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Inherent within the design of the study was a test of Reference Group Theory predictions, which suggested that the general hypothetical formulations would be upheld due to an individual's perception of himself as a member of a particular reference group.

In devising a humor assessment instrument, initial cartoons were selected on the basis of a general racial theme. The final instrument contained five humor

categories: 1) Within Race Aggression, 2) Within Race Neutral, 3) Black Over White Aggression, 4) White Over Black Aggression, and 5) Between Race Neutral. The categories of Black Over White Aggression (pro-black) and White Over Black Aggression (pro-white) were the two main categories relating to the hypotheses. The "Buss-Durkee Inventory for Assessing Different Kinds of Hostility" (BDI) was used to assess a global measure of hostility intensity.

Eighty-four male subjects (10 black, 74 white) participated in this investigation. Each subject was enrolled in one-of-several undergraduate psychology courses at a large midwestern university. Each subject also received experimental course credit for his participation. One black experimenter administered all of the materials to each of twenty-one groups.

Independently, four subjects were requested to come to a prearranged room at a prescheduled time. Upon their arrival, the experimenter gave each a Cartoon Booklet, its corresponding rating sheet, and a sheet of instructions. The experimenter then left the room for exactly 10 minutes while the subjects completed their ratings. They were then

given the BDI. Upon completion of this task they were released. The complete procedure averaged 40 minutes.

The results were analyzed through a multi-variate approach applied to the repeated measures design. Significant results indicated that: 1) Reference Group Theory predictions were correct to the extent that blacks enjoyed pro-black humor more than whites, while whites enjoyed pro-white humor more than blacks; and 2) two distinctly modish operandum were apparent between black and white subjects with regard to hostility intensity and racial humor (i.e., black subjects displayed negative attitude--white subjects displayed more indirect hostility).

The question of "What is humor?" was discussed in conjunction with methodological suggestions and other considerations for future research in the area.

THE INFLUENCE OF RACIAL GROUP COMPOSITION
ON RACIAL-AGGRESSIVE HUMOR
APPRECIATION: A TEST OF
REFERENCE GROUP THEORY

By
Joseph Roy Webber

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Psychology

1974

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The many contributions of the members of my committee, toward both my professional and personal development, can not be adequately expressed. My association with Dr. Andrew "Andy" Barclay has been singularly most important. His guidance, patience, counseling, and sensitivity have been of incalculable value to me. I also wish to acknowledge the efforts of Dr. William Crano, Dr. Elaine Donelson, and Dr. Gary Stollak in seeing this work through to completion.

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF RACIAL GROUP COMPOSITION
ON RACIAL-AGGRESSIVE HUMOR APPRECIATION:
A TEST OF REFERENCE GROUP THEORY

By

Joseph Roy Webber

This investigation attempted to examine that broadly defined human characteristic known as a "sense of humor." A few of the more identifiable aspects of humor included its function as a tension-anxiety reducer; its relation to the affective or emotional aspect of individual temperament composition; and its potential as a pleasure inducing mechanism. Furthermore, it was assumed that the dynamics of racial humor could be explained in terms of their relationship to a broadly defined unconscious component of the psyche such as repression.

Specifically, this investigation attempted to determine the extent to which a black person would influence the white persons in a group of which he was a member on a humor appreciation rating task. General predictions suggested

that: 1) black subjects would find aggressive humor funnier than white subjects, 2) black subjects would find pro-black humor funnier than anti-black humor, and 3) a positive relationship would exist between racial humor appreciation and a global dimension of covert aggression (as a presumed consequence of the differences between black and white life-experiences). Moreover, it endeavored to determine the influence of a black individual upon three white individuals, all of which comprised a racially "heterogeneous" group; and the degree of apparent influence when the white individuals of a racially "heterogeneous" group were compared to the white individuals of a racially "homogeneous" control group. The assessment of the magnitude of that influence was arbitrarily termed the "influence effect."

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Eighty-four male subjects (10 black, 74 white) participated in this investigation. Each subject was enrolled in one-of-several undergraduate psychology courses at a large midwestern university. Each subject also received experimental course credit for his participation. One black experimenter administered all of the materials to each of twenty-one groups.

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This manuscript is dedicated

--with love--

to my mom,

Mrs. Emma May Webber

(Aunt "Buddy" if you will).

A rare Gemini

for sure!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

That broadly defined human characteristic known as a "sense of humor" may be construed as both encompassing, and yet contingent upon, other personality-situational-motivational aspects of an individual's life experiences. Conceivably, the relation between humor and these other variables is not clearly understood. Fortunately, psychologists and other behaviorally oriented researchers tend to agree that a "sense of humor" is an important and valuable personality trait [Shellberg: 1969(a), 1969(b)].

Several researchers (Redlich & Bingham, 1953; Flugel, 1954) have analyzed humor in the context of its dynamic or energetic influence upon human behavior; while the scholarly efforts of Goldstein and McGhee (1972) contribute much insight with respect to the many theoretical issues involved in the psychology of humor.

A few of the more identifiable aspects of humor include its function as a tension-anxiety reducer; its

relation to the affective or emotional aspect of individual temperament composition; its potential as a pleasure inducing mechanism; and in general, its many conative functions which tend to be intricately bound within the individual's perceptual gestalt of his environment.

This investigation assumes that the dynamics of racial humor may be explained in terms of their relationship to a broadly defined unconscious psychic-component commonly referred to as repression, i.e., the Freudian conceptualization of humor functioning. However, it is currently widely acknowledged that the psychic-mechanism of suppression may play an equal--if not more important--role within the milieu of humor preference. Thus, an individual's humor preferences at any given time may be the effect of unconscious strivings (repression), or they may be conscious attempts (suppression) to selectively cope with the immediate situation. The resolution of this apparent controversy has typically been to credit both repression and suppression as being of significant influence in any particular humor situation. Perhaps, the most conservative statement that might be made concerning this issue would necessarily take into account both factors. Empirical evidence, this investigation not excluded, tends

to base its hypothetical formulations upon the repressed aspects of the individual; while acknowledging the more suppressed or pre-conscious aspects as being situationally manipulatable sources of investigation.

Typically, paper-and-pencil inventories have been used as an index of the subject's affective state either prior to, during, or following the experimental manipulations. In attempting to explain differences and identify various constituents of the humor phenomenon, researchers have utilized several well-known assessment instruments such as The Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale, The Buss-Durkee Inventory for Assessing Different Kinds of Hostility, The California F-Scale, The Mirth Response Test, and other similarly conceived measures.

Though this particular investigation centers around the Buss-Durkee Inventory (BDI), it does not address itself to the issue of whether or not truly unconscious or repressed aspects of the psyche are in fact measurable at all. Simply, it is incorporated here as the most viable available measurement index--insight of other less appealing options.

Most of the literature in the area of humor appreciation suggests that: 1) individuals will possess different levels of hostility at any given point in time

depending upon the nature of their aggressive temperament and/or the situation; 2) individuals will respond differentially to a specific type of humor depending upon the extent to which they relate to the plight of the antagonist or the antics of the protagonist; and 3) individuals of minority groups often fail to exhibit the predicted response pattern with regard to humor appreciation--though the reasons remain unclear and open to speculation.

Mainly, this investigation attempts to determine the extent to which a black person will influence the white persons in a group of which he is a member, with respect to a humor appreciation rating task. General predictions suggest that: 1) black subjects will exhibit a higher humor appreciation score, 2) black subjects will exhibit a higher total aggression score, and 3) cartoons which are pro-black in content will be rated funnier by blacks than any other category of cartoons: while white subjects will rate pro-white cartoons funnier than any other category of cartoons.

Inherent within the structure of this investigation is a test of Reference Group Theory predictions. Reference Group Theory suggests that an individual's perceptions of himself as a member of a particular reference group will

cause him to: relate to, uphold the honor of, and generally defend the persons and behavior of that group (i.e., beliefs, values, and attitudes). Thus this investigation also attempts to determine the extent to which this basic prediction will be upheld on a humor-rating task using racially heterogenous and homogenous groups.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL RELATIONSHIPS IN HUMOR APPRECIATION

Relationship Between Repression and Humor

Freud (1916, 1928) made inferences as to how humorous one would find a particular joke or kind of joke. He suggested that repressed unconscious strivings contribute to the pleasure evoked by jokes; hence, the production or appreciation of tendentious humorous material reduces aggressive tensions.

