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**A Study of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black American Jokes
in the Light of the General Theory of Verbal Humor**

MA Thesis

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Abstract

Despite the vast research on the American folkloric repertoire, little research is done to closely investigate the stereotypical American repertoire of jokes and how far it can be a tell-tale guideline about the true status of ethnic and racial minority groups amid the American society. Employing a constructed framework of linguistic analysis adopted from Raskin and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) together with Mullen's analysis of verbal ethnophaulisms and the cognitive representation of minorities (2003; 2001) on the body of one hundred anti-Jewish and one hundred anti-black American jokes adopted from Wilde (1989), the researcher investigates a variety of stereotypical American jokes to examine the truth behind the American myth of the "melting pot." The researcher synthesizes the qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis so as to arrive at the most accurate findings possible. The implications of these findings are reviewed to arrive at an illuminating image on how far these linguistic disparagements mirror the way the recipient US society conceptualizes these minority social groups and therefore behaves towards them.

List of Abbreviations

GTVH: General Theory of Verbal Humor

SSTH: Semantic Script Theory of Humor

KR: Knowledge Resource

LA: Language

TA: Target

NS: Narrative Strategy

SI: Situation

LM: Logical Mechanism

SO: Script Opposition

Table of Contents

Part One: Theoretical Preliminaries.....	1
Chapter One: Introduction and Theoretical Framework.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	2
1.1.2 Source of Data.....	4
1.1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	7
1.1.4 Methodology.....	11
1.1.5 Chapterization.....	13
1.2 Theoretical Framework.....	17
1.2.1 The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH).....	18
1.2.1.1 Language (LA).....	24
1.2.1.2 Target (TA).....	29
1.2.1.3 Narrative Strategy (NS).....	31
1.2.1.4 Situation (SI).....	32
1.2.1.5 Logical Mechanism (LM).....	33
1.2.1.6 Script Opposition (SO).....	39

1.2.1.7 The KRs Hierarchy.....	40
1.2.2 Mullen's Verbal Ethnophaulisms and the Cognitive Representation of Minorities.....	41
1.2.2.1 The Complexity of Verbal Ethnophaulisms.....	45
1.2.2.2 The Valence of Verbal Ethnophaulisms.....	48
1.2.2.3 Attributes of Ethnic and Racial Immigrant Groups: Group Size, Physical and Cultural Familiarity.....	49
1.2.2.4 The Interaction between the Complexity and Valence of Ethnophaulisms and the Attributes of Minority Groups.....	52
Chapter Two: Review of Literature.....	54
2.1 Introduction.....	55
2.2 General Humor Theories: Preliminaries.....	57
2.1.1 Superiority Theories of Humor.....	58
2.1.2 Incongruity Theories of Humor.....	60
2.1.3 Release Theories of Humor and Freud.....	61

2.3 Linguistic Humor Theories: The Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH).....	64
2.3.1 The SSTH as the Precursor of the GTVH.....	64
2.3.2 Main Hypothesis of the SSTH.....	65
2.3.3 Analysis of a Sample Joke within the Framework of the SSTH.....	67
2.3.4 The Limitations of the SSTH.....	67
2.3.5 The Development of the SSTH into the GTVH.....	68
2.3.6 Critical Viewpoints against the GTVH.....	69
2.4 Recent Studies Based upon the GTVH.....	70
2.4.1 Elaborations and Follow-ups on the GTVH.....	70
2.4.2 The GTVH in the Field of Translation Studies.....	72
2.4.3 The GTVH in the Field of Sign Language.....	75
2.4.4 The GTVH in the Field of Audio-Visual Representations.....	76
2.4.5 The GTVH in the Field of Cross-Cultural Humor Studies.....	78
2.4.6 The GTVH in the Field of Political Humor.....	79

2.4.7 The GTVH in the Field of Socio-pragmatics	82
2.4.8 The GTVH in the Field of Humorous Narratives.....	83
2.4.9 The GTVH in the Field of Religious Jokes.....	83
2.5 The Multi-disciplinary Academic Study of Jokes: A Review of Literature.....	84
2.5.1 The Joke from Anthropological, Physiological and Social Viewpoints.....	84
2.5.2 The Stereotypical Repertoire of Jokes: A Survey of Relevant Studies.....	86
2.6 Mullen's Verbal Ethnophaulisms: Review of Literature.....	90
2.6.1 Palmore's Ethnocentrism: A Precursor for Mullen's Verbal Ethnophaulisms.....	90
2.6.2 Recent Studies Based upon Mullen's Verbal Ethnophaulisms...	93
2.7 The Contribution of the Current Study.....	94
Part Two: Application.....	97
Chapter Three: Application on One-Hundred Anti-Jewish American Jokes.....	97

