Despite the health-beneficial notion of humor, with the distinction of adaptive (affiliative, self-enhancing) and maladaptive styles (self-defeating, aggressive), Martin, Publik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, (2003) their interplay comes into focus. Can the maladaptive function of the negative styles be balanced by positive humor? Positive humor styles are accompanied with higher well-being, self-esteem (e.g., Kuiper & McHale, 2009; Martin et al., 2003) and favorable work outcomes, e.g. satisfaction, health, coping effectiveness, decreased burnout and stress (meta-analysis, Mesmer-Magnus, Glew & Viswesvaran, 2012).

Negative humor styles show the opposite patterns, e.g. an association with “dark personality traits” (Veselka, Schermer, Martin & Vernon, 2016) and higher depression (Martin et al., 2013), but are rarely researched. Given the impact humor has at the workplace (e.g., Romero & Curthard, 2006; Wood, Beckmann & Rossiter, 2011), and knowing that positive styles may buffer ruminative effects on dysphoria (Olson, Hugelshofer, Kwon & Reff, 2005), the interrelation of humor styles seems worthwhile to examine.

As self-enhancing humor is an intrapsychic coping style, can it help to buffer the association of negative humor with higher stress?

RESULTS

H2: partially supported → Polynomials of the self-enhancing style with a) self-defeating and b) aggressive humor were only significantly related to cognitive irritation.

Response surface analysis:
→ Polynomials of self-enhancing and self-defeating styles: significant coefficient for the line of agreement (a=0.66) → higher cognitive irritation with increasing incongruence between self-enhancing and self-defeating styles.