He postulated further that repressed or covert behavior would eventually manifest itself in some more evidence aspect of behavior. Thus, if an individual harbored a great deal of repressed aggression, it is probable that he would find aggressive humor stimuli "funnier" than humor stimuli with less aggressive content. That is to say, the more repressed aggression an individual harbors, the greater should be his enjoyment of aggressive or hostile humor material.

Moreover, in an attempt to discover the source of pleasure derived from humor, Freud assumed that "pleasure proceeded from a saving in expenditure of affect." Shellberg [1969(a)], much in the Freudian tradition, suggested that laughter or amusement followed from a saving of "mental work." Thus, the individual is prepared to spend a certain amount of psychic energy in any particular encounter, but finds that the energy actually needed is less than anticipated when it is channeled into or somehow attached to humorous material.

Epstein and Smith (1956) sought to obtain a measure of preference for a certain type of humor, to obtain an independent measure of repression, and to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the two as a means of evaluating the Freudian hypothesis. First, subjects were instructed to rate, and then sort (i.e., judge one cartoon relative to all other cartoons) a set of 16 cartoons--8 hostile and 8 nonhostile. During this procedure, facial expressions were unobtrusively recorded by the examiner. Second, through utilization of a peer-group rating technique, subjects were placed into one-of-three groups (over-estimators, slight underestimators, and considerable underestimators) according to the discrepancy

between self-ratings and the ratings of others on a number of statements felt to relate to hostility. Absolute discrepancy without regard to direction along these same dimensions was held to be a measure of insight. Thus, an index of repression and insight was obtained by subtracting from the self-rating of hostility on a Q-sort task, the mean rating by others on the same task.

Across groups, the significant results indicated that the hostile cartoons were rated more favorable than the control or nonhostile cartoons: and that some of the hostile cartoons were judged funnier than others. However, the results failed to support the hypothesis that repression of hostility is related to a general preference for hostile cartoons per se. But, the investigators attempted to explain this rather negative finding by suggesting that perhaps a significant relationship exists between repressed hostility and a preference for certain types of hostile cartoons. Moreover, they suggested that suppression (conscious inhibition) rather than repression (unconscious inhibition) would yield more significant findings in support of the Freudian hypothesis. Somewhat ironically, they found a significant relationship between insight and humor. They theoretically hypothesized that the two are related,

to the extent that one has the ability to accept the self as object in-and-of the humor.

Relationship Between Drive Level and Humor

As an extension of Freud's early work in this milieu, Strickland (1958) proposed that pleasure derived from responding positively to humorous material is a result of gratification of unconscious wishes or motivations that would remain repressed under ordinary circumstances. In this sense, humor then becomes a legitimate form of drive or tension reduction. Hence, in keeping with Freud's earlier position, the drive has been channeled into a more socially acceptable outlet. Within the realm of such formulations, Strickland (1959) investigated the influence of different types of motivation (blocked hostility expression and sexual arousal) on the appreciation of aggressive and sexual humor. He sought evidence to support the assumption that the psychological defense mechanisms of suppression and displacement may be of equal importance to repression as motivators of humor appreciation.

The results of the first experimental condition (hostility arousal) indicated clearly that the aroused

subjects preferred cartoons of a hostile nature over those of either neutral or sexual content. In the second condition (sexual arousal) a similar finding showed a significant preference for sexual cartoons by those subjects who were subjected to sexually oriented material prior to rating a set of cartoons which included sex, hostility, and neutral themes. However, a control group of subjects (i.e., no sexual or hostility arousal manipulations prior to rating the cartoons) showed a significant preference for the sexual cartoons over either of the other content categories. Lastly, Strickland found that neutral cartoons in the sexual group were more strongly preferred than either the sexual or neutral cartoon in the hostility group.

These findings demonstrate the sensitivity of humor appreciation to situational factors--especially regarding nonhostile material. Hence, the arousal of hostility without allowing for its overt expression tends to clearly result in a preference for hostile humor; whereas this trend is not so clearly supported within the context of other types of humor. Moreover, Strickland contends that suppression, and not repression, is the more important factor influencing humor appreciation because the subject's

response to humor is so readably controllable through experimental manipulation.

Assuming that the specificity of the aroused drive and the humorous stimulus which theoretically evokes a drive reducing response is crucial (as suggested by Byrne, 1958); Shurcliff (1968) designed an experiment in which a humor stimulus was selected that was thought to directly relate to the source of anxiety. He investigated the specific "relief theory" notion that one direct function of humor is the reduction of strong affect or arousal; suggesting then that the greater the subject's arousal prior to relief, the greater should be the judged humor. Some three levels of prior arousal were utilized in testing the possibility of an inverted U-shaped function as depictive of the relation between humor and prior arousal. The major hypothesis of this study was confirmed, although the relation between humor and prior arousal appeared monotonic rather than U-shaped, as he had suspected.

Shurcliff also suggested that "surprisingness" is an independent predictor of judged humor. Thus, when subjects expected an unwelcomed task and were surprisingly pleased to know that the task itself was an experimentally manipulated joke, they had a high humor appreciation

rating in direct relation to self-reported degrees of surprise. Lastly, Shurcliff was in accord with other investigators (Byrne, 1958; Strickland, 1959) in suggesting "specificity" and "appropriateness" as important factors with regard to the effectiveness of humor as a tension or affect-aroused reducing agent.

Shurcliff's argument is buttressed by Redlich, Levine, and Sohler (1951). They contend that, "the saving in psychic energy from responding to humorous stimuli is accomplished through a sudden breaking through of instinctual drives in a way which makes them acceptable to the ego so that counter cathexes becomes unnecessary." In general, this breaking-through phenomena is experienced as pleasurable and tends to serve an anxiety-reduction or avoidance function with respect to humorous material. Similarly, Kris (1936, 1938, 1940) assigned humor a double function in relation to anxiety by suggesting that, "humor is based on already-mastered anxiety while at the same time its function is to overcome anxiety" (Redlich, et al., 1951). Subsequently, Redlich, et al. suggest that condensation, displacement, and distortion are particularly relevant techniques of symbolization found in both humor responses

and dream recollections; while playfulness, incongruity, and absurdity were construed as other important elements in humor.

Relationship Between Hostility and Humor

Burma (1946) suggested that humor stimuli may conceal malice and allow for the expression of aggression without incurring the often dire consequences had the behavior been expressed in a more overt manner. Furthermore, he postulated that expressive acts may aid humor in its adaptability as a means of conflict expression. Hence, conflict in humor is expressed to a large extent by means of irony, satire, sarcasm, caricature, parody, and the like. The general assumption that humor stimuli contained concealed malice was supported by Stephenson (1951), who felt in addition, that humor was an idea source for depicting conflict.

Singer (1968) examined the possible tension-reduction functions of hostile humor in relation to themes of revenge and destruction. He predicted that: 1) Angered subjects would show enhanced appreciation of hostile humor directed at the target of the aroused aggressive impulses

(the "hate object"); 2) Exposure to hostile humor would provide a reduction of aggressive impulse strength for previously angered subjects; and 3) Of aroused individuals; those reporting the most enjoyment of hostile humor would show the greatest reduction in aggressive motivation.

In general, Singer's experimental strategy was to mobilize intense aggressive feelings toward segregationists and white supremacists in Negro subjects, and then to examine the effects of hostile antisegregationist humor, nonhostile humor, and benign nonhumorous material delivered by Negro performers. The findings indicated no significant differences among groups which could be attributable either to arousal or humor content manipulations. Thus, the major prediction went unsupported, i.e., angered subjects did not show enhanced appreciation of hostile humor directed at the "hate object." However, hostile humor was found to be aggression reducing for aroused subjects in accord with the second prediction. Differential findings for the third prediction suggested that subjects who appreciated the hostile humor derived some reduction in tension, but those who failed to enjoy hostile humor experienced an increase in tension level instead. The overall conclusion of this investigation appeared to be that, no simple one-to-one

relationship is identifiable between the strength of aggressive impulses and appreciation of hostile humor.

In a similar investigation based upon the psychoanalytic notion of humor as a reducer of tension, Singer, Gollob, and Levine (1967) hypothesized that

a marked heightening of inhibitions surrounding the expression of aggression will result in decreased ability to enjoy aggressive humor, but will not effect nonaggressive humor. This effect should become more pronounced as the intensity of aggression in the humorous material increases.

The investigators varied the intensity of interpersonal aggression depicted in a set of cartoons; while arranging the set to depict both "direct" and "mitigated" aggression along a mild-high aggression continuum. In the direct-aggression cartoons, an overtly aggressive act and aggressive motives were frankly portrayed; while in the mitigated-aggression cartoons, interpersonal destruction and aggressive intent were diluted. The major hypothesis was confirmed; however, subsequent predictions regarding mitigated cartoons did not reach statistical significance.

