

Coping, Connecting, & Critiquing: How Teachers Use Humor on TikTok

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Background

- Teacher turnover refers to teachers leaving their school or the profession. It disrupts student learning, increases district costs, and destabilizes school communities, particularly in high-need schools (Carver-Thomas, Linda Darling-Hammond, 2017).
- As teachers navigate these working conditions, many turn to humor to process and communicate their experiences.
- Humor is a process through which individuals interpret experiences and regulate emotions. Research suggests that humor can promote well-being or signal underlying distress (Martin, Ford, 2018).
- While studies show teachers use instructional humor to engage students (Banas et al., 2011), little research examines how teachers use humor to describe their own professional experiences, particularly in online spaces.
- The purpose of this project is to examine how current and former teachers use humor on TikTok to frame their teaching experiences and working conditions.

Methods

- RQ: How do former and current teachers use humor to describe their experiences on TikTok?
- What method did we use?
 - We used grounded theory, a qualitative research methodology that analyzes data to identify patterns and develop insights through repeated comparison.
- How was the data analyzed?
 - We conducted qualitative coding of Teacher TikTok transcripts, annotating videos to identify recurring themes and patterns.
- What was our sample?
 - Our sample includes 10 U.S. teachers who post teaching-related content on TikTok.
 - The sample includes 5 current teachers ("stayers") and 5 former teachers ("leavers").
- How were videos coded?
 - We used both deductive coding (based on teacher working conditions and humor theories) and inductive coding (themes that came up from the data).

Results

- Preliminary results suggest that current and former teachers use humor for three primary functions: coping, connecting, and critiquing.
- However, there is evidence there may be some differences in how current and former teachers use humor and what they joke about.
- Hopefully, through further research we can highlight the underlying differences in TWC and humor to find a Hypothesis that can create proper results.

Theory	Definition	Example
Superiority (Martin & Ford, 2018)	Involves a "winner" and a "loser"; results in feelings of superiority over others and/or increased group cohesion	"Hey besties, I'm in a bad mood but I want to show you my favorite teacher purchase to date. [shows a keychain violin on lanyard around neck] It's this daggum world's smallest violin... [Pretending to be a student, leaning head back and scrunching up face in exasperation, using a whiny voice] "Miss Ellie, I don't feel like doing my work" [Presses a button on the violin and it plays "Woe is Me"]" - Ellie
Collective identity* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)	Humor that is specific to a group (teachers) ; does not require a "loser" to strengthen group identity and/or cohesion	"Number 3... Michael? Number 3. Question number 3, we're on question number three. It's on page 6 Page 6? It's the document we've been working on for like five days,. Yeah, page 6. It's on google classroom. You just gotta click on what I assigned on Friday and we're going to keep going. Number 3? It's on page 6?... No that's question number six, we're on question number 3 page 6. Yeah, we've been working on it this whole time, you've seen it. Oh you don't know? Great." - Carlos "POV: You try to connect to your students by attempting to use their 'skibbidy Ohio rizzler' slang" - Zoey
Incongruity (Martin & Ford, 2018)	Surprise and amusement when expectations do not match reality	"No ISS room, so the students were sent to PreK- including violent ones. Nothing better than sending a violent student with babies." - Ellie
Relief (Martin & Ford, 2018)	Stress & tension has been reduced resulting in mirth and laughter	"TEACHER EDITION: No I'll still help you, it's just the fact that you talked over me, interrupted me, were on your phone the whole time I was giving instructions that kinda threw me off." - Carmela
Self-deprecating (Martin & Ford, 2018)	Self-directed humor about one's own shortcomings, failures, or circumstances	"'Tell me that you're extremely wealthy without telling me that you're extremely wealthy.' [OP Responding]: I'm a teacher." - Lavender



References

"When you're not mentally, emotionally or physically ready for school to start!!"

Cora, Leaver

"On behalf of the administration here at *middle school*, we just want to give you a token of our love..."

Lavender, Stayer

