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IF IT WALKS LIKE A PROVERB AND TALKS LIKE A QUESTION: PROVERBIAL AND OTHER FORMULAIC INTERROGATIVES

Abstract: Although a small number of question-form phrases have been included in standard proverb dictionaries or have been proposed for inclusion in future dictionaries, many of these phrases, although fixed in form, lack the truth-statement function that typifies most so-called true proverbs. This is also true of sarcastic interrogatives; although sarcastic interrogatives are (at least in some cases) fixed-form interrogatives, they do not state generalizable truths about the world or propose appropriate ways to respond to particular types of recurrent situations within it. Fixed-form rhetorical questions with a more clearly proverbial function do exist, however, and a number of these proverbial interrogatives are here identified, described, and distinguished from other types of formulaic interrogatives.

Keywords: proverbs, paremiology, sarcastic interrogatives, rhetorical questions, formulaic language, formulaic interrogatives, proverbial interrogatives

Although many writers (e.g., Dundes, 1975; Lau et al., 2004; Mieder, 1993; Taylor, 1931; Whiting, 1932) have expressed considerable doubt that we will ever have a satisfactory definition of the folkloric form known as the proverb, that belief has not prevented scholars from trying, nonetheless, to describe the major elements that differentiate "proverb" from "not proverb." Whiting (1932) traced the history of the definition of the proverb from antiquity through the early 20th century, from Aristotle's requirement that a proverb be "a product of the masses rather than of the classes" (p. 278) and Apostolius's observation that a proverb is "a useful saying" that "makes clear the truth in furtive fashion" (p. 287), to John Dykes's (1709) observation that proverbs are expressions "directing the Conduct of human Life" (p. 295) as well as Thomas Fielding's (1825) note that proverbs "are the manual of practical wisdom compiled from the school of experience" (p. 299). He also referenced perhaps the most alliterative definition ever, Nathan Bailey's (1721) observation that a proverb is "a Pithy Phrase but if it not be pos-

sess'd of the Proper Pedigree, be it ever so *Brilliant*, it is at best but a Bastard Brat or a Sorry Upstart *avoided* alike by the Learned and *flouted* by the Vulgar. Its Patent of Nobility demands that it be Witty and Handsome in *Admonition*; Dignified in *Discourse*, and Rapid as a Rapier in Rebuke. Combining Wit with Wisdom and Brevity with Brain it may afford a Crutch for the Cripple to save his shins and anon, a Cudgel for the Curate to thwack Sinners to Salvation" (p. 297).

Consistent with the emphases of these early scholars, most contemporary researchers seem also generally to agree on several common characteristics of proverbs including relative brevity (Basgoz, 1990; Lau et al., 2004; Mieder, 1993); fixedness of form (Taylor, 1931); incorporation of poetic elements (Abrahams, 1972); reliance on metaphor (Gläser, 1998; Mieder, 1993); traditionality, encompassing evidence both of age (demonstrating the imprimatur of history; Arora, 1984, Basgoz, 1990; Mieder, 1993) and currency (demonstrating the imprimatur of a generalized social acceptance; Arora, 1984; Mieder, 1993); and evidence of an authoritative value perceived to come from "the people" rather than from the authority of any one person (Arora, 1984; Mieder, 1993). Unfortunately for those in search of a precise definition, however, many of these elements are also more "generally" and "relatively" true than definitively so. Just how brief, how fixed in form, how poetic, how metaphorical, how traditional, how widely used, and how far removed from the original speaker a phrase must be to be truly proverbial is left largely to the discretion of the individual paremiologist or paremiographer (Arora, 1984; Lau et al., 2004; Mieder, 1993).

Proverbs may also be defined by their functions in social and behavioral terms (Lau et al., 2004). After reviewing both lay definitions of the proverb and proverbs about proverbs, Mieder (1993) concluded that "It appears that to the mind of proverb users… proverbs contain a good dose of common sense, experience, wisdom, and above all truth" (p. 5). In fact, when lay people defined proverbs, the most commonly used word was "wisdom" (included in almost half of all definitions, more commonly even than the words "phrase," "sentence," or "saying"), and the adjective "general" occurred almost as frequently as the word "short" (Mieder, 1993). This emphasis on the wisdom-imparting function of the proverb is also apparent in scholarly definitions of the genre. Whiting (1932), for example, included in his definition of the proverb the observa-

tion that a proverb "expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth" (p.302). This requirement, for a proverb to present the hearer with wisdom or a truth that applies not just to a given situation but that can be generalized to encompass a number of similar situations, is echoed in other definitions as well. For example:

> "Proverbs are descriptions that propose an attitude or a mode of action in relation to a recurrent social situation. They attempt to persuade by clarifying the situation, by giving it a name, thus indicating that the problem has arisen before and that past practice has come up with a workable solution…. This does not mean that all proverbs attempt to produce an action immediately. Many proverbs rather attempt to produce an attitude toward a situation that may well call for inaction and resignation….We can distinguish two kinds of occasions, then, in which proverbs attack ethical problems: one, in which a proverb is used to direct future activity; and two, in which a proverb is invoked to alter an attitude toward something that has already occurred. In either case, the proverb places the problem situation in a recognizable category by providing a solution in traditional witty terms." (Abrahams, 1972, p. 119, 121).

Or, in pithier form, Gallacher (with a parenthetical addition from Mieder) defined a proverb as "a concise statement of an apparent truth which has [had, or will have] currency among the people" (Mieder 1993, p. 14) and Lau et al. (2004) concluded, "Proverbs are short, traditional utterances that encapsulate cultural truths and sum up recurrent social situations" (p. 8). Once again, however, there is disagreement on this point. Dundes (1975), for example, specifically asserted that "purely functional definitions are inadequate" (p. 961) and argued that "the critical question is thus not what a proverb does, but what a proverb is" (p. 962).

It seems quite likely that the problem or even impossibility of defining proverbiality results from the fact that proverbs do not actually comprise a natural category of texts at all; instead it may well be that the perception of proverbiality is a judgment call. That is, proverbiality, like beauty, may be, to a considerable extent, in the eye of the beholder. Such a view is consistent with Taylor's (1931) observation that "an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not" (p.3). The problem with Taylor's

assertion, however, is that the "incommunicable quality" of proverbiality (like beauty) clearly has a different essence for one person than it has for another; although different people often agree, not all people – or even all scholars – always agree. That does not mean, however, that proverbs (like beauty) cannot be studied or that progress cannot be made toward an empirical definition of these perceptual phenomena. Just as psychological researchers have made progress in identifying predictors of the perception of beauty that the average person has probably not explicitly noted (e.g. facial symmetry, familiarity, and, in females, waist-to-hip ratio), so too have paremiologists made progress in identifying the predictors of the incommunicable quality of proverbiality (e.g., brevity, familiarity, poetic features, and degree to which the phrase encapsulates wisdom). In short, it appears likely that both beauty and proverbiality may form perceptual continua that exist as a function of the presence of a number of associated factors, each of which is an imperfect indicator on its own. This is consistent with the observation that "The utterance in question – 'truly proverbial,' i.e., traditional, or not – will function as a proverb, with all the accompanying weight of authority or community acceptance that the concept implies, as the direct result of the listener's perception, right or wrong, of its 'proverbiality'" (Arora, 1984, p. 4). From this perspective, then, it is less meaningful to ask whether or not a phrase *is* a proverb than to ask about the likelihood that it will be *perceived* as a proverb. So-called "true proverbs," in this sense, are those that are likely to show the greatest degree of consensus among judges. They also likely to be those phrases best marked by key indicators of proverbiality, much as Mieder (1993) argued that "the more 'proverbial markers' a statement has, the greater its chance to become proverbial" (p. 9), it could also be argued that the more proverbial markers a statement has the greater its chance to be *perceived* – consensually or by an individual - as proverbial.

