Assessing Student Perceptions of Inappropriate and Appropriate Teacher Humor

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Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association, November 2007, Chicago, Illinois.

Abstract

This study replicated and extended Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith's (2006) preliminary typology of appropriate and inappropriate teacher humor and advanced three explanations for differences in interpretations of teacher humor. Students were more likely to view teacher humor as inappropriate when it was perceived as offensive and when it demeaned students as a group or individually. Student humor orientation, verbal aggression, and communication competence were related to how students viewed teachers' use of appropriate and inappropriate humor. Teachers' level of humor orientation, verbal aggression, nonverbal immediacy, and communication competence were also related to how students viewed teachers' use of humor. The results suggest that a combination of the factors examined can be used to explain differences in classroom humor appropriateness ratings.

As the teacher entered her classroom to deliver the first exam of the semester, she noticed that her students appeared quite nervous. As she handed out the exams she asked the students, "Why did the Cyclops quit teaching? Because she only had one pupil!" Most of the students laughed at the joke, but some did not.

This example illustrates one of the ways that teachers can use humor in the classroom. Would students perceive this example of teacher humor as appropriate for the classroom? What factors determine whether or not students perceive this humor as appropriate? These questions are addressed in this study by examining several factors that may be related to whether a student perceives certain types of teacher humor as appropriate or inappropriate for the classroom.

Humor in the Classroom

A substantial body of research exists that addresses the benefits and types of humor that teachers employ in the classroom (Aylor & Opplinger, 2003; Bryant Cominsky & Zillman, 1979; Bryant, Cominsky, Crane, & Zillman, 1980; Bryant & Zillman, 1988; Conkell, Imwold, Ratlliffe, 1999; Davies & Apter, 1980; Downs, Javidi, & Nussbaum, 1988; Frymier & Wanzer, 1999; Frymier & Weser, 2001; Gorham & Christophel, 1990; Kaplan & Pascoe, 1977; Sadowski & Gulgoz, 1994; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999; White, 2001). Instructors' use of humor has been linked repeatedly to important outcomes in the educational setting such as, improved perceptions of the teacher (Scott, 1976), higher teacher evaluations (Bryant et al., 1980), enhanced quality of the student-teacher relationship (Welker, 1977), and affective learning (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999a). Researchers have also investigated the amount and type of humor used in the classroom and its impact on classroom climate (Stuart & Rosenfeld, 1994). More recently Wanzer and her colleagues (2006) examined different types of teacher humor used in the classroom and provided preliminary information on student perceptions of appropriateness. While this research identified appropriate and inappropriate types of humor used in the classroom, it did not apply a theoretical perspective to explain variability in students' interpretations of humorous content. The goal of the present study was to further examine Wanzer et al.'s appropriate and inappropriate types of teacher humor and offer explanations for variations in interpretations of appropriateness. We begin by examining previous research that has identified appropriate and inappropriate humor use by teachers.

Perceptions of Humor Appropriateness

In "*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious"* Freud introduces the concept of humor appropriateness (Freud, 1905/1960). Freud argued that there are two types of humor; non-tendentious and tendentious. Jokes or humor attempts labeled harmless, non-tendentious, or abstract are those that are perceived as innocent and lacking a specific aim or purpose by recipients (Freud, 1905/1960, p. 106). On the other hand,

humor attempts labeled tendentious or purposeful often "run the risk of meeting with people who do not want to listen to them" often because they target others' personal characteristics (Freud, 1905/1960, p. 107). Freud's initial distinctions between the two humor types are insightful and are illustrated in subsequent humor studies.

Early research conducted by Bryant, Cominisky and Zillmann (1979) investigated teachers' use of humor in the classroom and noted that teachers seemed to use both tendentious and non-tendentious types of humor. Ten types of humor that college teachers used in the classroom were identified in this qualitative investigation; jokes, riddles, puns, funny stories, funny comments, nonsexual hostile, sexual nonhostile, sexual hostile and nonsense. When the researchers examined how often teachers used these different types of humor they found that teachers seemed to use a balance of both tendentious (48%) and non-tendentious types (52%). This seminal instructional study illustrated the types of humor used in college settings, the spontaneity and relatedness of the teachers' humor attempts, and variations in teachers' use of humor based on teacher sex. Interestingly, Bryant and his colleagues (1979) noted that "a great deal of the humor used by college teachers is hardly 'innocent' since nearly one-half of it is used to convey hostile or sexual messages" (p. 116).

Gorham and Christophel later (1990) investigated the relationship between teachers' use of humor in the classroom and student perceptions of verbal immediacy. They identified 13 categories of humorous behaviors by asking students to keep a detailed journal of the "things this teacher did or said today which shows he/she has a sense of humor" (Gorham & Christophel, 1990, p. 51). One item on the verbal immediacy scale is "Uses humor in class." As expected, Gorham and Christophel found that the total number of humorous incidents reported by students was positively correlated with this immediacy item (r = .37). Conversely, the number of self-disparaging humor attempts made by the teacher and the number of brief tendentious humor attempts directed at individual students was negatively correlated (r = -.23 and r = -.17, respectively) with the "uses humor" item. These results suggest that certain types of tendentious or purposeful teacher humor may be inappropriate for the classroom.

Neuliep (1991) explicitly examined the appropriateness of the humor categories identified by Gorham & Christophel (1990). Neuliep's (1991) research confirmed the existence of Gorham and Christophel's (1990) humor categories and provided some preliminary information on the types of humorous messages that high school instructors viewed as appropriate in the classroom. However, Neuliep examined teachers' perceptions of humor appropriateness and not students' perceptions of humor appropriateness.

More recently, Torok, McMorris, and Lin (2004) examined students' and teachers' perceptions of Bryant et al.'s (1979) typology of classroom humor. Three instructors and 124 college students reported their perceptions of a modified

version of Bryant's types of classroom humor. The researchers began their investigation assuming that the seven non-tendentious types of humor (funny stories, funny comments, jokes, professional humor, pun, cartoon, and riddles) would be considered generally positive in the college classroom, and subsequently found support for this assumption. They also speculated that four types of tendentious instructor humor (i.e., sarcasm, sexual humor, ethnic humor, and aggressive/hostile humor) would be perceived negatively by students. They found that some of these tendentious types were perceived as ineffective while others were not. Their findings suggest that some types of teacher humor may be perceived by students and teachers as universally inappropriate while other types may be interpreted differently depending on the source and receiver of the humorous message. Their study was limited, however, by a small sample size and for failing to provide a substantial rationale for defining humor types as either appropriate or inappropriate.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Humor Categories

Much of the classroom communication research has focused on what teachers say and do that is perceived as appropriate for the classroom. Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006) asked students to recall and construct examples of both appropriate and inappropriate uses of humor by their teachers. Constant comparative methods were used by the researchers to place the student-generated humor examples into categories of appropriate and inappropriate humor. The four broad categories of appropriate humor that emerged from this study, related humor, unrelated humor, self-disparaging humor, and unplanned humor, were similar to those identified in prior research (Bryant et al., 1979; Downs et al., 1988; Gorham & Christophel, 1990). Four broad categories of inappropriate teacher humor were identified and labeled as offensive humor, disparaging student humor, disparaging other humor, and self-disparaging humor. In both cases (appropriate and inappropriate humor) the broad categories were further divided into subcategories of more specific types of humor (see Wanzer et al., 2006 for complete descriptions of all categories and subcategories).

