

Study explores why humor is important in romantic attraction

September 3 2015, by Christine Metz Howard



Men might want to ditch the pickup lines and polish their punchlines in their quest to attract women, new research at the University of Kansas suggests.

Jeffrey Hall, associate professor of communication studies, found that when two strangers meet, the more times a man tries to be funny and the more a woman laughs at those attempts, the more likely it is for the woman to be interested in dating. However, an even better indicator of romantic connection is if the two are spotted laughing together.

Those findings were among the discoveries Hall made in his search for a link between [humor](#) and [intelligence](#). For the past decade, research has debated whether women appreciate men's humor, which is often cited as one of the most valued traits in a partner, because it allows them to suss out the smarts of potential mates. But Hall said finding someone who

appreciates your [sense of humor](#) is valuable in its own right.

"The idea that humor is a signal of intelligence doesn't give humor its due credit," Hall said. "If you meet someone who you can laugh with, it might mean your future relationship is going to be fun and filled with good cheer."

In the article "Sexual Selection and Humor in Courtship: A Case for Warmth and Extroversion," which was published online this month in the journal *Evolutionary Psychology*, Hall discusses three studies he performed that didn't find a connection between humor and intelligence.

In the first study, 35 participants studied the Facebook profile pages of 100 strangers to gauge their personalities. Their evaluations were compared with a survey completed by the Facebook users. Hall found humorous people were much more likely to be extroverted than intelligent and were seen by strangers that way, too. The data also suggested that men and women posted similar amounts of humorous content to their pages.

In the second study, nearly 300 students filled out a survey on humor in courtship. Looking at GPA and ACT scores, the study found that there was no connection between how smart the person was and how funny he or she claimed to be. But it did find a relationship with humor and extroversion. The study also didn't find a difference in how men and women comprehended or appreciated humor.

To find out how humor use by men and humor appreciated by women played a role in romantic attraction, the final study brought together 51 pairs of single, heterosexual college students who didn't know each other. The pairs sat alone in a room and talked for about 10 minutes. Afterward they filled out a survey.

The results didn't indicate that one sex tried to be funnier than the other. However, it did suggest the more times a man tried to be funny and the more times a woman laughed at his jokes, the more likely she was romantically interested. The reverse was not true for women who attempted humor.

It also showed that when the pair laughed together, they were more interested in each other.

Finding no link between humor and intelligence, Hall offers four explanations for why humor is so important in finding partners:

- Humor points to having a sociable and agreeable personality. "Part of what it means to be social is the ability to joke along with people," Hall said.
- Men use humor to gauge if women are interested in them. "Men are trying to get women to show their cards," Hall said. "For some men it is a conscious strategy."
- When [men](#) make jokes and women laugh, they may be performing a script in courtship. Men acting like jokers and [women](#) laughing along may be part of it, too. "The script is powerful and it is enduring, and it dictates everything from asking someone out to picking up the tab," Hall said.
- Humor is valuable for humor's sake. "Shared laughter might be a pathway toward developing a more long-lasting relationship," Hall said.

Provided by University of Kansas

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