Researchers from outside the field of paremiology have also had to grapple with the definition of the proverb in their attempts to contextualize the relationship of proverbs to other forms of fixed-form speech. Both proverbs and proverbial phrases have been described as examples of "phraseological units" (Gläser, 1998), "phrasal lexemes" (Moon, 1998), "formulaic language" (Wray, 2002), and idioms (Gläser, 1998). None of these categories, though, seems especially apt from a paremiological point of view. Although

the first three categories include proverbs and proverbial phrases, they extend well beyond those folkloric forms also to include fixed-form phrases such as "at least," "of course," "in fact," "you know," and "in time" (Moon, 1998), "to live in sin," "of a certain age," "a bone of contention," "the alpha and omega," and "burden of proof" (Gläser, 1998), "Praise the Lord!," "Happy birthday," "I wouldn't do that if I were you," and "God willing" (Wray, 2002). The term "idiomatic" is problematic in that it has often been defined with reference to metaphor and scholars using this terminology have then sometimes required that only phrases that are metaphorical can be true proverbs. Gläser (1998), for example, differentiated between proverbs (e.g., "Make hay while the sun shines. One swallow does not make a summer.") and commonplaces (e.g., "Boys will be boys. We live and learn. It's a small world.") in noting that "All proverbs are idiomatic because in their figurative meaning they refer to a different state of affairs…" while "Commonplaces may be trite formulae and truisms…. As a rule, they are not idiomatic" (p. 127). This is, however, not a distinction that most paremiologists make because most paremiologists do not make metaphoricity a prerequisite to proverbial status. In fact, there is evidence that less than half of most modern proverbs (coined since 1900) are metaphorical, and it may be that metaphoricity is a less common feature of contemporary Anglo-American proverbs than it was of more traditional sayings (Mieder, 2012).

Although paremiologists appear not to have devoted much effort to differentiating true proverbs and proverbial phrases from other types of fixed-form speech, they have devoted considerably more attention to differentiating between these two types of phrases. In his early attempt to differentiate between these forms, Whiting (1932), referred to the category of proverbial phrases as a "catch-all" category including simple comparisons and other phrases that "are often very hard to distinguish from what we call idioms" (p. 305), noting that many of these phrases may be "barbarians from the outer darkness of Slang "(p. 306). Ultimately, he noted, "the investigator must use discretion and his own judgment in distinguishing between proverbial phrase and idiom" (p. 306). Taylor (1934) also tried to clarify the difference in his note that a proverbial phrase "is a locution varying according to person, tense, and number, e.g., 'He brings home the bacon,'… which consequently exists in the speaker's mind as a turn of speech without a completely rigid

form" and a proverb "which, although it may lack a verb, is a grammatical sentence expressing a complete idea… existing in speech as a unit" (p. 16).

The problem of differentiating between proverbs and proverbial phrases is likely to result because the types of phrases generally characterized as "proverbial phrases" often are marked by a number of features (e.g., brevity, familiarity, metaphor, and poetic features such as alliteration and rhyme) predictive of proverbiality. As such, phrases of this sort may well be perceived as existing along that continuum of proverbiality. Lacking other markers of proverbiality, however, they are much less likely to be consensually regarded as proverbial than the so-called "true" proverbs. This is also the sense in which some superstitions (e.g., weather or medical superstitions), if expressed in brief fixed-form rhymes (e.g., "Red sky at night, sailors' delight"), may be mistaken for proverbs because they have "the textural features of proverbs" (Dundes, 1984, p. 40). Notably, however, the marker of proverbiality that these kinds of phrases (e.g., proverbial similes, proverbial comparisons, rhymed superstitions) seem most likely to be absent is the marker of generalizable truth or generalizable injunction to wise response that is likely to be present in the case of most (or, arguably, even all) "true" proverbs. This feature then appears to play a key role in differentiating "proverb" from "proverbial phrase."

That is the sense, then, in which "proverbs" and "proverbial phrases" will here be differentiated. A fixed-form phrase with currency and traditionality will be considered to be a true proverb if it appears to state a generalizable truth or to prescribe a course of action based on such a generalizable truth, but not if it merely describes a particular situation in formulaic language (even if that formulaic language is metaphorical, frequently used, and traditional).[1]

Formulaic Interrogatives

Because most definitions of proverbs refer only to sayings, phrases, expressions, or utterances, it seems that the definition of proverbiality would not preclude a proverb in interrogative form, especially as some questions, particularly "rhetorical" questions, can be regarded as "pseudo-assertions" (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 1977, p. 375) or "interrogatively coded answers" (Driver, 1984) that make statements or answer questions rather than pose questions. There

are, furthermore, clearly a number of formulaic interrogatives (here meaning simply interrogatives that have been codified into a frequently-used fixed form by the members of a group) that appear to meet, at least, the criteria of familiarity and traditionality. Some of these formulaic interrogatives (e.g., "Has the cat got your tongue?" "What are you driving at?" "Where do we go from here?" "How does that grab you?" "Who's minding the store?")[2] are non-rhetorical in the sense that the locutionary syntax is interrogative and the illocutionary intent is information-eliciting (i.e., they are questions that are intended to be answered); the fixedness of their form does not undermine the genuine nature of the query. Other formulaic interrogatives, however, are largely rhetorical, i.e., despite their interrogative syntax, their illocutionary intent is not primarily information-eliciting (see, e.g., Schmidt-Radefeldt, 1977). In the category of rhetorical formulaic interrogatives we find phrases that appear generally to function as rebukes ("What's that got to do with anything?" "Who the hell do you think you are?" "What will people think?" "Are you out of your mind?" "How should I know?" "Who died and made you God?"), intentional distracters ("How 'bout them Mets?"), discussion enders ("What can I say?" "Do you have a better idea?"), warnings ("Do you want a spanking?" "How would you like a knuckle sandwich?"), expressions of encouragement ("What's the worst that could happen?") and expressions of gratitude ("How lucky am I?" "What would I do without you?"). Still, however, despite their familiarity, popularity, fixedness of form, and occasional metaphorical nature, these phrases would not generally be regarded as proverbs, at least by paremiologists, largely, perhaps, because they neither state nor hint at generalizable truths.

Because proverbs are not information-eliciting, true proverbial interrogatives, as a subset of true proverbs, should also not be information eliciting; despite their interrogative form, they should pose questions that are rhetorical in the sense that they should make a point (i.e., state a truth or suggest an action) rather than elicit information. This, then, raises the question of whether "true proverbs" can ever take an interrogative form.