For the present investigation, a preliminary humor appropriateness scale was created using items based on the humor categories and subcategories identified by Wanzer et al. (2006). One of the benefits of using these categories is that they were inductively derived from student responses to questions that explicitly asked them to report inappropriate and appropriate humor use. Thus, this scale represents a nearly comprehensive list of both the appropriate and inappropriate types of humor that instructors might use in the classroom. This study extends Wanzer et al.'s (2006) research by attempting to develop a measure of humor behavior based on Wanzer et al.'s work so that researchers can identify variations in students' perceptions of appropriate teacher humor. Another goal of this study was to advance

explanations for why certain types of humor may be perceived as appropriate and other types perceived as inappropriate.

Differences in Perceptions of Humor Appropriateness: Three explanations

When reviewing the appropriate and inappropriate categories developed by Wanzer et al. (2006), the researchers noted that some of the examples of appropriate humor were also generated as examples of inappropriate humor. Specifically, self-disparaging humor by the teacher was viewed as both appropriate and inappropriate. Also, sarcasm, or cynical humor was identified by students as both appropriate and inappropriate. Torok et al's (2004) study also identified variations in students' ratings of appropriate and inappropriate humor types. These findings indicate that there may be multiple factors that influence the perception of humor appropriateness. Three possible explanations for differences in perceptions of humor appropriateness were investigated in this study. First, working from incongruity-resolution and disposition theories (Zillmann & Cantor, 1996), we speculate that certain types of humor are viewed as universally inappropriate for the college classroom. Next, the extent to which individual differences in receivers influence perceptions of teachers' humor appropriateness are explored. Finally, we question whether humorous messages are interpreted differently depending on "who" says it; that is, are humorous messages interpreted as appropriate or inappropriate depending on certain teacher characteristics.

Humor Theories

Humor researchers have had a longstanding interest in distinguishing funny messages from those that are not funny and generally agree that several theories or even a combination of these theories explain why certain messages evoke laughter. The three classic theories that describe why individuals find something funny are incongruity theory (Berylne, 1960), arousal relief theory (Berylne, 1969), and disparagement or superiority theory (Wolff, Smith, & Murray, 1934). Incongruity theory (Berylne, 1960) asserts that we find messages funny when there is a contrast, inconsistency, or surprise in the message. Berylne (1969)'s arousal relief theory holds that any type of affective arousal (except extreme emotional arousal) can be pleasant and provoke laughter. Superiority or disparagement theories state that we find something funny when it disparages others. Theorists that advance this perspective on humor note that when we laugh at material that disparages others we are really laughing due to the "sudden glory we feel from favorable comparison of ourselves with the inadequacies of others" (Wicker, Baron, & Willis, 1980, p. 702). According to disparagement theories, we may also find it funny when we make ourselves the "butt" of the joke.

While these three classic theories clearly explain why something is perceived as funny, they do not seem to directly address another criterion used to evaluate humorous messages: appropriateness. There appears to be a great deal

of empirically-based information on the types of humor that are effective; that is, the types of humor that elicit smiles and laughter; however, there is less research available on how we determine humor appropriateness. From a communication competence perspective, it is important to examine factors that contribute to and affect perceptions of message effectiveness and appropriateness (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). In the present study, theoretical perspectives linked to incongruity and superiority theories are applied to address student perceptions of teacher humor. More specifically, incongruity-resolution, a theory derived from incongruity theory (La Fave, Haddad, & Maesen, 1996) and disposition theory, a theory developed from superiority and disparagement theories (Zillmann & Cantor, 1996) are used as a framework to understand how humorous messages are cognitively and affectively processed by receivers in the classroom.

Incongruity-resolution and disposition theories. Incongruity-resolution theory illustrates how humorous messages are cognitively processed by receivers and expands Berlyne's (1960) original incongruity theory. This theory depicts humor as a two-phase process where the perceived incongruity or inconsistency in the stimuli must first be recognized and then accurately interpreted by the receiver for the joke or humorous content to be perceived as funny (La Fave et al., 1996). Thus, for humorous messages to be processed and subsequently evaluated as funny, the incongruity or inconsistency in the humorous content must be recognized and "make sense" to the recipient. If the incongruity is too absurd or complex for the recipient to comprehend, he or she cannot "get" the joke. This theory explains why some individuals find Gary Larson's depictions of talking animals performing mundane human-like acts as funny and others do not. In one of Gary Larson's comics a deer standing upright with a large bulls-eye on its chest is shown talking with another deer. The deer without the bull's-eye states "Bummer of a birthmark Hal." There are multiple incongruities in this example including the deer standing upright, the deer carrying on a conversation, and the deer with the bull's-eye on its chest. Upon recognition of the incongruities, the resolution occurs when we realize that this is an unfortunate, albeit funny birthmark for a deer.

Disposition theory addresses affective elements of humor, explains how humorous messages are evaluated, and clarifies shortcomings of superiority theory. Disposition theory specifies that the intensity of the affective responses we have to humorous stimuli depends on how we feel about those who are made the "butt" or target of the joke (Zillmann & Cantor, 1996). This theory addresses the affective element of humorous messages by explaining that we are more likely to view humor attempts favorably when they target individuals we dislike or when the targets are not recognized as part of our referent group. Conversely, we are less likely to find humor attempts as funny or appropriate when they target

individuals we like, such as those included in our reference groups (Cantor & Zillmann 1973; LaFave, Haddad, & Marshall, 1974; Wicker et al., 1980; Zillmann & Cantor, 1996). We are less likely to find these humor attempts as funny because we perceive ourselves as similar to the humor target and thus any attack on the target may be perceived as a personal transgression. Suls (1977) and others have used these two theories in combination to increase "understanding of humor and of attendant affective and cognitive mechanisms" (Wicker et al., 1980, p. 701).

Disposition and incongruity-resolution theory may explain why some types of humor were originally identified as inappropriate in the Wanzer et al. (2006) study. For example, Wanzer et al. reported that 69% of the responses in the inappropriate categories involved disparaging types of humor that often included professors disparaging students as a group or individually. Because students generally possess favorable opinions of themselves and their respective peer groups (e.g., other students, sororities, and fraternities, athletic teams, and religious or political affiliations), disposition theory would predict that students would view these forms of humor as "not funny" and therefore, not appropriate for use in the classroom setting. As mentioned previously, teacher's humor is often tendentious in nature (Bryant et al., 1979).

