from within the community; certainly there would be concern on their parts that their talk would reveal
themselves even further. As such these potential subjects were off limits.

To find subjects that were less off limits that I, at the same time, knew little about was a self-imposed task for I wanted a way to 'test' my claims in different environments with different people; hence the other locations. Locations were chosen for reasons including, of course, financial considerations (The cities were places I had not been to before and were for the most part cities in which I was attending academic conferences or doing a presentation.). Other factors included bar size and city size as well as bar type. I wanted some bars that seemed comparable to the gay bars of Columbus. Bretz (Toledo) and After Dark (Monterey) were comparable to tg (The Garage); Leather Stallion (Cleveland) and Hooterville (Toledo) were comparable to tw (Tradewinds); RickyJay's (Sarasota) and others were comparable to te (The Eagle). Different types of locales were chosen because that seemed, in earlier stages of this project, to be an influencing factor on humor. However, as acknowledged earlier, the location is not the direct variable, nor is patron's age. The significant variable was more length and stage of relationship which just happened to be more available and readily studied in bars like tw and smaller neighborhood versions of it like Hooterville or more
mixed bars like Eagle and RickyJaye's. Patrons in some locations were just easier to 'join in with.'

At RickyJaye's, for example, Mike and friends were having an 'after-hour party' to which I was invited, where note-taking as well as listening was much easier (less loud noise, standing out less while taking notes, and so on). This provided me as researcher the opportunity to not only see if my theory applied to people in gay bars in other cities but also if the same theory applied to how people talked in non-bar environments, with a completely different part of the gay community, at times. Don and Todd had several guests at their after hour party who never went to the gay male bars for many reasons. Mike, himself, reported that it was rare that he came out, having been in a monogamous relationship for years. He reported going out that night only to see some friends who work at the bar who he didn't see as often since he and John moved into a MR4.

Still, claims above held true: I was able to correctly gauge whether a pair were engaged in a mate or friend relationship just by focusing on humor content; and further able to distinguish which level of that FR or MR by focusing on humor type. One or two exceptions did occur, described later, but if it is possible to somehow explain away or discount those exceptions, then there is a 100% accuracy
rate at that gathering and extremely accurate while attending gatherings held by Taylor (Knoxville), Al, Chip, Bernard, David, Kevin, Rick and Fred (in Columbus and Toledo). Theory was much less useful at Taylor’s Knoxville gathering than any, though I attribute that to, perhaps, my understanding of the humor ‘rules’ being actually more accurate than theirs. It could also have something to do with the difference in location and crowd, as well. Taylor’s gathering was different from others in that the parties’ host was young as well as gay, an undergraduate at the university there. More than 2/3 of the guests were also undergraduates and much younger than most other subjects (and me, for that matter). I suppose it could be argued that their youth and relatively short time of being out had not been enough time to learn norms of others. Certainly, there were a few older gay men there (‘older’ at this party was between 30 and 40.), and their humor was more reflective of their relationship type and the relationship levels. Also, some of the younger people at that party (like Marc, Beau, and Jeff), were younger people who reported having gone to gay bars many times in other cities, having come out at very young ages (16, 17, and 18), and having known each other for over three years. Thus, though young in age, they were, as Marc said, more mature in gay years, "I may be only in my twenties [now] but in gay years I am 35!" (meaning he had been out 5 years). Another gathering was difficult for
the purpose of testing theory. A gathering thrown by Rick and Fred (a birthday party) included several dozen guests. The larger crowd, for some reason, seemed to hamper my ability to test theory. Further, Rick and Fred having been in a MR4 themselves for many years, seemed to know mostly people who were, themselves, coupled. Though in Columbus, there were still only five people at the party that I'd ever seen in my note-gathering in any of the Columbus bars. This seemed good at first because I would not know people and could test theory (Many were from out of town, but just as many lived in Columbus.). However, I was really only successful in assessing the type of relationship (FR vs. MR) level (94%; N = 16); batting only 62.5% (N = 16) in determining the relationship level. Reasons for that lower percentage may have something to do with any of a number of factors. One is that I and the theory could be flawed, but its success in all other situations seems to discount this somewhat. Another possibility may be the unique pool of guests: almost all long-established coupled relationships, who indicated they "never go to the bars" or "rarely go to the bars" or "there are no gay bars back home."

As such it may be that as gay men become more removed from the gay bar culture, their humor changes. Another factor may be that there were more women at this party than at others. It could be that the presence of women,
especially non-gay women, affected gay men's humor some. For example, though only 62.5% accurate in gauging subjects’ relationship level, the theory was accurate almost 88% of the time if we count those times in which the theory generated an answer that was just one level too low. In other words, 6% of the time the theory predicted a level 2 relationship (when it was really more level 3) and 19% of the time it predicted a level 3 relationship (when it was really level 4). If we count these one-unders as a 'success' for the theory, accuracy is up at 87.5%. That may be reasonable; after all, subjects may tone down humor when non-gay women (who had not been in a room full of predominantly gay men before) are joining in the conversations, avoiding some of the more sensitive topics within HC4 shared amongst polite company.

Another possibility is that it is not the problem with the theory but with me as researcher; having a sense of a recorder's inaccuracy or bias. Since 75% of the dyads examined ended up placing in level 4 categories, in the end, it may have been that, subconsciously, I was reluctant to code them all as such since: 1. it was only my second time at testing the theory and (2) I was unwittingly influenced by the first test of the theory which had only 24% of that party (the younger, less out Knoxville group) being in level 4 relationships.
One other exception occurred on occasion. In fact, it was the only error made in the Sarasota sample. That error resulted when one subject, George, referred to Ben as one of his "best friends," but George never engaged in humor with Ben, over the course of a two-hour period, that went beyond HC1 humor. Ben did share HC2 humor with George, but more HC1 than HC2. The theory would predict that this is a level 2 relationship (both agreed the relationship was nonsexual making it definitely a FR2, not MR2). However, George did share sick, sexual, and scatological humor with me, who he had just met, which would be more indicative of a FR3 or FR4 relationship with me which was not true (FR1 or even FR0). Thus it was clear that George enjoyed HC3 humor, probably even had a HS3 or HS4 himself. Thus, the theory would dictate that at least some HC3 or HC4 humor emerge while talking with Ben. In fact, Ben shared with Mike and me (George had stepped away) humor that was definitely from HC3 and HC4. Though Ben and Mike did fit the theory as being good friends, Ben and I had talked, on and off, for less than 45 minutes. His scatological, philosophical and sexual humor were not out of line at all but clearly showed that he was not insulted by risque humor. As such, the theory seems to fall apart completely for this dyad of George and Ben, at first. However, George’s belief that he and Ben were best friends (FR3 or FR4) was not consistent with how Ben viewed the relationship (as a FR1). Ben, in fact, referred to
George as a 'nuisance' on one occasion talking about how the manager had asked George not to be so abrasive to new customers and to not encourage them to 'go with him to the other Sarasota bars.' Thus Ben as employee of the bar may be seeing his role as a service employee requiring him to some degree to be kinder with George than what some other patrons were in their dealings with the person whose use of humor and, in turn, his demeanor seemed out of place or brazen. Regardless of the reasons as to why they see the friendship differently, the fact remains that they do. In defense of the theory such mismatched or nontraditional relationships are always a source of problems for researchers of relational communication: they not only defy categorization but they defy some researchers' definition of a relationship. This researcher sees Ben and George in a type of FR, clearly but would not, as Nicotera would say, classify it as a FR2 or FR3 just because they approximate the average of how Ben sees it and how George sees it. Rather, my tendency (as is Nicotera's in later research, 1992) is to classify it as FR1, not taking the average of the members' self reports but rather taking the lesser of the two levels (See Nicotera, 1992.). This seems justifiable, not just because other researchers have done so before and argued for doing so, but also because the humor in this example is far more consistent with a FR1 relationship than any other. As such, regardless of how
George reports the level of the friendship he shares with Ben, he jokes and shares humor segments with Ben as if they are engaged in a FR1. Ben sees the relationship as FR1 and jokes as if it is a FR1. Further, this humor calculus (Refer to the final grid of this chapter.), if you will, supports it being a level 1 friend relationship.

Another deviation occurred at a bar in Columbus, Ohio but is much less troubling. Jack, planning to introduce two of his friends to each other and 'set them up together' finds it impossible to do so because one shares a humor segment with the other, about the other, from HC4. This is done just seconds after their introductions occurred, and Jack reported that he thought his friend 'blew it by talking about how he had sex with his wife,' even though Jack saw them as quite compatible aside from that. Clearly in this case the presence of HC4 humor was not indicative of anything other than inappropriate communication or miscommunication, possibly influenced by subjects' alcohol intake and other more personal factors that can not really be taken into account, in the humor calculus provided here.

To summarize and to return to the notion of a humor-calculus more directly, this research is best capsulized in the chart which follows. A 4x2 matrix of 8 cells shows how humor differs across relationship types (FR vs. MR) and
relationship levels (1 through 4). Though not implied by formal logic, it is nonetheless asserted here that: (1) knowledge of the type of relationship and the level of the relationship allows one to make reasonable predictions about that couple's use of humor; and (2) knowledge of a couple or dyad's use of humor allows one to make reasonable predictions about the kind and level of relationship that subjects share.

Such an assertion is something this researcher feels comfortable in making as a result of analysis of notes taken during the 43+ month period. Further, these assertions have been tested with other gay male populations in other cities and other settings both during and after the data collection process and have reasonable support from pre-existent research and the grounded theory which emerged during this project. Along with attempting to answer research questions posed in the first chapters, this research project has also uncovered serendipitous results: these too are significant. Those results are primarily related to how coupled and non-coupled gay men communicate with each other. As they were ancillary to this chapter in which the original research questions were re-examined and answered, those unanticipated results and a discussion thereof appear (as does a discussion about this project's limitations and some suggestions for future research) in the next chapter. The
Humor Calculus Grid which appears at the end of this section will receive greater justification and support in that section. However, differences between the humor at levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 of a relationship should be clear already. That is, greater use of humor from HC4 allows the MR3 or FR3 to progress to a level 4 MR or FR. HC3 humor allows a level 2 relationship to progress to a level 3. HC2 humor fosters growth from the FR1 to FR2 and MR1 to MR2, and appropriate use of humor (primarily from HC1) at the entry level of the friend or mate relationship allows the relationship to begin (and eventually grow). The latter of these is evidence of humor as an entry variable, allowing the approachables or availables to become a true FR1 or MR1 to begin with. The former are all filters which, when passed through successfully, allow the humor to serve as the intensity variable necessary for relationship growth. The primary aspect of humor to examine to ascertain such growth is the humor type and in turn humor class. We will see in the next chapter that other information like humor content is capable of distinguishing friend from mate relationships.

#### FR level

| #4 | HS: mutual gay friends & gays, in general, if coupled. | mostly anti-gay |
|    | Non-gays if not coupled; a little about mutual friends | no anti-straight |
|    | SD & SL if both are uncoupled | Hardly any SD |
|    | SL if S is coupled but L isn’t | Hardly any SL |
|    | SD if S is uncoupled but L is. | |
|    | HT: Broadly mixed, from HC1-HC4. | HT: (See FR4.) |
|    | May be evenly split or more from HC4 | |

| #3 | HS: mutual friends but also gays, if both coupled; non-gays if not coupled. Tho’ anti-gay or anti-straight H is limited compared to others | much is anti-gay |
|    | some HC4 may exist, it is very limited. HC3 would probably be the most favored. | little anti-straight |
|    | HT: Well-mixed from HC1-HC3. Tho’ | some SD & SL, but more SL than SD |
|    | | HT: (See FR3.) |

| #2 | HS: some friends/ mutual or not; gay & non-gay related humor targets start to emerge | more anti-gay than anti-straight |
|    | practically none from HC3-4 | amount of SD = SL |
|    | HT: HC2 and HC1 | HT: (See FR2.) |

| #1 | HS: mostly tv shows, films, ‘creative drag names’ SD & SL | HS: (See FR1.) but much more SD/ much less SL than FR1 |
|    | HT: mostly from HC1 | HT: (See FR1.) |
|    | practically none from HC2-4 | |
|    | BJ: famous/infamous people, family | BJ: infamous or outcast people, |
|    | virtually no anti-gay humor | both gay & straight |

#### MR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FR level</th>
<th>MR level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>mostly anti-gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no anti-straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>much is anti-gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>little anti-straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>more anti-gay than anti-straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>amount of SD = SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>HS: (See FR1.) but much more SD/ much less SL than FR1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HC = Humor class. HS = Humor subject/content HT = Humor type. BJ = Butt of most jokes H = Humor SL = speaker to listener humor that is targeted toward listener SD = speaker to listener humor that is more self-deprecating**

**Figure 4.7:** The Humor Matrix: A Calculus of the Entry and Intensity Variable in Friend and Mate Relationships within a Marginalized Population (A Model: Gay Male Nightclub Humor)
CHAPTER 5

SERENDIPITY FOR THE FUTURE:
ADDITIONAL RESULTS, LIMITATIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

This chapter’s purpose is to present and discuss a third set of results, neither expected nor anticipated when the research for this project began. It is included because it did emerge as a variable in how men in the gay male nightclub (in Columbus, Ohio and elsewhere) used humor, particularly what served as subject matter for their humor content. Samples of the field notes which led to this conclusion and the ensuing discussion do contribute to the stated goals of this project and have proven useful in the creation of the Humor Calculus Matrix which appeared in the last section of chapter four. Since examining the humor of the coupled versus the non-coupled gay male was not the raison d’etre of this project originally, this discussion was not included in the previous chapter’s detailing of answers to the research questions. Its usefulness in answering some of those questions, however, could not be ignored (In fact, the reader was referred to this chapter on two separate occasions in chapter four.). As such, it is included here before a discussion of potential limitations.
of this study as a whole and suggestions for future research (with which the subject of couples' humor versus the humor of non-couples is inexorably linked.). Further field note samples are included and do, in fact, follow the same format as those in chapter four. They also add more evidence to claims made in chapter four in that this third set of results, (couples vs. non-couples) though unexpected, remains consistent with claims made in chapter four.

5.A. Results, Part Three. Serendipitously reached conclusions about the different humor content of coupled gay men and non-coupled gay men.

5.B. Limitations of this study

5.C. Suggestions for future research
5.A. RESULTS, PART THREE: COUPLED VS. NON-COUPLED GAY MEN
AND THEIR USE (AND THE ROLE) OF HUMOR IN THE GAY MALE
NIGHTCLUB

Field notes strongly support the following two statements; albeit neither is a surprising fact:

Though it is true that not all gay men told jokes with non-gays as the butt of the jokes, many did; in fact, most were at least exposed to such jokes.

Similarly, though it is true that not all gay men told jokes with gays as the butt of the jokes, many did; in fact, most were at least exposed to such jokes.

Given the above observations, it is no surprise that a given subject in the gay bar might tell a joke demeaning non-gays on one occasion and an anti-gay joke on another. However, subjects usually seemed to share jokes that demeaned one group more than the other: this was curious. Researchers like Davies (1990, 1991) argued that members of a marginalized population such as this one would probably tell more gay jokes than would the general population; that seemed to be quite clear. However, several subjects told nothing other than anti-gay jokes at various time periods and jokes that demeaned non-gays on other occasions. The other variables like the level of relationship, the type of relationship and demographics did not seem to have any influence at all on which group was more disparaged in
jokes. However, an unanticipated factor seems to explain these differences. Consider these comments from Beau, a single gay white male born in the mid-60's and Marc, a single white male born in 1968:

Sample #6: private party, gathering of friends and acquaintances for Christmas in Knoxville, Tennessee (kn121290 @8:04)

Marc: (to a group of four at a party) You all would not believe Beau!
Jeff: Why? What did he do this time?
Beau: Yeah; what did I do this time?
Marc: (laughing) Like you don't know? Last night; the pick-up guy!
Jeff: O, Beau picked up someone. News-flash!
Marc: No he didn't pick up anyone; I'm talking about a guy in the pickup that he wanted to get.
Beau: You still bitchin' about that? Girl, someone better slap that bleedin' ol' pussy of yours
Marc: Well, yes, Beau, I'm still talking about that. We were in the redneck part of town; we could've been killed.
Beau: (to Jeff about Marc) Man, that girl's hysterical.
Marc: Hysterical! Hysterical? I'm hysterical cause you screamed to a butch man in a beat up truck -- he had to be straight -- "Yoo hoo wanna fuck a cissy!?!!" I was so embarrassed!!
Beau: You was just embarrassed cause you probably done him already.

Sample #7: Later that same night, more guests arrived. By 8:20 the small college student apartment contained seventeen guests (including the host and me) when Alan knocked on the door. Alan, who most of the guests seemed to know arrived with friends; Marc was answering the door; Jeff and Beau standing beside him. (kn 121290 @ 8:22).

Marc: Alan; you made it
Alan: No thanks to your map you dyslexic bitch
Marc: I was very cocktailed when I made that; I'll have you know. Besides you've been here before; you didn't remember where I lived?
Alan: Well I though I did but you had that big ol butt-ugly welcome mat at the foot of the door; we’ve been walking around the complex looking for it.
Beau: O that ugly thing: I think Marc returned it to the trailer park where it belonged
Marc: I like that: it’s cute.
Jeff: Nah. She didn’t get rid of it: it’s at the foot of her bed, I’m sure.
Marc: O you bitch!
Jeff: Hey that’s bastard to you dearie!
Beau: Well, like they say ‘no matter where Marc serves the guests; it seems they like the bedroom best.’
Marc: O stop. I don’t mind y’all making fun of me but NOT my household accessories. This is why I don’t have my friends over to my apartment
Beau: yeah, only tricks: that’s what I always say.
Jeff: Well if she thinks we’ve been hard on her so far, we better not even begin to discuss those damn ducks in the kitchen
Beau: Don’t go there: she’s just aviarily challenged.
Alan: That explains the lawn-geese on the porch.
Beau: I tried to get that trailer park breeder’s eleven toothless children to each take one when they were pickin up the purple doormat, but even they thought the lawn-geese gauche.
Jeff: I thought you told me not to bring up the ugly lawn geese to a room full of queens.
Beau: Those geese have already been brought up
Alan: Like food-poisoning!

Sample #8: A few interruptions have occurred but the previous conversation seemed to continue. (knl21290 @ 8:31).

