Is all humor created equal? On comic mechanisms used to integrate, separate or voice dissent

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Humor is a complex rhetorical phenomenon that people use and encounter in their daily lives. While humor has positive functions (Boxer and Conde 1997; de los Heros 2001; Holmes, Marra and Burns 2001; Norrick and Spitz 2008), it also has a negative side associated with stereotyping, mockery, and sarcasm (Billig 2005, Gillota 2013). This presentation relates to my long-term research on humorous mechanisms and social functions in Spanish comic television programs in Peru, Mexico, and the US. Here, I discuss the multimodal mechanisms and functions of humor employed in the media. My analytical framework combines "The General Theory of Verbal Humor" (Attardo and Raskin 1991), CDA, Snellix's (2009) classification of different types of humor in sitcoms, and the superiority model (Billig 2005). I begin by examining negative ethnic humor and boundary creation in Peruvian comic programs like "Telecholo" (1970's) and "La paisana Jacinta" (2000-2020) which mock Andean immigrants by "othering" them. I then analyze humor in the bilingual English-Spanish dramedy "Jane the Virgin " showing the disarticulation of negative stereotypes about Latinxs in the US. I finish with an overview of my most recent research in the Netflix series "La casa de las Flores" (2018-2020). I discuss how jocularity serves as a tool to denounce sexism and intolerant behaviors toward the LGBTQ communities in Mexico.

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