Gollob and Levine (1967) sought to identify interpersonal aspects of aggression with respect to tendentious (sexual or aggressive function) jokes and nontentious (innocent) jokes. Within the Freudian notion that

"distraction" must accompany tendentious humor if it is to provide psychic pleasure, they hypothesized that cartoons depicting a high degree of interpersonal aggression, while rated the most humorous on a pretest would on a posttest be rated significantly less funny than either low-aggressive or innocent cartoons. With reservation, as to differential pressures in relation to social desirability of responses; the major hypothesis was confirmed.

Three questions which Dworkin and Efran (1967) attempted to answer were: 1) What is the effect of humor on anger?; 2) What effect does anger have on a person's appreciation of humor?; and 3) Does the content of the humor make a difference? Though far from conclusive, the results indicated that anger appears to lead the individual to respond selectively to humor of hostile content; rather than to make people more appreciative to humor per se. Hence, people tend to respond more strongly to humor stimuli which in some way parallels their present cognitions. Exposure to humorous material does however seem to significantly mitigate or lessen feelings of hostility and anxiety. Lastly, though not surprisingly so, the results indicated that people who were angry responded more positively to hostile humor than did persons who were not angry.

Gutman and Priest (1969) investigated social perception as having a major influence on the appreciation of hostile humor. They contend that "intentionality is implied in the very definition of aggression," but that this is an often ignored problem in most humor studies. Using the "squelch" (i.e., an aggressor and a victim interact) as humor stimuli, they contend that there are two social perceptions which could influence the subject's reaction to the joke: the perception of the aggressor and the perception of the victim.

In support of the main hypothesis, results indicated that the perceived character of the victim was the major determinant of the justifiability of aggression in their study. Thus, aggression toward a socially unacceptable victim was significantly more justified than aggression toward a socially acceptable victim. However, the major source of humor in the jokes used in this investigation was the character of the aggressor. These findings were in apparent conflict to other investigations which have shown that it is difficult for people to identify with the victim of aggression (Lerner & Simmons, 1966); and when the victim of aggressive humor is clearly a member of the person's own political, religious, or ethnic group--humor

is inhibited (Priest, 1966). Thus, contend Gutman and Priest, "humor is greatly dependent on the social context which precedes it."

Young and Frye (1966) designed a series of experiments to: 1) examine the effects of a hostility-arousing condition on the appreciation of various jokes under individual and group administrations, 2) assess the appreciation of humor in individual and group administrations, and 3) explore the effect of three forms of social facilitation on the appreciation of humor.

Results from the first study (hostility-arousal) were contrary to "relief theory" predictions. There was no increased appreciation of humor under hostility arousing conditions. However, the results did tend to support other findings (Byrne, 1958; O'Connell, 1960) in showing that experimental attempts to effect appreciation of specific kinds of humor by differential motivation arousal are by-and-large unsuccessful. Also, the findings of this preliminary study indicated that there was no significant differences between "individual" and "group" administrations on either an overt or a covert dimension of laughter.

Being somewhat of a replication of the first study, the findings of the second investigation were essentially

the same. There was some evidence, though not significant, to suggest that group administrations of hostile-humor stimuli is more sensitive to the overt responses (laughing, comments, etc.) of its members than individual administrations--under specific conditions manipulated in this investigation.

The third study was directed toward understanding the importance of situational variables in the appreciation of humor--in the case of sexually oriented humor. The results showed that female responses to sexual humor, in the presence of males, is more important to the group response than that of the males.

Dynamic individual differences notwithstanding, Young and Frye conclude that it is the nature of the social situation which plays an extremely important part in an individual's appreciation and/or responsiveness to a particular kind of humor.

Murray (1934) found that "subjects with strong, self-assertive trends who assume critical, hostile and misanthropic attitudes toward their fellow men are those who most intensely enjoy disparaging jokes." Furthermore, he found that assessed aggressive sentiments of university students was highly related to the appreciation of

disparaging or degrading jokes; while, expressed aggressive conduct was not. These findings lead him to conclude that laughter at derisive or insulting jokes was the consequence of repressed hate.

Freudian theory would seem to predict a negative correlation between expression of hostility and finding hostile cartoons amusing, while other research findings would tend to predict a more positive relationship. In an attempt to resolve or at least clarify this apparent conflict; Byrne (1956) investigated the relationships among (a) behavior ratings of expression of hostility, (b) the extent to which hostile cartoons are judged to be amusing, and (c) the ability to recognize that the cartoons contain hostility. Using male neuropsychiatric patients as subjects, he found a significant difference between those who express hostility either overtly or covertly and those who do not express hostility (i.e., one who tends to comply with all the demands and wishes of those around him). The hostile subjects found cartoons funnier than the nonhostile group. Similarly, after having controlled for intelligence, they found the hostile group was better able to recognize hostility in cartoons than their more complacent counterparts.

Operating within the assumption that aggressive behavior is related primarily to the strength of aggressive drives and secondarily to other personality and situational factors, Hetherington and Wray (1964) investigated humor preferences of subjects with extreme scores on need aggression and need for social approval under alcohol and non-alcohol conditions. As predicted, high-aggression subjects rated aggressive cartoons as funnier than did low-aggression subjects. Furthermore, alcohol seemed to facilitate the expression of repressed aggressive needs in humor--especially for subjects who demonstrated a high need for social approval.

Subsequent findings (Hetherington & Wray, 1966) indicated that humor ratings were sensitive to the experimental manipulation of aggression; however, the intensity of the effect of any such manipulation was dependent upon type of subject (angered vs. nonangered) and cartoon content (experimental aggression vs. stress). Moreover, the results of the latter study indicated that stress alone has little differential effect on ratings of aggressive cartoons by either high or low aggression subjects. But, ratings were differentially effected by high and low aggressive subjects depending upon whether they committed

an aggressive act within the experimental setting or witnessed an aggressive model in such context.

Landy and Mettee (1969) attempted to determine whether subjects' specific hostile feelings toward an anger-arousing agent could be reduced through the enjoyment of hostile cartoon humor, even when the subjects were not aware of the hostile content of the humor. They expected that subjects who were insulted by an experimenter prior to rating a battery of hostile and nonhostile cartoons would find hostile cartoons more humorous than either subjects who merely witnessed such an attack or control subjects who were neither aggressed against nor allowed to witness such an insulting scene. Furthermore, they assumed that subjects who were directly insulted would, upon post-evaluation, be more negative in rating the likability of the experimenter. Likewise, those who witnessed the insult would be more inclined to rate the experimenter negatively; while the control subjects should be least negative in their evaluations.

The results of the investigation indicated that the insulting experimenter was indeed successful in angering the subjects; while subsequent findings clearly suggested a reduction in hostility arousal through the humor ratings

per se--as opposed to the mere passage of time or their involvement in a seemingly distracting task. However, these investigators were unable to determine whether or not the hostile cartoons or the cartoon battery in general was the primary facilitating agent in the reduction of hostile feelings toward the insulting experimenter. The authors, in not overruling or lessening the role of the hostile cartoons, posit the alternative explanation which suggests that it was humor per se--rather than the specific type of humor--which largely determined the degree of hostility-reduction in the aroused subjects. In conclusion, the questionability of the exact process whereby subjects reduced hostility was left unaccounted.

Primarily as an extension of Singer's (1968) investigation of the cathartic effects of hostile humor upon aggression-aroused subjects, Shalit (1970) studied, the effect of vicarious participation in hostile activities toward an enemy, in reducing the hostile content of fantasy. Testing groups of national service recruits in Israel, a year before--immediately following--and a year after the Arab-Israel Six Day War in 1967; he clearly showed that all indexes of fantasy hostility were lower in 1967 than in either the previous or following year. His findings,

in concruence with those of Singer, suggest a reduction in the need for hostility after participation in aggressive acts.

CHAPTER III

THE ADAPTIVE FUNCTIONS OF HUMOR

Overview

The "adaptive functions of humor" are many and varied. As a functioning life-style process, humor tends to interact with a number of other life-style variables, e.g., general personality traits, determinants of the situation, etc. This interaction is of such fashion that usually no more than one problematic function is readably identifiable in any particular situation.