Marc: Must you finger all the [potato] chips before you take one?
Jeff: Yea Beau; they’re not men!!
Beau: Hey I say why commit to one when there’s another better one nearby?
Jaye: This is not about chips anymore is it?
Marc: It should be about the chips: the men aren’t worth it!
Beau: The pick-up man would’ve been.
Marc: Well yeah, he was worth it I bet. He’s a butch ol straight boy.
Beau: Wait a minute: some of us cissies take offense to that.
Phil: Not to interrupt this meeting of the minds but I want Paul [my current boyfriend] to meet you, though I’m not sure why. [Paul made introductions and introduced Jeff, Marc,
and Beau as some of his "best friends" before he and Paul moved on.

Beau: You stop, [to Phil]; no wonder all these little tricks of yours think so poorly of your friends.

Phil: It's been eleven weeks, now: that's serious [hugged Paul].

Jeff: Serious for that one [pointing to Beau; speaking to Phil, loud enough for all to hear] is anything longer than eleven days.

Phil: I heard it was eleven inches.

Greg: Eleven minutes as I remember it.

Jeff: Yep, you've tricked with Beau [The group laughed.]

Beau: Spoken like the truly jealous: what are you, straight?

Marc: You know the straights are all jealous of us [and then to Beau in a whisper, "So's Phil."] [All laughed; Beau moreso]

Jeff: Yeah, the redneck in the truck must've been real jealous.

Beau: When he looks me up ... (interrupted)

Phil: You mean feels you up ... 

Jeff: He means 'fucks the cissy' [all laughed]

Beau: Hey! I'm still in the room here [others laughed even more.]

Marc: If'n and when'n he looks you up Beau, you'll know he wanted you.

Beau: You know it sister friend

Marc: That's right: gay men get more sex than straight guys; so they're jealous of us.

Jeff: I know you don't mean they're jealous of ALL of us.

Beau: Nah, just [jealous of] Marc and me.

Phil: Hell, those two've been under more men than a nautical toilet.

Jeff: The navy has Beau listed as a friendly port [all are laughing]

Beau: I'm still in the room. Yoo hoo! Still in the room.

Marc: No kiddin' Beau; only [potato chip] crumbs are left.

The segments of talk above illustrate several humor segments, most of which are difficult to classify. Of particular importance (underlined) are some of the words, phrases, and ways of addressing each other within various humor segments that was clear in this group of friends.

Marc, when addressing Beau, spoke to him directly, mentioned
his name specifically, or used pronouns like we, us, and a variety of female pronouns, nouns, and derogatory slang. Beau often did the same when communicating to or about Marc. They did not communicate to Phil or Jeff in quite the same way: male pronouns were used; no female-derogatory nouns were. Their first names were not mentioned when they were spoken to by Marc or Beau. Though they were joked about, it was not always done for the group as a whole (Marc says, "So's Phil" to Beau in a whisper in the discussion of straights being jealous of them.) and when it was for the group as a whole, that was one of the few times the proper names of Phil and Jeff were used by Marc or Beau.

Jeff and Phil, on the other hand, treated each other in a fashion very similar to the way Beau and Marc treated each other; but treated Beau and Marc very much like the way Beau and Marc spoke to them. At first glance, it might appear as if Jeff and Phil were closer to each other than they were to Marc or Beau, but that was not the case. Jeff and Marc were as close friends with each other as were Beau and Marc. The levels of friendship for each pairing was definitely FR4 and none of the four had ever dated any of the others nor expressed any interest in doing so. Thus the differences in speaking seem a bit more inexplicable.
Unlike Beau and Marc who were both single, Jeff and Phil were in relationships: Jeff for two years and Phil for nearly three months: this was a significant difference which seems to account for the interaction of these four subjects. In addition, a closer look at some of the humor content in the above dialogues indicates that Beau and Marc were more likely to engage in anti-straight talk/humor. Jeff and Phil, though not making anti-gay jokes, per se, do make quite a few jokes and comments at Beau’s expense. Such joking, the one-up-man-ship and bon mots discussed in chapter two, is somewhat routine in groups, especially in the subjects observed for this study. Also common is the role of ‘scape-goating’ in which one person in the group serves almost as a focal point, uniting other group members by being different or ‘the fool’ (See, notably, Bales’s (1990) SYMLOG work and Cosar (1959) who addressed humor and scape-goating; though, neither is addressing the gay male population and as such the scapegoating role that the single gay male often plays, as the foil to the coupled gay males.).

Still, theories like Bales’s show the effect of the scape-goating on a group, but do not explain why a person emerges as a scapegoat. Further, any attempt to explain away the apparent communication differences in the above
samples of talk do not explain the following conversations, recorded later that night:

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Sample #9: (knl121290 @9:11)

Phil: I got to say that it’s been a while since I’ve been to a party where all the music was by Bette Midler, Madonna, and Abba.
Jeff: AND we all had to be quiet when Twin Peaks came on [the tv].
Phil: Exactly.
Jeff: Guess you haven’t been to a party where all the men thought they were women, huh?
Phil: Never with that much conviction [nodded in the direction of Marc, Beau, and Greg in the other corner]
Jeff: Actually, most of them are more like little boys who think they’re girls
Buck: Yea, not mature enough to be women [all laughed].
Ward: Hard to believe you all are friends.
Jeff: Ah they’re the nicest guys; well, girls [laughs]. They’re just so...
Ward: Gay?
Jeff: well [laughing] yea
Phil: No; you mean ‘juthth th:o::: gay’ [made wavy ‘limp-wrist’ motion]

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Sample #10: (knl121290 @9:35)

Marc: I can’t believe that little bitch [Wade] called me a slut.
Beau: Yea; he hardly even knows you, huh dearie?
Marc: That’s right. At least when Jeff and Paul do it I know it’s out of love
Beau: And cause they really know that you are a slut
Marc: well yes that too
Beau: Wow you must love me too since I call you slut and get away with it all the time
Marc: yes but the difference is you call me that to my face!
Beau: Plus, when I say it I mean it as a compliment.
Marc: Well that’s understood you little cock-taster. We all bow to you the queen of all cock-tasters!
Beau: Guess that makes Jeff the queen of all cock-teasers

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Marc: Actually princess. Paul still holds the higher throne.
Beau: Yes but she thinks she's king!
Marc: Not queen?
Beau: She's just too: butch to be a queen of anything
Marc: Someone needs to tell Paul, 'yoo hoo missy; you like dick: you're a fag!'
Beau: [snapped fingers] Aren't we all?
Marc: Even most breeders at heart
Beau: Ooh the pick-up guy
Marc: [arm around Beau] Yes, Dorothy, when he leaves Kansas, even he will wanna fuck a cissy.
Beau: Dare to dream!
Marc: Beau, darling, your eyes are as good as rolled back.

What might appear at first blush like a scape-goating phenomenon in the earlier conversations seems very different in the above two excerpts. For one, brunt of jokes in these cases seem to be people outside the conversation circles. Second, some of the joke targets are the same as when the members were present. Jeff's joke to Beau "They're not men!" [when talking about Beau 'fingering all the chips'] and Beau's comments to Phil like "your little tricks" are made from the teller of the humor segment to the actual brunt of the joke (or at least within earshot of him). Thus, despite the close friendships which existed between Jeff, Marc, Beau, and Phil at the time (relationships which remain, by the way, still today right up to the time of Marc's passing late in 1996.), certain jokes were always made by Beau and Marc about Jeff and Phil whereas Jeff and Phil told jokes about Beau and Marc, usually on topics like dating and sexuality, with jokes that were often anti-gay.
or anti-straight. These dynamics shifted depending on the humor content. Marc and Phil were recent college alumni; Jeff had gone to 'hair-school,' according to Marc, but Beau had no schooling beyond high school. Others frequently told Beau-jokes which were really popular blond jokes at the time with Beau's name substituted (Beau, oddly enough, had jet black hair.):

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Sample #11: (kw121290)

Jeff: [to Phil] Know why Beau couldn't keep his last job?
Phil: No idea
Jeff: It was an M & M factory; she was throwing out the W 's

Jeff: Don't ask Beau to take off his shirt.
Wade: Why? He seems to have a nice enough body.
Jeff: Yes, but she's so vain and is trying to keep that bruised belly-button a secret.
Wade: Bruised... huh? God, what happened?
Jeff: Her last three tricks were even stupider than she is.

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In essence, at gay bars and gay parties, anyone at any given time may be the brunt of jokes; the jokes may be told directly to the target of the joke, told to someone else while the target of the joke is clearly in earshot, or told to someone else when the target is not in earshot. Of course, such is true in most settings: non-gay bars, family gatherings, departmental meetings, and phone conversations with friends. In gay nightclubs and the parties thrown by subjects who I met at the nightclubs, the humor is more of a
direct hit than in non-gay settings. Also people who did not know each other for long periods of time seemed to progress to a point of being able to make very negative jokes about each other much sooner than their non-gay counterparts. Most striking may be how anti-gay and anti-straight humor was used.

More than jokes about any other groups (the uneducated, the unattractive, the young, the old, etc.), jokes which expressed anti-gay themes and/or anti-straight themes seemed to be the most common humor contents. But they were not just more plentiful in number; they were also more significant. The kind of jokes one told regarding anti-gay or anti-straight themes often indicated whether one was coupled or single. As stated before, people certainly made jabs at both groups but when a person (as many did) clearly told one type of joke almost exclusively when compared to the other, it was reasonable as researcher to estimate or guess the subject's "couple-status." As such, I suppose, it is possible for one subject to gauge another's couple-status from the same clues; this gauging is, to the subjects themselves, I am sure, far more important. Expressing humor types involving an anti-gay or anti-straight sentiment is thus a potential way to communicate valuable information. It has both a humor role and humor function (to those who can read it as such) of communicating couple-status.
Of a related nature, singleness, once it is mutually communicated between two who are engaging in a potential "pick up," encourages other humor types, roles and functions. Consider the following:

Sample #12: tw050392

Davy: Kent, tell Evan what your dad did; Evan, you’re gonna die this is too good.
Kent: Well Mom and Dad visited last weekend and
Evan: Wait. Do they know your gay?
Kent: O God no. No No No No No:
Evan: Ok go on. I’ll bet this is a story about forgetting to de-fag your apartment.
Kent: Well kinda. I actually had everything [pictures from a ‘gay’ party, gay newspapers, pornography, etc] hidden, I guess, but my dad came out of the bedroom saying that he hoped I didn’t mind that he borrowed some of my cologne. Well, I told him that I don’t mind. But then I got to thinking... I don’t have cologne in the bedroom; I keep it in the bathroom. So I go into the room and sittin on the dresser is my new but now half-empty bottle of poppers. My dad is wearing it behind his ears! [all laughed]
Evan: that would have to burn; wouldn’t it?
Kent: I guess but I bet he and mom had the best sex they’ve had in the last thirty years though.
Davy: You should’ve taken ‘em to Tradewinds to disco dance [laughing]
Evan: You better not make fun... [he] may have a monkey on his ear, now
Davy: Really. Before you know it he’ll be brushing his teeth with coke (cocaine) and trying to style his hair with X (short for ‘ecstacy,’ a popular upper at some clubs).

Davy was trying to set up Kent and Evan on a date; this was Kent and Evan’s first meeting of each other though each had known Davy for at least a year. Davy, knowing that Evan was a fan of poppers (a popular inhalant at the time, used by many gay men while dancing or engaging in sex), wanted
Kent to relay the story not just because it mad all who heard it laugh but also because it communicated information about Kent to Evan. This, Davy explained, might help be a selling point to Evan as Evan and Kent knew that each other was single, but not a whole lot else about each other yet. If the relationship were to turn in to something sexual, sexual compatibility of the two would be a factor and, for Evan, absence of poppers would decrease Kent’s chances of a sexual encounter.

Consider Kent’s use of humor on another night, this time working alone to make a pick up:

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Sample #13: 070393
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Kent: So each Christmas my parents come over and I’ve hung my [greeting] cards all around the place but I have to put the faggier ones up really high so mom doesn’t snoop and read what everyone wrote inside. So I’m in the kitchen and I hear this voice from the living room, "Kent what’s a TOP?"

Theo: 0 NO:: [laughing]

Kent: So I’m thinking she’d been in the garage and found my ex’s letters and was reading them but here I walk into the living room where I must’ve had 130 cards hanging up. But now there’s 129 hanging and one in mama’s hands. [A couple walk by.] There’s the two who sent me the card [pointing]. Cris and Scot, you won’t believe what happened over the holiday with the folks. [Introductions are made by Kent to both Scot and Cris. The five of us are there: Scot, Cris, Theo (who Kent had just met that night), Kent and me. Kent repeated part of the story for Cris and Scot’s benefit and picked up where he’d left off.].

Kent: Just my luck -- the one card that fell was the one they sent me.
Theo: Some naked hunks on the inside, huh?
Cris: No I just made a joke about Kent’s latest ex...
Kent: And then he writes, "Congratulations for being a Top." So here’s mom reading it, not even knowing I’m gay, and how the hell do you explain this one?
Cris: So you came out to them?
Kent: No: I said that this is the name of the degree I got in June (Kent had gotten an M.A. that summer and was working on a Ph.D..)
Scot: Holy shit. And they bought it?
Kent: Way too well. Cause when I went home to visit them; it was a Sunday. Dad says Mr. Deluca said to tell you congratulations. And I asked him why. Dad says he was congratulating me for earning my top degree -- Dad was telling everyone at church. [laughs from Scot and Cris]
Kent: Can’t you just see my dad going down the pews, "My son’s a top. My son’s a top. Yoo hoo my son’s a top!"
[laughs from Theo also]
Scot: well girlie girl you finally done made your pa-pa proud.
Cris: Well maybe back in Pig-farm, U.S.A. no one would know what the hell it meant.
Kent: oh yea? The whole time I was home, Skippy from the church choir was way too friendly.
Scot: Ah, your dad may actually get you a date out of this. Too bad more people didn’t know!
Kent: They do. The story gets better. I pick up the local newspaper that week and see a blurb in the newspaper about me becoming a Top!
Cris: You’re kidding.
Kent: No I got it at home [turned to Theo] You’ve all got to see it. It’s a riot.
Cris: Well, Kent isn’t someone -- in your town, even -- gonna pick up on that.
Kent: You’d think but my sister came over for dinner; she has her degree and she knows it’s called an M.A. but said the letters must stand for something. So I’m thinking of some abbreviation to come up with in a nanosecond and I blurt out ‘it stands for toward the Ph.D.; TO the P.’ [more laughing]
Scot: It’s like he lives in St. Olaf (A reference to Rose’s hometown in The Golden Girls; its residents are notorious for their stupidity).

Noteworthy about the conversation above and conversations shared later that evening by Theo and Kent is that Kent is not just relaying a funny story but is also
sharing rather private, though very important, information about himself, in a very acceptable manner. And, he is opening the door for future conversations of this nature between him and Theo. Of all the funny stories he could tell, even funny stories about his parents, he chose one that makes use of the term "top" and him having been one recently with an ex. This reinforces to Theo his status as being single and conveys the information that he can be top (as well as bottom), regarding the sexual relationship with another man. Though an awkward subject for discussion, especially with someone he’s just met, Kent managed to share the info to Theo, someone who he is interested in, in a manner that is not too blatant or tacky within the community’s norms. In essence, one has to ask, "How else other than through humor could this info be conveyed, especially after such a short period of time, without seeming brash?’ These episodes accentuate the importance of humor in the gay bar.

"Topness" or "Bottomness" emerged in many humor segments, almost as if there was a need for the subject to be discussed or shared, but invoking distinctly gay forms of humor was the only acceptable way to do so. This may be because gay men, like non-gays, living in the general culture follow similar norms as everyone else when it comes to topics of discussion (It is considered awkward if a new
acquaintance asks questions about one's religious affiliation, stand on abortion, or political leanings and equally out of place when one makes jokes about the recently deceased.). There are no norms or 'rules' in non-gay culture for discussing topness and bottomness. Without the norm present, but with the need for the topic's discussion still remaining, it seems a gay community has, to some degree, "established" a way to broach the subject: humor.

Even while knowing that humor is the way that such matters are communicated does not mean that humor, itself, lacks guidelines. The following is one of several examples displaying this fact:

Sample #14: tw061595

Jack: You saying you've been with a woman?
Dale: I was married for thirteen years.
Rory: Really? I didn't know you were married that long.
Jack: Thirteen years of that? Spearing for fish? Guess that makes you very experienced at being top
Rory: She's drunk, Dale. Dismiss her.

Jack and Rory were very good friends, had ridden together to the bar even. Dale was a friend of Rory's a few years back, but Dale moved out of Columbus and they were catching up. Jack had told Rory of his interest in Dale when Dale had stepped away to get beers. Though Rory had told me later that he thought that Jack and Dale may have been compatible, Jack was "coming on too strong, talking
about Dale being a top." Rory indicated later that Jack could've found a better way to get the information he desired: namely, self-disclosure taking the form of a joke about himself having been bottom. Consider a more successful humor exchange:

Sample #15: te 040793

Domm: How did you know it [your most recent relationship] was true love?
Matt: Hey I must have been in love; I was top for that man

Though brazen and confrontational-style joking behavior is accepted, maybe valued, within the gay bar community, a sense of rules still exist. Joking about oneself's experiences as a top or bottom is acceptable, as is such joking about friends. Joking about a new acquaintance's bottomness or topness is automatically seen as a 'pick-up' line of behavior or as a type of insult and is also less acceptable in polite company, not to mention usually less successful.

In the earlier conversation Dale was not joking about anything when he was talking about the length of his marriage: he was merely stating fact. Therefore, the brazen comment by Jack was even more out of place. There was no build up to the sort of joking-amongst-each-other about each-other environment of, for example, Marc and Beau whose
dialogues appeared earlier. All of these factors contributed to making Jack's comment seem out of place, prompting Rory's comment to ignore Jack, which Dale had started to do anyway, by that time.