Expectations. duPre (1998) addresses a number of weaknesses with existing humor theories and expands incongruity-resolution theory to include a more detailed explanation of the significance of expectations recipients have for the source and situation. She argues that individuals enter every situation with a set of expectations, and when there is a deviation, inconsistency or incongruity in those expectations, they will assign some affective evaluation to the deviation. An expectancy violation thus can evoke a positive or negative affective response. Humor that violates the students' expectancies and causes a negative emotional response may be viewed as inappropriate. In the Wanzer et al. (2006) study, students indicated that teachers' use of sexual, morbid, sarcastic, or vulgar humor was inappropriate for the classroom (Wanzer et al., 2006). Use of these types of humor deviated from students' original expectations of how teachers should behave in the classroom and resulted in negative evaluations of their behaviors. These data suggest that use of certain types of humor negatively violates students' expectations of appropriate teacher classroom behavior.

From this body of research and extant humor theories, we begin to formulate a more well-defined picture of when students are likely to perceive teachers' humor attempts as appropriate and inappropriate. Students may be more likely to view humor as appropriate in the classroom when an incongruity is recognized and resolved and when the target of the humor is a disliked other or is not a member of the student's reference group. On the other hand, it is likely that teacher humor attempts will be perceived as inappropriate when the teachers' behavior negatively violates students'

expectations of appropriate teacher behavior, when incongruities or inconsistencies in the message are not recognized and resolved, and when the target of the humor is a liked and/or similar other or a member of the student's reference group. Using selectionist procedures to examine Wanzer et al. (2006) categories and subcategories of teacher humor, we speculate that some teacher behaviors will be perceived as more appropriate for classroom settings than others, but we also suspect variability in student responses. Because students will differ greatly in their expectations of appropriate teacher classroom behavior and will vary in how they process and evaluate humorous content, we posed a research question to examine whether certain types of teacher humor would be viewed as universally appropriate or inappropriate for the classroom. Hence, the first research question:

> RQ1: Are some teacher humor behaviors generally viewed as more appropriate than other humor behaviors?

Student characteristics influence on humor. Differences in student perceptions of the appropriateness of teacher humor may be linked to students' individual differences. Derks (1995) describes the importance of studying the relationship between personality differences and humor appreciation by stating that "the relatively known personality constructs could give leverage to the understanding of the mechanisms of humor" (p. ix). Early research by Eysenck (1942; 1943) indicated that extraverts showed a greater preference for sexual and aggressive types of humor. In addition, extraverts laughed more frequently in humorous situations and rated certain types of humor as funnier than introverts (Ruch, 1993). Not surprisingly, research indicates that the intensity of the individual's response to humorous stimuli is closely connected to the appreciation of humor (Ruch, 1993). Humor orientation (HO) (M. Booth-Butterfield & S. Booth-Butterfield, 1991), defined as the extent to which someone appreciates, enacts humorous messages and perceives him or herself as effective in humor production, may be related to students' perceptions of teacher humor. Wanzer and Frymier (1999) conducted research where students reported their HO, perceptions of their teachers' HO, and how much they learned from that same teacher. They found that the greatest amount of learning occurred when a high humor-oriented student was paired with a high humor-oriented instructor. Humor-oriented students, who are more receptive to humor use in general, may view more types of teacher humor as appropriate for the classroom. HO students may be receptive to teachers' use of humor because they enact these same types of humorous behaviors in their daily interactions.

Another individual difference that may affect student interpretations' of teacher humor is verbal aggression. Wigley (1998) describes verbal aggression as the propensity to attack the self-concept of another person during social interaction. These verbal attacks often occur during arguments and may be

delivered in place of or in addition to topic-focused arguments (Wigley, 1998). Verbally aggressive individuals are more likely to target others in their humor rather than target themselves (Wanzer, M. Booth-Butterfield, & S. Booth-Butterfield, 1996), view their aggressive remarks as humorous (Infante, Riddle, Horvath, & Tumlin, 1992) and, thus, may appreciate aggressive types of humor more than individuals low in verbal aggression. Schrodt (2003) found that, in general, students with moderate to high trait verbal aggressiveness rated their teachers as being more verbally aggressive. Combined with the finding that verbally aggressive individuals believe the use of aggressive messages is warranted (Martin, Anderson, & Horvath, 1996), these types of students may be more likely to perceive humor attempts as aggressive, while also accepting this type of humor as appropriate. Superiority theory indicates that much of the humor individuals' use does have an aggressive component. Therefore, verbally aggressive students may view teachers' use of disparaging or offensive types of humor as appropriate or acceptable for the classroom because they regularly enact these types of messages and believe their use is justified.

A third and final student characteristic, communication competence, was also examined as a potential predictor of student ratings of humor appropriateness. Communication competence refers to one's ability to communicate effectively with others and achieve interpersonal goals (Canary, Cody & Manusov, 2003). Students who communicate more effectively and appropriately may be more cognizant of the factors or elements that contribute to message appropriateness than students who are less effective communicators. Thus, we suspect that individual differences such as humor orientation, verbal aggression, and communication competence may predict variations in student ratings of the appropriateness of teacher humor. Hence, our second research question:

RQ2: Are student characteristics of humor orientation, verbal aggression, and communication competence associated with students' perceptions of humor appropriateness?

Teacher characteristics influence humor. The final variable that may explain variations in student perceptions of teacher humor is teacher characteristics or behaviors. In examining the students' perceptions of teacher characteristics, we are assuming that it does matter "who" employs the humor. As mentioned previously, students form expectations about how teachers should or should not behave in the classroom, and we suspect that teachers' individual differences influence students' expectations of teachers' behaviors, particularly over the course of a semester. In other words, what a student expects from a teacher and deems as appropriate or inappropriate is in part based on how that teacher has behaved and communicated throughout the semester. Similar to RQ2, we suspect that student perceptions' of teacher HO, verbal aggression, and communication competence may explain differences in how

students rate the appropriateness of teachers' humor behaviors. An additional teacher variable, immediacy, was also examined in relationship to student ratings of teacher humor. Teachers perceived as immediate by their students often use a variety of verbal and nonverbal behaviors to reduce physical and psychological distance between themselves and their students to create more positive teacher-student relationships (Richmond, Lane & McCroskey, 2006). Immediate teachers are more likely to use humor as part of their teaching repertoire (Gorham & Christophel, 1990). Thus, if the student perceives the teacher as more humor oriented and/or immediate, it is likely that the student will expect the teacher to use different types of humorous behaviors and therefore, may also view the humor messages as being more appropriate.

Similar to RQ2, we expect that teacher characteristics may be related to how students rate teachers' use of humor behaviors. Student expectations of how teachers regularly behave in the classroom as well as the relationships they develop with their teachers may be related to ratings of teacher humor appropriateness. Thus, the third research question is advanced:

RQ3: Are teacher characteristics of humor orientation, nonverbal immediacy, communication competence, and verbal aggression associated with student perceptions of humor appropriateness?