The vast array of thought as to the functions of humor all seem to converge upon the notion that humor functioning is intricately bound within the individual's personality structure. Absolute adherence to this view necessitates that one be able to amply describe the case history of the individual or group under investigation. Generally speaking, however, the notion implies that different life-styles and/or cultural experiences will have an identifiable nature within a given society--with regard

to both the individual and the society of which he is a member. In this regard for instance, self-assertation, dominance, and urbane sophistication are a few of the variables which have been identified as personality characteristics in preliminary attempts to clarify the nature of humor. The more global functions of humor appear to be:

- 1) Certain humor forms may be modifiable as valid projective devices, and therefore applicable in the therapeutic setting.
- 2) Humor may function as an anxiety arousing or reducing agent under specific conditions.
- 3) Humor preference or appreciation is somewhat contingent upon intellectual, perceptual, and emotional facets of the individual.
- 4) The broad range of humor functioning contains an undeniable hostility component, which tends to operate in a somewhat erratic manner.
- And 5) the unconscious nature of humor (especially its aggressive nature) may be exploited within the realm of fantasy--sexual fantasy in particular.

Thus humor is an extremely adaptable mechanism which can be found among every aspect of the life-process. What seems to be of small concern to researchers, but may have great consequences for the individual, is the fact that humor is not always at one's beck-and-call. Moreover, it seems almost trivial to suggest that that fact per se

may intrinsically be humors most enduring quality. However, no known research has been discovered at the time of this investigation which would indicate that this aspect of humor functioning has even remotely been investigated. It follows that any motivational characteristics which humor may acquire are a sort of composite of all the many situational variables of the moment--in addition to the many life-experience variables.

In summary, the essence of this discussion has been to sharpen the awareness of the interrelated effects of humor functioning or adaptation upon the life-process. A hasty scan of the literature which follows should more convincingly illuminate the above discussion, while the scope of the problem should be more within conceptual grasp.

Personality-Situational- Motivational Variables

Cattell and Luborsky (1947) concur that some of the more profound aspects of a man's personality may be revealed through observation of the things or situations that he finds most amusing. They suggest that: a) individuals are consistent in their preferences for certain kinds of humor; b) repressive forces in the individual underlie his

appreciation of certain kinds of humor; and c) there is a relationship between humor and projective tests. They purportedly isolated 5 factors from some 13 clusters (arbitrarily defined categories of jokes) which they believed to be general personality factors in response to humor. Those factors were: 1) Good-natured self-assertion, suggesting a good-natured lack of restraint on the part of the individual; 2) Rebellious dominance, suggesting dominance and resentment of authority; 3) Easy-going sensuality vs Sex repressed aggressiveness, suggesting expression of aggression where sex repression is high; 4) Resigned derision, suggesting a common passive element in derisive humor; and 5) Urbane sophistication, suggesting a factor of sophistication or intelligence. Moreover, they contend that these are "general personality factors, not extrinsic matters of form or content in the jokes."

Strother, Barnett, and Apostolakos (1954) attempted to determine whether particular cartoons could be used as a basis for a projective technique. They found that certain cartoons differentiated between groups of subjects scoring low on various sections of the MMPI (i.e., a rating of tendency toward psychosomatic illness; and "index of autonomic efficiency"; and a test of response to a

frustrating situation) and groups of subjects scoring high on these same sections. Further results, using different groups of subjects indicated that the subjects' responses to the cartoons tended to form internally consistent clusters. Strother, et al. came to the rather inconclusive deduction "that objectively scored judgements of cartoons have potential value as a projective technique."

In a brief report, Grziwok and Scodel (1956) showed significant results indicating that subjects high in TAT aggression (Cards 4, 6 BM, 7 BM, 13 MF, 14, 18 BM, and 16) prefer aggressive humor while those low in TAT aggression prefer social commentary humor. Moreover, subjects high on an aesthetic scale preferred logically incongruous cartoons whereas those who were low on the same scale preferred aggressive humor. A further comparison showed that subjects high on a social scale preferred aggressive cartoons as compared to those low in theoretical value who showed a preference for sexual cartoons. In summary, the findings indicated a preference for orectic (aggression and sexual) humor, as opposed to cognitive (social commentary and logical incongruence) humor. Orectic humor was thought to be characterized by more fantasy aggression,

more extraversion, less preoccupation with intellectual values, and less psychological complexity.

Levine and Abelson (1959) investigated the possibility that anxiety-arousing humor may elicit differential responses with respect to the anxiety tolerance level of the subject. Hence, they predicted that highly anxious subjects would reject anxiety-arousing humor stimuli (i.e., find it less funny by degree); in contrast to less anxiety-arousing material. The results supported the hypotheses to the extent that psychiatric patients (high anxious group) responded differently than did normal controls in showing a preference for minimally anxiety disturbing material; while controls apparently displayed no such preference. In general, the cartoons liked by the patients tended to be less disturbing than the cartoons liked by the normals (control). Moreover, comparison of both groups showed that the cartoons which were selected as the most liked were much less disturbing overall than those chosen as the most disliked.

Levine and Redlich (1960) attempted to measure the influence of intellectual and emotional factors (especially anxiety) upon the appreciation of humorous cartoons. Using psychiatric patients as subjects, they assumed that a greater sensitivity to humorous material would be more

evident than in individuals who did not exhibit noticeable signs of anxiety.

Controlling for intelligence level, they found no significant differences between the humor appreciation scores of the psychiatric patients and normal control subjects. These findings suggested that differential comprehension of joke content using both psychiatric and normal subjects was primarily due to differences in emotional composition. Furthermore, a high positive correlation was found between the degree of comprehension and likability among the psychiatric patients. Thus, the patients who showed understanding of the meaning of the joke tended to find it more enjoyable than those who had low comprehension scores. However, no difference between comprehension and enjoyment was shown by the controls; apparently understanding was unrelated to emotional reaction in them. It was suggested that a rather close relationship exists between intelligence and the understanding of humorous material; such that, emotional factors tend to interfere with one's comprehension and subsequent enjoyment of any particular joke (Laffal & Redlich, 1953). These findings were inferred to be especially accurate for emotionally disturbed individuals.

O'Connell (1960) examined personality variables in relation to individual adjustment, within the context of psychoanalytic formulations on wit and humor. He attempted to test: 1) whether groups of subjects exposed to stress appreciate wit more than comparable groups tested under nonstressful conditions; 2) the prediction that women prefer nonsense or harmless wit more so than men; 3) the assumption that the maladjusted person will appreciate hostile wit more than the well-adjusted person under nonstressful conditions--and conversely under more stressful conditions, the well-adjusted person will appreciate hostile wit to a greater extent than the maladjusted person; 4) the assumption that the more well-adjusted the person the greater will be his overall appreciation of humor; and 5) in contrast to the maladjusted person, the more well-adjusted the person the greater will be his appreciation of nonsense humor.

The more significant results of this study indicated that: 1) for males, it was the more maladjusted who relied on and employed hostile wit in a more defensive manner under nonstressful conditions; however, under more stressful conditions, maladjusted males tend to use this defense less than their supposedly well-adjusted counterparts; 2) well-adjusted women and maladjusted men, in

general, preferred hostile humor to a greater extent than did a contrasting group of maladjusted females and well-adjusted males; and 3) a significant three-way interaction indicated that maladjusted males and well-adjusted females preferred hostile wit under nonstressful conditions, in contrast to an opposite sex-adjustment group--however, under stressful conditions the well-adjusted males appreciated humor more than their maladjusted male counterparts; while in reverse, the well-adjusted females showed greater appreciation for hostile humor.

Hammes (1962), as a logical experimental extension of several earlier investigations which examined the relationship between manifest anxiety and other behavioral problems [Hammes, 1959; Hammes, 1961(a) & 1961(b); Hammes & Young, 1959], predicted that situations in which emotions such as worry, depression, tension and the like are treated in a humorous fashion would be less enjoyed by high-anxious than by low-anxious individuals. Using groups of high and low-anxious males and females, Hammes found that high-anxious males did produce the predicted result, i.e., rated the cartoons less humorous than did their low-anxious counterparts. However, females tended, though not statistically significantly so, to react in reverse manner:

high-anxious female subjects produced higher humor ratings than did low-anxious females. The experimenter concluded that differential "identification" with the cartoon characters (Shultz's Peanuts") was mostly responsible for the strong Anxiety by Sex interaction. Thus, no clear-cut conclusion was drawn concerning the relationship between anxiety and humor.

