Humor styles, culture-related personality, well-being, and family adjustment among Armenians in Lebanon*

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Abstract

This research examined the structure and correlates of an Armenian translation of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin et al. 2003) among a community sample of ethnic Armenians residing in Lebanon. Four humor factors were found, as in the original Canadian samples: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating humor. Scale reliabilities were generally acceptable, and inter-correlations among the scales were low. Armenian-Lebanese participants, as compared to Canadian and Belgian norms, obtained significantly lower scores on all four humor scales. Compared to females, males reported significantly more use of all four styles of humor, particularly aggressive and self-defeating humor. Humor styles correlated differentially, and generally as predicted, with perceived health, psychological well-being, and family adjustment, although they were unrelated to depression. Higher scores on aggressive humor related to higher vertical individualism and lower horizontal and vertical collectivism. Overall, the findings provide cross-cultural support for the theoretical structure and usefulness of the HSQ and represent an initial step in the study of humor among Armenians.

Keywords: Armenians in Lebanon; collectivism; family adjustment; humor styles; individualism; life satisfaction.

1. Introduction

There is a paucity of psychological research on Armenians living outside Armenia generally, and Armenian humor in particular. Although there
are a number of humor web sites that carry exclusively Armenian jokes, the scientific study of humor in Armenians is lacking. Armenians living outside Armenia may be an interesting population in which to study humor, since they form a minority ethnic sub-culture in many countries, with a history of oppression and national homelessness. Humor amongst such groups may be an important way of maintaining a cultural identity and coping with the stresses of being a cultural minority. On the other hand, their ethnic minority status, along with their history of tragedies and hardships, may have resulted in a diminished capacity for humor overall. Thus, research on this group may have implications for humor styles in ethnic minorities more generally.

The present study focuses on Armenians in Lebanon and uses an Armenian translation of a newly developed measure of humor styles, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin et al. 2003). Armenians are one of several ethnic groups in Lebanon. The Armenian presence in the country is over two centuries old. The first Armenian immigrants settled in the Lebanese Mountain in 1720, and founded the Convent of Bzoumar. The second group of Armenian settlers arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and congregated mostly in the central districts of the city of Beirut. The third wave were refugees from Western Armenia in the aftermath of World War I. The Armenian refugees settled in a variety of refugee camps (Bourj Hammoud, Marash, Sanjak, etc.) in the host country. Armenians in Lebanon continue to speak Armenian, a unique Indo-European language that is unlike the Semitic and Roman languages of the surrounding cultures. The Armenian community in Lebanon at present comprises less than 150,000 people, the majority of whom reside in the urban city of Beirut and its northern suburbs, as well as in the rural district of Anjar. There is a significant congregation of Armenians in the Bourj Hammoud district of Beirut (roughly 100,000 Armenians) and in Anjar (approximately 2400 Armenians). The present study drew participants from both of these groups.

The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ; Martin et al. 2003) comprises four humor styles relating to individual differences in everyday uses of humor. These are: potentially beneficial uses of humor to enhance the self (self-enhancing) and to enhance one’s relationships with others (affiliative), use of humor to enhance the self at the expense of others (aggressive), and use of humor to enhance relationships at the expense of the self (self-defeating). Individuals who are high on affiliative humor tend to say funny things, to tell jokes, and to engage in spontaneous witty banter to
amuse others, to facilitate relationships, and to reduce interpersonal tensions. Self-enhancing humor involves a generally humorous outlook on life, a tendency to be frequently amused by the incongruities of life, and to maintain a humorous perspective even in the face of stress or adversity. Aggressive humor relates to the use of sarcasm, teasing, ridicule, derision, “put-down” humor, or disparagement humor. Finally, self-defeating humor involves excessively self-disparaging humor, attempts to amuse others by doing or saying funny things at one’s own expense as a means of ingratiating others or gaining approval, and use of humor as a form of defensive denial or avoidance. Thus, rather than assuming that sense of humor is a unitary and uniquely positive construct, the HSQ views it as multidimensional, with potentially detrimental as well as beneficial facets.

