

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT: Powerless Targets and Opposite Scripts in Ethnic Jokes of Stand-Up Comedy

STUDENT: Amanda Kmetz

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While stereotypes and discrimination are typically viewed negatively, popular culture has the ability to covertly further stereotypes that potentially lead to racial discrimination (Lippi-Green, 1997). In one area of popular culture, stand-up comedy, it is very common to hear jokes containing what are commonly referred to as ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ slurs. In the context of humor, these jokes can be classified as ‘ethnic jokes’ and may serve to disparage one group by casting them in an unfavorable role (Mintz, 1998). The stand-up routines in the comedic sector of the entertainment industry are peppered with disparaging, stereotypical ethnic jokes. The mask of comedy has all but deemed this brand of joke acceptable. Unfortunately, ethnic jokes that have appeared in the context of stand-up comedy have scarcely been studied in the literature. One unique feature of stand-up comedy is the expectation of new and innovative jokes, including those jokes classified as ‘ethnic’. The ethnicity of the stand-up comedian could be influential in determining the ethnicity of the target of his or her jokes. This research will investigate the relationship between a stand-up comedian’s and the target’s ethnicity.