3.1 The Jewish American Minority in the US.....	98
3.1.1 History, Population and Ancestry.....	98
3.1.2 Language.....	103
3.1.3 The Powerful Grab of the Jewish Minority on the Socioeconomics of the US.....	106
3.2 Preliminary Assumptions Based upon the Qualitative Analysis of Ten Sample Anti-Jewish American Jokes.....	108
3.2.1 Language in the Sample Jokes.....	112
3.2.2 Target in the Sample Jokes.....	116
3.2.3 Narrative Strategy in the Sample Jokes.....	118
3.2.4 Situation in the Sample Jokes.....	119
3.2.5 Logical Mechanism in the Sample Jokes.....	120
3.2.6 Script Opposition in the Sample Jokes.....	122
3.3 Findings of the Quantitative Analysis of the One Hundred anti-Jewish American Jokes in the Light of the GTVH.....	123
3.3.1 Language.....	123

3.3.2 Target.....	134
3.3.3 Narrative Strategy.....	138
3.3.4 Situation.....	141
3.3.5 Logical Mechanism.....	145
3.3.6 Script Opposition.....	154
3.4 Analysis of the Anti-Jewish American Jokes from the Perspective of Mullen's Theory of Verbal Ethnophaulisms.....	156
3.4.1 The Ethnophaulisms' Complexity.....	156
3.4.2 The Ethnophaulisms' Valence.....	165
3.4.3 The Interaction between the Complexity and Valence of Ethnophaulisms and the Attributes of the Jewish American as a Minority Group.....	166
Chapter Four: Application on One-Hundred Anti-Black American Jokes.....	170
4.1 The African American Minority in the US.....	171
4.1.1 History, Population and Ancestry.....	171
4.1.2 Language.....	176

4.1.3 The Socioeconomic Status of the African American Minority of the US.....	180
4.2 Preliminary Assumptions Based on the Qualitative Analysis of Ten Sample Anti-Black American Jokes.....	183
4.2.1 Language in the Sample Jokes.....	186
4.2.2 Target in the Sample Jokes.....	190
4.2.3 Narrative Strategy in the Sample Jokes.....	192
4.2.4 Situation in the Sample Jokes.....	194
4.2.5 Logical Mechanism in the Sample Jokes.....	195
4.2.6 Script Opposition in the Sample Jokes.....	199
4.3 Findings of the Quantitative Analysis of the One Hundred Anti-Black American Jokes.....	200
4.3.1 Language.....	200
4.3.2 Target.....	208
4.3.3 Narrative Strategy.....	211
4.3.4 Situation.....	217

4.3.5 Logical Mechanism.....	224
4.3.6 Script Opposition.....	234
4.4 Analysis of the Anti-Black American Jokes from the Perspective of Mullen’s Theory of Verbal Ethnophaulisms.....	236
4.4.1 The Ethnophaulisms’ Complexity.....	236
4.4.2 The Ethnophaulisms’ Valence.....	239
4.4.3 The Interaction between the Complexity and Valence of Ethnophaulisms and the Attributes of the African American as a Minority Group.....	240
Conclusion.....	243
5.1 The Aim and Framework of the Study: A Brief Overview.....	244
5.2 The Analysis Findings: Significance and Implications.....	245
5.2.1 A Survey of the Findings of the GTVH Analysis.....	245
5.2.2 A Survey of the Analysis Findings of Mullen’s Theory of Verbal Ethnophaulisms.....	255
5.3 Recommendations for Further Research.....	260

Appendix of the Findings.....	265
Appendix 1: A detailed account of the statistical results of the analysis of GTVH six parameters.....	265
Appendix 1.1: Statistical results of the LA parameter analysis.....	265
Appendix 1.2: Statistical results of the TA parameter analysis.....	272
Appendix 1.3: Statistical results of the NS parameter analysis.....	274
Appendix 1.4: Statistical results of the SI parameter analysis.....	275
Appendix 1.5: Statistical results of the LM parameter analysis.....	276
Appendix 1.6: Statistical results of the SO parameter analysis.....	277
References.....	278

Part One: Theoretical Preliminaries

Chapter One: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

The present study attempts to undertake a linguistic analysis of ethnic and racial American jokes targeted against minority social groups, such as the Jews and the blacks. The theoretical framework adopted in this study is a joint linguistic framework the researcher constructs through integrating Raskin and Attardo's the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) together with Mullen's linguistic analysis of verbal ethnophaulisms in his linguistic-cultural theory of verbal ethnophaulisms and the cognitive representation of minorities (2003; 2001). The GTVH is developed by Raskin and Attardo (1991), and is further elaborated in Attardo (2001; 1994). The GTVH is chosen for being one of the most encompassing and comprehensive linguistic theories of humor because it is applicable to all types of verbal humor. The GTVH mainly analyzes every joke according to six parameters or knowledge resources (KRs) which are: language (LA), narrative strategy (NS), target (TA), situation (SI), logical mechanism (LM) and script opposition (SO). The GTVH is considered the backbone for the linguistic analysis of jokes in the body of the corpus of the present thesis.

On the other hand, Mullen's linguistic analysis of verbal ethnophaulisms with regard to their complexity and valence is considered the genesis of his cultural theory on how the verbal ethnophaulisms directed against given minority groups mirror the way the recipient society thinks