The HSQ was developed and validated with several large Canadian samples of participants ranging in age from fourteen to 87 years (Martin et al. 2003). The four humor styles have shown acceptable levels of reliability, and a clear factor structure corresponding to the hypothesized dimensions. The four humor styles, as assessed by the HSQ, have also shown differential and theoretically-relevant patterns of correlations with other self-report measures of humor, peer ratings of humor styles, and measures of moods, well-being, self-esteem, optimism, hostility, intimacy, agency and communion, and personality traits from the Five Factor Model (Martin et al. 2003; Kuiper et al. 2004). In general, self-enhancing and affiliative humor have been shown to be positively related to measures of psychosocial well-being, whereas self-defeating humor tends to be negatively related to these variables. Aggressive humor has been shown to be related to aggression and hostility in general, and negatively related to intimacy and relationship satisfaction.

There have been two recent cross-cultural applications of the HSQ. Saroglou and Scariot (2002) have translated the HSQ into French, and have demonstrated good psychometrics and factor structure in a sample of Belgian participants, as well as differential correlations with measures of personality, attachment, and academic motivation. Kazarian and Martin (2004) have used the original English-language version of the HSQ in a sample of university students in Lebanon, and have supported the four-factor structure in the Lebanese context. In addition to examining correlations of humor styles with measures of adult attachment, health, and psychological well-being, Kazarian and Martin (2004) also expanded the cross-cultural study of humor styles by showing differential
and theoretically relevant patterns of correlations with the culture-related personality dimensions of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism.

In the present study the cross-cultural application of the HSQ is extended to Armenians in Lebanon. Whereas the previous study focused only on university students in Lebanon (a small number of whom were Armenian, but most were from other ethnic backgrounds), the present study employed a broad community sample drawn from the general Armenian population with a wide age span and a diversity of occupations. Thus, this study is the first to examine the HSQ in a minority ethnic population within a dominant culture. The HSQ was translated into Armenian using a back-translation methodology to examine its structure and psychometric properties in the Armenian-Lebanese context. Validation of the factor structure of the HSQ among this population would establish cross-cultural equivalence of the measure and would provide additional support for the universality or culture-non-specificity of the HSQ constructs.

A second aim of the present study was to replicate the Kazarian and Martin (2004) findings on the HSQ by investigating the relationship of humor styles to appraisals of health and psychological well-being, and the culture-related personality dimensions of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. In relation to health and well-being, Armenian translations of the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (Radloff 1977) and the perceived health and well-being measures employed by Kazarian and Martin (2004) were used in the present study. We were interested in knowing whether humor styles are predictive of depression, perceived health, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being in a community sample of Armenians in Lebanon. Differential correlations between the four humor styles and the health and well-being measures would provide additional cross-cultural evidence for the distinction between beneficial and detrimental uses of humor.

To explore the relation between the humor styles and the culture-related personality dimensions of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, an Armenian translation of the Individualism-Collectivism Scale (Singelis et al. 1995) was used. The original English version of this measure was used in the previous Lebanese university study by Kazarian and Martin (2004). The constructs of individualism and collectivism have been widely used in cross-cultural psychology for understanding cultural differences in the ways in which individuals view
themselves in relation to others (Bond and Smith 1996; Oyserman et al. 2002). Collectivism focuses on the interdependence of individuals in society and the primacy of group needs over individual needs, whereas individualism emphasizes individuals’ independence and the primacy of individual needs over group needs. Cutting across the individualism-collectivism dimension, the horizontal perspective emphasizes equality between individuals within societal groups, whereas the vertical perspective emphasizes inequality or hierarchy (Singelis et al. 1995). These cultural dimensions provide an interesting framework for exploring possible cultural differences in humor styles, as well as individual differences in humor within a given culture.

As in our previous study with Lebanese university students (Kazarian and Martin 2004), we predicted a positive correlation between horizontal collectivism (HC) and affiliative humor, since HC is associated with a desire for harmony, sharing, and mutual happiness among members of the in-group, and affiliative humor involves the use of humor to promote group cohesiveness. Second, we predicted a positive correlation between vertical collectivism (VC) and self-defeating humor, since VC involves sacrificing one’s own interests for the sake of the group, while self-defeating humor refers to the use of humor to facilitate group cohesiveness at one’s own expense (e.g., excessively self-disparaging humor for the amusement of others). Third, we predicted a positive correlation between vertical individualism (VI) and aggressive humor, since VI involves competitiveness and striving to win at the expense of others, while aggressive humor refers to the use of humor to enhance oneself by disparaging others. Finally, we predicted a positive correlation between horizontal individualism (HI) and self-enhancing humor, since both involve self-assertion and personal independence while respecting the rights of others. The first three of these predictions were supported in the Kazarian and Martin (2004) study, but the correlation between HI and self-enhancing humor was non-significant (indeed, HI was unrelated to any of the humor styles). In the present study, we were interested in knowing whether these patterns found among Lebanese university students would also appear in a broad community sample of Armenians living in Lebanon. A similar pattern of findings would lend further support to the idea that different styles of humor may be related to culture-related personality dimensions.