Lamb (1968) attempted to replicate the findings of Strickland (1959) which suggested that the enjoyment of sexual or aggressive humor (via cartoon ratings) was enhanced by experimentally induced arousal of sexual or hostile motives. However, Strickland (1959) noted that sexual arousal seemed to produce a general tendency to respond positively to all varieties of humor--in contrast to hostility arousal. Lamb extended his investigation of the effects of sexual arousal upon humor enjoyment, by examining the relationship between the personality correlates of "guilt" and "need for approval." Though the major hypothesis of this study was supported, other results were in disagreement with the earlier Strickland findings.

Davis and Fierman (1955) examined whether or not subjects who differed on a self-rated anxiety scale would respond differentially to humorous stimuli. Using content

categories of aggression, sex, and nonsense; they administered a standardized set of cartoons to subjects in an individual manner. Both vocal and facial responses were recorded by the examiner while the subjects rated each cartoon along a funniness continuum. Excepting some obvious misunderstanding of intent in several of the cartoons, the results indicated that low-anxious subjects enjoyed each category of cartoons to a greater extent than did high-anxious subjects. Moreover, the relationship between the subjects' rating of his susceptibility to anxiety, and his preference-rating for cartoons of specific content seemed to depend upon the social context of the humor stimuli.

Hom (1966) attempted to evaluate the effect of shock and anxiety levels on the perception of humor. Groups of high, medium, and low anxiety subjects (as measured by the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale) were placed into either a "threat of shock" or a "no threat of shock" condition, and instructed to rate a set of jokes along a funniness continuum. Results indicated that the "threat of shock" was such an intense aversive stimulus as to significantly suppress the perception of humor. However,

no significant differences in humor response were found as a function of anxiety level.

Using male and female sample groups, Endler and Hunt (1968) compared proportions of variance derived from an S-R Inventory of Hostility to those derived from an S-R Inventory of Anxiousness. They suggested that responses to the hostility inventory represented the "emotional state of anger." It follows that: "The stronger the indicator responses and the more consistently the various evoking situations, the stronger the trait of hostility and the more hostile the individual manifesting these behavioral indicators of anger." They found in comparing hostility to anxiousness responses, that subject contributions to total hostility variance was greater than to anxiousness--though no readily apparent explanation was available. Discussion of the results indicated that individual differences in the intensity of a hostility trait were more prominent than those in a trait of anxiousness. Further results suggested that women, rather than men, were more influenced by situational factors of both hostility and aggression.

In a study designed to assess the effects of humor on the academic test performance of subjects differing in

level of text anxiety; Smith, Ascough, Ettinger, and Nelson (1971) hypothesized that high test-anxiety would have deleterious effects on test performance. They felt it theoretically possible to improve test or task performance of highly anxious subjects by introducing humor into the testing situation. Interestingly enough, neither the high test-anxious group nor the low test-anxious group indicated a significant sex difference, irrespective of whether or not they were introduced to humorous material. However, the main hypothesis was shown to be correct: high test-anxious subjects who received a "humorous" test booklet outperformed a matched group of subjects in a nonhumorous condition. Moreover, performance of subjects in the high test-anxiety condition equalled that of low test-anxious subjects in the nonhumorous condition. Hom (1966) supported the findings of Smith, et al. He found that subjects exposed to anxiety-arousing conditions rated jokes less humorously than did nonaroused subjects. Smith, et al. concluded that the manner in which humor affected the efficiency of task-oriented behaviors was a function of the nature of the task, the level of anxiety, and the characteristics of the situation.

The conclusions of Zajonc (1969) suggested that mere exposure to a stimulus object enhances the individual's attitude toward it. While those of Sheldon (1969), in which rats showed a preference for novel or familiar stimuli as a function of the amount of novelty (arousal) present in their environment; lead Schick, McGlynn, and Woolam (1972) to investigate those rather general notions using humor stimuli. They showed that: a) familiar cartoons were preferred over unfamiliar ones; b) increased exposure to unfamiliar material increased preference for it; and c) highly-anxious subjects showed a preference for familiar cartoons, i.e., they rated the familiar cartoons higher and the unfamiliar ones lower than did low-anxious subjects.

CHAPTER IV
REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERSHIP AND
HUMOR APPRECIATION

Racial Group Affiliation

In addition to his speculations regarding the role of humor in relation to conflict situations; Burma (1946) emphasized the nearly impossible role of assigning malice a specific role in "racial" humor. Regarding the relationship between the "real" humor and one's perception of the "butt" of the joke, he felt that one would see nothing of humor in a particular situation if the butt were directed toward the racial group of which he belonged.

Specifically, most black-white wit makes either one race or the other appear as the butt of the humor. More prevalent among the vast array of humorous literature are jokes by whites about blacks; which typically depict some stereotyped character (or characteristic of the group) as a point of departure for the humor.

Poussaint (1967, 1969, 1970) explored different and varied facets of the so-called "Negro self-hatred hypothesis"; to which a number of social scientists attribute many of the Negro's social and psychological ills. Poussaint suggested that the total American system is geared toward extinguishing the aggressive (self-assertive) drive of the Negro through systematic oppression. He posits that the simplest method for dealing with rage stemming from feelings of oppression--in the absence of any acceptable outlet--is to suppress it and substitute an opposing emotional attitude. One such substitution of particular interest with relation to humor is a "compensatory happy-go-lucky attitude"; in which the person appears to be seemingly carefree. Unfortunately, Poussaint offers little or no objective evidence in support of the relationship between laughter and environmental oppression.

Wolff, Smith, and Murray (1934), in a rather pioneering study, attempted to discover whether differences would occur in the humor responses of Jews and of Gentiles when presented with disparaging jokes about Jews. Though inconclusive, the findings indicated that the Jews found the jokes less humorous than the Gentiles as a function of disparagement. Hence, by apperceiving the jokes as

insulting to themselves, the Jewish subjects apparently "denied" any degree of humor to them. Moreover, many of the Jews would not attribute their dislike of the joke to racial sentiment, but rather referred to the triteness or coarseness of the joke. Rationalization and denial appeared to characterize the sentiment of the Jewish subjects with respect to "ingroup" jokes. These findings were somewhat in contradiction to Reference Group Theory predictions which suggest that: Individuals who perceive themselves as members of a particular ingroup, will enjoy humorous material which attacks a particular outgroup, more than they will enjoy similar attacks that are directed toward the reference group of which they perceive their membership.

Middleton (1959) compared the appeal of racial jokes to groups of black and white subjects. Each black subject was matched with a white subject on such personal characteristics as age, sex, education, social class, geographical residency, and the like. In an attempt to determine some of the variables related to favorable or unfavorable reactions to racial jokes, and on the basis of the Wolff-Smith-Murray theory; Middleton formulated several similar hypotheses to those which are being examined in this particular investigation. More specifically, his

primary interest was with the relation between authoritarianism and humor; while a peripheral interest centered around the relation between black-stereotypes and humorous reactions to them.

Specifically, Middleton predicted that: whites react more favorably to antiblack jokes than do blacks; while blacks react more favorably to antiwhite jokes than do whites. Hence, though the present investigation may in some respects be construed as a replication of the Middleton study, its basic thrust lies somewhat outside of the concerns of Middleton. Broadly speaking, there exists a basic difference in the methods utilized in each case, they presumably tap different and perhaps unrelated dimensions of that human characteristic called "laughter." Unfortunately, replication of the Middleton study seems to be near impossible, for he states only that the jokes used in his investigation were of three broadly defined categories: anti-black, anti-white, and nonsensical. There is no other mention made as to the form of the joke, its specific content, or the like.

In any case the results indicated that the black subjects found the anti-black jokes quite as funny as did the whites, but that the black subjects reacted more

favorably than the whites with regard to the anti-white jokes (authoritarianism or ethnocentrism uncontrolled for). However when a control for authoritarianism was introduced, highly authoritarian whites reacted more favorably to anti-black jokes than did blacks--as hypothesized. But among those with relatively low scores on the F-scale, blacks reacted more favorably than did whites to anti-black jokes. Middleton suggested that "feelings of guilt" and a general "touchiness" with regard to race relations (on the part of the nonauthoritarian whites) was the most probable cause of the latter unexpected finding. When middle and lower-class subjects were compared, no significant difference was found among whites; however, middle-class blacks responded more favorably than did lower-class blacks to both anti-black and anti-white jokes. Moreover, Middleton speculated: the more favorable response to the anti-white jokes by the middle-class blacks was partially explained by: 1) their greater feelings of relative deprivation at the hands of whites, 2) the refusal of whites to recognize class distinctions within the black population, and 3) a greater class consciousness on the part of the middle-class blacks which somehow motivated them to maintain a certain real or perceived distinction among themselves. Thus, differential

support was found for the Wolff-Smith-Murray theory and the other predictions of Middleton's investigation.