Method

Design and Procedures

In order to address the research questions, slightly different methodologies were needed to address RQ1 and RQ2 than was needed to address RQ3. RQ1 asked if some humor behaviors were generally perceived as more appropriate than others. To address this question, data was needed that focused on teachers in general. RQ2 asked if student characteristics were related to student perceptions of appropriate humor behaviors and required data that asked students to self-report their orientations toward communication. RQ3 asked if teacher characteristics were related to perceptions of appropriateness. This research question needed data that focused on specific teacher behaviors. In order to collect data that allowed us to address all three research questions, participants were randomly assigned to one of two surveys. Participants who completed survey A (n=159) were asked to rate the appropriateness of various behaviors used by college teachers in general, and then completed measures of their own humor orientation, communication competence, and verbal aggression. The data from survey A was used to address RQ1 and RQ2. Participants who completed survey B (n=192) were first asked to complete a measure of their humor orientation and were then asked to think of the class they had immediately preceding the communication class for which they were completing the survey, and to report their teachers' use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors, humor orientation, verbal aggression,

and communication appropriateness. Students were then asked to imagine their teacher using each of the humor behaviors (see description below) and to indicate how appropriate it would be for their teacher to use that behavior. Additionally, students completed affective and cognitive learning indicator measures, which are not reported here. The data from survey B was used to address RQ3.

Participants

Participants in this study were recruited primarily from a mid-sized Midwestern University and asked to complete an on-line survey. The on-line survey was also made available to students at the second author's eastern institution. Approximately ten students from the eastern school completed the survey. Students at the Midwestern university received credit toward a departmental research requirement. Students enrolled in introductory communication classes (that served majors and non-majors) who were targeted for recruiting were sent an e-mail soliciting their participation. The email contained a link to surveymonkey.com where they read a brief description of the study, were informed of their rights and responsibilities, and gave informed consent. Once participants consented, they were asked if their birthday was odd or even. Those with an even birthday were directed to survey A, and those with an odd birthday were directed to survey B. Participants completing survey B reported on teachers (98 male and 60 female instructors) from 40 different departments The total sample consisted of 352 participants, consisting of 149 males, 200 females, and 3 who did not report sex. Participants were predominately freshmen (35.8%) and sophomores (50.6%), with 7.7% juniors and 4.8% seniors (3 participants did not report year). Institutional Review Board approval was obtained from both institutions where data were collected.

Measures

Humor behaviors. A measure of humor behaviors was developed based on the appropriate and inappropriate humor behaviors identified by Wanzer et al. (2006). Using inductive analytic techniques, Wanzer et al. identified four major types of appropriate humor with 26 sub-types and four types of inappropriate humor with 25 sub-types. Each item was written to reflect a specific humor type. A total of 41 items were generated.[1] Because we were interested in whether participants perceived the humor types as appropriate, a 5-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (*very inappropriate*) and 5 (*very appropriate*) was used.

The 41 items were submitted to principle components analysis with iteration prior to factor extraction with promax rotation. Exploratory rather than confirmatory factor analysis was used because of the overlap in the appropriate and inappropriate categories identified by Wanzer et al. Confirmatory requires a clear theoretical model to guide the analysis. While we expected appropriate and inappropriate categories, we were uncertain about where several humor behaviors might load. Criteria for factor extraction were

eigenvalue > 1.0, loadings > .60 with at least three items loading on each factor, and each factor accounting for at least 5% of the variance. Criteria for item retention were primary loading > .60 and secondary loading < .40. MSA = .91 indicating sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 7361.37, *df*=820, *p* <.001) indicating that there were adequate relationships among the variables for factor analysis to be appropriate.

The principle components analysis yielded six factors with eigenvalues > 1.0. The scree plot indicated three to five factors were possible. Five factors had at least three items loading at > .60 and accounting for at least 5% of the variance; therefore a five-factor solution was determined to be the most appropriate. The first factor accounted for 30% of the variance, was labeled Disparaging Humor, and consisted of 9 items with a *M* = 15.40, *SD* = 6.29, and alpha reliability of .93. The second factor accounted for 18% of the variance, was labeled Related Humor, and consisted of 7 items with a *M* = 28.66, *SD* = 3.55, and alpha reliability of .85. The third factor accounted for 6% of the variance, was labeled Unrelated Humor, and consisted of 3 items with a *M* = 9.45, *SD* = 2.47, and an alpha reliability of .85. The fourth factor accounted for 7% of the variance, was labeled Offensive Humor, and consisted of 3 items with a *M* = 7.35, *SD* = 2.76 and an alpha reliability of .84. The fifth factor accounted for 5% of the variance, was labeled Self-Disparaging Humor, and consisted of three items with a *M* = 11.08, *SD* = 2.04 and an alpha reliability of .80. Factor loadings and correlations among variables are shown in Table 1.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Humor orientation. Students' humor orientation was measured with M. Booth-Butterfield and S. Booth-Butterfield's (1991) Humor Orientation (HO) scale. The HO scale is a 17-item self-report measure that uses a 5-point Likert format anchored by 1 (*strongly agree*) and 5 (*strongly disagree*). Participants in both group A and group B completed the HO scale on themselves. Student HO had a *M* = 62.68 with a *SD* = 7.93, and an alpha reliability of .87, which is similar to previous use of the measure (Wanzer et al.,1996; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999).

Participants in group B also completed the HO scale on the teacher they had in the class immediately preceding their communication class. Nine of the seventeen items were reworded to reflect what the teacher usually does. Items that involve self-assessment such as "I can be funny without rehearsing a joke" and "I can easily remember jokes or stories" were excluded from the teacher HO scale. Teacher HO reflects students' perceptions of their teachers' use of humor in the classroom. Teacher HO had a *M* = 28.30 and *SD* = 7.81, and an alpha reliability of .92.

Nonverbal immediacy. Nonverbal immediacy was measured with 16 items from Richmond, McCroskey, and

Johnson's (2003) other-report nonverbal immediacy scale. A 5-point Likert-type measure anchored by 1 (*never*) and 5 (*very often*) was used. Nonverbal immediacy had a *M* = 57.29 and *SD* = 9.82, and an alpha reliability of .91.

Student communication competence. Students' communication competence was measured with Rubin and Martin's (1994) 10-item measure of interpersonal communication competence. A 5-point Likert-type scale anchored by 1 (*almost never*) and 5 (*almost never*) was used. Communication competence had a *M* = 39.03 and *SD* = 4.21, and an alpha reliability of .74.

Verbal aggressiveness. Participants in group A completed Infante and Wigley's (1986) 20-item verbal aggressiveness (VA) scale. The scale used a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored by 1 (*almost never true*) and 5 (*almost always true*). Levine, Beatty, Limon, Hamilton, Buck, and Chory-Assad (2004) recommend using the 10 aggressively worded items to measure verbal aggressiveness; therefore VA consisted of these 10 items. Student VA had a *M* = 23.61 and a *SD* = 5.28, and an alpha reliability of .80.

Participants in group B reported VA for the teacher they had in the class immediately preceding their communication class using Myers and Knox's (1999) measure of verbal aggression in the classroom. This measure consisted of 10 items that reflected verbally aggressive behavior. Participants reported how frequently their teachers used each behavior with a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored by 1 (*never*) and 5 (*very often*). Teacher VA had a *M* = 14.65 and *SD* = 6.64, and an alpha reliability of .94.