A final aim of the study was to extend previous research on the role of these humor styles in psychosocial well-being by examining their relationship to family adjustment. Although there has been some research
on humor styles in friendships (Martin and Ward 2003) and dating relationships (Martin et al. 2002), no previous studies have examined the HSQ in relation to general family functioning. An Armenian translation of the General Functioning subscale of the McMaster Family Assessment Device (Epstein et al. 1983) was used as an overall measure of family adjustment. We predicted a positive correlation between affiliative humor and family adjustment, as affiliative humor involves the use of humor that promotes social cohesiveness. Similarly, we predicted a negative correlation between aggressive humor and family adjustment, as aggressive humor involves use of humor that is socially disparaging. Since self-enhancing and self-defeating humor have not been found to be consistently correlated with measures of relationship quality and satisfaction in past studies (e.g., Martin and Ward 2003), we did not expect these two humor styles to be related to the family adjustment measure.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

A total of 278 Lebanese residents of Armenian ethnicity (61% female) participated in the study. Sixty of the participants were from the rural area of Anjar, and the rest were either from the Bourj Hammood district of urban Beirut or were students attending the American University of Beirut or Haigazian University. None of these students had participated in our earlier study (Kazarian and Martin 2004). The mean age was 31.7 years (sd = 14.5, range = 12 to 83). Reported marital status was 60.2% single, 34.7% married, 3.9% divorced, and 1.2% other. With regard to reported occupation, 32.7% were skilled or blue collar workers, 9.6% business owners, 12.2% professionals, 19.7% working in education, 21.1% students, 4.1% homemakers, and .7% unemployed. With regard to religious affiliation, all were Christian. All participants signed informed consent forms.

2.2. Measures

All measures were translated into Armenian using back-translation methodology. To minimize fatigue, different sets of measures were
administered to different groups, all of whom completed the Armenian versions of the HSQ (HSQ-Armenian) and the Individualism-Collectivism Scale (ICS-Armenian). Thus, not all participants completed all scales (sample sizes for each measure are indicated below). Measures were administered in randomized order.

**Humor Styles Questionnaire** (HSQ; Martin et al. 2003). The HSQ is a 32-item measure comprising four 8-item scales assessing different styles of humor: affiliative (e.g., “I laugh and joke a lot with my friends”); self-enhancing (e.g., “My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things”); aggressive (e.g., “If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it”); and self-defeating humor (e.g., “I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults”). Respondents indicate the degree to which they agree with each item using a 7-point Likert scale. Martin et al. (2003) reported internal consistencies (Cronbach $\alpha$) of .80 for affiliative, .81 for self-enhancing, .77 for aggressive, and .80 for self-defeating humor.

**Individualism and Collectivism Scale** (ICS; Singelis et al. 1995). The ICS is a 32-item measure of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. It comprises four 8-item scales: horizontal individualism (HI; e.g., “I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways”), vertical individualism (VI; e.g., “It annoys me when other people perform better than I do”), horizontal collectivism (HC; e.g., “It is important to maintain harmony within my group”), and vertical collectivism (VC; e.g., “I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group”). Respondents indicate their agreement with each item using a 9-point Likert scale. The internal consistencies of the ICS-Armenian scales were .59, .64, .68, and .60, respectively.

**Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale** (CES-D; Radloff 1977). The CES-D is a 20-item measure of depressive symptoms in the general population. Each item requires a rating from 0 to 3, higher scores indicating more depressive symptoms. The internal consistency of the CES-D-Armenian scale was .89; 152 participants completed this measure.