Political Group Affiliation

Priest (1966) attempted to establish the generality of Reference Group Theory to "political party affiliation." He investigated the relation between social facilitation and humor appreciation attributed to a set of politically-oriented jokes. Using jokes about Goldwater (Republican presidential candidate) and Johnson (Democratic presidential candidate), subjects rated the two types of jokes on election day of the 1964 campaign. It was hypothesized that:

- 1) derogatory jokes about one candidate would be rated funnier than jokes about the other candidate as a function of the subject's political party affiliation, i.e., jokes about the outgroup would be rated funnier than those about the ingroup; and
- 2) subjects who were permitted to laugh out loud would rate jokes funnier than subjects who were instructed to remain silent.

The results confirmed the hypothesis that members of one reference group enjoy derogatory jokes about the other group more than jokes about their

own group. However, permission to laugh out loud did not correlate significantly with total humor appreciation.

Similarly, Priest and Abrahams (1970) conducted another investigation, one day prior to the 1968 presidential election. Their conclusion posited a general proposition with respect to political humor, suggesting that: the appreciation of hostility in humor depends upon the particular target against which it is directed. Moreover, their results clearly supported the predicted relation between political humor and reference group membership--as did Priest's (1966) investigation.

CHAPTER V
HYPOTHESES AND RATIONALE FOR
THE INVESTIGATION

Overview

The basic rationale for this investigation originated from four readably identifiable sources: 1) Freud (1916, 1928); 2) Burma (1946); 3) Middleton (1959); and 4) Priest (1966).

First, Freud's (1916, 1928) theoretical reflections as to the nature of behavior in relation to humor suggested that any covert (veiled) aspect of behavior which is repressed by an individual is only subject to manifestation in some overt (evident) aspect of behavior. With relation to humor then, Freud felt that repressed unconscious strivings (such as unconscious desires to harm another individual) contributed to the enjoyment of humor stimuli. Thus an individual who harbors a great deal of repressed aggression will find aggressive humor stimuli "funnier" than humorous material of less aggressive content.

Furthermore he suggested that the covertly aggressive individual who is able to enjoy aggressive humor stimuli will be able to reduce his internal aggressive tensions in this manner.

Second, Burma's (1946) conclusions as to the dynamics of humor in general, and racial humor in particular, suggest that humor often conceals malice (i.e., covert function) and allows for the expression of aggression via some other more socially acceptable means (i.e., overt function). But he emphasized that it was nearly impossible to assign "malice" a specific role in "racial" humor. Though he did not speak in terms of Reference Group Theory, he also proposed that an individual would find little amusement in humor in which he perceived himself as the "butt" of the joke. Hence, an individual's perception of himself as a member of an "ingroup" does not allow him to readably enjoy derogatory humor directed toward that group, especially when the perceived assault is being made by a member of some perceived "outgroup." Similarly, an individual who perceives himself as a member of some "deprived" outgroup will not readably enjoy derogatory humor directed at that group by a member of some perceived ingroup. Thus, the phenomena of "reference group affiliation" is highly

contingent upon both the individual's perception of himself as a member of a specific ingroup or outgroup, and his overall perception of what constitutes either an ingroup or an outgroup.

Third, Middleton's (1959) observations regarding black and white reactions to racial humor provided some foundation for the rationale of this investigation. Middleton attempted to determine some of the variables related to funniness appreciation of racial jokes. His findings suggested racial humor appreciation was somewhat determined by the racial content of the humor stimuli, the race of the individual, and the degree to which the individual was authoritarian. Furthermore, he found that middle-class blacks responded more-like middle-class whites than-like lower-class blacks.

The fourth investigation upon which this study is based was provided for by Priest (1966) and his associates (Priest & Abrahams, 1970). He attempted to establish the generality of Reference Group Theory, with respect to political party affiliation. One prediction which was clearly supported indicated that jokes about an outgroup will be rated funnier by a member of a parallel ingroup--at least with respect to political party affiliation. In

essence then, Priest was able to establish a certain generality of Reference Group Theory in relation to humor and "political party affiliation"; while Burma and Middleton were only partially able to do so with respect to "racial group affiliation."

Based on the above rationale, it is specifically assumed that: 1) black subjects will find aggressive humor funnier than white subjects, 2) black subjects will find pro-black humor funnier than anti-black humor, and 3) a positive relationship exists between racial humor appreciation and a global dimension of covert aggression. Hypothetically, it is presumed that this latter relationship exists as a consequence of the differences between black and white life-experiences.

Primarily from the four earlier mentioned sources, several hypotheses were formulated for this investigation--whose basic endeavor was to determine: 1) the degree of apparent influence when the white individuals of a heterogeneous group were compared to the white individuals of a racially "homogeneous" control group (between group influence); and 2) the influence of a black individual upon three white individuals, all of which comprised a racially "heterogeneous" group (within group influence).

Between Group Influence

More specifically, the main concern of the between group influence was to an arbitrarily labeled "influence effect." In an attempt to separate out the "influence effect" between the homogeneous group and the heterogeneous group, only the white individuals of each group were compared to each other. Conceptually, the "influence effect" was simply the influence of the black individual upon the white individuals of his group. Thus it was the "magnitude" of the influence which was under investigation. It was theorized that this "influence effect" would be of such magnitude as to be apparent, when the two groups were compared to each other (as a consequence of excluding the responses made by the black subject). In essence, we hoped to be able to attribute any such influence (i.e., difference between the two groups) solely to the presence of the black subject. Furthermore, the homogeneous control group was thought to constitute the more "normal" group in these comparisons. It was hypothesized that:

Hypotheses for Between
Group Influence

- I. A racially heterogeneous experimental group (one black male and three white males) will rate humor stimuli (cartoons) of racial-aggressive content funnier, than will a racially homogeneous control group (four white males).
- II. A racially heterogeneous experimental group will have a higher humor rating score on pro-black cartoons, than will a racially homogeneous control group; and vice versa, a racially homogeneous control group will have a higher humor rating score on pro-white cartoons than will a heterogeneous experimental group--who are being subjected to the influence of a black person within the group.
- III. A racially heterogeneous experimental group will have a higher overall score on a composite measure of different kinds of hostility, than will a racially homogeneous control group.
- IV. Combining across groups, a positive relationship will exist between a composite measure of humor

appreciation and a composite measure of aggressive tendencies.

Within Group Influence

The within group influence may be thought to comprise a distinctly different conceptual mode than the between group influence. Basically, the within group influence sought to determine the extent to which the black subject differed from the white subjects in the heterogeneous experimental group--along the measures of humor and aggression. Thus the within group influence did not attempt to directly assess the "influence effect," but rather, to determine probable causes for predicted differences among individuals within the same group. Hence, these differences should be contributing factors to the predicted "influence effect" of the between group influence. Generally speaking, the within group influence sought to determine the behavioral differences between the black subject and his fellow group members--rather than his direct influence upon them. The hypotheses which were formulated for the within group influence specifically

constituted a paraphrasing of those hypotheses which were formulated for the between group influence.

Hypotheses for Within
Group Influence

- V. Within a racially heterogeneous experimental group, the overall funniness rating score for a sole black subject will be higher than the average funniness rating score for the remaining white subjects within the group.
- VI. Within a racially heterogeneous experimental group, pro-black cartoons will be rated funnier by a sole black subject, in contrast to, the average rating score of the other subjects in the group; and vice versa, the average funniness rating score of the white subjects will be higher than the score of a sole black subject on pro-white cartoons.
- VII. Within a racially heterogeneous experimental group, a sole black subject will have a higher overall aggression score, in comparison to the average overall aggression score of the white subjects within the group.

VIII. The combined scores of a racially heterogeneous experimental group will produce a positive relationship between a composite measure of humor-appreciation and a composite measure of aggressive-constituents.

CHAPTER VI

METHOD

Humor Instrument: Cartoon Selection

Initial cartoons were selected on the basis of a general racial theme. Approximately eighty cartoons were selected from such published sources as Esquire, Evergreen, Muhammad Speaks, The New Yorker, and Playboy. From this pool, several graduate students and psychology professors then independently sorted the cartoons into one-of-five a priori categories according to racial-aggressive humor content. This procedure was repeated until four cartoons were unanimously placed into one-of-five humor categories as follows: 1) Within Race Aggression, 2) Within Race Neutral, 3) Black Over White Aggression, 4) White Over Black Aggression, and 5) Between Race Neutral (see Appendix B).