Sarcastic Interrogatives

The one line of scholarship most directly related to the issue of proverbs as questions (or questions as proverbs) is the work on a type of question often known as a sarcastic interrogative. Doyle

(1975), and Dundes (1967) before him, described a particular type of fixed-form response in which a speaker replies to a previous query requiring a yes or no response with a question of his or her own, phrased so as to have a "glaringly obvious" (Doyle, 1975, p. 33) yes or no answer that corresponds to the answer to the original speaker's question. A "dumb" question might therefore be answered with "Is the Pope Catholic?," "Can a duck swim?," "Do fish swim?," "Is the sky blue?," or "Does a chicken have lips?" Use of such a response, in question form, not only answers the original question but does so "derisively," and in a way probably intended to make the recipient feel sheepish in the face of the (albeit usually jocular) rebuke (Doyle, 1975, p. 33). Dundes called these responses "pointed rhetorical questions" while Doyle referred to them as "sarcastic interrogatives."[3]

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have discussed this kind of response under a variety of other names for a variety of purposes (for reviews see Doyle, 2008; Schaffer, 2005), but Doyle went a step further than any other researcher when he argued that these questions "constitute a minor species of proverb lore" (1975, p. 33) and a "subcategory of proverbs" (2008, p.5). In fact, Doyle noted that "not a single one" of the language scholars who have described these types of questions "uses the term proverb" (2008, p. 10). Dundes (1967), for example, not only did not describe these pointed rhetorical questions as being proverbial, he actually noted that "no one of these minor genres [including pointed questions] is of the importance of a genre like the proverb" (p. 35). The proverbiality of these phrases is nonetheless apparent, Doyle argued, in the fact that sarcastic interrogatives are clearly metaphorical (1975; meaning that the content of the sarcastic interrogative is almost always also irrelevant to the question it is intended to answer, 2008)[4] and consist, as proverbs do, of a topic and a comment (2008). Doyle also noted that, like proverbs, sarcastic interrogatives frequently involve assonance and alliteration (1977). Furthermore, sarcastic interrogatives are, in some cases, clearly related to familiar proverbial similes (e.g., "Do fish swim?" is related to "swims like a fish"). Doyle did note, however, that these sarcastic interrogatives are also arguably related to jokes and riddles (1975, 1977); both jokes and sarcastic interrogatives, for example, appear to be more likely than traditional proverbs to "allude to historically prominent persons or events" (1977, p. 79).

With the exception of "Can a duck swim?," few examples of sarcastic interrogatives exist in standard proverb dictionaries, although phrases of this type have been included in some dictionaries of American slang (Doyle, 2008). Doyle interpreted this as being due to the tendency for authors and editors of more recent proverb dictionaries to draw potential entries from already published volumes. As a result, he argued, "The expressions are there in oral tradition and in printed documents, but nobody thinks of them as proverbial" (p. 13). The other possibility, though, is that although sarcastic interrogatives may be formulaic, and although they may well be representatives "from the outer darkness of Slang" (Whiting, 1932, p. 306), they may not be truly (or at least prototypically) proverbial.

The primary argument against the proverbial status of sarcastic interrogatives is that although sarcastic interrogatives often appear to be fixed form phrases with both currency and the kind of history of usage required by the criterion of traditionality, sarcastic interrogatives seem, almost by definition, not to carry the kind of generalizable truth that has historically been held to typify true proverbs. Sarcastic interrogatives, which by definition are limited to providing emphatic "yes" or "no" responses, would seem to be unlikely candidates to be arguments that state the truth in furtive (or any other) fashion (à la Apostolius), direct "the Conduct of human life" (à la Dykes), serve as a "manual of practical wisdom" (à la Fielding), "propose an attitude or mode of action in relation to a recurrent social situation" (à la Abrahams), or "encapsulate cultural truths" (à la Lau et al.).

Furthermore, although Doyle, in his earlier (1975, 1977) papers, limited his discussion to fixed-form sarcastic interrogatives with demonstrated currency and at least some evidence of traditional usage, by thirty years later (2008) his definition had apparently broadened. Phrases such as "Do I know my own name?," "Do I eat food?," "Am I hearing you speak?," and "Do I love this pearl of India?" (2008, p. 16-17) seemingly meet the requirements of being questions with obvious answers uttered in retort in response to another question, but they do not appear to be formulaic phrases characterized by traditionality and currency (nor do they seem to have the humorous intent of anti-proverbs that result when a speaker or writer intentionally alters a traditional fixed-form proverb for humorous effect; Mieder, 2004). In fact, Doyle acknowledged this

distancing from the criterion of traditionality when he noted that "… it is the pattern and the *function*, not the presence of particular words, that mark a given text as belonging to the category that I have designated sarcastic interrogatives. Such is less extensively the case with so-called true proverbs" (2008, p. 22). He argued, however, that with sarcastic interrogatives, as with proverbial similes, "the pattern is definitive… even if the actual wording of the expression has been invented on the spot" (2008, p. 23). In fact, he noted, speakers may "*invent* a sarcastic interrogative, pouring new words into the old formula" (p. 23).[5]

Paremiologists, though, do not traditionally limit themselves only to the pattern of a text as evidence of its proverbiality. Thus if it is truly only (or primarily) "the pattern as it functions… in context… that defines the genre" (Doyle, 2008, p. 23), then it appears to be more appropriate to consider sarcastic interrogatives to be a discrete genre – quite possibly, as Doyle has suggested (1975, 1977, 2008), closely related to the riddle or the joke – than to consider these statements as being proverbial in the traditional sense.

By this argument, original sarcastic interrogatives, as representative of only the wit of one person and lacking the force of tradition, seem definitely not to be true proverbs inasmuch as they lack fixedness of form, tradition, and familiarity. Even formulaic sarcastic interrogatives,[6] though, which do demonstrate these features, are questionable in terms of their status as proverbs (or at least questionable in terms of their likelihood of being consensually perceived as proverbs) because they do not attempt to convey any type of generalizable truth; they appear to convey more wit (or at least pseudo-wit) than wisdom. Interestingly, Doyle chose not to include sarcastic interrogatives in his 2012 *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (Doyle, Mieder, & Shapiro, p. xi), suggesting that he too no longer regards these formulaic interrogatives as prototypically proverbial. As such it would appear that this one line of paremiography dedicated to the collection of question-form proverbs actually fails to identify any true *proverbs* in question form, despite identifying a number of interesting formulaic interrogatives.

Other Formulaic Interrogatives That Have Received Folkloric Attention

Other kinds of fixed-form interrogatives have also found their way both into standard proverb dictionaries and onto lists of new and emerging proverbs not yet well-represented in proverb dictionaries. A list of question-form phrases included in several published proverb dictionaries and additional phrases proposed as "new" proverbs (Doyle, 1996; Lau et al., 2004) appears in Table 1.

It is immediately apparent from inspection of Table 1 that the interrogative phrases included in proverb dictionaries are low consensus texts; by far the majority are included in only a single source. "Where's the beef?"[7] and "Why buy the cow when milk is free (cheap)?" each appear in four of these sources and "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" appears in three. This suggests that these kinds of interrogative texts are not generally, despite their fixedness of form, consensually deemed proverbial – and inspection of the included texts suggests several reasons why this might be so.