**Psychological Well-Being and Perceived Health** (HSS; Ontario Ministry of Health 1992). Well-being and perceived health status were assessed by
17 items taken from an epidemiological study originally conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Health. Well-being comprised the sum of 13 items relating to life satisfaction, positive and negative moods, and energy level (Cronbach $\alpha = .83$). Perceived health was composed of 4 items relating to health status, health satisfaction, and worries about health (Cronbach $\alpha = .66$; negatively keyed items reversed). The correlation between the Armenian translations of these two measures was .40 ($p < .001$); 173 participants completed the perceived health items and 160 completed the well-being items.

McMaster Family Assessment Device-General Functioning (FAD-GF; Epstein et al. 1983). To assess family adjustment, the 12-item General Functioning subscale of the FAD was used. Each item is rated on a 4-point rating scale, higher scores indicating higher family adjustment. The internal consistency of the FAD-GF-Armenian was .81; 142 participants completed this measure.

3. Results

3.1. HSQ-Armenian factor analysis

Standard deviations for all items on the Armenian translation of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ-Armenian) were greater than 1.0 (range = 1.45 to 2.21), indicating adequate item variance across participants. A principal components analysis using Varimax rotation was computed on the 32 items. Examination of the scree plot indicated that a four factor solution was clearly optimal. The first four factors had eigenvalues of 4.02, 3.10, 2.31, and 1.71, respectively, and accounted for 34.8% of the total variance.

An examination of the item loadings on each of the four rotated factors revealed that these factors corresponded very closely with the original four scales of the HSQ. With only three exceptions, all of the items loaded most highly on their designated scale, indicating that the theoretical structure of the HSQ found in other cultures also exists among Armenian Lebanese. One item from the affiliative humor scale ("I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself" — reverse keyed) loaded on the factor corresponding to the self-defeating humor scale. In addition, one item from the self-defeating humor scale ("If I am having..."
problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don’t know how I really feel’’) loaded on the factor corresponding to the self-enhancing humor scale. Finally, one item from the aggressive humor scale (‘‘When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am not usually very concerned about how other people are taking it’’) loaded on the self-defeating humor scale. These three items were therefore omitted from their respective scales in computing scale totals and internal consistencies.

3.2. Internal consistencies and inter-correlations

The internal consistencies of the four scales, as well as their inter-correlations are presented in Table 1. The internal consistencies were .71 for the affiliative humor scale, .70 for self-enhancing humor, .60 for aggressive humor, and .65 for self-defeating humor. These reliabilities, although acceptable, are somewhat lower than those reported by Martin et al. (2003) for the original English language version of the measure with Canadian samples and those reported by Saroglou and Scariot (2002) for the French translation used in Belgium. These lower reliabilities may be due to subtle differences in meaning reflected in the Armenian translation or, alternatively, to different patterns of humor usage among Armenians compared to Canadians and Belgians. They may also be due to the greater heterogeneity of this sample compared to those of Saroglou and Scariot (2002) and Kazarian and Martin (2004), which used only students.

The inter-correlations among the four HSQ-Armenian scales ranged from .05 to .39 for males and from .01 to .41 for females. Thus, as with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Affiliative</th>
<th>Self-enhancing</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Self-defeating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative humor (AFH)</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>−.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-enhancing humor (SEH)</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive humor (AGH)</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-defeating humor (SDH)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cronbach alpha coefficients are on the diagonal. Correlations for males are above the diagonal, for females below the diagonal.
Key: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.
previous studies, these four humor scales show considerable independence from one another. As with Canadian samples (Martin et al. 2003), the strongest correlations were found between the two presumably beneficial humor scales (affiliative and self-enhancing; $r_s = .39$ and .31 for males and females respectively, $p < .001$) and between the two presumably detrimental humor scales (aggressive and self-defeating; $r_s = .35$ and .41 for males and females respectively, $p < .001$). In addition, as with the Canadian samples, self-enhancing and self-defeating humor were significantly correlated among males ($r = .24$, $p < .05$) but not females ($r = .10$, ns). However, whereas a moderate correlation was found between affiliative and aggressive humor among both males and females in Canada, this correlation was non-significant for both sexes in the present sample. The pattern of correlations in this Armenian sample is quite similar to that found in Lebanese students (Kazarian and Martin 2004) and in Belgian participants (Saroglou and Scariot 2002). Thus, it would appear that, in these latter three cultures, relative to North Americans, there is less of a tendency for friendly joking and laughing with one’s friends (affiliative humor) to be associated with sarcastic put-down (aggressive) humor.