The categories of Black Over White Aggression and White Over Black Aggression were the two main categories

relating to the hypotheses of this study. The Black Over White Aggression category was previously defined as "pro-black" cartoons; while the White Over Black Aggression category was similarly defined as "pro-white" cartoons. Though it seems intuitively obvious, "pro-black" cartoons were generally construed as "anti-white" cartoons; and vice versa, "pro-white" cartoons were conceived as "anti-black" cartoons.

Throughout the cartoon categories, with respect to aggression, a general balancing effect was attempted. For instance, the Within Race Aggression category (which consisted of cartoons depicting an overtly aggressive situation containing two or more individuals of the same race) was internally balanced with two all black and two all white cartoons. Thus it was expected that this category, along with those of Within Race Neutral and Between Race Neutral would act as control categories, i.e., attempted balance effect. Hence, the Black Over White Aggression category contained four cartoons depicting whites as the butt of the joke. Similarly, the White Over Black Aggression category contained four cartoons depicting blacks as the butt of the joke. Specifically, the cartoon categories were constructed as follows:

1. Within Race Aggression [see Appendix B1 (1-4)]

This category consisted of two all black and two all white cartoons which depicted an overtly aggressive situation involving two or more individuals of the same race. For example, one black man might be shown physically assaulting another black man. Moreover, there were two global dimensions of concern (as the label of the category implies): race and aggression. As with all the aggression categories, the word aggression is meant to imply a general level of intense hostility.

2. Within Race Neutral [see Appendix B2 (1-4)] This

category consisted of two all black and two all white cartoons which depicted a nonaggressive encounter between two or more individuals of the same race. Typically, cartoons in this category had the distinct characteristic of being nonthreatening in nature. One such cartoon from this category depicted a white man and his son engaged in a friendly game of billiards.

3. Black Over White Aggression [see Appendix B3 (1-4)]

This category contained four pro-black cartoons

which depicted a black person "getting the best" of a white person. Cartoons in this category were construed as anti-white. As in most of the aggressive cartoons, some stereotypic ethnic characteristic of one group was played upon as the butt of the joke. Cartoons in this category typically exemplified a white person being ridiculed or assaulted by a black antagonist.

4. White Over Black Aggression [see Appendix B4 (1-4)]

In this category of cartoons, blacks were stereotyped as the "underdogs" at the mercy of white antagonists. An example of a cartoon taken from this category depicted two white policemen assaulting a black man in the police station.

5. Between Race Neutral [see Appendix B5 (1-4)] This

category was compiled of cartoons which included both a black and a white person engaged in some nonaggressive activity. Generally speaking, cartoons of this category more-or-less related to a dimension of "the human condition." One example of a cartoon taken from this category depicted two

war-torn soldiers, one black and one white, comparing notes on the comforts of civilian life.

Humor Instrument: Cartoon
Booklet (see Appendix B)

Each one of the twenty cartoons was printed in black and white on a single sheet of 8-1/2" x 11" white paper. All of the cartoons were printed approximately the same size. Care was taken to ensure that each of the cartoons (i.e., captions and pictures) were as readable as possible using the Xerox reproduction method.

The twenty cartoons were then placed in an order according to one-of-the-five a priori categories. Thus, the cartoons were dispersed throughout the booklet in such a manner that no two cartoons from the same aggressive category followed each other sequentially. One cartoon from each of the five categories was then randomly selected to comprise a subgroup of cartoons. The completed "Cartoon Booklet" then contained four of these subgroups, thereby accounting for all twenty cartoons. Necessarily, since no cartoon followed any other cartoon of the same category, a Within Race Aggression cartoon of the first subgroup could

not be followed by a Within Race Aggression cartoon of the next sequential group.

Humor Instrument:
Alternate Forms

Alternate forms of the completed Cartoon Booklet were used for presentation. The only difference between the two forms of the Cartoon Booklet was in the numerical order of presentation of the cartoons. Form A presented the cartoons in sequential order from 1 through 20; while Form B presented the cartoons in reverse order from 20 through 1. Two forms of the Cartoon Booklet were utilized as a control or "counter-balancing" technique to minimize any cartoon "sequence effect" response pattern on the part of the subjects. On this point, other investigators have failed to yield any "order" differences, either by individual or group administration of similarly constructed humor instruments.

Humor Instrument: Funniness
Rating Sheet (see Appendix C)

There was also a "funniness rating sheet" with two alternate forms corresponding to the order of the cartoons in each form of the Cartoon Booklet. The funniness rating sheet listed each cartoon by number and allowed a space to the left of the number for the subject's rating score.

Instructions for rating the cartoons were given at the top of the rating sheet as follows: "You are to give each cartoon a score according to how funny it is to you. Use the following scale: 1--Not at all funny, 2--Slightly funny, 3--Moderately funny, 4--Very funny, and 5--Extremely funny." General instructions pertaining to the rating scale and procedure were also read aloud to each group of subjects.

Aggression Instrument: Buss-
Durkee Inventory for Assessing
Different Kinds of Hostility
(see Appendix D)

The "Buss-Durkee Inventory for Assessing Different Kinds of Hostility" (BDI) attempts to assess a global measure of hostility intensity and, in addition, provide estimates of the intensity of the various subhostilities (i.e.,

subclasses of hostility--subscales of the BDI). Buss and Durkee (1957) identified eight different subclasses of hostility in male and female college students. They identified and briefly defined each subclass as follows:

1) Assault--physical violence against others; 2) Indirect Hostility--both roundabout and undirected aggression; 3) Irritability--a readiness to explode with negative affect at the slightest provocation; 4) Negativism--oppositional behavior, usually directed against authority; 5) Resentment--jealousy and hatred of others; 6) Suspicion--projection of hostility onto others; 7) Verbal Hostility--negative affect expressed in both the style and content of speech; and 8) Guilt--feelings of culpability. Factor analyses of their data revealed two global factors of hostility: an "attitudinal" component (Resentment and Suspicion) and a "motor" component (Assault, Indirect Hostility, Irritability, Verbal Hostility).

Similarly, a review of the cartoons contained in the Cartoon Booklet seems to reflect each of the hostility subclassifications in varying degrees depending on the specific cartoon. Thus, any one cartoon (a picture and its associated cartoon) may contain a number of aggressive components. It follows that the subclasses of Resentment,

Suspicion, Assault, Indirect Hostility, Irritability, and Verbal Hostility will be especially related to the overall formulations of this study.

Design and Data Analysis

This investigation utilizes a "repeated measures design" as discussed by Glass and Stanley (1970). With respect to humor, a 2 x 5 design was used; in which the funniness ratings of the two types of groups were made several times along the five humor categories; while a similar 2 x 8 design was utilized for the different kinds of hostility. In essence then, the conceptual attributes of this investigation include: 1) racial composition of the groups, 2) racial theme of the cartoons, 3) aggressive theme of the cartoons, and 4) subclassifications of hostility.

Subjects

Eighty-four male subjects (10 black, 74 white) participated in this investigation. Each subject was enrolled in one-of-several undergraduate psychology courses at Michigan State University. Each subject also received experimental course credit for his participation in the

experiment. Subjects were unknowingly scheduled to participate in either: 1) an all white--racially homogeneous control group or 2) a racially mixed--heterogeneous experimental group. The homogeneous group contained four white males, while the heterogeneous group consisted of three white males and one black male.

Experimenter

Due to the nature of this investigation (i.e., the cartoon content, the proposed sensitivity of the "influence effect," etc.) one experimenter administered the materials to each of the twenty-one groups which were utilized. In this case the principal investigator was black. This becomes an issue of discussion only because there is much evidence to suggest that subjects (esp. children and college students) react differently, on any given task, to experimenters of different races. However, it is felt that "experimenter bias" is not specifically under investigation here. Moreover, it is argued that whatever influence (either in affect or on the situation) a black experimenter may have had on any particular group--that that influence should be consistent across all groups.

Procedure

Independently, four subjects were requested to come to a prearranged room at a prescheduled time. Upon their arrival, the experimenter gave each a Cartoon Booklet, its corresponding rating sheet, and an instruction sheet (which was read aloud by the experimenter while the subjects followed along silently). The experimenter then left the room for exactly 10 minutes while the subjects completed their ratings. He then re-entered the room and collected the humor materials (mentally noting those of the black subject when present). At this point in the procedure, the experimenter gave each subject the BDI (though it was not identified as such). Again, the instructions were read as before. Subjects were requested to bring their completed BDI to the experimenter, who was seated outside the door of the testing room. Upon completion of this task, subjects were released. The procedure took less than an hour to complete generally, and averaged 40 minutes.