First, to be perceived as proverbial, formulaic interrogatives must have a fixed-form, currency (or past currency), and traditionality. Phrases that meet these criteria should, presumably, be relatively commonly used and, therefore, should result in a number of "hits" in a Google search. Some phrases deemed proverbial enough to be included in proverb dictionaries may, however, fail to meet these most basic criteria; this is evident in the fact that some of these question-form phrases result in relatively few hits in a Google search (as will be evident in Table 2). Google searches are, of course, imperfect indicators of use in a number of ways; a Google search, for example, taps written rather than oral communication, and those written communiqués are more likely to have been written recently and for public consumption rather than longer ago or for a private audience. Thus it is possible that proverbial usage may be underrepresented on the internet. However, the fact that many proverbs are frequently found in Google searches undermines this argument. It seems more likely either that low-frequency phrases have not yet condensed into the kind of fixed form that is readily searchable or that the phrases have not had widespread currency at least during the time periods and in the types of written contexts most well represented by online texts. On this basis, then, the proverbial status of these low-frequency phrases is questionable; if an

interrogative lacks the familiarity that springs from widespread current or traditional fixed-form usage, it is probably relatively unlikely to be readily perceived as either a formulaic interrogative or as a proverbial interrogative.[8]

A second possible explanation for the lack of consensus about the proverbiality of some of these texts also seems possible. For the most part, discussion of "proverbs" has traditionally been understood to refer to items with currency but without clear origins. Clever sayings from a recognizable source may eventually attain proverbial status but they seem to do so only as the "wisdom" or "truth" element comes to carry its own weight, independent of the authority of the original source (Mieder, 1993, 2012). That is, "proverbs" that can be traced to use by Franklin or Shakespeare or to Biblical origins are more "proverbial" the more they are used without reference to source to justify their value. The authority of the proverb comes from what "they" say (Arora, 1984) and from what "we" believe rather than from what Franklin, Shakespeare, the Bible, or any other particular source suggests. People might well argue that "a divided house cannot stand" or caution against "sparing the rod" without being able to cite chapter and verse and without referencing or even necessarily recognizing the Biblical origins of these ideas. For this reason, references to phrases from literary works ("Doctor Livingston, I presume?" "Et tu, Brute?"), television shows ("Is that your final answer?" "What you mean *we*, white man?") or from advertising slogans ("Where's the beef?") may well be rejected (perhaps even on an implicit level) as proverbial because they are recognized as having arisen from the Hollywood and Madison Avenue "classes" rather than from the popular "masses."

Finally, even those texts that are short fixed-form phrases with both currency and at least some tradition of usage may well not ring proverbial if they do not make any greater truth statement. Although some of the interrogative phrases included in Table 1 might suggest a generalizable truth, it seems clear that in many cases their primary reference is to a particular situation and not simply to the situation as an example of a generalized type of situation encompassed by a larger proverbial truth. For example, "Has the cat got your tongue?" could be used in any situation in which someone is being very quiet and "Who's minding the store?" could be used in a number of different kinds of situations to ask who is in charge while the person who is presumably supposed to be in charge is obviously absent, but

neither of these queries states or even hints at a larger truth about how to interpret or respond to the situation. "How do you like them apples?" likewise challenges the hearer with respect to a particular situation but states no truth with respect to it. Other phrases come a little closer to at least hinting at generalizable truths. For example, "Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?" hints that a bad circumstance may generalize to affect our feelings about a whole of which the circumstance was only a part and "Will it play in Peoria?" hints that an idea that may be endorsed by select groups may nonetheless be rejected by the common person, but these observations are, in these particular forms, much more clearly references to particular circumstances than to generalized observations of truth. The question posed (respectively) are: how did you like *this* circumstance and will *this* idea take root with the common folk? Thus although many of these phrases do clearly appear to be *formulaic* interrogatives (by virtue of their currency, traditionality, familiarity, and fixedness of form – and worthy of study by virtue of that categorization), it is easy to see why many of these phrases might not be likely to be perceived as truly *proverbial* interrogatives.

Thus we have evidence of a category of formulaic interrogatives that includes fixed-form sarcastic interrogatives (but not original sarcastic interrogatives), familiar fixed-form interrogatives strongly identified with a particular (often mass-media) source (including both catchphrases – e.g., "What do you mean we, white man?," "Is that your final answer?," "What you talkin' about, Willis?," "Well isn't that spe-cial?," "You talkin' to me?," "What's up, Doc?," and "Will you accept this rose?" - and advertising slogans such as "Where's the beef?," "Got milk?," and "Whassup?"), and formulaic interrogatives that are related much more strongly to particular situations than to generalizable truths. Other types of fixed-form interrogatives may also be subtypes of this larger category of formulaic interrogatives. Dundes (1967), for example, mentioned "irrelevancy indicators" (e.g., "What's that go to do with the price of tea in China?"), "rebukes to the greedy" (e.g., "What do you want, blood?" or "What do you want, egg in your beer?"), and "emissions traditions" (including "Going fishing?" as a response to nose-picking or "Do you hand out towels with your showers?" as a response to being sprayed with spittle) as a minor folklore genres that clearly can, at least in some cases, take the form of rhetorical questions. Although not mentioned by Dundes, familiar greetings

may also take a fixed interrogative form (e.g., "How's it going?" "What's shakin'?" and "How's it hanging?").

All of these examples are formulaic in that they consistent of fixed-form phrases with both currency and traditionality but they are not traditionally proverbial inasmuch as they do not state or imply generalizable truths. The question then is whether, within the domain of formulaic interrogatives, there does exit a subcategory of phrases that truly serve as truth-statements and that are, therefore, likely to be perceived as truly proverbial. If so, these phrases, here called "proverbial interrogatives," would prove to be still another subtype of the formulaic interrogative.

Proverbial Interrogatives

Some popular fixed-form interrogative phrases do seem to encapsulate wisdom in the form of a rhetorical question. This, for example, seems to be the case for the interrogative "Where does a 500-pound gorilla sit?" Because this question, when answered ("Anywhere it wants to") -- either explicitly by the original speaker or implicitly or explicitly by the hearer -- makes an important observation about power in metaphorical (or furtive) form, this fixed-form interrogative does seem to state a generalizable truth that appears to be applicable to many different situations where power is an issue. Other examples of this kind of potentially proverbial interrogative are listed in Table 2, which includes both potential proverbial interrogatives currently found in proverb dictionaries and some that have not yet been indexed (at least in the dictionaries surveyed here) but that one may well encounter in everyday life.

Some apparently proverbial interrogatives may actually be better interpreted as variants of non-interrogative proverbs. Mieder et al. (1992), for example, specifically listed interrogative variants for a number of included proverbs: "The reddest apple may have a worm in it" ("What's the good of a fair apple if it has a worm in its heart?"); "The early bird catches the worm" ("The early bird catches the worm – but who wants worms?"); "Little boys are made of rats and snails and puppy-dog tails" (with two interrogative variants… one version asking what are little boys made of and the other, after reviewing what both little boys and girls are made of, asking "doesn't a girl have a taste for roughness to marry a boy?"); "Old brag is a good dog but hold fast is a better one" ("Brag is a good dog, an' hold fast is a better one – but what do you say to a

cross of the two?"); "Christmas comes but once a year" ("Christmas comes but once a year; why not celebrate while it's here?"); and "Never hit a man when he's down" ("Why hit a man when he's down?"). Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro (2012) also listed interrogative variants for several proverbs including "It is possible to swallow an elephant – one bite at a time" ("How do you swallow an elephant?"); "Never give anything away that you can sell" ("Why give something away when you can sell it?"); "Nobody ever said life was easy" ("Who ever said life was easy?"); and "Nobody ever said life was fair" ("Who ever said life was fair?"). Likewise Titleman (1996) referenced "Where does a 500-pound gorilla sleep?" as having origins in a popular riddle of the 1970s, but indexed this interrogative form under the arguably idiomatic but not prototypically proverbial heading of "It's an 800-pound gorilla."