Conversational appropriateness. Instructors' communication competence was assessed with Canary and Spitzberg's (1987) conversational appropriateness measure, which is a part of their conceptualization of communication competence. The conversational appropriateness measure consisted of 20 items using a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 (*strongly agree*). Conversational appropriateness had a *M* = 111.14 and *SD* = 21.11, and an alpha reliability of .95.

Results

RQ1 asked if some humor behaviors are generally viewed as more appropriate than other humor behaviors. To address this research question, means for the five dimensions of humor and means for individual humor behaviors were compared between specific and general teachers. Means for each humor behavior were calculated for group A (those reporting on a general teacher) and group B (those reporting on a specific teacher) and are shown in Table 2. The means for each behavior differed little between general and specific teachers. Means for the five humor factors were also calculated for group A and group B. For Disparaging Humor, group A (general teacher) had a *M* = 14.97, *SD* =5.60 and group B (specific teacher) had a *M* = 16.14, *SD* = 7.12. For Related Humor, group A had a *M* = 29.34, *SD* = 3.28 and group B had a *M*=27.75, *SD* = 3.75. For Unrelated Humor,

group A had a *M* = 9.29, *SD* =2.46 and group B had a *M* =9.61, *SD* = 2.46. For Offensive Humor, group A had a *M* = 7.24, *SD* = 2.64 and group B had a *M* = 7.52, *SD* = 2.83. For Self-Disparaging Humor, group A had a *M* =11.17, *SD* =2.05 and group B had a *M* =10.98, *SD* =2.02. As with the individual behaviors, the means are very similar for the two groups. The goal of this analysis was to determine if the appropriateness of humor behaviors was consistent across the board, thus perceptions of teachers "in general" were compared to "specific" teachers. If cultural factors and norms contribute to perceptions of what is appropriate humor, we would expect there to be a great deal of similarity in student ratings of teachers in general and a specific teacher. Since the means for both specific humor behaviors and the humor factors were all very similar between the two groups, we conclude that cultural or sociological norms influence what humor behaviors students perceive as appropriate.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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RQ2 asked if student characteristics would be related to their perceptions of appropriateness. Canonical correlation analysis was used to address the relationships between the five humor types (disparaging, related, unrelated, offensive, and self-disparaging and the student characteristics (student HO, VA, and communication competence). One canonical correlation was significant R_c=.40, $F(15, 466.94) = 2.99$, $p <$ .001. The standardized coefficients and correlations with the variate are shown in Table 3 and indicate that disparaging and offensive humor are positively associated with student VA and negatively associated with student communication competence, while related humor is negatively associated with student VA.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Additionally, correlations among the three student characteristics and the 41 humor behaviors were examined and are shown in Table 4. Most of the correlations are small or nonsignificant, however a pattern does emerge. Student HO was positively associated with the perceived appropriateness of the related and unrelated humor behaviors as well as sarcasm. Student VA tended to be associated with perceived appropriateness of disparaging humor behaviors, which can be considered a form of aggressive communication. Students' communication competence tended to be positively associated with appropriate humor behaviors and negatively associated with inappropriate humor behaviors. Student characteristics appear to partially explain the variation in students' perceptions of teacher humor as appropriate.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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RQ3 asked if teacher characteristics would be related to how appropriate students perceive humor behaviors to be. Canonical correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationships between the humor types and teacher behaviors (nonverbal immediacy, HO, communication appropriateness, and VA). Two canonical correlations were significant. The first R_c = .41, $F(20, 408.89) = 2.36$, $p < .001$. The second R_c = .35, $F(20, 504) = 2.32$, $p < .01$. The standardized coefficients and correlations with the variate are shown in Table 5 and indicate that on the first canonical variate disparaging, unrelated, offensive, and self-disparaging humor were positively associated with teacher HO and VA. The second canonical variate indicated that related humor was positively associated with teacher nonverbal immediacy and negatively associated with teacher VA.

Additionally, correlations among the four teacher characteristics and the 41 humor behaviors were examined and are shown in Table 4. Correlations tended to be small or nonsignificant, but once again a pattern emerged. Student reports of teacher nonverbal immediacy were positively associated with perceived appropriateness of related humor and humor behaviors that might be considered "borderline" such as humorous comments about political events, stereotypical comments about students, and sarcasm. A similar pattern emerged for teacher HO. When teachers were perceived as higher in HO, their use of a variety of humor behaviors was perceived as more appropriate. Students' perceptions of teacher communication competence had few relationships with the humor behaviors. There were few relationships between teacher VA and appropriate humor behaviors, but inappropriate and disparaging humor behaviors were viewed as more appropriate with a more verbally aggressive teacher. Teacher communication behaviors also appear to partially explain the variation in students' perceptions of teacher humor.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, the researchers sought to explore the existence of and expand Wanzer et al.'s (2006) typology of appropriate and inappropriate teacher humor. The second objective of this study was to explore the reasons teacher humor is perceived as either appropriate or inappropriate by students. The first order of business was to develop a measure of teacher humor behavior based on Wanzer et al.'s typology. This typology was originally created by asking students to report examples of appropriate and inappropriate teacher humor. As discussed above, there was a good deal of overlap in appropriate and inappropriate categories making the replication of the categories unlikely. However, the five dimensions identified in the principle components analysis were similar to the four appropriate and four inappropriate categories identified by

Wanzer et al. However several of the subtypes of unrelated humor identified by Wanzer et al. were not retained in the unrelated factor. Items reflecting those behaviors initially appeared across several factors and were mostly lost by the completion of the analysis. While sexual jokes and comments made up 35% of the offensive category in Wanzer et al.'s study, the sexual comment item did not load on the offensive factor (or any factor). This is likely due to a lack of consistency in how students perceive such forms of humor. An examination of item #24 in Table 4 indicates that the appropriateness of sexual humor varied both with student characteristics (student VA) and teacher characteristics (teacher HO, conversational appropriateness, and VA). The factor labeled as offensive only contained items referring to vulgar humor, drugs, and drinking. Items reflecting the other subtypes identified by Wanzer et al. did not load on this factor. While Wanzer et al. identified two categories of disparaging humor (student target and other target) this distinction was not retained in the current factor structure. To conclude, these five dimensions do not offer the detail and richness of Wanzer et al.'s typology, but do provide a more succinct description of the types of humor students perceive as appropriate and inappropriate. This measure can also serve as a basis for teachers' use of humor behaviors in future research.