Of course, there were other ways in which singleness or coupled-ness seemed to be influencing humor. Consider the following conversations, paying special attention to Dann and Sean:

Sample #16: tw 090191

Carl: (holding two drinks) I know what you all are thinking but these are both mine: I don't feel like sharin'
Kent: Funny you look like a Sharon.
Kreg: Sharon (share and) Share Alike
Kent: Oo drag name! Sharon Cheryl Ike (/share and share alike/)
Kreg: I like that! And Dann could be Janet
Carl: Janet?
Dann: Miss Jackson, if you're nasty
Sean: I know that's a song, but I don't understand anything else you're saying
Carl: Kent and Kreg do this thing with words and phrases all the time
Sean: You guys do that [dress in drag]?
Kent: Hell no. We just come up with names...
Kreg: ...that the smart ones should be using. You [Sean] could be Dolly
Kent: Dolly Madison? Dolly Llama?
Kreg: Llama, that's good. But I mean Dolly Parton.
Sean: You look at me, a twenty-year old black man and you see a blond in high heels, high hair, and a high [er] income?
Carl: It's the breasts, huh?
Kent: Yeah, had to be the chest.
Kreg: My God yes. Look at those things; they're huge.
Picture them squeezed into a low-cut dress
Carl: Nothing backless I hope... Hairy back.
Dann: You do have an amazing chest, but I don't look at it and picture you in a dress; that's for sure.
Sample #17: (tw111191)

Dann: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to PeeWee [Herman]?
Sean: O God this is gonna be good. I don’t know; what?
Dann: Quit playing with your food.
Sean: That is so good.
Dann: I thought you’d like it. The bad thing is that I’m half-afraid to share it with my sister now.
Sean: Why? She didn’t know any of [his] victim’s did she?
Dann: You mean Pee Wee [laughing]?
Sean: No, I mean .. [laughing a bit] O cute; I get it.
Dann: No, I mean because I just came out to her and it’s probably to soon to tell a joke about a gay man.
Sean: You mean gay ‘men,” don’t you? I heard they both might be gay.
Dann: No, I didn’t hear that. Damn; there are going to be so many jokes out there to tell now.
Sean: So many jokes; so little time!
Dann: And I had to come out last month and [can’t share them with] my sister now.
Sean: There’s another reason not to tell people: you never know when a Cannibalistic Queen is gonna start an all protein, and dark chocolate, diet.
Dann: And when PeeWee is gonna go to a theater and discover a friend that isn’t animated.
Sean: That’s right. And people say I stay in the closet to hide from corporate America; it’s not. I just wouldn’t be told the good jokes [at work] if they thought I was gay.
Dann: You’re probably right. Plus they’d be afraid that you were like Dahmer or something ...
Sean: Yeah, you’re right. Like I’d chop them up and eat them or something ...
Dann: Exactly ...
Sean: like I have that much fat in MY diet
Dann: Straight people can be stupid.
Sean: Yea, I’m surprised more of them aren’t caught in movie theaters spanking their Hank. [laughs. Dann joins in the laughter.]
Sample #18: A man in drag has just walked by, bumping into friends that are standing around (tw021994).

Dann: Holy..
Sean: What I don't understand is why she would want to [dress like] a woman
Dann: probably to match the voice; ever hear her talk?
Sean: I guess I'd rather be with someone whose outer appearance is compatible with the parts [he has] underneath
Dann: For all we know, she got it [penis] cut off too.
Sean: Uh, I'm getting a drink.

Sample #19: Dann, Sean and Duke have been talking about an episode of The Nanny (television show) which had aired in which Fran was attracted to a guy, also a nanny, who turns out to be gay, and are swoon talking about an episode of Roseanne, recently repeated (te031195):

Dann: (to Sean) Too bad you weren't home again last night: you missed it.
Duke: That scene when she's getting interviewed; isn't that classic?
Dann: I like that...
Duke: (to Sean) the lady says to Roseanne that [her friend] she is so damn perky I want to run a knife through her skull (sic.).
Dann: Roseanne says, 'I can see why you're in personnel... you're nuts."
Duke: Cause Roseanne tells the woman (interviewer) that she really likes Phil's wife (the perky woman discussed earlier) and the woman from personnel says 'I didn't say I didn't like her," and then Roseanne says 'O I must've taken that knife-through-the-head comment the wrong way before.
Dann: She was just so serious through it too.
Duke: Almost as good as a drag queen could do it (be nasty, rude).
Dann: You know who the interviewer is, don't you?
Duke: Can't think of her name but she does Carmen San Diego.
Dann: Damn you're good.
Sean: You too [are] like a couple of Peggy Bundies sittin on the couch, eatin' bon-bons, and watching tv all the time.
Sample #20: Dann is talking to Adam; Sean is not at the that night (102095).

Dann: I haven’t watched the news or weather in a while.
Adam: So you didn’t know about the ruckus on my block last weekend, huh?
Dann: No. What happened?
Adam: Well that guy (adult male) who took those nude pictures of that girl (child) got off on bond and lives on the other side of (the block).
Dann: It was an old guy?
Adam: Only about 28 or something but I don’t think the girl was even in her teens yet.
Dann: And to think: it was a hetero who did that. You know they can’t be trusted around children (both laugh.)

Dann appears in the above five excerpts, sharing humor segments in each. Sean appears in all but the last sample. Dann shares humor that can be seen as nonsense (sample 16, possibly 19); as sick (sample 17); as anti-gay (sample 18); and as anti-straight (sample 20). Along with showing Dann using humor from the different humor classes, it also shows how Dann’s humor style seemed to change, over time. Seemingly this could be just coincidence; after all, we all share different types of humor from different humor classes at varying times in our lives — it seems insignificant at first. However, field notes reflect Dann truly changing his humor style a lot over the course of time, and rather predictably. I could, as researcher, pick out a sample of Dann’s talk without looking at the date and reasonably pinpoint the time period, not because I necessarily
remembered all the segments; rather because the way Dann created and shared humor segments reflected to some degree his changing relationship with Sean. For example, Dann and Sean were meeting each other for the first time during the week that sample 16 was recorded. I, too, as researcher was first introduced to Dann at that time (that night, specifically), but sensed he was interested in Sean (One comment appears in sample 16, ending that sample, which is a subtle marker to that effect.). Soon after that night, I spoke to Dann often, probably because I spoke with Sean often; I'd known and talked to Sean for five months prior to meeting Dann. By November, 1991 it was definite: if Sean and Dann came out to the same bar on the same night, one would eventually meet up with and hang out with the other for the rest of the night. Sean, seemingly more shy or withdrawn than Dann, certainly spoke to Dann and joked with Dann, but his humor segments paralleled Dann's in terms of humor class and humor content. Dann went from, in sample 16, nonsense humor (from humor class 1, according to Mindess, 1990, and this researcher as well) when he did not really know Sean at all, to both sick and hostile humor (classes 2 and 3), almost consistently, just two months later (See sample #17.). By February, 1992, the two were dating, having gone to the bar together after a Valentine's Dinner; by June they were referring to themselves as "a couple" each referring to the other as his "lover." By
November of the next year, the two were living together as lovers. Humor samples decreased in number as they went to the bar less frequently at that time, though I maintained some contact by phone and did make a point to talk to each when I did see them out, soon thereafter. Their humor was a bit more sexual and very much against "the bar scene," having "no interest in going out anymore since I’d rather spend time with Dann" as Sean said. Humor became very anti-gay as well; sample 18 is, more specifically, anti-drag, but neither anti-drag nor, more generally, anti-gay jokes were ever shared by Dann or Sean in the bar prior to living together as a couple. They were never shared again after their breakup in April of 1995 either, despite seeming to be a very common subject of satire while together.

By March of 1995, Dann and Sean’s MR, seemingly a MR4 to all who knew them, was having difficulty. In hindsight, it should have been more clear to all, perhaps, because they would come out more often, and do so alone: not with each other, not with a friend; and not even planning, usually, to meet any of their friends out. When they did come out together, their humor was different: it was different from what it had been when they had gotten along and different from when they came out alone. The presence of "the other half" seemed to stop any of the sexual, sick or hostile humor that seemed popular when the partner was not there.
Humor was always from humor class one, usually nonsense, and much less personal. In fact, practically all the humor was sharing something a friend had said, creating funny 'drag names' or sharing funny scenes from television episodes. In February and March none of the shared humor had been anti-gay or anti-straight.

After their breakup -- Dann had moved out -- satirical humor emerged a bit more often, though the two never hung out with each other at the bar. In fact, if Sean was at the bar and Dann showed up, Dann usually would go to a different bar, and vice versa. Thus there is no way to know how they spoke to each other or joked with each other since they seemed to avoid each other completely while out. Still, they did interact with friends and acquaintances, and when they did, the humor was much more satirical. Of course one might intuitively expect nasty jokes, satirical comments about the "ex" which were there on a few rare occasions. However, more humor segments, and much of the talk in general for that matter, was somewhat anti-straight. This deserves greater attention.

If what DeCocco and Shane (1992) write is true, gay men tend to meta-communicate often especially about their relationships; that is, the talk about how the relationship
is going with each other and also the way they talk about it. A couple of reasons are posited for this by DeCocco.

One such reason is that there is greater pressure, perhaps, for a gay couple in a MR4 to remain successful because the duo takes on the responsibility of serving as the 'poster-men for gayness.' That is, people seem to think monogamous homosexual relationships are rare or even nonexistent. Gay men (and women) in such relationships tend to take on greater responsibility and a self-imposed need to be and seem close to perfect to serve as a model for 'how to do it' to other gay couples living vicariously through them and to show straight coupled friends, who may or may not even know any other gay people how their lives as a couple parallel each other, asserting gays' acceptance of coupled relationships and encouraging their straight coupled friends to accept their gay relationship more and, in turn, gays in general. DeCocco's (1992) comments take on new meaning in light of 1996 articles in The Advocate about the breakup of Rob Paris and his ex as well as stories including lesbian celebrities like Melissa Etheridge (whose lesbian lover recently had their first child together, via a male donor), K.D. Lang, and Chastity Bono being interviewed about coming out and feeling the pressure that this puts on their relationships moreso than the pressures they feel individually by doing so. Recently, Ellen DeGeneres's
coming out in her own life and as 'Ellen Morgan,' her character on her situation comedy Ellen, have been the subject of countless news stories and casual conversations. By mid-April of 1997 Ellen had been the subject of stories, a cover story, in fact, in *Time* and *Newsweek*; had been the lead story on entertainment programs like *Entertainment Tonight, Access Hollywood, Extra, E! News Entertainment, American Journal, Hard Copy, MTV News, CNN Entertainment News, local news programs, the three major networks network news programs, morning programs like *CBS Morning News, Today, and Good Morning America, and network news-magazines like Dateline, 20/20 and *PrimeTime Live*. ABC (which airs Ellen) featured a two-part interview with Ellen on April 25 and 30 on its programs 20/20 and *PrimeTime Live*, including discussions with her family, friends from her home town, and a guy she went out with a couple of times as a teenager. ABC's *Politically Incorrect* featured discussions about Ellen's coming out; CBS's *Late Late Show with Tom Snyder* (guest hosted by Jon Stewart that night) devoted time to Ellen's coming out; and Oprah interviewed Ellen on her own talk show during the week that the coming out episode (Oprah plays a role in the Ellen episode too.). The majority of these programs also bring up the question of who Ellen is currently with (a relatively unknown actress who until April 1997 had remained relatively unknown, who was not 'out' as a lesbian); it is probably no surprise that
Ellen reports feeling more stress put upon her other half and on the relationship than she is feeling personally. Of course, some would say that this is a lesbian couple whose relationship is under scrutiny only because of Ellen's celebrity status, not because of her lesbianism but until she 'came out' these questions were not asked of Ellen, despite many interviewers' knowledge of Ellen's sexual orientation.

Besides the burden that DeGeneres and her partner or other homosexual couples in a MR may feel, another reason was posed by DeCocco (1992) about gay males' tendencies to talk to much about their own relationships with each other, citing the higher educational level, on average, of gay males (reported also in Ringer, 1995) and how certain types of communication like meta-communication increase as a couple's educational level increases.

Whether one subscribes to the same reasons why DeCocco attributes to gays and lesbians in MR4s feeling more scrutinized or not, suffice it to say that evidence does support DeCocco when saying that gays have that perception of their own relationships (DeCocco 1992, Ringer 1995, Shane 1992); those researchers seem to disagree only about what the causes for that perception may be. Given this, it seems odd that this tendency to talk about the relationship often
tends not to lead to discussion about the relationship nor the ex when engaging in bar humor. In fact, humor that is anti-straight seems to emerge rather than any joking or commenting about the relationship. It could be that talking about straight people, non-gay is a way for the gay male to distance himself from the recent breakup situation. Another may be that the gay male is expressing anger, possibly even jealousy, toward non-gays whose relationships seem to last longer and seem to be more successful to most. Both may be viable lines to examine. This author, however, especially after viewing Dann's humor in samples 16 through 20 sees the best explanation as one of identification.

Whether it be cultural norms or stereotypes many are accustomed to seeing the typical heterosexual male in his fifties, forties, or even thirties and twenties, as being married to a woman, having a house, some kids and pets, and getting together on very rare occasions with other male friends or buddies and occasionally going out to play cards, go fishing, have a few drinks or whatever. The stereotypes of the gay male are numerous but even the gay male in his forties and fifties, until very recently, was almost always thought of as being somewhat alone, not involved in a relationship and not necessarily close to his family, who goes out to gay bars on weekends or even weekdays. Gay men, brought up by non-gay parents who hold this belief, are

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inevitably influenced by this, feeling that being gay means one will be and feel alone in one’s old age (DeCocco, 1992). To alleviate this, many gay men report or exhibit overcompensating, working extra hard to ‘be liked by all’ or pursuing relationships very intently, assimilating into the societal expectations of heterosexuals. It is as if distancing themselves as much as possible from the homosexual stereotypes, the gay man may, perhaps, have the closeness and happiness that seems available only to heterosexuals in coupled relationships. This is lunacy to some gay men, but a sizeable number have been brought up feeling this way. As such, gay men who can more closely assimilate to heterosexual norms, beliefs, customs, and lifestyles will likely increase their chances of future happiness since heterosexuals are portrayed as being more ‘normal,’ ‘happy,’ and ‘healthy.’ Over a quarter of a century ago researchers and some gay males referred to the phenomena as ‘passing’ and some argue the goal remains today for many homosexuals, albeit today it is much less of a conscious matter.

Paglia is but one who has argued that lifelong marriage or coupling is really a culturally-created notion, created by a culture that is predominantly heterosexual; it does not and should not apply to others. If the need for marriage is supported by, amongst other things, a need for a man and
woman to come together and multiply, then such words mean nothing to gay men. Gay men should certainly stay together and remain monogamous if they do choose but doing so is not and should not be considered as, anything that is necessarily more respectable, admirable, noble or necessary that the alternatives. Dann’s humor reflects his disagreement with Paglia.

His humor in samples 17 and 20 reflect negativity toward non-gays; he was single at those times when making the comment about straight people making the faulty assumption that all gays are similar vis a vis his comments on Jeffrey Dahmer and Pee Wee Herman and the apparently opposite kind of comment, said with sarcasm, about how heterosexuals are always doing the kinds of things that the 28-year-old child molester did to the young girl, saying the same thing about heterosexuals that is often assumed about homosexuals. The latter, of course, serves many purposes from highlighting the similarities between gays and non-gays (Each group contains a wide variety of people; some of whom commit terrible acts.) to highlighting the differences between the two groups (All gays know that people who commit such heinous acts do so for reasons that have nothing to do with their own sexual orientations; though many non-gays realize this, there is still a sizeable portion of non-gay people who don’t, and they are the butt of the joke for
being uninformed or naive.). Taken together, examined with Dann’s other comments, and compared to the comments of others from the data it creates the following result (For more information on the rhetorical strategies and advantages of the following kinds of distancing, the reader is referred to broad categories of work in social movement rhetoric building upon Goffman’s *Stigma*, and more recently and most specifically by Brown’s work with "anomaly-masking" and "anomaly-featuring" concepts which emerged from Burkean notions of consubstantiality and identification and a variety of works by Stephen Pepper.):

A gay man whose humor style seems to include anti-straight humor as the primary humor content is **distancing non-gays** or maximizing the existing differences he feels between himself and straights. Specifically he is separating himself not from straight people, per se; rather the common beliefs that straight people seem to have of themselves and of each other, the least of which is living in a monogamous MR4 relationship.

A gay man whose humor style includes mostly anti-gay humor segments is minimizing the differences which he feels exist between him and heterosexuals as influenced by the culture; he is also maximizing the differences between himself and other gays or **distancing gays**.

Further evidence is in sample 18; Dann is sharing an anti-gay comment because he is identifying with heterosexuals’ norms of dating and couple-ness -- he’s in a monogamous and about to move in together as lovers. Thus, he distances himself via the humor from other gays in the
bar at the time, many presumably single. This is not unique to Dann and his friends; refer to samples 6 through 8 and talk amongst Jeff, Phil, Marc and Beau, the former being coupled but the latter two of the four being single. Marc and Beau’s humor take on more anti-straight undertones with one making a comment comparing Phil to ‘jealous straight men,’ an ultimate slam against Phil since those who are not gay are regularly demeaned by Marc and Beau. At the beginning of the chapter when those samples were discussed more thoroughly, recall that even use of non-humor devices like pronouns suggested some sort of internalization of the differences between them all, Jeff and Phil getting referred to as male pronouns while female pronouns were typically used to refer to Marc or Beau. This is repeated in sample 18 when Sean refers to the man in drag suggesting that a man should still look like a man but at the same time referring to the person as ‘she’ which is the same pronoun he used when that ‘drag queen’ was out at the bar but dressed like a man. Samples 1 through 3 with Alan, Burt and Dave seem consistent with these claims.

The rise and fall of the relationship between Dann and Sean has been discussed to help illustrate the claims here, but is consistent with two other couples observed over the time period whose relationships dissolved and whose use of humor changed as did the pronouns used to describe them.
Since note-taking ended Dann and Sean have managed to renew a friendship, FR2 or FR3, and are comfortable talking about or to each other. The other two pairs have had even more difficult breakups and still remain so distant with each other that it seemed inappropriate to quite samples of their talk, particularly since those couples did, on occasion, speak about the 'ex' rather negatively and openly on several different occasions at each of the three main bars observed. Dann and Sean, though parting was difficult for certain, either had less negative emotions involved or were just able to put them aside while out. Certainly another factor is that Sean drank very little, and Dann certainly drank less than the four men involved in the other two couplers. It could be that less drinking on their part caused them to air out less of their dirty laundry. Dann, in fact, when confronted by a friend of his one night about his recent breakup with Sean stopped the friend from "badmouthing him [Sean] like that" because "we both made mistakes... or maybe neither one of us was in the wrong just maybe not as compatible as [we] thought."