Using Google frequency as an indicator of relative frequency of use can help us estimate the relative primary of interrogative and non-interrogative proverbial forms. For example, "If ignorance is bliss, why be otherwise?" (Mieder et al, 1992) results in only 3 hits compared to the 3,640,000 hits for "Ignorance is bliss," clearly suggesting that the interrogative is a minor variant of a typically non-interrogative proverb. On the other hand, the non-interrogative "It's an 800-pound gorilla" and "It's a 500-pound gorilla," occurring 4,960 and 4,990 times respectively, are both clearly less common than the interrogative "Where does an 800-pound gorilla sit?" which occurs more than nine times as often. Similarly, "How do you eat an elephant?" occurs more than a hundred times as often as either "It is possible to swallow an elephant" (3 hits) or "You can swallow an elephant" (3,030 hits, and this figure includes many apparent hits that are not actually of the "one bite at a time" type). Thus it appears that even where both interrogative and non-interrogative versions of a phrase both exist, we cannot infer that the interrogative is merely a minor variant of the non-interrogative version; in some cases the (admittedly imperfect) down-and-dirty "Google test" suggests the interrogative phrasing is actually primary. Give this, interrogative forms of some proverbs that exist in both interrogative and non-interrogative forms (e.g., "Don't we all have the same 24 hours in a day?," "If ignorance is bliss, why be otherwise?," and "Why mess with success?") were retained as potential proverbial interrogatives and are included in Table 2.

Table 2 presents a number of potential proverbial interrogatives and their "Google frequency." It is obvious from this frequency data that many of these potentially proverbial interrogatives meet several essential criteria of proverbiality -- the fact that they often result in a number of hits in a standard internet search suggests that they have a relatively fixed form[9] as well as currency and/or traditionality. Equally important, the phrases included here also arguably express generalizable truths, albeit in interrogative form. Many of these phrases also involve other markers of proverbiality including use of metaphor ("Where are the snows of yesteryear?," "Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?," "Who ever saw a kitten bring a mouse to the old cat?," "You get a thorn with every rose, but aren't the roses sweet?," "Of what good are tools if allowed to rust?," "What weapon has the lion but himself?," "What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?," "Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice?," "Why go out for hamburger when you can get steak at home?," and "Why put on a raincoat if you're already wet?"), rhyme ("When Adam delved and Eve span, who then was the gentleman?," "What greater crime than loss of time?," and "You can talk the talk but can you walk the walk?"), and alliteration ("Are you a chump or a champ?" and "What are you, a man or a mouse?"). Some of these potentially proverbial interrogative phrases are also marked by the same kinds of limiting factors that diminish the perceived proverbiality of non-interrogative phrases. Several, for example, do not appear to be commonly used and others come from a relatively commonly known source (e.g., "Am I my brother's keeper?," "How's that working out for you?," "If God is with you, who can stand against you?," and "If you prick us, do we not bleed?").

Many of these phrases may be relatively new, although Mieder estimates that only about 1% of the proverbs included in Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro's (2012) *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* either take an interrogative form or exist as interrogative variants of non-interrogative proverbs (Mieder, 2012). It is clear, though, that the proverbial interrogative has a history dating back at least into the Middle Ages as the use of the phrase "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then a gentleman?" has been dated back at least to the late 1300s (Friedman, 1974; Resnikow, 1937). What's more, the fact that this phrase also appears in German, Swedish, Dutch, and Icelandic (Resnikow, 1937) versions also indicates that the interrog-

ative phrasing of proverbial truth-statements is not idiosyncratic to the English proverb lexicon.

If the sample of potentially proverbial interrogatives included in Table 2 is representative, then we can also infer that not all types of questions are equally likely to be proverbial. Roughly half of these interrogatives pose rhetorical questions about who, what, and why. Less common are questions about where, how, and when events occur and questions about whether something is or isn't, or can or can't (or does or doesn't) happen.

These proverbial interrogatives appear to be quite similar to non-interrogative proverbs in terms of both their overall length and in terms of the general association between length and frequency of use. Mieder (2012) reported that the proverbs included in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* ranged in length from 2 to 23 words and averaged about 7 words in length. Considering only the most frequent variant of each of the potential proverbial interrogatives listed in Table 2, we find the length of these phases ranges from 3 words ("Why ask why?") to 21 words ("There are lots of things in life that money won't buy, but have you ever tried to buy them without money?"). The modal phrase length is 7 words and the average length is 8.6 words. Furthermore, much as Mieder (2012) observed that longer modern proverbs tend to be less frequently used, there is a correlation of $r = -.32$ between the length of (the most frequent variant of each of) these interrogative phrases and the number of hits obtained for each in a Google search – suggesting at least a slight tendency for shorter proverbial interrogatives to be more frequently used.

Although not all proverbs are metaphorical, those that are often reference animals to convey the metaphorical message. Despite the industrialization of society that has occurred since 1900 this trend appears still to be true of modern proverbs, with 8.2% of the proverbs included in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* categorized as "animal proverbs" (Mieder, 2012, pp. 171-172). This appears to be even more true of the interrogative proverbs. In fact, nearly a quarter of the proverbs included in Table 2 reference either domestic animals (cows, cats/kittens, dogs, horses, chickens, and pigs) or wild animals (fish, birds, mice, gorillas, lions, and elephants).

In some cases (e.g., "How do you eat an elephant?," "How does a fish get caught?," "What's the difference between try and triumph?," and "Where does a 500-pound gorilla sit/sleep?"), prover-

bial interrogatives clearly take on a riddling character, especially when they are first encountered. The riddling nature of (at least some) proverbs has long been noted. Dundes (1975) differentiated the two genres in his observation that "in riddles the referent of the descriptive element is to be guessed whereas in proverbs the referent is presumably known to both the speaker and the addressee(s)" and, as a result, "riddles confuse while proverbs clarify" (p. 965). Green and Pepicello (1986) furthermore argued that a key feature of riddles is that, although often phrased as questions, their intent is not to elicit information; as such, although the locutionary act of posing a riddle may take an interrogative form, riddles (like proverbial interrogatives) are not true questions because they do not function as questions to elicit information. Obviously the links between proverbs and riddles are even more evident when we are dealing with proverbial interrogatives because both share the same very evident interrogative form. What's more, proverbial interrogatives, like riddles but unlike sarcastic interrogatives, do not generally have obvious answers (until the answer is learned). Despite this riddling aspect, though, proverbial interrogatives are, nonetheless, proverbial in that they present a truth relevant to the conversation at hand. Once the answer to the proverbial interrogative is known (either on the basis of past experience or when provided by speaker), the proverbial interrogative makes a point, albeit in question-form, germane to the issue or conversation under discussion. The point of the proverbial interrogative is not to be funny or entertaining (as is true of jokes, sarcastic interrogatives, and, sometimes, riddles) but rather to make a truth statement about the way the world is or about how one should respond with respect to that world, even if that statement is expressed in an incongruous, and therefore potentially "funny," form.