Three explanations for why humor is perceived as appropriate or inappropriate were advanced, with the results indicating that all three explanations provide some clarification on this question. The first explanation drew on a combination of disposition and incongruity-resolution theories to explain differences in students' perceptions of teacher humor appropriateness and can be used to understand the results from RQ1. Research question one queried as to whether some humor behaviors would generally be perceived as more appropriate than others by students. An examination of the means for individual humor behaviors as well as for the humor factors revealed a great deal of similarity in students' perceptions of appropriateness for general teachers and specific teachers. Humor behaviors identified as appropriate by Wanzer et al. (2006) generally had higher means (perceived as more appropriate) than those behaviors identified as inappropriate. Disposition and incongruity-resolution theories can be used to explain why certain types of humor were evaluated and processed differently by receivers. Many of the inappropriate humor behaviors target students, individuals, or groups and organizations that students view favorably. Disposition theory indicates that the target of humor must be either disliked or viewed as an "outsider" for the receiver to find the humor amusing. Therefore, it makes sense that students would perceive these forms of humor as inappropriate. Incongruity-resolution theory also provides some explanation of students' perceptions of the humor behaviors.

According to incongruity-resolution theory, receivers must recognize and understand the incongruity posed by the

humorous message. In addition, the expectations we have for a person or situation influence what we label as an incongruity (duPre, 1998). Culturally defined social norms may dictate what students perceive as appropriate behavior for college instructors and it is not surprising that American college students would perceive humor that involves disparaging others to be inappropriate. While college campuses are known for their parties and alcohol consumption, not all students partake in these college rituals and even those who do may not want their college instructors to comment on it. Thus, a teacher's use of humor that disparages others, is vulgar, or involves drugs/alcohol likely violates students' expectations of appropriate classroom behavior and simultaneously hinders the students' ability to identify and resolve the incongruity in the teachers' humor attempt. However students do expect teachers to do things that help them to learn; therefore the use of related humor would be consistent with their expectations and likely viewed as appropriate. Hence the consistent perceptions of appropriateness for these behaviors can also be explained by incongruity-resolution theory.

The second explanation advanced above was based on student characteristics and focused on whether students' perceptions of humor as appropriate or inappropriate would be influenced by students' communication predispositions and was examined in RQ2. The canonical correlation analysis indicated that disparaging and offensive humor were positively associated with student VA and negatively associated with student communication competence. This analysis provides evidence that student characteristics influence how appropriate they view certain humor behaviors, particular those generally viewed as inappropriate and is consistent with previous research that has found student predispositions to be related to their perceptions of teacher behavior (Frymier, 1993a, b; Schrodt, 2003; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999; Wooten & McCroskey, 1996). Evidence of the influence of student characteristics is also evident in the Pearson correlations in Table 4. Student HO had small significant correlations with several appropriate humor behaviors, and just two inappropriate behaviors: humor about illegal activities and sarcasm. Sarcasm is one of those behaviors that appeared in both appropriate and inappropriate categories (Wanzer et al., 2006). Student VA was negatively correlated with one appropriate humor behavior (#9) and was positively correlated with seventeen out of eighteen inappropriate humor behaviors. These results indicated that as students became more verbally aggressive they perceived the teachers' use of disparaging and offensive humor as more appropriate for the classroom. This finding is very consistent with the conceptualization of VA and the use of humor as a socially acceptable means of being aggressive (Infante et al., 1992).

Student communication competence had some small significant correlations with several appropriate humor behaviors, particularly those related to course content, and several negative correlations with inappropriate humor

behaviors, particular those that were disparaging. This finding was consistent with the conceptualization of competence. People who are communicatively competent are more sensitive and responsive to others, making them more other-oriented, and therefore communicatively competent students should perceive those behaviors that are potentially harmful to others as more inappropriate. These results taken together indicate that what students perceive as appropriate use of humor by teachers is influenced by their own communication dispositions.

The third explanation was based on teacher characteristics and explored how the teachers' communication in the classroom influences whether humor is perceived by students as appropriate or inappropriate and was addressed by RQ3. The canonical correlation analysis indicated that disparaging, unrelated, offensive, and self-disparaging humor were positively associated with teacher HO and VA. Additionally, related humor was positively associated with teacher nonverbal immediacy and conversational appropriateness and negatively associated with VA. These results provide evidence that how students perceive humor is influenced by other teacher behaviors, most notably HO, VA, and immediacy. This conclusion is further supported when the correlations in Table 4 are examined. Teacher nonverbal immediacy was primarily correlated with appropriate humor behaviors. The only inappropriate humor behavior it was associated with was sarcasm, a behavior that appeared in both appropriate and inappropriate categories (Wanzer et al., 2006). Teacher HO was positively correlated with several humor behaviors, even several inappropriate behaviors. Behaviors 24, 25, 27, 31, 36, and 38 in Table 4 are all behaviors that might be described as "on the edge." These include behaviors such as teasing students, basing jokes on stereotypes, sexual jokes, and vulgar behavior. People who are humor oriented are "funny people" who are better at delivering jokes than those who are less humor oriented (Wanzer, M. Booth-Butterfield, & S. Booth-Butterfield, 1995). Perhaps high HO teachers can pull off these humor forms that are a bit on the edge. Drawing on incongruity-resolution theory, perhaps high HO teachers are able to communicate the incongruity in such a way that students understand it. It also should be noted that teacher HO was not correlated with humor behaviors that targeted specific groups or individual students in a disparaging way. As predicted by disposition theory, students did not perceive these forms of humor as appropriate even when a funny teacher used them. Students' perceptions of teachers' communication appropriateness had few significant correlations with the humor behaviors, although correlations were generally positive with appropriate behaviors and negative with inappropriate behaviors.

While many of the relationships identified in this study between teacher characteristics (nonverbal immediacy, HO, and communication competence) and ratings of humor appropriateness could be described as slight to small, the

correlations between teacher verbal aggression and inappropriate teacher humor were a bit more substantial. For example, when students perceived the teacher as verbally aggressive, they also indicated that it was more appropriate for this same teacher to tease students about their intelligence (r =.46). Similarly, it was also more appropriate for verbally aggressive teachers to tease students based on their sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations and ethnic or racial background. Seventeen out of the eighteen inappropriate humor behaviors were positively and significantly associated with teacher verbal aggression. This was the same pattern identified when examining the relationships between student VA and student ratings of inappropriate types of humor. Students perceived it as appropriate for verbally aggressive teachers to use both the disparaging and offensive types of inappropriate humor behaviors. These ratings of perceived appropriateness were probably rooted in students' expectations for these teachers based on their experience with the teacher and do not necessarily indicate that students "liked" teachers using these forms of humor.