To say that telling anti-straight jokes is a way for Dann to consciously let people at the bar know that he is again "suddenly single" is a grand overstatement. However, many people would ask him soon after meeting how long he'd been single and I never heard this asked while he was
coupled, even on occasions when one or the other was out alone. Certainly there may have been other clues as well, but also I frequently heard how small town-ish the bar’s gossip was, particularly when it came to couples starting or ending a relationship. It seemed that people would know very little about some of these people about whom they spoke, not knowing ages, what they did for a living, which suburb they lived in or even their last name at times, but they knew who they were seeing, how long, and could often pinpoint the day or week of the breakup and were willing to speculate on the causes. So use of humor is certainly not the only factor in determining if the gay male is single or coupled but the male’s use of that humor is certainly indicative of the group(s) with whom he is identifying, at the time.

Further, use of Dann and Sean’s changing humor over the growth of their relationship illustrates how humor type not just humor subject changed. What Mindess refers to as a growth through classes of humor into adulthood we see in Dann and Sean not as a ‘growth into adulthood’ since both were within a year of being thirty. Rather it shows a growth into maturity of the relationship. It further shows (See sample 19) how, as the relationship neared its end, probably already back to a MR1 or even MR2 by that time, the declining relationship has a change on the humor type.
Increased amounts of nonsense humor is not necessarily the marker of the demise of a relationship, I suppose, but it was in this case. Of course by early 1995, just months before the breakup, the coupled subjects in question were sharing virtually no other type of humor other than that classified by Mindess in HCl.
5.B. PROBLEMS WITH THE STUDY: RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Any research study has limitations; this one is no exception. Though care has been taken to avoid some of the pitfalls that previous researchers have fallen into (following, at times, those scholars' suggestions for how to improve upon their own research), such precautions seemed successful at times, but less successful at other times. Naturally, new or unanticipated problems emerge as well.

As Painter's (1978) research on coming out as a lesbian via humor was a significant starting point for aspects of this study, a list of the limitations she observed in her own study are presented below and if/how this research addresses Painter's (1978, 191-194) concerns.

Methodology limitations: limitations of ethnomethodology, in general, and in studies like these, specifically:

1. note-taking problems
   a. abbreviations
   b. deciding what to record seems arbitrary
   c. writing for accuracy is difficult
   d. self-interpretations influence decisions

2. subject feedback limitations
   a. subjects' conscious self-reflection may affect data
   b. subjects change, move, stop going 'out' to the bars

3. replication is impossible/difficult.
Note-taking was certainly a problem, of varying degrees within this study. Heeding the advice of Painter (1978) and others, some necessary abbreviations were anticipated by preliminary visits to the field and some exposure, albeit limited, to some gay humor prior to the study. Unfortunately, less than twenty abbreviations were preplanned but well over a hundred came to be used. However, prior training in linguistics, use of phonic [phonetic] transcription in places and creating a legend for abbreviations as they were used proved useful. Painter suggested the latter of these, suggesting one write out one's notes after returning from the field that day/night while the information was still clear. Mindess (1992) and dozens of other humorologists gave enough background in humor research, in general, to allow me, as researcher, to learn how to cope with abbreviations of others' humor better.

Another concern, what one records is, at times, arbitrary seems unavoidable at times. When a conversation is occurring in a dyad, writing is difficult enough. In larger groups, subjects speak more often; they talk over each other; they interrupt; they splinter into sub-conversations; and the likelihood of even more people joining in the conversation is increased, since people walking by are increasingly likely to know at least one
person in the group and will say hello and join in the talk. As I spent more time than Painter (1978) and others while doing in-field note-taking, I came to feel very comfortable with the samples of humor in my notes as being representative and a reflection of balance in subjects’ talk. Also, in later stages I was coding, specifically, humor segments: I was not trying to get all the details of talk each and every time. Thus in dyads when notes were easier to keep up with, I could write both the humorous and non-humorous exchanges. In larger groups, I tended to focus on people sharing the most humor, subjects’ speaking most audibly, and, after the first year-and-a-half subjects to whom I had not yet been exposed. Additionally, follow-up work was done in the form of actual interviews and visits to out of town bars, and attendance at non-bar events like parties. Parties were particularly useful because one host videotaped his parties, allowing me as researcher to at least clarify some parts of conversations. Others, out of town, were sometimes willing to allow their voices to be recorded during the party, being told that tapes were running but not that their humor was the real focus of the dissertation. These recorded events were rare, naturally, since the focus was on bar humor and recordings were not possible in bars. They were nonetheless useful in that those quoted in samples within the research are accurate and replicable. Those recordings gave me periodic self-checks.
too about my own note-taking in other locations where all I had was pen and paper.

Nonetheless, a minimal amount of arbitrariness is a potential element in this or any research process. I was, as researcher, in the field in 1991 possibly a different researcher from the person I was in 1993. However, arbitrariness does exist in other types of research as well. The quantitative methodologist deals with arbitrariness in deciding which questions to ask and what order to put them in, even. Less obtrusive ethnomethodological research like SYMLOG is still hampered by the arbitrariness of when and what gets recorded. These limitations are present in this study as well. Some would argue that arbitrariness exists in terms of how subjects self-described their relationships also. For example, if a couple refers to themselves as being best friends (FR4), and my conclusions and theory are based on the correctness of their own self-judgments then my theory and conclusions are only as good as subjects' own accuracy. Of course, arbitrariness is expected to some degree, even by researchers of relational communication. Some arbitrariness is just unavoidable.

The other major limitation may be the changing subject pool. Painter (1978) experienced this as well, and so would any researcher. One advantage to this population is that
many regulars did exist in the gay male bar population: even now, over eight years after that first visit, some of the same patrons exist. Thus, even though some subjects do come and go, many remain. Further, these changes do not necessarily devalue the data of a subject who has since moved away. Sean, for example, is cited a few times as is Cris, Brad, Marc, and others who no longer are in Columbus. For that matter such changes may benefit the research as Marc, Cris and others served as respondents and/or hosts of parties and gatherings out of town where additional data collection and interviews were made possible. Of course, one problem this researcher encountered which was not mentioned by Painter and not anticipated (at least not to the degree that it occurred) by this researcher was the loss of dozens of people, mostly to AIDS. Of course, the real tragedy here is not the scholar's or academician's loss of "subjects:" rather it is the loss, very personal and profound, felt by many of the people with whom I spoke. Like them, I, too, felt this loss in ways that are personal and much more on a human level than the research level.

Despite heeding much of Painter's advice, I encountered other difficulties. Specifically, I was trying to address certain needs in the humor research which is lacking. However, those are very difficult needs to address. For example, lack of humor research within communication
competence literature is troubling since much of the conclusions about humor in friend and mate relationship that has been reached in this study begs for more attention from communication scholars interested in issues of humor's adaptability functions within competence. Also, though humor is known to be significant in marginalized communities, and some (Nicotera, 1992; Mindess, 1990) either call for such research directly or at least allude to its importance, it is difficult to transform specific conclusions about the humor of this group into theory about humor and relationships, in general. However, it is not impossible to do so.

The previous section showed favored humor types and humor contents of subjects based on the type of relationship in which they are involved (FR vs. MR) and the relationship level. Specific details about what makes up each of the eight cells formed by that matrix would certainly be different for other populations (I would not expect any anti-straight humor from other populations, marginalized or otherwise.). However, other targets may emerge. Certainly there is one exception to this previous statement; that being the homosexual women would use anti-straight humor at times, but even that may not necessarily be in the same way as it is used by gay men. Too many other variables and
factors would need to be considered. At the same time, that
doesn't mean that other results do not transfer over.

For example, intuitive knowledge of non-gay
relationships seems compatible with the findings on humor
types: that is, for example, HC4 is used more with our
closest friends than any other group. Humor types as shared
in our best friend relationships (FR4) may not differ that
much from the way we share humor in MR4 relationships. This
is a new finding. More important to many communication
scholars is that these facts do have generalizeability.
Further, it seems feasible to use what has been done here as
a starting point for other research on the links that exist
between humor and relationship communication. Also, it may
in an incidental way, share some information relevant for
those involved in humor research and/or gay studies.
Literature bases in each area are still growing.
5.C. Summary of Contributions and Suggestions for Future Research

A useful follow-up study may try to replicate this research with a different population or even a different researcher. On a personal level, this particular researcher thinks it may prove useful to take the information in the newly-created eight-cell humor matrix (from the previous section) and flesh out some of the ambiguities by using other research methods as well. A quantitative study, at this point, would prove useful; though certainly no more or less useful than qualitative research projects which deal with alternate settings, subjects, and/or communities. No doubt such research may result in a variety of new conclusions (and more questions), but in doing so it helps show further proof that humor does function as an entry and intensity variable in relationships, as it has been shown to do here. This increased attention, especially on the part of communication scholars, seems vital as humor's adaptability functions are ever-present but not really well understood from a communicative standpoint.

Another suggested avenue for future research is to flesh out even more thoroughly the differences which became clear in the sub-populations of coupled gay men and non-coupled gay men. Though single and married heterosexual
couples would not differ in terms of anti-gay and anti-straight jokes based sheeply on their status as a couple, are other humor contents significant in distinguishing the humor of those two heterosexual groups? Within the heterosexual population as well, are there differences between single straight men and single straight women and their joking habits? Williams (1980) stereotypes women as being catty toward each other when jealous about what the other has; though offering no research or support for his allegation. Nor does he indicate if he would expect the same to be true or not, when considering men's jealousies. Some of the communication of gay males has been likened to heterosexual men, some to heterosexual women, some to other oppressed or historically ostracized groups, and some to African-American Women. At least one author (See Ringer, 1995.) has tried to liken gay male's communication to the communication of the well-educated or sophisticated, and others have likened gay men's linguistic and communicative competence to the performance and competence of left-handers, particularly syntactic grammar and movement rules involving the grammatical constraint of subjacency (See Williams, 1989; Cowart, 1988; and Bever, 1987.). It seems that making such links with information gathered from this study may be possible but their role in broader theory is less clear. However, assumptions made here about why that
humor is different between the coupled and non-coupled gay male could be explored further.

Specifically, does the coupled gay man exhibit greater amounts of anti-gay humor relative to his anti-straight humor because he is assimilating into the general population (according to Mindess) or because there is some level of jealousy of the single gay male (See Williams's 1980 samples of 'bitchery-humor' in which women exhibited jealousy of other women.) and his freedom? Or, is such shift merely a convenience; that is, does the single gay male just emerge as the scapegoat a la the work in SYMLOG (Bales, 1990)?

Given that humor was able to serve as an accurate marker of level of relationship (1 through 4) and type of relationship (FR vs. MR), many questions emerge for future research, but also emerging are some rather significant contributions of this study.

First, would we expect there to be comparable markers within the non-gay population (and there is no reason not to expect this), and if so what are they? Presented here is a combination of method and literature review that is a useful approach for getting at such answers. Answers to the same research questions for other populations will have a great deal of utility and value as well.
Second, since we have, here, markers of relationship types and levels, and we have many scholars researching communities like the gay male population, we have a way, here, to help researchers of humor within this population to gauge the degree to which they are being exposed to the humor of the gay male, acting as a gay male, in the gay bar setting.

We also have via the creation of the eight cells in the humor calculus matrix the creation of reasonable subpopulations of the broader gay male bar community and the possibility of exploring other communicative forms of each subgroup (other than just humor) and a way to see how these communication patterns change. From chapter two, we know (DeCocco, 1992) that gay men have a tendency to over-analyze their relationships by talking with each other about their relationship much more than non-gays in relationships. If such visible clues existed to this researcher about the changes of gay men's relationships (by examining how their public humor was changing) then shouldn't similar clues exist to the men in those relationships? If not, is it related to the difficulty in reading humor or is it more likely that these relationship changes are visible to the men in these relationships, and their self-doubts about the security of their relationships are valid? That is, when DeCocco says gay men in recently dissolved MR4s report
spending a great deal of time talking about the significant issues with their partners, is it valid as DeCocco suggests to read this as "the over-communication caused the breakup" or is it more appropriate to read it as, "the men had clues about the inevitability of the relationship's demise (clues such as humor type changes) and then over-communicated to try to save the relationship, before it inevitably ended." As such, the presence of over-communication in the relationship is not a variable that influences a relationship's demise but only a marker of some other variable(s) which led to that point. It may be extreme to say that use of humor could be an issue, but certainly it is possible given that gay men rate humor as one of the five most significant variables in their friend and mate relationships and rate it as even more important in higher level friend and mate relationships.

Given this and the 'work' that one must do to get and become a part of gay humor, it is not so unreasonable to see humor, as a facet of communicative adaptability, as a factor in some relationships' demise. After all, consider the guests at Taylor's Knoxville party and put some of them, particularly the ones who had been out for shorter periods of time or had never been to a gay male bar, with some of the patrons of levi bars like Columbus's Tradewinds or the guests of Chip and Alex at one of their parties.
(levi/leather bar patrons) or party guests of Danny and Jimmy (levi/leather patrons who threw a party for 'Reba' their dog.). Certainly, some incompatibilities are predictable and even expected. Taylor's guest Gary is as old as guests of Jimmy and Danny, but Jimmy and Danny's friendships (from having been out for many years and being active in a variety of social organizations through the years), have given them many more close, firmly established gay friend and mate relationships. They can say things via humor, and do so regularly. Significant, of course, is that they do so appropriately with respect to group norms.

Gary's limited exposure to other gay men joking as gay men (living in a small town in Tennessee at the time) would not afford him and a new boyfriend the same opportunities that are afforded to Danny and Jimmy. I, as researcher, made the mistake of referring to a friend of theirs, (known well as 'Auntie Rick') by the name 'Auntie Rick' at an after hours party when Rick had gone to the basement for the purpose of approaching a possible MR1. Rick and others would have expected me at the time to know that I should refrain from calling out 'Hello Auntie' when Rick was pursuant of someone, but that was knowledge that I did not have at that time: single men often went to the basement to get to know each other better, away from talking and distractions on the first floor. By removing himself from his friends on the first floor to look for a relationship, Rick was also
removing himself from the scapegoat position which allowed him as a single gay male to be referred to as the female name, "Auntie." My lack of knowledge about the rules at the time prompted Danny to inform me, as researcher, that "Rick is no one's aunt when in the basement... she's the slutty but well-liked school girl with the helium heels and the well-known reputation." Certainly Gary, who seemed to know even less about gay joking and ways to speak than I did, would seem like an outsider in many ways to those in Rick's circle of friends if he and Rick were dating: not to mention that Rick's own ways of speaking would have to change somewhat at first or run the risk of excluding someone he is dating from much of his communication.

Despite the need of future research projects as suggested earlier, several important contributions are made to communication research by this project. Humor, often ignored in communication competency research and only peripherally considered in friend and mate relationship research, is shown to be significant in each by virtue of the evidence which points to humor being both an entry and intensity variable in both friend and mate relationships. Humor gives people the opportunity to simultaneously reveal information to friends and conceal that information from others who overhear it. Humor makes movement through the filtering process of relationships easier and in fact seems
the most viable option at times for helping relationship growth. Further, given that humor involves communicative risk, people must have intuitive knowledge that humor is not only useful as an adaptability function of our communicative competence but that it is also necessary. That is, abstaining from humor is simply not possible.

Humor type may increase FR or MR levels but humor content is significant in distinguishing the humor patterns of FRs versus MRs. It may be that humor content affects the increase in levels of FRs or MRs or that humor type differs when comparing FR to MR, but that was not the case here.

Humor type was not only a necessary condition for advancing through relationship filters, but it may also be a sufficient condition. That is, it was possible to ascertain the friend or mate relationship level of subjects simply by exposure to how they used humor in their naturally occurring talk. Certainly, Mindess suggested that more information could be gathered by using the methods that were used in this study, but even he would probably be surprised at how accurate humor was as a marker of relationship levels. As such, we have Mindess who researched in fields like psychology, sociology, and, of course, humor most often being able to contribute indirectly to the research on communication within relationships, entry and intensity.
variables within filtering communication, adaptability functions of humor as a subset of communication competence, and the interpersonal relational dynamics of gay men in the gay male nightclub. Likewise, these same communication concepts, literature bases on the communication of gay men, the booming literature base on the method and methodology of participant observation, and a myriad of other lines of research including this project's own hypotheses, theorems, postulates, conclusions, and field note samples combine to shed light on humor research (a la Mindess, Davies, and others) in fields like psychology, sociology, linguistics, and gay studies, as well as in the method of participant observation.
1 Koeller is one of many, discussed in detail in section 2.B.

2 Painter (1978) offers a case study, as does Coser (1959).

3 Both Painter (1978) and Coser (1959) examine this as does Berube and Davies (1990).

4 See section 2.C.3. for a discussion of Trinidadian Calypso.

5 See section 2.C.3. as well as Painter's (1978) discussion about lesbian humor and group membership.

6 Gruner (1978) is perhaps best known, though more recent work includes Duran (1983) and textbooks like Osborne's (1990) and Sprague and Stewart (1992).

7 Coser (1959) as well as Slovenko and Mindess (1990) and Williams (1980) are useful resources as are many authors in the collection be Decocco (1991).

8 This is considered in the Trinidad community and the discussion of gay men in the military during World War I (Berube, 1982).

9 Painter (1978) is most notable here.

10 Thus, notions of communication and humor's significance within the field are significant. Humor is vital in the definitions of communication posed by everyone from Cicero to Kenneth Burke.

11 Mindess, et. al. briefly discusses some of this in Antioch Humor Test. Branko Bokun does the same in Humour Therapy (1986). More thorough discussions by these authors are available in their original works, listed in the bibliography section of this document.
12 Introductory linguistics texts raise this issue (See McMannis et. al., 1990); Kenneth Burke would likely agree with linguistic notions of humor amongst animals. However, 1988 articles in *Newsweek* by Hager and Cowley are especially significant.

13 See Gruner, 1978, for more on riddles in mythology. Especially of interest should be that the word "riddle," from a purely descriptive definition of the term's usage in Medieval Times, meant 'counsel, providing advice or guidance' as opposed to its more current-day usage which seems to emphasize the word's "potentially humorous, puzzle-like quality (Gruner, 78).