A Preliminary Representation of Category Relations

This analysis, then, defines proverbial interrogatives with respect to three broader genres: formulaic language (itself a subset of folkloric forms and inclusive as well of other types of folkloric forms), rhetorical questions (a subset of all interrogative statements), and verbal humor (a subset of all humor). Although the role of verbal humor has not been the primary focus of this article, its role in our understanding of both (some) forms of formulaic language and (some) forms of rhetorical questions has certainly been at

least implied. Proverbs, after all, are frequently associated with humorous devices such as hyperbole, irony, and puns, and may be related, in some ways, to jokes (Norrick, 1989). Similarly, whether labeled as pointed rhetorical questions (Dundes, 1967), sarcastic interrogatives (Doyle, 1975, 1977, 2008), rhetorical-questions-as-retorts (Schaffer, 2005), or indirect-responses (Nofsinger, 1976) texts belonging to this genre appear almost always to be uttered with humorous intent, and they are interpreted as more humorous than more direct responses (Pearce & Conklin, 1979). Given, then, these three partially overlapping categories, a Venn diagram (as in Figure 1, with the hope that one figure will be worth at least several hundred words) may be profitable in elucidating, at least in a preliminary way, the relationships between these forms.

Although no attempt has been made to draw Figure 1 to scale, one very evident observation is that although the three main categories do overlap, each is also, to some extent independent of the others. Some (and probably most) formulaic language (e.g., slang and acronyms) is neither interrogative in form nor intended (or perceived) to be humorous in effect. Similarly most rhetorical questions are probably original creative utterances and therefore not formulaic, and they are probably also not generally intended (or perceived) to be humorous in effect. And, finally, much (and maybe most) verbal humor (e.g., puns and silly nicknames and, arguably, even jokes) does not involve rhetorical questions or formulaic use of language.

Each of these categories, however, does overlap with each of the others. At the intersection of rhetorical questions and formulaic language, for example, we find many of the examples of formulaic interrogatives previously discussed (e.g., fixed-form interrogative greetings, rebukes, warnings, catchphrases, advertising slogans, emissions traditions, etc.).[10] At the intersection of rhetorical questions and humor we probably find all or almost all examples of sarcastic interrogatives (fixed-form and original) and also texts included within the slightly broader category of "rhetorical questions as retorts" (Schaffer, 2005). Finally, at the intersection of formulaic language and verbal humor we find the folkloric form that has been called the "stock conversational witticism" (Norrick, 1984). These witticisms, intended to evoke laughter, are both conversational in the sense that they do not disrupt the flow of conversation and "stock" in that they are relatively well known by members of a giv-

en community. As such, this category may include proverbial comparisons (e.g., to lie like a rug), quips (including those Dundes described as examples of "emission traditions"), and, of course, fixed-form sarcastic interrogatives (but not original sarcastic interrogatives as those, by definition, cannot be "stock" witticisms). Such an analysis also implies that there may further be texts that represent all three of these categories, and that is exactly what we find: fixed-form sarcastic interrogatives, for example, are formulaic rhetorical questions used for humorous effects and other folkloric forms may also meet all three criteria (e.g., the nose-picking emissions tradition, "Did you find any gold yet?" or the proverbial interrogative, "With friends like those, who needs enemies?").

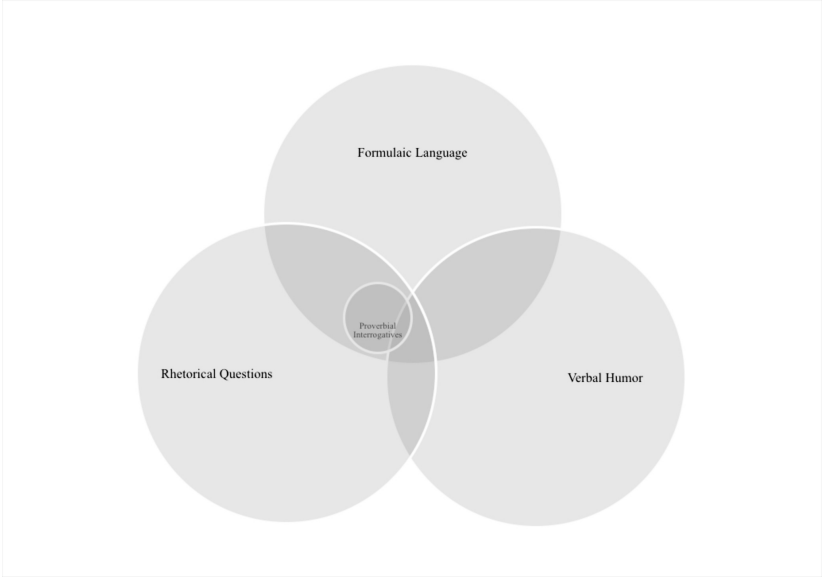

Figure 1. Relationship of proverbial interrogatives to formulaic language, rhetorical questions, and verbal humor.

What is the place of the proverbial interrogative in this system? By definition all proverbial interrogatives must be both formulaic and interrogative – probably in a rhetorical sense - and therefore they exist at the intersection of these two categories. Furthermore some (but not all) proverbial interrogatives may have a humorous aspect and this category may therefore also overlap with the catego-

ries of verbal humor and stock witticism. With a proverbial interrogative, however, as with proverbs more generally, the humor is not humor for its own sake, but rather humor in service of wisdom. If, as Bailey suggested (1721, in Whiting, 1932), a proverb results from a combination of "wit with wisdom," then the "humorous" (i.e., wit) elements of the proverb may serve to capture the attention of listeners in a way that makes them more receptive to the truth (i.e., the wisdom) message.

Ask a silly question and you may get a silly answer, but ask a proverbial question and you state the wisdom of the ages.

Table 1
Idiomatic Interrogative Entries Included in Standard Proverb Dictionaries or Proposed for Future Inclusion

Interrogative Entries	**Am Prov[a]**	**Facts File[b]**	**Oxford C[c]**	**Ran-dom[d]**	**Mo-dern[e]**	**Lau[f]**	**Doyle[g]**
A bird may love a fish, but where would they live (build a home, build a nest)?					21		
All are good girls, but where do the bad wives come from?	251						
Am I my brother's keeper?				414			
Avarice and happiness never saw each other. How, then, should they become acquainted?	31						
Birds sing after a storm, (so) why shouldn't (can't) we?					21		
Brother can you spare a dime? (Buddy…)				414			
Can't we all just get along?					95/ 97		
Cat got your tongue? (Has the…)				416			
Certainly there are lots of things in life that money won't buy, but have you ever tried to buy them without money?	589						
Doctor Livingston, I presume?				434			
Et tu, Brute?				414			
How could we measure the ups in life if it weren't for the downs?	626						
How do you like them apples?				410			72
How does that grab you?				434			