3.3. Scale norms and gender differences

Table 2 presents the mean scores for males and females, as well as for the total sample, on each of the four humor scales. To enable comparison with data from previous studies, scores for those scales which were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>8.37</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>8.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-enhancing</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-defeating</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>8.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>8.25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
reduced to seven items in the present study were prorated to eight items. With very few exceptions, both males and females in this sample obtained significantly lower scores on all four humor scales, as compared to the means previously reported for Canadians (Martin et al. 2003), Belgians (Saroglou and Scariot 2002), and Lebanese (Kazarian and Martin 2004). The only exceptions were that males in the present sample did not differ significantly from males in the Lebanese sample on affiliative, self-enhancing, and aggressive humor. To ensure that these differences between the cultural groups were not due to age differences in the samples (see correlations with age below), comparisons were also made controlling for age, but the pattern of significant differences remained the same. These differences suggest that, overall, Armenians in Lebanon are less likely to use all four styles of humor as compared to individuals from the other three cultures. However, Lebanese and Armenian males have comparable levels of affiliative, self-enhancing and aggressive humor.

With regard to sex differences, males, as compared to females, reported more use of affiliative humor ($t(249) = 2.20, p < .03$), self-enhancing humor ($t(249) = 2.17, p < .03$), aggressive humor ($t(249) = 4.19, p < .001$), and self-defeating humor ($t(249) = 4.50, p < .0001$). Thus, among Armenians in Lebanon, males appear to use the four forms of humor (particularly aggressive and self-defeating) more frequently than do females, a finding that is similar to the sex differences found in North America (Martin et al. 2003).

3.4. Age and humor styles

Significant negative correlations were found between age and humor styles for affiliative humor ($r = -.17, p < .01$), aggressive humor ($r = -.24, p < .001$), and self-defeating humor ($r = -.24, p < .001$), but not for self-enhancing humor ($r = -.05, ns$). Thus, older people, as compared to younger individuals, are less likely to use affiliative, aggressive, and self-defeating styles of humor.

3.5. Individualism-collectivism and humor styles

Correlations were examined between each of the four HSQ-Armenian humor scales and the ICS-Armenian horizontal and vertical individualism
and collectivism scales. These correlations are presented in Table 3. The correlation between aggressive humor and vertical individualism ($r = .25$, $p < .001$) was consistent with our predictions, as was the correlation between self-enhancing humor and horizontal individualism ($r = .17$, $p < .01$). However, contrary to our predictions, self-defeating humor was negatively (rather than positively) related to vertical collectivism ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$), and affiliative humor was uncorrelated with horizontal collectivism. Additionally, aggressive humor was negatively correlated with horizontal collectivism ($r = -.14$, $p < .05$) and with vertical collectivism ($r = -.24$, $p < .001$), while self-defeating humor was negatively related to horizontal collectivism ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$).

3.6. Perceived health, well-being, depression, and humor styles

Correlations between each of the four HSQ-Armenian scales and the measures of perceived health, well-being, and depression are also presented in Table 3. Perceived health was positively correlated with self-enhancing humor ($r = .27$, $p < .001$), and unrelated to the other three humor styles, suggesting that individuals who maintain a humorous outlook during times of stress perceive themselves to be more physically healthy. Since we do not have objective health data, it is unclear whether this finding reflects a relationship between this humor style and actual physical health or merely health satisfaction (cf. Kuiper and Nicholl 2004). Psychological well-being was also positively correlated with self-enhancing humor ($r = .26$, $p < .001$), as well as with affiliative humor.
(r = .21, p < .001), but unrelated to the two presumably deleterious forms of humor. Thus, perceptions of life satisfaction, high energy, and positive moods are positively associated with a generally humorous outlook on life and a tendency to laugh and joke with others. Finally, scores on the CESD measure of depression were unrelated to any of the HSQ-Armenian scores, suggesting that none of these humor styles are related to depression.

3.7. Family adjustment and humor styles

Correlations between the four HSQ-Armenian scales and the FAD-GF scores are also presented in Table 3. The correlation between affiliative humor and family adjustment, although tending in the predicted direction, was not statistically significant (r = .15, ns). However, family adjustment scores were related in the predicted direction to the aggressive humor style (r = -.33, p < .001); that is, higher use of aggressive humor was associated with poorer family adjustment.