15 Plato, in the *Republic*, spoke against humor, charging that in humor the reader/audience is exposed "to something base which can rub off on us." Humor then was considered by Plato as potentially harmful to the audience's character. He went on against humor saying that persons "of worth" should not be represented in drama as ever being overcome by laughter; to lose oneself in laughter is to lose our faculties which make us human to silliness and the irresponsible.

Plato did say that comedy could be successful at portraying vices which all should avoid, but there were significant numbers of critics who disagreed with even this. Though there were some; notably, Dryden, who wrote that humor could be useful merely by evoking laughter or amusement, but others like Shadwell opposed this, "Methinks a poet should never acknowledge this, for it makes him of as little use to mankind as a fiddler or a dancing master." (cited by Morreall from Ralph Piddington's *The Psychology of Laughter*, 1933).

Along with these early discussions of humor by Plato (and others), Plato had obvious impact on Aristotle's theories (Superiority theory, attributed to Aristotle, began with Plato who argued that laughter is merely the laughing at something or someone; and, as such, was necessarily antisocial and uncharitable.). Aristotle merely brought the subject out as worthy of discussion.
Plato's discussions on humor can be found in *Republic*, pp. 387-389. His relation to contemporary humor theory by humor theorists can be found in Morreall's *Taking Laughter Seriously*. In addition, despite these contributions by Plato, Aristotle is still regularly treated as the earliest discussions of a theory of humor.

16 See Holland for almost direct references to humor as rhetorical, a way of knowing, an agent of social change. Humorists as the ideal of identification (a la Kenneth Burke) can be found in a section on The Humorist as the Ideal of Humanistic Identification in "Freudian Humour: The Eupsychia of Everyday Life," by Walter E. O'Connell in Chapman and Foot's *Humor and Laughter*.

17 Aristotle's discussions occur in (Poetics) trans. S.H. Butcher. Discussions of the relationship between comedy and tragedy occur in Northrop C. Frye's "The Argument of Comedy," in *English Institute Essays*, 1948, ed. D.A. Robertson, Jr. as well as Holland (1982) and Gruner (1978). Aristotle argued that humor or comedy could be better understood when contrasted to tragedy. Specifically, Aristotle argued that 'hamartia,' tragedy that dealt with "noble humans bearing a defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive."

18 On humor's successful use, consider Norman Cousin's (1974) personal account, Coser's (1959) description of humor's use by the terminally ill, Haig (1988), Morreall's (1983) treatment (p.129.) of one of Dorothy Parker's failed suicide attempts, Mindess et. al., (1985) notably for discussions of Abraham Lincoln, Dorothy Parker and also, by contrast, the (lack of) humor of the schizophrenic or maladjusted.

19 Words related to tragedy, disaster or violence abound. They include: punch line, to die laughing, to kill 'em, to knock em dead, to die on stage, to break a leg, to beat someone to a punch line (This use of beat has changed in meaning through time, but early uses linked it to the more physical use of the term to mean beat, as in combat, as opposed to simply arriving first to a destination.), to beat a joke to death.

20 See section 2.A.2. for a conceptualization of this issue as well as footnote 13's reference to Gruner and Aristotelian approaches to humor, in general.
21 To some degree, there are glaring exceptions to this statement such as Gruner, Holland, and Bailey, but in these cases researchers are not trying to strategically advance nor refute the claims made by Aristotle; rather they seem to relish the idea of adding examples to illustrate Aristotle’s original comparison. Consider Gruner’s statement, quoting Mel Brooks, "Tragedy is when I cut my finger; humor is when a stranger falls down an open sewer;" Holland’s defense of Aristotle, "Tragedy is comedy, slowed down. We consider the word play, "he couldn’t pull himself together, so he pulled others apart" as bearing features of humor or comedy, but the prince in Hamlet who could be described this way can only be viewed as tragic during the play." Bailey has argued the fine line of humor/tragedy is walked with childhood exchanges, "Disappearing from one’s child is tragic, but peek-a-boo is fun; throwing a child is tragic, but playing toss and catch using the child is a game, typically played by fathers with their children; exposing children to violent stories may be seen as tragic but exposure to these scenes in cartoons or nursery rhymes are considered fun.

22 Along with Gruner (1978), Lull (1940), Kilpella (1961), Pokorny (1965), Zeman (1967), Pokorny-Gruner (1969), Gruner and Lampton (1972), Brandes (1970), Kennedy (1972), Gruner (1976), Brown and Bryant (1983), Zillman and Bryant (1983) have found no link between wit or sarcasm and persuasion. Others who have found attitude change as a result of regularly-occurring humor in the newspaper include Kumata (1956), Asher and Sargent (1941), and Brinkman (1968).

23 outlined by Campbell in The Philosophy of Rhetoric, 1776. A list of rules can be found in Bitzer’s The Philosophy of Rhetoric by George Campbell, 1963.

24 Consider Institutio Oratoria, notably Book VI in Murphy’s Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric (1983).


26 The literature on this is plentiful; too much for a footnote, and is considered in depth in the sections on Sociological Approaches to Humor, and even more so in the sections of this document regarding community.
27 This was first done by Gruner in "A Further Experimental Study of Satire as Persuasion," in Speech Monographs, 33, (June, 1966). It was also done by James V. Zeman (1967) in an MA thesis at the University of Nebraska, "An Experimental Study of the Persuasive Effects of Satire in a Speech Presented to a High School Audience."

28 Refer to footnote 22 for a partial list of authors who have had sarcasm, as a form of wit, linked somehow with persuasion in their hypotheses.

29 Gruner (1966), cited in footnote 27 as well.

30 A list of these would be dozens of pages long, and more importantly not terribly necessary. However, some popular texts include: Sprague and Stewart (1992), Lucas, Osborn and Osborn (1991).

31 Along with those listed in footnote 30, Jones and Knorowski's "Humor in the Classroom," addresses this in Whimsy V; Gibb (1964) and Markiewicz (1972) do as well. Gruner (1976) in Chapman and Foot discusses the issue as it relates to mass communication.

32 In other words, if subjects miss the fact that what they are hearing is intended as humor, how could they ever interpret it AS humor, and consequently, how could they ascertain the speaker's intent, and then, on top of all that, how could they know the speaker is trying to persuade via sarcasm?

33 Paulos (1982) has suggested that recall of mathematics may be hindered by humorous messages; Gruner (1978) argued that recall depended more on how the humor was presented and the type of humor used.

34 See Education and Humor in Whimsy VI, various authors. This is also considered, to a lesser degree, by Paulos.

35 "Gruner-esque" is used here as a means of referring to a clump of Gruner's research collectively, which dealt with attempts to link sarcasm/wit to persuasion in which he had subjects view humorous material alone or make judgments alone, did not indicate beforehand that the speech was sarcasm, and did not use satire presented by professional, well-known satirists. The need for the creation of this term on my part came from a need to discuss a significant amount of research (see footnotes 22 and 27 for some.) which used particular methods to answer the question. Note that not all of Gruner's experiments were done this way; even though most were. The term Gruner-esque, then, is
representative of his earliest work on sarcasm/persuasion (prior to 1966) as well as several experiments he has done since which used these earlier methods and approaches. Also note that Gruner's approaches, though modified through the years by Gruner, have had significant impact on research done by others as well. A significant number of them are conducting or have conducted experiments like Gruner did when he began examining sarcasm's relationship to persuasion. These experiments are included in the "Gruner-esque" as well, if they follow Gruner's earliest methods in form.

36 Gruner (1976) and Gruner (1978) are usually regarded as the definitive or seminal works even though all of Gruner's research before or since has also followed this line of research as well.

37 See section 2.C. for details about humor's role in groups. Such a discussion is important but is too lengthy for a footnote and is really more relevant in the discussion in that later section.

38 Scholars like Mindess, Gruner or Holland typically cite Malpass and Fitzgerald's (1959) work, but usually no other studies like it. Humorologists have more of an interest in the non-physical elements of humor.

39 This, of course, could be argued via one's common sense in combination with knowledge of the sociological theories of humor.

40 Actually, Gruner does not argue this in early works; seemingly not realizing it until his later (1978) work.

41 People also read and understand differently. Messages may be less ambiguous when delivered orally rather than visually. See Williams (1989) for a discussion of how even left handedness versus right handedness can influence sentence reading and interpreting.

42 One could argue that this is why situation comedies often feature laugh tracks when not filmed live or why audiences are told when to applaud by someone hitting the 'applause' sign: producers are creating an environment in which a person watching a show alone at least hears laughter of others -- even if they are 'canned' or on a machine.

43 Hertzler (1970) is a significant example, discussed later in this chapter, but others exist as well; significant authors' works are discussed throughout later sections.
Golden, Berquist, and Coleman (1976) and (1983) give some attention to it in their survey of rhetoric; Devito regularly reports on rules for humor in his texts which survey the field of communication in general. It could be suggested that Enninger's or I.A. Richards's discussions of language and metaphor parallel these discussions of humor particularly if one is willing to view humor as a subset of metaphor. Such a discussion seems tentative at this point but rather tangential at later stages in this document. So the intrigued reader may be well-advised to examine Enninger or Richards, particularly after examining the results of this study as they are presented in the final two chapters.

All of the authors and texts from footnote 30 above include lists of the types of humor; Sprague and Stewart (1992) are the only ones to go in depth, giving rules on how to deliver humor.

Later research on humor is discussed in the subsequent sections of this document.

Most other research prior to and since remains in anthropology or anthropological linguistics.

See sections 2.C.2. and 2.C.3.

Examples abound and are discussed later in this paper but the most glaring is the use of humor in Trinidad, essentially by a majority of the people, as a social force. (Jones and Liverpool, 1976).

Even the long debate between scholars regarding wit vs. humor parallels the debate regarding rhetoric vs. poetic, respectively, and has been suggested by Gruner's (1978) interpretation of his own research and that of Bryant (Rhetoric and Poetic 1965), and Bigelow (Southern States Speech Journal, 29, Dec. 1953, p.83-97.)

These five interests are all considered rather extensively in research, but the first three are most relevant in this case, and are given the greatest amount of attention in the discussion which follows.

More detailed discussions of Kant and Schopenhauer's influential theories can be found in Morreall (1983) and Mindess, et. al., (1985). A general discussion of "theorists theorizing" (notably, pp. 107-116.) can be found in Holland (1982).
53 Mindess is really one of the few in the area of humor research to consider all approaches with such depth and to incorporate them into a unified theory. Mindess incorporated theory (extending all the way back to Aristotle) from a variety of scholars in many disciplines.

54 Eastman's (1921) approach was intended as a reaction to Sigmund Freud (1904, 1905, 1912, 1915) and was developed even further in Eastman's later works (1936) when Eastman responded to Freud's later (1920, 1923, 1925, 1926, 1928, 1933) theories.

55 Demana's (1983) introductory text is but one example. Paulos (1982) discusses the benefit of such in text books.

56 Holland argues that physical stimuli like tickling, laughing gas (nitrous oxide), and various kinds of electrical stimuli "cause" laughter in the truest sense. Some diseases have also been known to cause laughter or laughter and other humorous responses, particularly recognizable by their occurrences at unusual times. Alzheimer's disease, Kleine-Levine syndrome, Pick's brain atrophy, pseudobulbar palsy, multi-infarct dementia, multiple sclerosis, hebephrenic schizophrenia, and Kuru are known to cause responses like that of one reacting to humor, but are different from a regular humorous response because in these diseases seems to occur for no reason, even without any stimuli. This presence of a humorous response without a humorous stimuli has led to those with the diseases seeking treatment or being sent to specialists. It is Holland's use of "cause" in these cases which makes it important to distinguish these examples from someone smiling or laughing at a humorous event; the laugher or smiler has, for the most part, general overall control -- humor "caused" nothing, comparatively.

57 Holland, p.31. The underlining of "social" is his.

58 Holland, p.32.

59 According to Whitburn's Top Pop Albums, 1955-1985, (1985), the artist Vaughn Meader had two such albums "First Family," and "First Family, volume two" which were so popular that both were in the top ten at the same time in the summer of 1963. Meader was making a career primarily from shows like The Ed Sullivan Show and the success of his albums until Kennedy's assassination in November. By the end of the month, Meader's television appearances ended and sales of both albums ended abruptly, despite the fact that both had been selling well up until that time (Even the older album maintained sales regularly during the year
spending three months atop the charts and becoming the year's second best selling album and one of the biggest selling comedy albums of all time.

60 Haig is not alone in this sentiment; Holland has also addressed this issue especially the varying theories of humor as explaining jokes. As Holland puts it, though some humorists insist that all joking is a sign of superiority over another, sometimes we just smile, laugh, and appreciate humor without feeling superior -- even Freud acknowledged that a cigar is, sometimes, just a cigar.

61 This is a belief echoed by many, too unwieldy for a footnote, but they are discussed in depth in subsequent sections: notably, the section on sociology and all three sections on community.

62 Other support of this comes from many, discussed in and after the section on sociology.

63 Many would argue that humor would exist as an entertainment form even if for no other reason than (1) it is a social catalyst and (2) people enjoy, simply, being amused. (This was a criticism made of Plato's strong statements against humor, by Dryden, which has been, obviously, supported repeatedly since.). However, Davies (1991, 1990, 1986) argues that humor may be more evident and, possibly, more crucial to people within a disparaged or ostracized community.

64 The existence of everything from support groups to twelve-step programs lends some support to the "misery loves company" adage. Humor's function within such company is incredibly significant. Take, for example, the 39 members of Heaven's Gate whose suicides in March of 1997 had devastating effects on surviving members of their families, of surviving cult members, and, to a smaller degree, on the country as a whole. Surviving cult members on a March 31, 1997 edition of 60 Minutes indicated that talking about matters helped them recover from their grief. Another survivor echoed this on April third and fourth editions of The Jenny Jones Show as did relatives interviewed on Dateline NBC and evening news programs throughout the week. Even people seemingly unattached to the incidents felt a need to talk about "it" as if those events in Southern California were affecting them as well. Bill Mahr and guests on Politically Incorrect spoke of the event with seriousness at first, but quickly lapsed into humor, and jokes about the event are starting to pop up in everyday talk in much the same way that tragedies like The Challenger Explosion prompted jokes in its day.
Even less grandiose and nationally-gripping tragedies spark a similar need to share, via humor eventually, one’s less-than-pleasurable experiences. The comedienne, Roseanne, incorporated some of her personal experiences as an abused child in several episodes of her sit-com as a forum for venting. The public’s disapproval of her singing of The National Anthem was also dealt with in her visits to talk shows and her sit com itself. When her character on the show is asked not to sing because her voice is less than pleasant, Shelley Winters (who plays her grandmother) reassures Roseanne by telling her to ignore then, "You have a lovely voice, dear." Another episode finds Roseanne at the grocery store with daughter Darlene and several of her classmates when the teens pick up a tabloid newspaper and comment on the woman on the front saying things like, "God, that woman is on every magazine," "This magazine [The Enquirer] must have some kind of grudge against her," and "Last month she wanted a woman to have a three-way with her and her husband while she was having an alien’s three-headed baby," (statements printed about Roseanne herself in recent months). Roseanne turns, grinning ear to ear, saying, "Yeah, but she’s a damn good singer though," as the live studio audience thunders with applause and laughter.

Even Tammy Faye Baker and Zsa Zsa Gabor, who have taken their turn as the brunt of tabloid commentary and late-night talk show jokes, have appeared on talk shows themselves, expressing how hurt they were about such comments only to make jokes about themselves soon thereafter (Zsa Zsa, fined for assaulting a police officer made a commercial making light of the incident; Tammy Faye whose makeup was done by ‘Pittsburgh Paints’ according to comedian Jay Leno has since had her own laughs on Leno’s show and on The Drew Carey Show, playing the mother of the mascara-challenged Mimi making such crowd-pleasing comments as "Hi Drew; you’ll have to excuse me. I barely had time to put on my face." Given that subjects of jokes this month have included Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, O.J. Simpson, and Michael Jackson, we can only expect such self-deprecating humor to prove useful to those celebrities in a few months.

65 This analogy was first made clear by Hertzler (1970).

66 Along with Hertzler, Holland (1982) makes this point. To a lesser degree, Gruner (1972b) does as well.

67 See the upcoming discussion in the sections on sociology and the community sections.
68 One author refers to it as the body's own, natural cod liver oil. Mindess (1985) says that humor is no panacea, but calls it the closest thing we've got. Morreall (1983) called humor "distinctly human, "important to human life in a way that nothing else is," (p.85.)

69 This statement is from Coser (1959), primarily, but is echoed by many in the area of sociology and community.

70 See Fry and Allen (1976) in Chapman and Foot as well as Holland (1982). Fry and Allen create an argument for understanding the comedian/comedienne and their writers as a means of understanding humor. This is also done in The Healing Power of Humor, arguing for a study of Lincoln to help understand humor's potential as self-coping and finding television situation comedies or movies appearing on television as having the same effect. One can actually see this comment verified, somewhat, in the books serving as autobiographies of various comedians and comedienes; notably, Joan Rivers's Still Talking and Enter Talking as well as Fran Drescher's Enter Whining.

71 Coser wrote of this saying some patients in a hospital were able to find their own way of amusing themselves as diversions, while others exposed to people engaging in humor seemed potentially unaffected, or at least, not as improved as most who engaged in humor socially.

72 Examples of these shows examined for either their comic form or their role in the lives of people who have watched them as part of a self-healing process are found in Palmer (1987), Greig (1969), and Allen Klein's (1989) The Healing Power of Humor.

73 Discussion of the jokes about these groups of people as typical targets are found in Davies (1990). Details about how these comedians/comediennes overcome, particularly Gregory are found in Gruner (1978), Hertzler (1970), Bokun (1986), and Klein (1989).

74 This experience is detailed by Rivers, (1991), but is suggested also by Fry and Allen (1976) and Holland (1982).


77 Timing for a joke is an important factor in the context of telling a joke, what Holland calls a necessary condition for humor.

78 Williams (1989), Bever and Cowart (1987) discuss the matter in depth as it relates to the syntactic constraint of subjacency and specified subject constraints in transformational grammars.