Interrogative Entries	Am Prov[a]	Facts File[b]	Oxford C[c]	Ran-dom[d]	Mo-dern[e]	Lau[f]	Doyle[g]
If fortune smiles, who doesn't -- if fortune doesn't, who does?	230						
If ignorance is bliss, why be otherwise?	325						
If not us, who? If not now, when?				435			
If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?					234		79
Is a woman ever satisfied? No, if she were she wouldn't be a woman.	667						
Is there anything men take more pains about than to make themselves happy?	447						
Is that your final answer?						9	
Never mind who was your grandfather -- what are you?	652						
Of what good are tools if allowed to rust?	606						
Of what use is it to pretend there is a choice when there is none?	98						
Other than (Aside from) that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?							78
Talk of the rack, what is it to a woman's tongue?	604						
What are you driving at?				422			
What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?		250	72				
What did the President know and when did he know it?				437			
What greater crime than loss of time?	126						
What makes someone tick?				441			
What weapon has the lion but himself?	646						
What you mean *we*, white man (paleface)?							81
What's in a name?		252		445			
What's the use of cleverness, if foolishness serves?	101						
When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?	8	255	1				
Where are the snows of yesteryear?				457			

Interrogative Entries	Am Prov[a]	Facts File[b]	Oxford C[c]	Ran-dom[d]	Mo-dern[e]	Lau[f]	Doyle[g]
Where do we go from here?				430			
Where does a 500-pound (800-pound) gorilla sit?					109		76
Where's the beef?				411	18	9	73
Which came first, the chicken or the egg?		259		417			
Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice?					35		
Who ever saw a kitten bring a mouse to the old cat?	350						
Who'll bell the cat?	87						
Who's counting?				418			
Who's minding the store?				443			
Why are there more horse's asses than there are horses?	30						
Why buy a (the) cow when you can get the milk (for) free?	123	261					
Why buy a cow when milk is (so) cheap?		261	44		288		
Why buy milk when a cow is so cheap (when you've got a cow at home)?					166		
Why go out for fast food (hamburger, a hamburger) when you can get steak at home?					75		
Why keep a dog and bark yourself?		261	124				
Why should the devil have all the best tunes?		262	52				
Will it play in Peoria?							79
With friends like that, who needs enemies?		263					
Would you buy a used car from this man?				415			
You get a thorn with every rose, but aren't the roses sweet?	592						

Notes. [a]Mieder's *The Dictionary of American Proverbs*; [b]Manser's *The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs*; [c]Simpson's *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*; [d]Titelman's *Random House Dictionary of Popular Proverbs and Sayings;* [e]Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro's *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*; [f]Lau (2004); [g]Doyle (2006). The page number of each entry is indicated in the table.

Table 2

Preliminary List of Potentially Proverbial Interrogatives

Potential Proverbial Interrogative	**Google Hits**
A bird may love a fish, but where would they live?	36,000
A bird may love a fish, but where would they build a home?	12,400
A bird may love a fish, but where would they build a nest?	3
All are good girls, but "where do the bad wives come from"?	43
Am I my brother's keeper?	904,000
Are you a chump or a champ?	1,340
Avarice and happiness never saw each other. How, then, should they become acquainted?	2,050
Birds sing after a storm, why shouldn't we?	33,700
Birds sing after a storm; why can't we?	5,120
Can't we all just get along?	5,240,000
Certainly "there are lots of things in life that money won't buy, but have you ever tried to buy them without money?"	3
Do "you kiss your mother with that mouth"?	195,000
Do "you kiss your momma with that mouth"?	182,000
Do "you kiss your mom with that mouth"?	104,000
Don't we all have the same 24 hours in a day?	1000
How could we measure the ups in life if it weren't for the downs?	1
How do you eat an elephant? (One bite at a time.)	389,000
How do you swallow an elephant? (One bite at a time.)	3,370
How does a fish get caught? (He/it opens its mouth.)	9,350
How's that working out for you?	326,000
How's that working for you?	276,000
How's that workin' for you?	52,200
How's that workin' out for you?	34,000
If everyone else jumped off a bridge, would you?	13,100
If everybody else jumped off a bridge, would you?	11,500
If fortune smiles, who doesn't -- if fortune doesn't, who does?	1,200
If God is with you, who can stand against you?	152,000

If God is with you, who can be against you?	102,000
If ignorance is bliss, why be otherwise?	2
If not now, when?	7,750,000
If not you, who? If not now, when?	278,000
If not us, who? If not now, when?	150,000
If you can't laugh at yourself, who can you laugh at?	1,600,000
If you prick us, do we not bleed?	215,000
If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?	659,000
Is a woman ever satisfied? (No, if she were she wouldn't be a woman.)	2,480
Is the screwing you're getting worth the screwing you're getting?	318
Is the screwin' you're getting' worth the screwin' you're gettin'?	287
Is there anything men take more pains about than to make themselves happy?	0
Never mind who was your grandfather -- what are you?	9
Never mind who was your grandfather -- who are you?	0
Of "what good are tools if allowed to rust"?	1
Of "what use is it to pretend there is a choice when there is none"?	53
Talk of the rack, what is it to a woman's tongue?	4
What are you, a man or a mouse?	169,000
What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?	25,500
What do you have to lose?	3,450,000
What have you got to lose?	2,960,000
What greater crime than loss of time?	12,700
What if the shoe was on the other foot?	444,000
What if the shoe were on the other foot?	287,000
What weapon has the lion but himself?	8
What would Jesus do?	1,200,000
What would you do if you knew you could not fail?	307,000
What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?	101,000
What's in a name?	26,300,000
What's the difference between try and triumph? (A little umph.)	3,610
What's the use of cleverness, if foolishness serves?	1

When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?	24,600
Where are the snows of yesteryear?	42,200
Where does an 800-pound gorilla sit? (Anywhere it wants to.)	45,100
Where does an 800-pound gorilla sleep?	9,370
Where does a 500-pound gorilla sleep?	4,000
Where does a 500-pound gorilla sit?	2,880
Where's your sense of adventure?	215,000
Which came first, the chicken or the egg?	1,460,000
Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches the mice?	5,020
Who cares if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice?	80
Who ever said life was easy?	42,600
Who ever said life is easy?	5,970
Who ever said life was fair?	72,800
Who ever said life is fair?	21,600
Who ever saw a kitten bring a mouse to the old cat?	0
Who made you judge and jury?	128,000
Who made you judge and executioner?	7,780
Why are there more horses' asses than there are horses?	14,000
Why are there more horse's asses than there are horses?	1,120
Why ask why?	1,410,000
Why buy the cow when you can get the milk free?	633,000
Why buy the cow when you can get milk for free?	611,000
Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?	271,000
Why buy a cow when you can get the milk for free?	46,500
Why buy a cow when milk is cheap?	39,000
Why buy a cow when you can get milk for free?	29,100
Why buy a cow when milk is so cheap?	8,140
Why buy the cow when milk is so cheap?	1,900
Why buy the cow when milk is cheap?	1,410
Why buy a cow when you can get the milk free?	10
Why buy a cow when you can get milk free?	9
Why buy the cow when you can get milk free?	2

Why buy milk when a cow is cheap?	4
Why buy milk when a cow is so cheap?	1
Why buy milk when cows are cheap?	1
Why buy milk when cows are so cheap?	0
Why give something away when you can sell it?	159
Why go out for hamburger when you have steak at home?	28,900
Why go out for a hamburger when you have steak at home?	25,400
Why go out for hamburger when you can get steak at home?	154
Why go out for a hamburger when you can get steak at home?	2
Why go out for fast food when you can get steak at home?	2
Why go out for fast food when you have steak at home?	2
Why keep a dog and bark yourself?	72,300
Why mess with success?	440,000
Why put on a raincoat if you're already wet?	72
Why wear a raincoat if you're already wet?	32
Why should the devil have all the best tunes?	114,000
Why should the devil have all the best music?	2,360
With friends like these, who needs enemies?	235,000
With friends like that, who needs enemies?	140,000
With friends like this, who needs enemies?	75,600
With friends like those, who needs enemies?	30,300
You can talk the talk but can you walk the walk?	236,000
You get a thorn with every rose, but ain't the roses sweet?	3270
You get a thorn with every rose, but aren't the roses sweet?	33

Note. Google results were gathered July 25-27, 2012. Where noted, only the portion of the text enclosed in quotation marks was searched; for all other entries, the indicated phrase was itself searched (without parenthetical "riddle" answers).