This research has advanced our understanding of teacher humor in the classroom. Previous research has described the types of humor used by teachers (Bryant et al., 1979; Downs et al., 1988; Gorham & Christophel, 1990) and linked humor to learning (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), but has not provided concrete guidelines to teachers about how and when to use humor effectively and appropriately. In Wanzer et al.'s (2006) effort to identify appropriate and inappropriate humor behaviors, they noted overlap between several of the categories. In this study we offered three explanations for the overlap and to explain variations in student perceptions of teacher humor. The results indicate that a combination of the three explanations advanced is responsible for describing the variance in ratings of humor appropriateness. As predicted by disposition theory, there are some forms of humor (particularly disparaging humor) that are consistently perceived by students as inappropriate. When students evaluated a general versus a specific teacher, the means of humor appropriateness level were very similar. Items defined as "appropriate" by Wanzer et al. (2006) were rated as more appropriate by both groups, and items that were "inappropriate" were rated as less appropriate by both groups. This consistency in evaluation provides support for the normative influence on the perception of appropriateness. Student predispositions further explain why the same humor behavior can be perceived as both appropriate and inappropriate. Examining the data further, the researchers found small, but significant relationships between student VA, HO and communication competence. Most interesting is the correlation between student VA and high ratings of inappropriate items on the scale. Verbally aggressive students view the "borderline" and risky types of humor as being more appropriate. Therefore, the students' personality characteristics do seem to affect how appropriate they rate types of teacher humor. Finally, teacher

communication behaviors, particularly nonverbal immediacy, HO and VA seem to influence the interpretation of the humor behaviors. HO, while also correlated with appropriate humor, was positively correlated with a few inappropriate behaviors. This suggests that how the teacher delivers the humor does have an effect on how it is received by the students. The correlations between teacher VA and inappropriate humor types were more pronounced. If these results are due to expectations of that teacher using certain humor behaviors, then it seems to follow that the way the teacher acts in the classroom, and exhibits his/her personality affects the way in which students will subsequently evaluate his/her humor usage.

Limitations and Future Research

A major limitation of this study is that students did not report on teachers' actual use of the humor behaviors. The students who were asked to report on a specific teacher were still evaluating them on the categories of humor that were provided. Since they were basing their evaluation on the imagined use of the humor types given, it is unknown whether the specific teacher actually used those behaviors. Future research needs to examine teachers' actual use of these behaviors and their relationship to other teacher communication behaviors as well as to student outcomes.

Another limitation is that the correlations that were found were mainly small. Additionally the large numbers of correlations calculated in Table 4 are vulnerable to Type I error and therefore should be interpreted with caution. This means that generalizing the results of this study without further investigation would not be warranted. It is useful though to use these results as a preliminary investigation and provide a framework for the design of future studies.

Information about the likelihood of a given teacher to use such humor behaviors cannot be deduced from these results. In the future, it would be useful to determine how often teachers use these humor behaviors to see if the level of humor usage has an effect on how appropriately it is viewed. It is possible that an over usage of even appropriate types may be detrimental. By continuing this line of research, significant conclusions about the appropriateness of using certain humor types in the classroom will be reached.

Endnote

[1]On the surface it appears that there should be 51 items since there are 51 subcategories. However because of the overlap in the categories and the two non-specific categories, all humor behaviors could be reflected with 41 items.

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Table 1

Humor Behavior Factor Structure

	Disparag-ing	Related	Unrelated	Offen-sive	Self-Disparaging
Use humor related to course material.		.66			
Use funny props to illustrate a concept or as an example.		.77			
Tell a joke related to course content.		.68			
Tell a humorous story related to course content		.62			
Performs or acts out course material to illustrate concepts.		.81			
Facilitates student role-play exercises to illustrate course content.		.78			
Uses language in creative and funny ways to describe course material.		.64			
Tells stories unrelated to course content.			.92		
Tells jokes unrelated to course content.			.83		
Uses critical, cynical or is sarcastic humor about general topics (not related to the course).			.82		
Makes fun of him/herself in class.					.86
Tells embarrassing stories about him/herself.					.88
Makes fun of him/herself when he/she makes mistakes in class.					.74
Uses vulgar language or nonverbal behaviors in a humorous way.				.72	
Makes references to drinking or getting drunk in a humorous way.				.93	
Talks about drugs or other illegal activities in a humorous way.				.82	
Picks on students in class about their intelligence.	.77				
Makes humorous comments about a student's personal life or personal	.71				

interests.

Singles out a student about he/she is dressed to be funny.	.80				
Tease or make a joke about a student based on the student's gender.	.86				
Make humorous comments about a student's religion.	.92				
Tells jokes or makes humorous comments based on stereotypes	.68				
Tells jokes that target specific racial or ethnic groups.	.87				
Uses humor targeted as specific religious groups.	.81				
Uses jokes or other humor target at homosexuals.	.85				
Disparaging	1.0	-.09	.36	.46	.22
Related Humor		1.0	.29	.24	.29
Unrelated Humor			1.0	.38	.41
Offensive Humor				1.0	.36

Table 2

Humor Behavior Means

Appropriate Humor Behaviors	Group A (General Teacher)	Group B (Specific Teacher)
1-Use humor related to course material.	4.44	4.16
2-Use funny props to illustrate a concept or as an example.	4.14	3.86
3-Tell a joke related to course content.	4.33	4.17
4-Tell a story related to course content.	4.38	4.27
5-Is critical or cynical of course material, such as using sarcasm.	3.09	3.08
6-Uses stereotypical college student behavior as examples to illustrate course content (.e.g., beer drinking examples).	3.75	3.67
7-Teases students in a lighthearted way or uses students in class as examples of course content.	3.27	3.35
8-Performs or acts out course material to illustrate concepts.	4.06	3.72
9-Facilitates student role-play exercises to illustrate course content.	3.86	3.62
10-Uses language in creative and funny ways to describe course material.	4.16	3.98
11-Tells stories unrelated to course content.	3.29	3.38
12-Tells jokes unrelated to course content.	3.17	3.24
13-Uses critical, cynical or is sarcastic humor about general topics (not related to the course).	2.85	2.97
14-Makes comments about stereotypical college student behavior.	3.40	3.52
15-Teases students in class.	2.37	2.56
16-Performs or puts on an act in class to be funny.	2.86	2.95
17-Uses puns or other forms of word play in class.	3.69	3.58
18-Makes humorous comments about current and political events.	3.39	3.44
19-Uses funny props or media unrelated to the course material.	2.88	2.86
20-Makes fun of him/herself in class.	3.68	3.71
21-Tells embarrassing stories about him/herself.	3.56	3.52
22-Makes fun of him/herself when he/she makes mistakes in class.	3.91	3.78
23-He/she does things unintentionally that are funny (e.g.	3.23	3.24

trips over a student's foot).