79 MacDonald Critchley, (1975), *Silent Language*. Sully's *An Essay on Laughter* seems to be the most complete and regularly cited work on this.

80 See Grotjahn’s (1957) *Beyond Laughter*, pp. 67-129. for details of children and humor, notably pp. 67-82.


82 Many, including those in footnote 81, would argue that humor or a sense of humor are developed or learned. Gruner (1978) argues that it is an unlearned trait, saying that it is natural to laugh at many things; it is only from hearing things as a child, like "Quit acting up," or "Stop being so silly," that we came to unlearn our natural humorous tendencies. However, this societal push to avoid frivolity, foolishness or clowning behavior in particular situations, is still learned.

83 Communities are discussed later on in this dissertation, as is humor in communities. However, Goffman’s (1963) *Stigma* is often cited regarding rules and norms in a community. The social aspects of humor seem to be most completely addressed by Davies (1990).

84 Jones and Liverpool (1976) present the strongest example of humor’s impact for a community. That impact is strong because of its impact on group cohesion, its impact on challenging the group’s oppressors, and the amount of influence humor has had on outsiders in Trinidad, as well as the society in general.
Robertson (1981) does this throughout American Myth, American Reality. Others like Fitzgerald (1981) and (1986) have, when writing on community, extended that notion, but still regularly come back to making an argument of a community as being bigger than the bounds of a geographical region by comparing it TO "any small town." See p.20. of Cities on a Hill, as an example.

Goffman compares a community to a team (in Hare and Blumberg, 1988), in Teams, a chapter in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, with no mention of the need of a shared block or neighborhood, but referring instead to a "sense of teamwork" which one can, of course, have a sense of when being alone. Presence of others is not crucial for one to feel a part of "a group."

The academic community is probably generally accepted as a community by most who would read this; this document being a piece of data representing one of the rituals of that community. Certainly, I, while writing alone, feel that sense of communitas; academicians reading the document have a similar sense of "academe" and that community-feeling can still exist, to some degree, while reading in solitude.

The African-American community has been written about often. An earlier discussion of Dick Gregory’s appeals to that community was presented. More comprehensive studies include Soulside; Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community, especially Ulf Hannerz's "Street Corner Mythmaking," section, pp. 105-117. "How I Got Over: Communication Dynamics in the Black Community" in OJS, 62, Feb., 1976, pp. 26-39. is an exemplar from the field of communication.

Examples abound. Jay Leno has had great success with newspaper misprints and faulty headlines or advertisements. Recent ones have included "Local teen wins Speeling Bee," "Prostitutes appeal to Pope," and "$3.99 for grass seed guaranteed to make your ass grow." The fact that a journalist did not intend to spell 'spelling' incorrectly in the Speeling Bee Headline does not make the headline any less funny or amusing, in much the same way that Dan Quayle's 'potato' mistake was not intended to make us laugh. Thus, we have to consider such gaffs as humorous; they certainly become more humorous when Jay Leno shows them to a national audience, pointing out the mistakes or when the television character Murphy Brown dumps a truck load of potatoes in the lawn beneath Dan Quayle's window, after he criticizes her for becoming a single mother.
Other examples exist in every day talk and life some appearing in Painter (1978) but more detailed discussions occurring in Morreall’s (1983) explanations about the laughter AT someone (the fall on the ice, the bad hair day, the ugly hat, etc.) which break up daily monotony for many.

87 One need only ask oneself, "Which is funnier: the potato misspelling by Quayle or the planned comedy monologue of Pauly Shore?"

88 Painter (1978) does so regarding the lesbian humor she experienced in the field while gathering her own field notes, suggesting the humor of others taught her how to joke as a member and, in turn, to feel a greater sense of community with the group and to laugh in new and more interesting ways. Almost two decades later on the situation comedy Ellen, DeGeneres’s coming out and that of her character Ellen Morgan have allowed for the broadening of the kind of humor that can be used on that program, albeit some humor (See Appendix A) of every day joking by gay men or women remains off limits due to the nature of television, not to mention her show’s affiliation with Disney and the ABC network.

89 Rhetoricians are well aware that a text, script, or symbol can become much bigger than the mere object itself. The Bible is regarded as a book that if far more than a text to most. People can be moved to tears by a script or song and a symbol as common as the traffic light has profound effects. Burke noted that the red light causes people to stop, without thought, as if a person is forcing them to do so even when no other people are around. Humor, as a rhetorical device in literature, texts, comics, poetry, music, art, cartoons, sound and photographs has at least as much "exchange" potential.

90 An excellent example is from Hayes, whose "Gayspeak" (QJS, 62, Oct., 1976, pp. 256-266) not only was about the shared language of gays, but whose title prompted the title of Chesebro’s collection, Gayspeak, including a section of several articles on gay (Darsey, Chesebro and Klenk, Glenn) and lesbian (Painter, Day and Morse) community. Further, the phrase we’ve probably all said at one time or another, "It was so funny, I laughed out loud" is significant because it accentuates our underlying belief or knowledge that the humor shared with others is more appreciated than the humor we experience solo.

91 The short-lived comedy on NBC ran in the mid-90s, starring Holland Taylor, John Forsythe, David Hyde-Pearce, J. Mahaffey and others.
Lucy is doing a commercial for a syrup which contains alcohol. The need to do repeated "takes" and "do-overs" to perfect the commercial led to the character Lucy becoming more and more drunk as time went on. That episode and the "Lucy and Viv work the conveyer belt of chocolate at the candy factory" episode are often selected in viewer polls, still today, as the most memorable episodes of the classic "I Love Lucy."

Burnett's variety show aired at 10 P.M. (Eastern) on CBS featuring regulars like Tim Conway and Lyle Waggoner. The Gone with the Wind skit also featured Harvey Korman as "Rhett" and Vicki Lawrence who performed the role of the housekeeper and performed the oft-quoted, "I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' no babies" lines.

See footnote 90 for a similar line of argument being made for humor within a group.

See footnote 86 for Morreall's (1983) expression of this same sentiment.

Morreall (1983) was mentioned before and credited for discussing this distinction. In fact, he and Haig are both paraphrasing Bergsen (1900) as cited in Sypher (1956).

This in itself is a rephrasing of comments made by Aristotle, mentioned earlier.

Though this may seem intuitive, Malpass and Fitzgerald were the first to really work at creating an accurate way to measure overt reactions to a humor stimulus.

Gruner used this to refer to the patients in the Coser study, specifically.

This is, in fact, a significant issue here because it is a cornerstone of some of the research questions within this project and is addressed in more detail in chapter four and, to a lesser degree, chapter five.

Though I first heard this joke when both of my sisters sent me a copy on a joke sheet, it is not really a 'new joke,' appearing in joke compilations like When you're up to your ass in Alligators dating it back to the early 1900s and the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Jones and Liverpool (1976: 177) argue that the language and the beat both combine to form the 'humor' they described.

This is also supported by field notes for this study, detailed in chapters four and five.
104 Sully makes the same quote as Montagu but does not attribute it to him. Montagu's is assumed to be the original as it precedes Sully's copyright by two years.

105. One comedian refers to that moment of key ignorance as an "ignosecond," the precise moment of realization that the door is about to close too soon for the keys' retrieval.

106 Mindess et al. in The Antioch Humor Test provide another view of obscene humor, noting that some view obscene humor as indicative of a juvenile or unpolished use of humor whereas others see obscene humor as having only a 'shock value.' Mindess does acknowledge this as being why some people use obscene humor around certain people, but views obscene humor used with the appropriate audience as being just as healthy as other humor types.

107 Paulos (1983) suggests this may be why the first or second grader learns immediately how to draw distorted pictures of the teachers: he or she is learning how to prepare for the future where bosses replace teachers as the oppressors.

108 See columnist David Feinberg (1992) for an explanation about what happened when he joked as a member of the HIV+ community without other people knowing that he, himself, was HIV+. He points out the need to use humor on his own to deal with HIV before he could tell others," then to "come out about his health status to his readers" before he can share humor about HIV" in his columns.

109 See sample #14 in Appendix A for sample talk displaying how a humor attempt 'backfires,' and chapter four where samples like that one are explained and analyzed in more depth.

110 Hertzler (1970) seems to be the only author attempting to make this a separate category; others include these in scapegoat humor, Hertzler's ninth form.

111 Scapegoating applies to other communicative talk as well. Bales and Cohen (1979) is a starting point for such a discussion. Scapegoating as it relates more to this project is discussed more in the fourth and fifth chapters.

Hayes cites Murray himself but Davies, most of whose work is in put-down humor of or by minorities, has expanded on Murray's work significantly since Hayes made his argument almost a quarter of a century ago. Davies work is also considered in much of the psychology research on humor; notably, Mindess, whose work in humor research is closely related to and influenced by joking trends and humor patterns in everything from one's affiliation with a subculture to one's daily interaction with work peers, friends, and family.

Cathy Buckley makes fun of her own deafness in comedy routines, claiming it eases others' comfort levels -- she is already comfortable with it. Louie Anderson and Roseanne (Barr-Arnold-Thomas) have said this about their weight problems and how they speak of it in comedy routines.

Anderson said that he was self-conscious at first because he thought that all the audience saw when he walked out was a "fat" comedian. Joking about what he perceived to be his anomaly made him feel more at ease. "If you don't start laughing, I'm going to come out there and sit on you: that ought to make you laugh" and "You could say I like dieting about as much as Jim Baker (PTL scandal fame, imprisoned at the time) likes dropping the soap," are two ways that Anderson diffused his own and his audience's sensitivity, perhaps, to his differences.

Like Anderson on his HBO appearances, Roseanne has also made light of her weight, so to speak. Roseanne has come on stage saying, "I know what you're thinking -- does she KNOW she's that big? [followed by a long pause] Bite me; I know. Do you know you're a butthead?" She has also made fun of her weight on her own sitcom. When accused by a weight trainer (on the show) of thinking about food too much, she responds, "I could snap your spine like a potato chip you little bitch." The humor of Buckley or Anderson and Roseanne is referred to by some as a 'gimmick,' but it is really much more than that.

Darsey (1981) argues (p. 59.) that gay studies "must concentrate on the idiographic, that is, precisely what no one else is going to study. The traits that are unique to gay men and lesbians must be isolated and their impact on various phenomena, such as language use, must be studied." Darsey seeks to outline "what areas are the legitimate province of a legitimate gay studies," (p. 58.) but even his observations are not necessarily negated by Berube's experiences. To me, Darsey echoes or at least reflects, Chesebro's concerns regarding a "gayspeak." We must be careful to avoid jumping to conclusions about who is or is not gay, about what makes up the (or "a") gay
community, and about assessing too much meaning to symbols within the gay community. For example, field notes from a leather bar in Columbus, Ohio produced the following dialogue:

Mick: You must come here often, I guess.
Amin: No, this is my first time here; in fact only my second time ever in this kind [gay] of bar.
Mick: Well, you seem to have learned what you like early.
Amin: What do you mean?
Mick: Well you seem to know that you like to be on top when you fuck; so you must not be too new at all this.
Amin: No, I have never done that; I don’t really think it’s safe. I guess American’s think that all foreign men want to ravage some white American sexually, huh?
Mick: No, but I think if you’re not into it, you ought to ditch the hanky [handkerchief]; that’s false advertising.

In this case, Mick has made the seemingly reasonable assumption that since gay men often advertise sexual interests via handkerchiefs (back left pocket for dominant role, back right for passive role, with different colors of hankies suggesting differing sexual interests and front pockets indicating who will make the first move, according to Joys of Gay Sex) especially in leather bars and since Amin was wearing the blue hanky in his left pocket in a leather bar, then Amin’s interests sexually were made relatively clear. Amin later confided, "I’m just a left-handed queen allergic to Ohio who wanted a Bud Light."

It is imperative, then, that an outside researcher take precautions not to make Mick’s error. Translating the error and the steps leading up to it:

1. Mick knows that "top" men often, though not always, advertise their sexual interests within a gay bar via hankies.

2. Statement 1 is even more true in the leather bar than in other gay bars.

3. Amin was in a gay bar, wearing the blue hanky on the left, and was not just in a Columbus gay bar but was in its only leather bar.

4. Therefore, Amin was probably top.
And also to avoid making Amin’s error. Amin’s set of assumptions follow:

1. I appear to be the only foreign sounding/looking patron in this bar tonight.

2. This is the third guy to talk to me tonight and the third guy to make the assumption that I want anal sex and that I want to play that ‘male’ role.

3. I am not encouraging this but no one else seems to be having the same experience.

4. Therefore these advances are due to my foreign born status or Saudi-looking appearance.

It’s easy to see the error of Mick via truth tables and logic: If A -> B, then the presence of A may imply B, but the presence of B does not imply A. Complicating matters more is that life and language is not a truth table. If A is topness and B is wearing the correct hanky in one’s left back pocket, one must consider, in this case, that A does not automatically guarantee B in this case. That is, it is possible for a person to be "top" but still not wear the hanky. After all, not all people in the bar wear such markers. At most, half of the men in leather wear such hankies, but less than 5% of the bar’s population as a whole do so. A vast number of reasons may exist: some men are coupled and are not advertising; others choose not to follow the crowd; some wear clothes lacking a back pocket; some may not (like Amin) be aware of the symbols’ meanings. As such, the presence of A does not always imply B within the community. Similarly, as Chesebro pointed out in a response to Darsey, if C is a sign of gayness and D is actual gayness, one must be careful of assuming that the presence of C automatically implies D. Many (Some linguists would argue that all artificially-created symbols are ambiguous.) symbols are ambiguous. After all, even Freud acknowledged that a cigar is, sometimes, just a cigar.

115 See section II. C. 4. for citations of Berube’s as well as others works.

116 Section I begins with an overview of theory and methodology (p.17.). In the introduction Painter says (p.1.), "When the study began the primary focus was one of traditional participant observation." She goes on to list a series of questions on the next few pages, none of which dealt with humor as a phenomenon under study.
117 After completion of the dissertation she presented a paper on humor at the First Annual Communication, Language and Sex Conference on May 20, 1978, but subsequent work, in, for example, Chesebro's *Gayspeak*, have dealt more with "recognition among lesbians in straight settings."

118 Examples from one publication, *The News*, from Columbus include "Who's she think she is? Anita Bryant?" as a parenthetical in one story and in another story, regarding Joan Rivers and Johnny Carson, "I wanted to know why Johnny snubbed Joan like that AND I want to know who does Joan's hair."

119 Columbus's gay/lesbian newspaper is written and published by males. Other Columbus publications in the past few years such as *GT*, known also as *Good Times*, had a almost all-male authorship of articles; *Gaybeat* and *Heartland* have had more female authors but still they remain a small minority.

Columns are by the Bizzybody (a pseudonym for a group of people) and Lee Lynch, who recently started writing a column, *Lesbianville*, but had written other columns before this where the sex was not detectable. Most articles in that publication, *Gaybeat*, do not include any authors' names, common in many publications, actually.

Lakoff (1975) outlines some male and female language differences which have become standard in many sociology, communication, and linguistics texts since.

120 Needless to say, information does exist; it is cited in this document. However, that research is rather fragmented or inconclusive.

121 Mindess writes about the humor of the oppressed minority in general. That could certainly be applied to, with modifications, the gay male population.

122 More current samples of 'gay talk' in the gay male nightclub can be found in Appendix A and B. This author, unlike Duberman, is not using the gay talk and gay humor in order to poke fun; rather, it is used (as will be clear in chapters four and five) to illustrate humor patterns of the men involved.
123 Garber suggests that the two groups probably benefitted each other. This author would also like to suggest that it may be this early tie between these communities in Harlem, 1920 may be at least one explanation as to why the humor of gay men is often compared to the humor of African-American Women. That claim is made, in passing, in the last two chapters.


125 Van Vechten's notorious and naively-titled novel of 1926, Nigger Heaven, reflected the general white naivete by many homosexuals in Harlem and created more strife and tension between groups after its publication.


127 Ibid.

128 Ibid., p.11.


131 Ibid.,

132 Berube, p.24 and p.28.

133 Berube, p.28. quoting Burt Miller.


135 Gaybeat gives examples from Columbus, Ohio's March. Similar accounts can be found in The Alternative from Baltimore (1987).

136 Hayes in "Gayspeak," discusses briefly what using female terms for gay men's humor, saying "These stereotypes (of women) are the vehicle for the irony." Hayes discussion appears on pp. 48-50. in Chesebro (1981). This emerged significant in this study as well; see chapter five.

Susan Sontag and Vito Russo have discussed campy humor; examples appear in Berube (1983) and Williams (1980). The 37.5% mentioned here refers to three of eight, but it is not broken into "camp" vs. "non-camp" humor since that is a distinction not exactly clear to the author and not really a focus of this particular project.

See Berube, 1983.

Humor's role seemed to be a way in which one could demonstrate membership as a lesbian to lesbians.

Osgood has suggested using a +3/-3 scale that liking or disliking a person can affect how that person's message is received, and have argued that the opposite is true: we tend to like more those who seem to agree with us.

This occurs in A Rhetoric of Motives (1950), Language as Symbolic Action (1966), and Dramatism and Development (1972).

Humor is discussed on pages 111-181, but the real discussion, per se, is on pages 111-121. Subsequent discussions are of specific examples of humor gathered in the data.

One example from Painter (1978) was that laughter emerged after one lesbian joked to another, "Oh I thought I'd go out (tonight) and rape a few kids," (p.140.). In this case, the knowledge possessed by lesbians about their own lesbianism is that lesbians are no more inclined to molest than anyone else, making the joke almost a form of sarcasm, directed at the out-group who believe such things.

Jones and Liverpool (1976) found a similar phenomenon in their study of Trinidad humor at Carnival. Many have found a similar phenomenon true of community-talk in general. Phillipsen (1975), (1977), found speaking a certain way as being necessary for being perceived as a member in Teamsterville. His study dealt mostly with what sociolinguists refer to as a dialect, found to be instrumental as a marker of community-identification in various studies by Lebov (notably, the Martha Vineyard studies). It should be added that this project lends credence to these claims as well; see chapters four and five.

Humor's socializing role has been considered by many; a more thorough discussion occurs later in the sections relating to sociology, all three sections on community, and to a lesser degree the section on psychology.
Golden, Berquist, and Coleman (1976) and (1983) give some attention to it in their survey of rhetoric; Devito regularly reports on rules for humor in his texts which survey the field of communication in general.