4. Discussion

This is the first study of humor styles among ethnic Armenians living in Lebanon and, indeed, the first study on psychological aspects of humor in this ethnic group. In addition, this is the first study of humor styles using the HSQ among a minority ethnic group within a dominant culture. We were able to recruit a sizable sample of participants representing a wide range of ages, occupations, education levels, and marital status. The Armenian translation of the Humor Styles Questionnaire revealed a clear four-factor structure and, although reliabilities were somewhat lower than those obtained in the original English version, the individual scales showed adequate internal consistencies. Some further refinement of the translation of some of the items may result in even higher reliabilities.

In the present sample, as in previous studies, the modest size of the inter-correlations among the HSQ scales, as well as their differential correlations with other constructs, provide further evidence that these are quite distinct dimensions of humor, which may be found in a wide range of cultures. At the same time, the pattern of correlations among the HSQ scales suggests some differences between cultures in the way these styles of
humor inter-relate. In particular, unlike the findings with both males and females in Canadian samples (Martin et al. 2003), aggressive and affiliative humor were unrelated in the present sample. This pattern is similar to that found previously with French-speaking Belgians (Saroglou and Scariot 2002) and with Lebanese university students (Kazarian and Martin 2004). Thus, the non-North American cultures studied so far do not show the tendency, found in North America, for people who engage in friendly joking and laughing with their friends (affiliative humor) to also make use of teasing, sarcasm, or disparaging (aggressive) forms of humor. Further cross-cultural research is needed to examine the patterns of relationships among humor styles in a broader range of cultures.

Comparison of the means of the four HSQ scales indicates lower uses of all four styles of humor among Lebanese Armenians as compared to norms from Canadian (Martin et al. 2003) and Belgian samples (Saroglou and Scariot 2002). Although mean scores for males were similar between Armenians in the present sample and Lebanese university students in the Kazarian and Martin (2004) study, females in the present sample showed significantly lower scores than females in the Lebanese study. These differences remained significant even after controlling for age. These findings may reflect a lower value placed on the experience and expression of all forms of humor among Armenians as compared to the other cultures that have been studied to date. These differences may also partly have to do with the fact that this is a minority ethnic group, whereas the other studies with the HSQ all investigated humor styles in the mainstream culture. Perhaps due to their minority status, ethnic Armenians in Lebanon take a generally more serious approach to life, or are generally lower in extraversion (which is correlated with humor, Ruch 1994) or in general satisfaction-related constructs, as compared to the broader Lebanese society. If so, these potential sub-culture differences would seem to apply particularly to Armenian women rather than men in Lebanon. However, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions based on these initial findings. It would be beneficial to conduct similar investigations with Armenians living in Armenia (where they are the dominant culture) and in other countries where they are in the minority, as well as with other ethnic sub-cultures in other countries. Such research would allow us to determine the degree to which these patterns are generalizable to all Armenians, or only to those who are a minority in other countries, or if they are generally typical of any people who form an ethnic sub-culture.
With regard to sex differences in humor styles, the patterns are similar across cultures, with only weak sex differences in use of affiliative and self-enhancing humor, while men show much greater use of both aggressive and self-defeating humor as compared to women. These appear to be widespread sex differences in humor styles, although research with other cultures is needed to confirm their universality. The correlations with age found in this study were also generally comparable to those found in Canadian samples (Martin et al. 2003). Older participants, as compared to younger individuals, showed lower scores on affiliative and aggressive humor and no differences on self-enhancing humor (as in the Canadian data), although the negative correlation between age and self-defeating humor found in this sample did not appear in the Canadian data. While older people tend to show less humor overall (particularly the more negative styles), their use of humor to cope with stress is not lower relative to younger people. Longitudinal research is needed to determine whether these age differences are due to changes in the way people use humor as they grow older or to a cohort effect.