Notes:

[1] Not all paremiologists would probably agree with this characterization, however. This distinction does not, for example, explain why Abrahams (1972) included "crying wolf" and "sour grapes" as well as Wellerisms (e.g., "I see, said the blind man, as he picked up his hammer and saw") as proverbs or why Mieder (1993, pp. 50-51) argued that "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water" should have been included in Hirsch et al.'s book on cultural literacy as an example of an idiom rather than as a proverb and should not have included "Carpe diem" as a proverb. If, however, proverbs "are self-contained units" that "have a moral weight of their own and an argument that is virtually self-sufficient" (Abrahams, 1972, p. 123), then it would appear that by Abraham's own definition neither "crying wolf" nor "sour grapes" is a true proverb inasmuch as neither presents an argument. On the other hand, a directive NOT TO throw the baby out with the bath water does appear to be stated in truly proverbial form. Although "to throw the baby out with the bath water" merely describes a situation, the directive "DON'T throw the baby out with the bathwater" advocates a course of action. In this sense, then, some proverbial phrases (including "crying wolf" or "rocking the boat") may take on the form of proverbs when they become directive statements of generalized truths or directives to particular responses (e.g., "Don't cry wolf" or "Don't rock the boat") in generalized types of situations. Other proverbial phrases, including proverbial similes and proverbial comparisons (e.g., "neat as a pin," "snug as a bug in a rug," and "like a bat out of hell"), do not state generalized truths about the world or suggest appropriate courses of action to take when confronting certain kinds of situations within that world and they are, therefore, here interpreted to be lacking a very important characteristic of proverbiality.

[2] These examples were selected from Titleman's (1996) *Random House Dictionary of Popular Proverbs and Sayings*. The inclusion of "and Sayings" in this title suggests that Titleman may not see these phrases as being actual proverbs but inclusion of these "sayings" in the same volume with "proverbs" suggests that in Titleman's view, at least at some implicit level, these two forms of texts must share at least some elements or characteristics in common.

[3] Doyle argued that these phrases are not rhetorical (inasmuch as their content is almost never relevant to the topic under discussion) and are not pointed (inasmuch as the response implies rather than directly states the foolishness of the original question and/or the original questioner). Schaffer (2005), however – and without reference to the work of either Dundes or Doyle -- not only categorized these questions as rhetorical (on the basis of their "question structure, apparent lack of need or expectation of an explicit verbal answer, and ability to serve as an acceptable answer to a true information-eliciting question and to elicit mental responses") but also noted that answers to these types of questions are "*pointedly* left for the hearer/reader to infer" (p. 452, italics added).

[4] In fact, a more relevant sarcastic interrogative may be harder to interpret than a less relevant one. Nofsinger (1976) gives an example of asking a swimming fanatic, "Did you swim yesterday?" and receiving the response, "Is the Pope a Catholic?" (p. 174). Such a response, because of its clear thematic irrelevance, is probably actually easier to interpret than an exchange of "Did you swim yesterday?" with a

response of "Do fish swim?" (or "Do ducks swim?"), although relative ease of interpretation is an empirical question beyond the scope of this paper.

[5] Without the limiting factors of fixedness of form, traditionality, and currency, however, Doyle's sarcastic interrogatives come to be almost indistinguishable from the yes-no subtype of Schaffer's (2005) "RQ-as-retort," in which a rhetorical question is "used in response to a preceding question" because the answer "is to be recognized as precisely the same as the first question's" (p. 433); the parallelism is also obvious in Schaffer's observations that these RQ-as-retort responses "seem to be used specifically to imply that the answer to the prompting question should have been obvious to the asker" and that they are "clearly exploited in different ways to create humor" (p. 433).

Schaffer's conceptualization of RQ-as-retorts seems to be the broader domain in that RQs-as-retorts are not limited to responses to yes-no questions (although most of the examples she gives do fit into this category) and in that RQs-as-retorts may, in her scheme, be responses to statements rather than to questions, a possibility that Doyle (2008) explicitly rejected. Both domains, though, allow for the creation of original as well as fixed-form utterances, although this was not clearly evident in Doyle's earlier work.

[6] Schaffer's (2005) work suggested that fixed-form (popular, stock) sarcastic interrogatives probably comprise a relatively small proportion of the sarcastic interrogatives used in natural conversation with a far greater proportion being original creations.

[7]For a history of the transformation of "Where's the beef?" from advertising slogan to proverb, see Barrick (1986).

[8]Of all the dictionaries here surveyed, it was Mieder et al.'s (1992) dictionary that yielded the most low-frequency texts. This dictionary was compiled in a notably different fashion from the others, however, as the entries were based on field research and reports of oral use. The editors did note in the Preface, however, that the original set of nearly 150,000 texts was edited to "approximately 75,000 citation slips containing true proverbs" (p. ix), indicating that the texts presented in Table 1 all passed muster with the group as being truly proverbial regardless of their lack of established currency or traditionality. (It is important to note, however, that although the introduction suggests that "true" proverbs were defined as "concise statements of apparent truths that have common currency," it also indicates that the editors "decided to err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion," p. xii). Here the primary criterion of proverbiality then appears to be that if it sounds like a duck and somebody says it's a duck, then it's a duck. And given that perceptions of proverbiality, like perceptions of beauty, may vary to some extent from one person to another, I would not argue that these are not proverbs, but rather only that they might be relatively unlikely to be *consensually* recognized as such.

[9] The fixedness of form is relative rather than absolute because "many proverbs are current in various degrees of variation" (Mieder, 2012, p. 143). The argument is not that a given phrase exists in only a single form but rather that at least one fixed form of phrasing is used frequently enough that the phrase is (at least potentially) recognizable as the wisdom of the folk rather than as an idiosyncratic phrasing constituting the wit of a given speaker. To illustrate differences in the frequency with which particular phrasings are used, I have included in Table 2 the number of internet search "hits" for several different phrasings for a number of potential pro-

verbial interrogatives. In Table 2 variants are listed in descending order of frequency (i.e., with the variants with the greatest number of Google hits listed first).

[10] Although, of course, each of these categories also includes members that are fixed-form, and therefore formulaic, but not interrogative. Similarly some formulaic interrogatives are interrogative but do not exist within the domain of *rhetorical* questions because they are treated, by both the asker and the answerer, as genuine requests for information (e.g., "Who's minding the shop?" and "What are you driving at?"). In fact, some rhetorical questions (e.g., "Where is it written that a bathtub has to be cleaned once a week?") have both formulaic ("Where is it written…?") and original elements. Clearly Figure 1 does not capture all of these possibilities; it is intended only as a shorthand heuristic guide and not a comprehensive representation of any of these domains.

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