All of the authors and texts from footnote 30 above include lists of the types of humor; Sprague and Stewart (1992) are the only ones to go in depth, giving rules on how to deliver humor.

Other early examples include Plato, who, in the *Republic*, wrote against humor, charging that in humor the reader/audience is exposed "to something base which can rub off on us." Humor then was considered by Plato as potentially harmful to the audience's character. He went on against humor saying that persons "of worth" should not be represented in drama as ever being overcome by laughter; to lose oneself in laughter is to lose our faculties which make us human to silliness and the irresponsible. Though Plato did say that comedy could be successful at portraying vices which all should avoid, significant numbers of critics disagreed with him. Others, like Dryden, wrote that humor could be useful merely by evoking laughter or amusement, but others like Shadwell opposed this, "Methinks a poet should never acknowledge this, for it makes him of as little use to mankind as a fiddler or a dancing master." (cited by Morreall from Ralph Piddington's *The Psychology of Laughter*, 1933).

Along with these early discussions of humor by Plato (and others), Plato had obvious impact on Aristotle's theories (Superiority theory, attributed to Aristotle, began with Plato who argued that laughter is merely the laughing at something or someone; and, as such, was necessarily antisocial and uncharitable.). Aristotle merely brought the subject out as worthy of discussion. In rhetorical theory since then, authors already discussed (Gruner, 1978, 1976, 1974, 1972b, 1972a, 1971b, 1971a, 1970, 1967b, 1967a, 1966, 1965b, 1965a; Gruner and Lampton, 1972; Goodchilds, 1972; Nilsen 1978; Nilsen, et. al., 1988; Ziv, 1988, 1986b, 1986a, 1984) have added to early rhetorical theory somewhat.

Plato's discussions on humor can be found in *Republic*, pp. 387-389. His relation to contemporary humor theory by humor theorists can be found in Morreall's *Taking Laughter Seriously*. In addition, despite these contributions by Plato, Aristotle is still regularly regarded as having provided one of the earliest discussions of a theory of humor.
150 Jones and Liverpool (1976) is one notable example although neither was examining humor from a communication perspective.

151 Chesebro’s Gayspeak collects some of these works, although none as complete as Painter’s (1978).

152 Jones and Liverpool (1976) and Painter (1978) are equally illustrious.

153 Subsequent work by Lincoln and Guba is also significant, but appeared in print after the initial literature review for this project was done. Though they do not retract any of their original ideas and claims, they do add to them. Lincoln and Guba’s (1989, Sixth Printing) Naturalistic Inquiry and Guba and Lincoln’s (1989, First Printing) Fourth Generation Evaluation are just two such examples; the former of these, however, is more directly relevant here.

154 Processing and reporting are discussed at length by Lincoln and Guba (1989): 332 - 381.

155 Ibid., p. 382-392. Lincoln and Guba reprint a portion of Edward Halpern’s (1983) dissertation in their appendix. Page 388 has significance for inferencing as do pages 40, 188, 202-207, 290, 333, 335. As with footnote 153, Lincoln and Guba’s revisions are consistent with their previous claims.
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Pepper, Stephen. (See Brown, William).


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Sample #1: Alan has just introduced Carl to a group of friends, including Burt. Carl has just walked away, and Burt has asked Alan a few questions already about Carl (tw010592 @11:29).

Alan: You got it bad, don’t ya?
Burt: What, I can’t ask questions?
Alan: Please! Oprah asks questions. All of a sudden you’re Morly fucking Safer!

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Sample #2: Burt has offered to buy himself and Alan a beer and has returned with the two bottles. Alan occasionally said something to his other friends, though inaudible, but mostly is talking to Burt. Two of the friends leave to dance, and Dave joins in with Alan and Burt’s conversation (tw010592 @11:55).

Dave (to Alan): This one still going on about Miss Thang?
Alan: Yea she’s in love.
Burt: O, I am not. I don’t even know him or that much about him. Do you know him well (to Dave)?
Dave: Well enough (laughs, deep in tone, looking up from his beer for the first time in about three minutes, grinning at Burt)
Alan: Well I don’t [know him] yet. Tell me why you call her Miss Thang.
Burt: (talking to Dave, over top of Alan) Oo Bitch I know that laugh. He did you didn’t he?
Dave: Get a grip, ladies.
Burt: So you weren’t with him? He didn’t do you?
Dave: Well... I was with him, but he didn’t do me. I did him.
Alan: (very loud) O my God, O my God O my God. (Alan turned around, full 360 degrees twice, and slaps Dave lightly on the shoulder.)
Burt: Aw I can’t believe that.
Dave: Well it’s true, missy, and trust me she is a MISS Thang in the bedroom, a real do-me queen. There ain’t no MISTER about her.
Alan: My Lord, Dave was top with someone. The room is spinning; I just... I just have to sit down. (Put his hand to his head and sat on an empty stool).
Burt: Damn I guess I won’t be having his kids then, huh?
Dave: Not without a turkey baister.
Alan: Well you know, (grabs Dave’s arm, but was clearly speaking to others as well as he was still very loud)
Burt (rhymed with Gertrude, and I found out later that it meant ‘Burt’) borrowed mine for Christmas; don’t think I’ll be gettin’ that back anytime soon.
Dave: I don’t think I’d want it back.
Burt: Oh, I gave that back to you at the party. Don’t go there.
Sample #3: The corner of the bar where the original five patrons had been when I arrived to the bar at 11 were still in that vicinity, nearly two hours later. Carl has just returned and put one hand on Alan’s left shoulder and his right hand on Dave’s right shoulder as if to hug them both. (tw010592+ @12:45).

Carl: You queens still holdin court here?
Dave: Well Burt’s been holdin somethin else.
Burt: O God tell the world.
Carl: I’m surprised someone as cute as you doesn’t have someone around to hold on to you. Excuse me (Carl walked away, tapped Burt a few times on the shoulder before leaving and stood in line to get a drink.).
Burt: (to Dave and Alan) Damn is he strong. You sure he’s a bottom? I mean you’re absolutely positive?
Alan: He was bottom.. with Dave. Dave. Dave was top; doesn’t that mean anything to you?
Dave: Hey I don’t know if he’s an exclusive [bottom] or not.
Burt: You don’t think he’s exclusive [bottom]?
Dave: That’s not what I said; I just don’t know. The topic never exactly got discussed.
Alan: Aw for God’s sake let it go. Carl has been with DAVE. Doesn’t that mean anything to you? Them goods are damaged! Give it up Burt.
Dave: Well, sounds like Burt is quite willing to give it up.
Sample #4: Greg and Joe one night were joined by Marty who was friends with Greg, but just meeting Joe for the first time. As Joe shook hands with Marty, (te012994):

Joe: You look surprised man. Seen a ghost?
Greg: Yea we’re the ghosts in this bar tonight [That night, like many Sundays, included a sizeable black and African-American population at te., probably about 1/4 or 1/3 the club though the portion on non-Sundays is closer to 1/20]. (All chuckled a bit.).
Marty: Well you are the first white guy I’ve been introduced to tonight.
Greg: Aw but you’re not complaining I hope; I know how you fancy dark meat.
Marty: Oh I do not; don’t start spreading false rumors to people. Hell, I don’t even know why I come out here on Sunday nights anymore.
Greg: Same reason we do, I bet. Garage is closed and tw is dead after midnight.
Marty: So where do all those good looking white men go on a Sunday night?
Joe: Back to their girlfriends, child. [All laugh].
The three gentlemen, all white, continued talking, especially Joe and Marty, as they shared a common interest in sports and discussed the Super Bowl. Very limited joking occurred until Joe joined back in and told an ethnic joke, demeaning to blacks and African-Americans, and all laughed.
Sample #5: Even a pair of friends one of whom is white and the other black shared ethnic jokes with each other though certainly less often than were told by all-white groups of males about non-whites. The majority of the jokes took place in te, mostly on a Sunday, one of the bars’ busiest and most crowded nights. Common joking between a white friend Ed and a black friend Andy included (tw 070596):

Ed: Andy, look there’s that guy [a black patron who both had watched on the dance-floor earlier that night. He had danced shirtless and was very athletic in build.]
Andy: (turned to see the guy) That is not him, not even close. My God all of you people really do think that all of us people look alike don’t you. [Both laugh.]
Ed: (pauses a while and looks again) No I’m not wrong that is him. Look again.
Andy: (looking again) Yea that IS him. He looked better far away.
Ed: No, you just don’t recognize him with his shirt back on. See how you are?
Andy: And how did you know him so well.
Ed: I’d know the butt anywhere.
Andy: O and see how you are
Ed: (interrupting) And before you say it, no I don’t think that all of your butts look the same. So don’t even say it and don’t even flatter yourself! [puts hand on hip and waves his hand in front of Andy].
Andy: Bitch, I’m gonna tell him you’re in the KKK and you won’t ever have a chance with him, unless he’s into something sick and twisted like that.. if that’s the case, he deserves you.
Ed: And I deserve him.
Sample #6: private party, gathering of friends and acquaintances for Christmas in Knoxville, Tennessee (knl21290 @8:04)

Marc: (to a group of four at a party) You all would not believe Beau!
Jeff: Why? What did he do this time?
Beau: Yeah; what did I do this time?
Marc: (laughing) Like you don’t know? Last night; the pick-up guy!
Jeff: O, Beau picked up someone. News-flash!
Marc: No he didn’t pick up anyone; I’m talking about a guy in the pickup that he wanted to get.
Beau: You still bitchin’ about that? Girl, someone better slap that bleedin’ ol’ pussy of yours
Marc: Well, yes, Beau, I’m still talking about that. We were in the redneck part of town; we could’ve been killed.
Beau: (to Jeff about Marc) Man, that girl’s hysterical.
Marc: Hysterical! Hysterical? I’m hysterical cause you screamed to a butch man in a beat up truck -- he had to be straight -- "Yoo hoo wanna fuck a cissy!?!" I was so embarrassed!!
Beau: You was just embarrassed cause you probably done him already.
Sample #7: Later that same night, more guests arrived. By 8:20 the small college student apartment contained seventeen guests (including the host and me) when Alan knocked on the door. Alan, who most of the guests seemed to know arrived with friends; Marc was answering the door; Jeff and Beau standing beside him. (kn 121290 @ 8:22).

Marc: Alan; you made it
Alan: No thanks to your map you dyslexic bitch
Marc: I was very cocktailed when I made that; I’ll have you know. Besides you’ve been here before; you didn’t remember where I lived?
Alan: Well I though I did but you had that big ol butt-ugly welcome mat at the foot of the door; we’ve been walking around the complex looking for it.
Beau: O that ugly thing: I think Marc returned it to the trailer park where it belonged
Marc: I like that: it’s cute.
Jeff: Nah. She didn’t get rid of it: it’s at the foot of her bed, I’m sure.
Marc: O you bitch!
Jeff: Hey that’s bastard to you dearie!
Beau: Well, like they say ‘no matter where Marc serves the guests; it seems they like the bedroom best.’
Marc: O stop. I don’t mind y’all making fun of me but NOT my household accessories. This is why I don’t have my friends over to my apartment.
Beau: yeah, only tricks: that’s what I always say.
Jeff: Well if she thinks we’ve been hard on her so far, we better not even begin to discuss those damn ducks in the kitchen
Beau: Don’t go there: she’s just aviarily challenged.
Alan: That explains the lawn-geese on the porch.
Beau: I tried to get that trailer park breeder’s eleven toothless children to each take one when they were pickin up the purple doormat, but even they thought the lawn-geese gauche.
Jeff: I thought you told me not to bring up the ugly lawn geese to a room full of queens.
Beau: Those geese have already been brought up
Alan: Like food-poisoning!
Sample #8: A few interruptions have occurred but the previous conversation seemed to continue. (knl21290 @ 8:31).

Marc: Must you finger all the [potato] chips before you take one?
Johnson: 
Jeff: Yea Beau; they’re not men!!
Jaye: Hey I say why commit to one when there’s another better one nearby?
Marc: This is not about chips anymore is it?
Beau: It should be about the chips: the men aren’t worth it!
Marc: The pick-up man would’ve been.
Beau: Well yeah, he was worth it I bet. He’s a butch ol straight boy.

Beau: Wait a minute: some of us cissies take offense to that Phil: Not to interrupt this meeting of the minds but I want Paul [my current boyfriend] to meet you, though I’m not sure why. [Paul made introductions and introduced Jeff, Marc, and Beau as some of his "best friends" before he and Paul moved on.]
Beau: You stop, [to Phil]; no wonder all these little tricks of yours think so poorly of your friends.
Phil: It’s been 11 weeks, now: that’s serious [hugged Paul].
Jeff: Serious for that one [pointing to Beau; speaking to Phil, loud enough for all to hear] is anything longer than eleven days.
Phil: I heard it was eleven inches.
Greg: Eleven minutes as I remember it.
Jeff: Yeah, the redneck in the truck must’ve been real jealous.
Beau: When he looks me up ... {interrupted}
Phil: You mean feels you up ...
Jeff: He means ‘fucks the cissy’ [all laughed]
Beau: Hey! I’m still in the room here [others laughed even more.]
Marc: If’n and when’n he looks you up Beau, you’ll know he wanted you.
Beau: You know it sister friend
Marc: That’s right: gay men get more sex than straight guys; so they’re jealous of us.
Jeff: I know you don’t mean they’re jealous of ALL of us.
Beau: Nah, just [jealous of] Marc and me.
Phil: Hell, those two’ve been under more men than a nautical toilet.

Jeff: The navy has Beau listed as a friendly port [all are laughing]
Beau: I’m still in the room. Yoo hoo! Still in the room.
Marc: No kiddin’ Beau; only [potato chip] crumbs are left.
Phil: I got to say that it’s been a while since I’ve been to a party where all the music was by Bette Midler, Madonna, and Abba.
Jeff: AND we all had to be quiet when Twin Peaks came on [the tv].
Phil: Exactly.
Jeff: Guess you haven’t been to a party where all the men thought they were women, huh?
Phil: Never with that much conviction [nodded in the direction of Marc, Beau, and Greg in the other corner]
Jeff: Actually, most of them are more like little boys who think they’re girls
Buck: Yea, not mature enough to be women [all laughed].
Ward: Hard to believe you all are friends.
Jeff: Ah they’re the nicest guys; well, girls [laughs]. They’re just so...
Ward: Gay?
Jeff: well [laughing] yea
Phil: No; you mean ‘jutht th:o:: gay’ [made wavy ‘limp-wrist’ motion]
Marc: I can't believe that little bitch [Wade] called me a slut.
Beau: Yea; he hardly even knows you, huh dearie?
Marc: That's right. At least when Jeff and Paul do it I know it's out of love.
Beau: And cause they really know that you are a slut.
Marc: well yes that too.
Beau: Wow you must love me too since I call you slut and get away with it all the time.
Marc: yes but the difference is you call me that to my face!
Beau: Plus, when I say it I mean it as a compliment.
Marc: Well that's understood you little cock-taster. We all bow to you the queen of all cock-tasters!
Beau: Guess that makes Jeff the queen of all cock-teasers
Marc: Actually princess. Paul still holds the higher throne.
Beau: Yes but she thinks she's king!
Marc: Not queen?
Beau: She's just too: butch to be a queen of anything
Marc: Someone needs to tell Paul, 'yoo hoo missy; you like dick: you're a fag!'
Beau: [snapped fingers] Aren't we all?
Marc: Even most breeders at heart
Beau: Ooh the pick-up guy
Marc: [arm around Beau] Yes, Dorothy, when he leaves Kansas, even he will wanna fuck a cissy.
Beau: Dare to dream!
Marc: Beau, darling, your eyes are as good as rolled back.
Sample #11: (knl21290)

Jeff: [to Phil] Know why Beau couldn't keep his last job?
Phil: No idea
Jeff: It was an M & M factory; she was throwing out the W 's

Jeff: Don't ask Beau to take off his shirt
Wade: Why? He seems to have a nice enough body.
Jeff: Yes, but she's so vain and is trying to keep that bruised belly-button a secret
Wade: Bruised... huh? God, what happened?
Jeff: Her last three tricks were even stupider than she is.
Sample #12: tw050392

Davy: Kent, tell Evan what your dad did; Evan, you’re gonna die this is too good.
Kent: Well Mom and Dad visited last weekend and
Evan: Wait. Do they know your gay?
Kent: O Go:d no. No No No No No:
Evan: Ok go on. I’ll bet this is a story about forgetting to de-fag your apartment.
Kent: Well kinda. I actually had everything [pictures from a ‘gay’ party, gay newspapers, pornography, etc] hidden, I guess, but my dad came out of the bedroom saying that he hoped I didn’t mind that he borrowed some of my cologne. Well, I told him that I don’t mind. But then I got to thinking... I don’t have cologne in the bedroom; I keep it in the bathroom. So I go into the room and sittin on the dresser is my new but now half-empty bottle of poppers. My dad is wearing it behind his ears! [all laughed]
Evan: that would have to burn; wouldn’t it?
Kent: I guess but I bet he and mom had the best sex they’ve had in the last thirty years though.
Davy: You should’ve taken ‘em to Tradewinds to disco dance [laughing]
Evan: You better not make fun... [he] may have a monkey on his ear, now
Davy: Really. Before you know it he’ll be brushing his teeth with coke (cocaine) and trying to style his hair with X (short for ‘ecstasy,’ a popular upper at some clubs).
Kent: So each Christmas my parents come over and I’ve hung my greeting cards all around the place but I have to put the faggier ones up really high so mom doesn’t snoop and read what everyone wrote inside. So I’m in the kitchen and I hear this voice from the living room, “Kent what’s a TOP?”

Theo: O NO:: [laughing]

Kent: So I’m thinking she’d been in the garage and found my ex’s letters and was reading them but here I walk into the living room where I must’ve had 130 cards hanging up. But now there’s 129 hanging and one in mama’s hands. [A couple walk by.] There’s the two who sent me the card [pointing]. Cris and Scot, you won’t believe what happened over the holiday with the folks.

[Introductions are made by Kent to both Scot and Cris. The five of us are there: Scot, Cris, Theo (who Kent had just met that night), Kent and me. Kent repeated part of the story for Cris and Scot’s benefit and picked up where he’d left off.].

Kent: Just my luck -- the 1 card that fell was the 1 they sent me. Some naked hunks on the inside, huh?