Inappropriate Humor Behaviors		
24-Tells sexual jokes or makes sexual comments.	1.95	2.01
25-Uses vulgar language or nonverbal behaviors in a humorous way.	2.28	2.34
26-Makes references to drinking or getting drunk in a humorous way.	2.74	2.78
27-Tells humorous stories about his/her personal life.	3.57	3.51
28-Talks about drugs or other illegal activities in a humorous way.	2.27	2.34
29-Uses morbid humor such as joking about death or severe injuries.	1.88	1.98
30-Uses sarcasm in class.	3.64	3.54
31-Teases students in class about their intelligence.	1.74	1.80
32-Makes humorous comments about a student's personal life or personal interests.	1.88	1.95
33-Tease a student about he/she is dressed.	1.61	1.69
34-Tease or make a joke about a student based on the student's gender.	1.73	1.71
35-Make humorous comments about a student's religion.	1.38	1.55
36-Tells jokes or makes humorous comments based on stereotypes	2.22	2.27
37-Tells jokes that target specific racial or ethnic groups.	1.43	1.69
38-Uses humor targeted at others teachers.	2.36	2.26
39-Uses humor targeted as specific religious groups.	1.53	1.63
40-Uses jokes or other humor target at homosexuals.	1.45	1.59
41-Humor that disparages a certain political affiliation.	2.14	2.02

Table 3

Humor Behaviors and Student Characteristics Canonical Correlations and Coefficients

Variables	Canonical Correlations	Canonical Coefficients
Humor Types		
Disparaging Humor	.94	.82
Related Humor	-.35	-.34
Unrelated Humor	.20	-.00
Offensive Humor	.55	.24
Self-Disparaging Humor	.11	-.11
Student Characteristics		
Humor Orientation	.13	.35
Verbal Aggressiveness	.76	.58
Communication Competence	-.72	-.72

Table 4

Humor Behavior Correlations with Student and Teacher Characteristics

Appropriate Humor Behaviors	**SHO**	**SVA**	**SCC**	**NVI**	**THO**	**TCA**	**TVA**
1-Use humor related to course material.	.16*	.05	.08	.29*	.25*	.19*	-.13
2-Use funny props to illustrate a concept or as an example.	.12*	.00	.21*	.23*	.19*	.01	.03
3-Tell a joke related to course content.	.15*	.03	.15*	.27*	.21*	.19*	-.18*
4-Tell a story related to course content.	.17*	-.04	.24*	.30*	.21*	.10	-.14
5-Is critical or cynical of course material, such as using sarcasm.	.15*	.20*	.01	.10	.09	-.09	.07
6-Uses stereotypical college student behavior as examples to illustrate course content (.e.g., beer drinking examples).	.04	.22*	.14*	.35*	.27*	.16	-.11
7-Teases students in a lighthearted way or uses students in class as examples of course content.	.00	.07	.02	.33*	.26*	.04	.00
8-Performs or acts out course material to illustrate concepts.	.12*	-.01	.20*	.17*	.18*	.03	-.03
9-Facilitates student role-play exercises to illustrate course content.	.10	-.18*	.19*	.20*	.14	.00	-.03
10-Uses language in creative and funny ways to describe course material.	.10	-.03	.18*	.20*	.15	.13	-.11
11-Tells stories unrelated to course content.	.07	.13	.08	.17*	.21	-.05	.16*
12-Tells jokes unrelated to course content.	.11*	.22*	.07	.14	.25*	-.03	.19*
13-Uses critical, cynical or is sarcastic humor about general topics (not related to the course).	.08	.13	.05	.05	.22*	-.08	.20*
14-Makes comments about stereotypical college student behavior.	.09	.11	.07	.33*	.27*	.01	-.02
15-Teases students in class.	.04	.22*	-.08	.06	.19*	-.15	.19*
16-Performs or puts on an act in class to be funny.	.14*	.07	-.02	.04	.15	-.19*	.20*
17-Uses puns or other forms of word play in class.	.13*	.05	.04	.07	.09	.07	-.15
18-Makes humorous comments about current and political events.	.08	.02	.01	.25*	.37*	.05	.01
19-Uses funny props or media unrelated to the course material.	.13*	.16*	.07	.06	.26*	-.14	.26*
20-Makes fun of him/herself in class.	.08	.09	.04	.13	.22*	.00	-.05
21-Tells embarrassing stories about him/herself.	.03	.13	.00	.18	.23*	.01	.04

22-Makes fun of him/herself when he/she makes mistakes in class.	.12*	.03	.17*	.05	.09	-.07	.01
23-He/she does things unintentionally that are funny (e.g. trips over a student's foot).	.00	.08	.10	-.01	.07	-.07	.19*
Inappropriate Humor Behaviors							
24-Tells sexual jokes or makes sexual comments.	.01	.24*	-.13	.09	.22*	-.17*	.29*
25-Uses vulgar language or nonverbal behaviors in a humorous way.	.09	.22*	-.11	.09	.16*	-.15	.27*
26-Makes references to drinking or getting drunk in a humorous way.	.08	.15*	.05	.04	.10	-.11	.13
27-Tells humorous stories about his/her personal life.	.07	.14	.05	.14	.18*	-.03	.06
28-Talks about drugs or other illegal activities in a humorous way.	.12*	.21*	-.04	.07	.10	-.17*	.17*
29-Uses morbid humor such as joking about death or severe injuries.	.08	.21*	-.11	-.01	.10	-.19*	.29*
30-Uses sarcasm in class.	.17*	.18*	.07	.18*	.15	.02	.02
31-Teases students in class about their intelligence.	-.01	.22*	-.17*	-.08	.16*	-.22*	.46*
32-Makes humorous comments about a student's personal life or personal interests.	.06	.22*	-.22*	.01	.12	-.17*	.29*
33-Tease a student about he/she is dressed.	.00	.19*	-.19*	-.05	.07	-.16	.28*
34-Tease or make a joke about a student based on the student's gender.	.06	.25*	-.12	-.03	.07	-.12	.21*
35-Make humorous comments about a student's religion.	-.01	.16*	-.18*	-.12	.06	-.15	.34*
36-Tells jokes or makes humorous comments based on stereotypes	.08	.25*	-.13	.06	.18*	-.10	.17*
37-Tells jokes that target specific racial or ethnic groups.	-.01	.29*	-.21*	-.09	.08	-.11	.30*
38-Uses humor targeted at others teachers.	.03	.25*	-.17*	.02	.17*	-.11	.27*
39-Uses humor targeted as specific religious groups.	.00	.28*	-.26*	-.08	.03	-.10	.23*
40-Uses jokes or other humor target at homosexuals.	.03	.25*	-.21*	-.10	.06	-.11	.26*
41-Humor that disparages a certain political affiliation.	-.01	.21*	-.10	-.03	.15	-.06	.20*

*p < .05

SHO=student humor orientation; **SVA**=student verbal aggressiveness; **SCC**=student communication competence; **NVI**=teacher nonverbal immediacy; **THO**=teacher humor orientation; **TCA**=teacher communication appropriateness; **TVA**=teacher verbal aggressiveness

Table 5

Humor Behaviors and Teacher Characteristics Canonical Correlations and Coefficients

Variables	First Canonical Correlation		Second Canonical Correlation	
Humor Types	Correlation	Coefficient	Correlation	Coefficient
Disparaging Humor	**.71**	.46	-.45	-.46
Related Humor	.42	.22	**.86**	.84
Unrelated Humor	**.92**	.68	.02	-.23
Offensive Humor	**.55**	-.11	.02	.11
Self-Disparaging Humor	**.48**	.03	.28	.25
Teacher Characteristics				
Nonverbal Immediacy	.41	.24	**.81**	.67
Humor Orientation	**.79**	.60	.43	.17
Conversational	-.17	-.08	.26	-.35
Appropriateness				
Verbal Aggressiveness	**.67**	.63	**-.69**	-.69