The correlations between humor styles and the cultural dimensions of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism only partially supported our predictions and previous findings. The most robust finding appears to be the positive correlation between aggressive humor and vertical individualism. Thus, those who place greater emphasis on the independence of individuals in social groups, and who expect inequality and competition among individuals, appear to use humor in more aggressive ways. Aggressive humor in this cultural orientation may be one means of competing with others and striving to win at the expense of others. In addition, the predicted correlation between horizontal individualism and self-enhancing humor was found, indicating that those who view individuals as independent yet equal tend to engage in humor that is self-asserting yet respectful of others. However, we did not replicate the finding of a positive correlation between affiliative humor and horizontal collectivism or between self-defeating humor and vertical collectivism (instead, this latter correlation was actually negative in the present study). We are unable to explain the latter negative correlation, particularly given the finding of a significant correlation in the opposite (predicted) direction in the Kazarian and Martin (2004) study (although both correlations were less than .20). This will need to await replication and further investigation. On the other hand, in the present study,
Aggressive humor was negatively related to both horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism, indicating that those who place greater emphasis on the importance of the group rather than the individual are less likely to engage in sarcastic or disparaging forms of humor, which would tend to impair group cohesion.

Further research is needed to reconcile the different patterns of correlations found in these two studies. In particular, it would be beneficial to examine relationships between the four humor styles and culturally-related personality dimensions across a wide range of different cultures, rather than within a single cultural group (as in the present study), where there is likely to be less variance across participants. Such broader cross-cultural research may elucidate the ways in which national differences in horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism may be reflected in different ways in which people from different countries tend to express humor.

Consistent with the findings of Martin et al. (2003) and Kuiper et al. (2004), the present study revealed an association between the potentially more beneficial forms of humor and perceived health, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction, while aggressive humor was unrelated to these variables. In particular, both perceived health and well-being were related to self-enhancing humor, while affiliative humor was related only to well-being. These findings provide further support to the notion that some forms of humor may be more conducive to health and well-being than others, and underline the importance of distinguishing these different styles of humor in research on humor and well-being (Martin 2001). However, the lack of a negative correlation between self-defeating humor and well-being (found in North American samples), suggests that this self-disparaging and ingratiating form of humor may not be as clearly detrimental to well-being in this cultural context as it appears to be in the North American context. This suggests a potential cultural difference in the meaning of self-defeating humor. The lack of any significant correlations between depression and the four styles of humor is also noteworthy, suggesting that the different styles of humor do not confer either a protection or a vulnerability to depression in this population. This pattern is also different from that found in previous research in North America, where affiliative and self-enhancing humor are typically negatively related to depression and self-defeating humor is positively related to depression (Kuiper et al. 2004; Martin et al. 2003).
Finally, the significant negative correlation between aggressive humor and family adjustment indicates that this negative style of humor may be particularly detrimental to the quality of family interactions. The lack of a positive correlation between family adjustment and positive styles of humor is also interesting, suggesting that those who engage in affiliative and self-enhancing forms of humor do not necessarily perceive their families to be better adjusted. This pattern of results is similar to those found in some previous research on the HSQ and satisfaction with friendships and dating relationships, where aggressive humor was found to be consistently negatively related to satisfaction, whereas positive forms of humor were less consistently related to satisfaction (Martin et al. 2002; Martin and Ward 2003). However, the HSQ assesses general humor styles of the individual across a wide range of relationships rather than the humor expressed in the context of any one relationship. Researchers may need to more specifically assess various uses of humor within specific relationships, such as the family or marriage, to observe beneficial effects of positive humor styles on relationship satisfaction and quality of functioning.

Of course, the correlational nature of this research precludes the possibility of making causal conclusions. It is unclear whether adaptive forms of humor lead to better health and well-being (perhaps by enhancing one’s ability to cope with stress or increasing one’s social support), or whether having better health and well-being causes one to be more cheerful and prone to express more positive forms of humor. Similarly, the direction of causality between aggressive humor and family adjustment is unknown. A further limitation of this study is that it relied exclusively on self-report measures; future research should make use of other sources of data, such as behavioral observations and peer ratings. Finally, this study only made use of Armenians living in Lebanon. It would be interesting to see whether similar results are found among Armenians living in other countries of the world, including Armenia itself. In addition, it would be interesting to compare these findings with those of other ethnic minorities. Nonetheless, this study extends research examining cultural differences and similarities in styles of humor and the role of humor styles in personality, health, and well-being, and represents a starting point for the study of humor among ethnic minorities in general and Armenians in particular.
Note

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* The authors would like to thank Rubina Artinian for her contribution to the translation into Armenian of the measures used in this study, and Maral Boyadjian for her assistance in the data gathering process.

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