Cris: No I just made a joke about Kent’s latest ex...

Kent: And then he writes, “Congratulations for being a Top.” So here’s mom reading it, not even knowing I’m gay, and how the hell do you explain this one?

Cris: So you came out to them?

Kent: No: I said that this is the name of the degree I got in June (Kent had gotten an M.A. in summer & was working on a PhD.).

Scot: Holy shit. And they bought it?

Kent: Way too well. Cause when I went home to visit them; it was a Sunday. Dad says Mr. Deluca said to tell you congratulations. And I asked him why. Dad says he was congratulating me for earning my top degree -- Dad was telling everyone at church. [laughs from Scot and Cris]

Kent: Can’t you just see my dad going down the pews, “My son’s a top. My son’s a top. Yoo hoo my son’s a top!” [Theo laughs too]

Scot: well girlie girl you finally done made your pa-pa proud.

Cris: Well maybe back in Pig-farm, U.S.A. no one would know what the hell it meant.

Kent: oh yea? The whole time I was home, Skippy from the church choir was way too friendly.

Scot: Ah, your dad may actually get you a date out of this. Too bad more people didn’t know!

Kent: They do. The story gets better. I pick up the local newspaper that week and see a blurb in the newspaper about me becoming a Top!

Cris: You’re kidding.

Kent: No I got it at home [turns to Theo] You’ve all got to see it. It’s a riot.

Cris: Well, Kent isn’t someone - in your town, even? - gonna pick up on that?

Kent: You’d think but my sister came over for dinner; she has her degree and she knows it’s called an M.A. but said the letters must stand for something. So I’m thinking of some abbreviation to come up with in a nanosecond and I blurt out ‘it stands for toward the Ph.D.; TO the P.’ [more laughing]

Scot: It’s like he lives in St. Olaf (A reference to Rose’s hometown in The Golden Girls; its residents are notorious for their stupidity).
Sample #14: tw061595

Jack: You saying you've been with a woman?
Dale: I was married for thirteen years.
Rory: Really? I didn't know you were married that long.
Jack: Thirteen years of that? Spearing for fish? Guess that makes you very experienced at being top
Rory: She's drunk, Dale. Dismiss her.
Sample #15: te 040793

Domm: How did you know it [your most recent relationship] was true love?
Matt: Hey I must have been in love; I was top for that man
Sample #16: tw 090191

Carl: (holding two drinks) I know what you all are thinking but these are both mine: I don’t feel like sharin’
Kent: Funny you look like a Sharon.
Kreg: Sharon (share and) Share Alike
Kent: Oo drag name! Sharon Cheryl Ike (/share and share alike/)
Kreg: I like that! And Dann could be Janet
Carl: Janet?
Dann: Miss Jackson, if you’re nasty
Sean: I know that’s a song, but I don’t understand anything else you’re saying
Carl: Kent and Kreg do this thing with words and phrases all the time
Sean: You guys do that [dress in drag]? 
Kent: Hell no. We just come up with names...
Kreg: ...that the smart ones should be using. You [Sean] could be Dolly
Kent: Dolly Madison? Dolly Llama?
Kreg: Llama, that’s good. But I mean Dolly Parton.
Sean: You look at me, a twenty-year old black man and you see a blond in high heels, high hair, and a high [er] income?
Carl: It’s the breasts, huh?
Kent: Yeah, had to be the chest.
Kreg: My God yes. Look at those things; they’re huge.
Picture them squeezed into a low-cut dress
Carl: Nothing backless I hope... Hairy back.
Dann: You do have an amazing chest, but I don’t look at it and picture you in a dress; that’s for sure.
Sample #17:  (tw111191)

Dann: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to PeeWee [Herman]?  
Sean: O God this is gonna be good. I don’t know; what?  
Dann: Quit playing with your food.  
Sean: That is so good.  
Dann: I thought you’d like it. The bad thing is that I’m half-afraid to share it with my sister now.  
Sean: Why? She didn’t know any of [his] victim’s did she?  
Dann: You mean Pee Wee [laughing]?  
Sean: No, I mean .. [laughing a bit] O cute; I get it.  
Dann: No, I mean because I just came out to her and it’s probably to soon to tell a joke about a gay man.  
Sean: You mean gay ‘men,” don’t you? I heard they both might be gay.  
Dann: No, I didn’t hear that. Damn; there are going to be so many jokes out there to tell now.  
Sean: So many jokes; so little time!  
Dann: And I had to come out last month and [can’t share them with] my sister now.  
Sean: There’s another reason not to tell people: you never know when a Cannibalistic Queen is gonna start an all protein, and dark chocolate, diet.  
Dann: And when PeeWee is gonna go to a theater and discover a friend that isn’t animated.  
Sean: That’s right. And people say I stay in the closet to hide from corporate America; it’s not. I just wouldn’t be told the good jokes [at work] if they thought I was gay.  
Dann: You’re probably right. Plus they’d be afraid that you were like Dahmer or something ...  
Sean: Yeah, you’re right. Like I’d chop them up and eat them or something ...  
Dann: Exactly ...  
Sean: like I have that much fat in MY diet  
Dann: Straight people can be stupid.  
Sean: Yea, I’m surprised more of them aren’t caught in movie theaters spanking their Hank. [laughs. Dann joins in the laughter.]
Sample #18: A man in drag has just walked by, bumping into friends that are standing around (tw021994).

Dann: Holy..
Sean: What I don't understand is why she would want to [dress like] a woman
Dann: probably to match the voice; ever hear her talk?
Sean: I guess I'd rather be with someone whose outer appearance is compatible with the parts [he has] underneath
Dann: For all we know, she got it [penis] cut off too.
Sean: Uh, I'm getting a drink
Sample #19: Dann, Sean and Duke have been talking about an episode of The Nanny (television show) which had aired in which Fran was attracted to a guy, also a nanny, who turns out to be gay, and are swoon talking about an episode of Roseanne, recently repeated (te031195):

Dann: (to Sean) Too bad you weren't home again last night; you missed it.
Duke: That scene when she's getting interviewed; isn't that classic?
Dann: I like that...
Duke: (to Sean) the lady says to Roseanne that [her friend] she is so damn perky I want to run a knife through her skull (sic.).
Dann: Roseanne says, 'I can see why you’re in personnel. you’re nuts.'
Duke: Cause Roseanne tells the woman (interviewer) that she really likes Phil’s wife (the perky woman discussed earlier) and the woman from personnel says 'I didn’t say I didn’t like her,' and then Roseanne says 'O I must’ve taken that knife-through-the-head comment the wrong way before.'
Dann: She was just so serious through it too.
Duke: Almost as good as a drag queen could do it (be nasty, rude).
Dann: You know who the interviewer is, don’t you?
Duke: Can’t think of her name but she does Carmen San Diego.
Dann: Damn you’re good.
Sean: You too [are] like a couple of Peggy Bundies sittin on the couch, eatin’ bon-bons, and watching tv all the time.
Sample #20: Dann is talking to Adam; Sean is not at te that night (102095).

Dann: I haven’t watched the news or weather in a while.  
Adam: So you didn’t know about the ruckus on my block last weekend, huh?  
Dann: No. What happened?  
Adam: Well that guy (adult male) who took those nude pictures of that girl (child) got off on bond and lives on the other side of (the block).  
Dann: It was an old guy?  
Adam: Only about 28 or something but I don’t think the girl was even in her teens yet.  
Dann: And to think: it was a hetero who did that. You know they can’t be trusted around children (both laugh.)
Sample #21: messages from Bob on the answering machines of two different friends and one of their comments, from an interview that same week. Messages were left on 039193; 05-96, 042397

Bobb: Oo Chris. Lovely drag name, 'Dressa Drawer.'
Cris: [Bobb] comes up with the worst names: who the Hell names a kid Dressa? If she weren’t a little florist queen I’d really start to wonder if she was really one of us [gay] or not.
Bobb: Doll I just heard the best line on Cybill. Call me back love if you wanna hear it.
Bobb: Girlfriend, it is just so wonderful that a girl can come back after a long hard day and watch Golden Girls. It’s back on cable. It’s great and I get it. And you don’t... Bitch!
Sample #22: told on several occasions, the first of which was recorded on 090292

Kent: So mom asks me again why I’m never having kids and I just say ‘think about it mom; think about it,” really serious and all. She got quieter and asked ‘You were dating someone seriously last year weren’t you?’

I told her ‘yes’ and then she says, ‘when you came home at Christmas-time last year, you’d just broken up didn’t you?’

And I said ‘yes, yes,’ feeling relieved and impressed because my mom not only must have figured out I was gay but she also knew that I’d been seeing each other and when we broke up. So just when I’m start to think my mom is so insightful and feelin’ all proud of her an’ all, she up and says, ‘she was colored.’

(different people on different occasions): O god what did you do? Did you tell her?

Kent: I said ‘she was neither, mom’ and when she asked ‘neither what?’ I told her, ‘neither Black nor a she.’ I still think it took a couple minutes for her to figure out what I was saying.
Sample #23: Many told stories of someone named "T.A." though the same story was told about someone named "T.J." and "J.T." and nicknamed, 'Ms. Funt' on four separate occasions. I never met the person, and most telling the story even had not met the person though a woman named Sharon, his former roommate, assured the men one night that he did exist, and the story was true. The story was repeated with slightly different endings like 'Smile you're on candid camera,' but the remainder of the story was told with very little variety. It was first recorded on 12/13/90.

(various): So he has to do this project for school, making a video, and he kept putting it off because he was so stressed about wanting to come out and all so he killed two birds with one stone and videotaped his coming out. Hysterical. They started getting rude with him and he yells out, "Come on Come on; work with me work with me! If you don't start behaving, I'll have to recast you and find nicer people to play my parents." They must not have known the camera was on; I guess telling them he was gay wasn't the 'worst thing he could say;' it was, 'I'm gay and this moment is my class project.' So the worst thing isn't saying 'Mom, Dad, I'm gay.' It's saying 'Mom, Dad, I'm gay. Now smile for the camera.'
Sample #24: Dave and six other friends are standing around talking; Herb having just mentioned sending [Christmas] cards to his ex.

Dave: I really never kept in touch with most of my exes.
Kent: Well... Christ, Dear. Don't you have a day job too?
Kurt: Yes, but the free clinic IS the whole way across town.
Bern: Was that their choice or yours?
Bobb: And I never counted all the grains of sand that lie on the beach, what's your point?
Dave: What, Herb and Blaine, no retort?
Herb: Some things are just more tragic, than funny...
Blaine: There were just so many choices, I got confused. Damn, I'm just a'cramping up here.
Sample #25: McG met his future lover, Jimm, in Cleveland, having gone up to visit with a local leather club and several other friends. In their room during the night, which they shared with a couple of friends including one nicknamed [Auntie] Rick, Jimm was heard saying, "Give me that Sweet Ass" prompting nicknames like "Sweet Ass McG."

Soon thereafter Jimm has come to visit McG. for July Fourth Holiday, surprised to know that his quote was well-known even among bar patrons who hadn't been to Cleveland that weekend. During his visit, Jimm was on crutches, wandering through the bar, which made it even more clear that he had coined McG.'s nickname

Kent: Welcome to Columbus, Gimpy; get any of that swee::t ass?
Jimm: O god, no.
McG.: Guess I got a new nickname now.
Kent: What was it before?
Auntie: Ankles!
McG.: You stop.
Kent: I'm getting a beer; you want one, Hopalong?
Sample #26: Similar physical conditions required friends to comment to Kent, who was yellowish in skin color, supposedly from hepatitis.

Kent: Bobb and Cris, this is Danny's friend [pointing to Jimm]. Bobb, Cris, I'd like you to meet Forest Gimp.
Jimm: Or you can call me Jimm.
Cris: And you can call her Jaundice Bergen
Bobb: Or Helen Yeller.
APPENDIX B

NONSENSE HUMOR SAMPLES (FROM HUMOR CLASS 1)

--- THE "DRAG NAMES" LIST ---

A RANDOMLY ORDERED SET OF NAMES
THAT WERE USED BY LOCAL "DRAG QUEENS"
AND 'WANNABES'
OR WERE 'MADE UP' BY SUBJECTS
JUST FOR FUN (HC1)

(A list of 200 is provided. In general, these samples of nonsense humor from Humor Class One are listed in the order in which they were recorded.)

1 Jen Givitis
2 Annie Getcher-Gunn
3 Dressa Drawer
4 Eileen O'Neal
5 Eartha Quake

503
Maxine Truck
Chris San Themum
Sharon Cheryl Like (share and share alike)
Anita Mann
Anita Love
Anita Dick
Anita Cox
Sofonda Cox
Carrie A VanDetta
Sara Soda (from Sarasota, Florida)
Holly Wood
Mary Tyler Whore
Mary Tyler Morgasm
Scarlett Red’Hara
Zoe’ Loft
Billie Rubens
Lily Von-shtoop
Ima Lilla T’Pot
Jaundice Bergen
Helen Yeller
26 Holly Day
27 Holly N. D'Ivy
28 Hannah Kah
29 Linda Mia Money
30 Bloodied Mary
31 Chris Muss
32 Towsha (Tall One who shaves her anus)
33 Little Miss Nothing
34 Little Miss Everything
35 Little Miss Can't Be Wrong (from a song)
36 Candy Cane
37 Candy Land
38 Amanda Cane
39 Amanda Huggengkiss
40 Candy Graham
41 Bea Littled
42 Bea Attitudes
43 Miss Bea Hive
44 Bee Thattaway
45 Barbie Doll
46 Anna Tomical
47 Anna Tomickly-Correct
48 Anna Rexic
49 Ann Nonymous
50 Marsha Marshomarcia (Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!)
51 Lucy Goosy
52 Lucy Pancreas
53 Hemma Roids
54 Di A. Rhettic
55 Anna Versary
56 Hallie Ween
57 Hallie Bop
58 Enya Face
59 Nealsa Down-Often
60 Belle Emic
61 Connie Tagious
62 Connie Artist
63 Bitchcakes
64 Ms. Butch
65 Anna Bolic-Steroids
Sheila B. Cummin-Rounda-Mountain (when she comes)
Le' Botomie
Connie Lingus
Dee Lightful
Miss Tree-Girl (Mystery Girl)
Misses Cox
Sela Bussy (celibacy)
Penny, Auntie
Penny Arcade
Ova D. Rainbow
Ma’ Dunner (play on ‘Madonna’)
Ms. Rhea (misery)
Penny Pincher
Penny Wise
Amber Wavesa-Grain
Connie Stipation
N. Emma (Enema)
Cholostomy Bagg
Wanda Round
Anita Peters
86  Candy Bar
87  Candy Corn
88  Brandy Glass
89  Brandy Alexander
90  Miss Grand Opening
91  Chedda Cheese
92  Chita Neva-Prospas (Cheater never prospers)
93  Miss Virginia West
94  Penny Sylvania
95  Sara Yevo (Jevo)
96  Saya Narra
97  Petunia Plant
98  Rhoda Dendrom
99  He-She Herman (derivation of "Pee-Wee Herman")
100 Jackie Off
101 Jill Ted
102 Carrie Okey
103 Miss Fired
104 Miss D. Toilet
105 Selfmeddie Kates (Self-medicates)
106  Ima Lush
107  Rude-Paul (a take off on drag queen, Rupaul)
108  Patty O’Furniture
109  Patty Cake
110  St. Patty Day
111  Erin Go-Brach
112  Val N. Tine
113  Miss April Fool
114  Frencha Kisses
115  Katey Did
116  Miss Man
117  Connie Voluted
118  Beth Lee Hem
119  Sandy Aygo (San Diego)
120  Tia Pett (Sounds like ‘Chia Pet’)
121  Pinky Flamingos
122  Connie Rhea (gonnorhea)
123  Di A Rhea
124  Peg Square (Square Peg)
125  Brenda Me-Over
126  Yugo Girl  (you go, girl)
127   Kay Mart
128  Kay Passa  (Que’ Pasa?)
129   Dot Matrix
130  Chaka Lit  (Chocolate)
131  Miss I. C. Cold
132  Karen Poor-Tonight  (Caring for Tonight [only])
133  Sir Whore E-T.  (sorority)
134  Miss Carriage
135  Afta Birth
136  Hurlie Mae
137  Helia Heels  (helium heels)
138  Miss Grace, the Amazing  (Amazing Grace)
139  Abby Normal  (from "Young Frankenstein", also)
140  Dee Moralized
141  Polly Darton  (a play on 'Dolly Parton')
142  Kay Sara Sara  (Que’ Sera’ Sera’)
143  Fuma Gate
144  Miss Lay, Miserables  (‘Les’)
145  Terra Cotta
146  Lynn Guini
147  Ann Chovy
148  Cherry Jubilee
149  Tranna Sexual
150  Sherry Bottles
151  Daisy Bed
152  Miss Human Mattress
153  Tia Fortua (Tea-a for Two-a)
154  Tiper Over
155  Ann L. Cavity
156  Sadie Masochist
157  Gail Winds
158  Eileen Over
159  Clara Bouyant
160  Juana Atta-Tima (one-a at a time-a)
161  Kitty Cocktail
162  Kitty Litter
163  Rhina Plasty
164  Electra Shock-Therapy
165  Miss L. Toe
166  Eve Adams (from Adam and Eve, I believe)
167  Mary Me
168  Dee Vorce
169  E. Masculated
170  Rhoda Kill
171  Barb Wire
172  Barb Aric
173  Honey Dew
174  Peaches Cobbler
175  Cara Mebaktuolver Jinny ('Carry Me Back to olVa.') The
176  Anti-Virgin
177  Peri Odical
178  Sir Jen (Surgeon)
179  E. Coli
180  Jen Tile (gentile)
181  Caffeine Rush
182  Amannis Hartufine (A man is hard to find.)
183  Cybill Lized
184  Ova D. Hill
185  Kelly Green

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186  Ella Gant (elegant)
187  Miss Ella Funt
188  Aunt Flo (Flow)
189  Auntie Jen (Antigen)
190  Miss Hurra Cane
191  Autumn Leaves
192  May Flower
193  June Bug
194  Ova Reese
195  Flamma Bell
196  Sally Vate (salivate)
197  Aunt Arctica
198  Nellie Queen
199  Cara Sell (Carousel)
200  Vicki Torrious.