CHAPTER VII

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

The results of this investigation were analyzed through a multivariate approach applied to the repeated measures design. The overall design was such that, two distinctly different types of groups were compared to each other along the global dimensions of humor and aggression.

General outline for the analysis of the data was such that a subtotal funniness rating score for each category of cartoons was calculated for each subject, by summing the numerical ratings given the individual cartoons in each of the five humor categories. Each sub-total category score was then summed to compile a total humor rating score. Similarly, a subtotal score for each subclassification of the BDI was calculated for each subject, by summing their numerically-coded responses to the individual items in each of the eight hostility subclasses. Each hostility subclass subtotal was then summed to compile a

total aggression index score. On the basis of these scores, differences between (and within) groups in response to racial humor and general aggression were subjected to multivariate analysis of variance (yielding both a "t" and "f" statistic), and Pearsonian Product Moment Correlations where applicable (Glass & Stanley, 1970; Scheifley & Schmidt, 1973).

Similar, but separate, computations were performed for the between group influence and the within group influence. Notably, the between group influence attempted to determine the degree to which a group of white subjects (influenced by the presence of a black subject) would differ along the measures of humor and aggression from a group of all white subjects (who had not been subjected to a black subject). In contrast, the within group influence sought to determine the degree to which a sole black subject differed from the other white subjects in his group along the same measures of humor and aggression.

Between Group Influence

With respect to the between group influence, comparisons were made between racially homogeneous groups and

racially heterogeneous groups. Mean scores for the homogeneous group (all white males) were compared to those of the white individuals only in the heterogeneous group.

Treatment x Group
Type Interaction

A significant (borderline: $F = 2.75$, $p < .06$; 4/16 df) interaction was found between the mean funniness ratings of the homogeneous group and those of the heterogeneous group on the cartoon categories--as is shown in Figure 1.

In general these findings (see Table 1) indicate that the racially homogeneous group rated each category of cartoons funnier to a significant overall degree than the heterogeneous group ($t = 2.39$, $p < .05$; 1/9 df). One notable exception to this finding was the Within Race Neutral category of cartoons, in which a proposed balancing trend occurred: the difference between the two groups was near zero for this category. In this instance, Hypothesis I was not supported, i.e., the racially heterogeneous group did not have a higher total funniness rating score than the homogeneous group. However, partial support (though nonsignificant) was found for Hypothesis II. Thus the

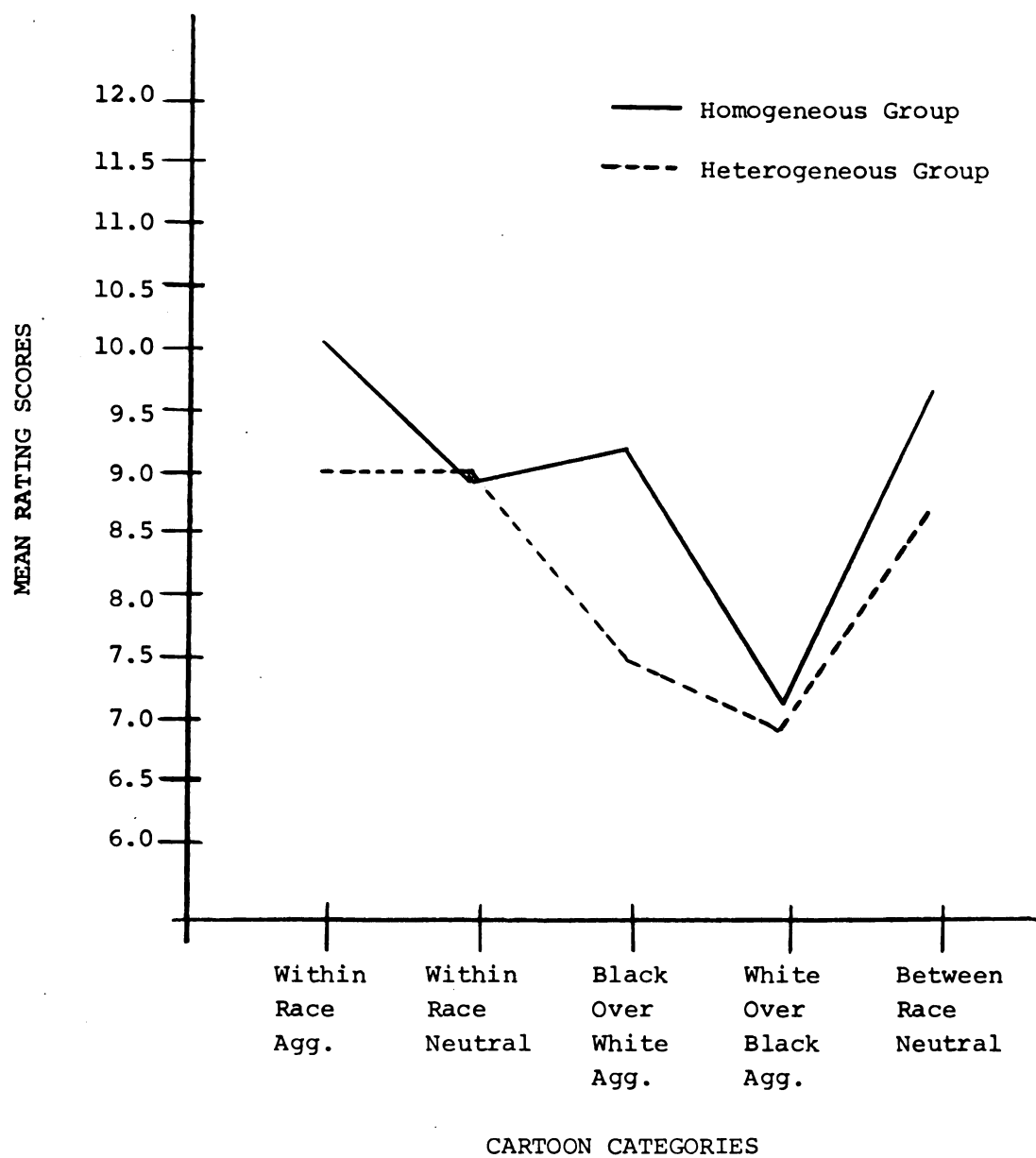


Fig. 1.—Mean Funniness Rating Score by Group Type and Cartoon Category.

TABLE 1
MEAN FUNNINESS RATING SCORE BY GROUP TYPE AND CARTOON CATEGORY

Cartoon Category	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous	Difference
	Mean Score	Mean Score	
Within Race Agg.	10.05	8.97	2.08
Within Race Neutral	8.91	8.97	-.06
Black Over White Agg.	9.14**	7.47	1.67
White Over Black Agg.	7.19	6.83	.36
Between Race Neutral	9.64	8.60	1.04
Total Humor	43.59*	40.83	2.76

*t significant at .05 level

**t significant at .01 level

Note: The greater the mean score, the funnier subjects rated the cartoons.

Scores could range from 5 to 20 for each category. Also, see

Appendix E for "Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Between Group Influence on Humor Categories."

homogeneous group did appear to enjoy pro-white humor stimuli to a greater extent than did the heterogeneous group. More interestingly, however, was the unexpected finding which indicated that the all white group enjoyed pro-black humor significantly greater ($t = 3.94$, $p < .01$; 1/9 df) than did the racially mixed group.

Though speculative at this point, it would appear that the presence of the black subject in the heterogeneous group had a general overall "humor response inhibitory influence" upon the white subjects in his group; i.e., they did not feel as free to respond to the cartoons as did their homogeneous group counterparts. Furthermore white male students, when left among themselves to respond to the cartoons, were apparently able to "laugh" at themselves. Moreover it appeared that the comfort generated from the homogeneity of the group tended to generalize, i.e., the humorous material per se became a "laughing matter."

Group Type Main Effect

No significant main effect for group type was found with respect to the five humor categories. This nonsignificant finding was opposite that predicted by Hypothesis I.

The data suggested that (see Table 1) the presence of a black subject in an all white group will not significantly bring their reactions, to racial-aggressive humor stimuli, any closer to his own; but rather, his presence will tend to inhibit them from responding in a "normal" manner under these specific conditions. Thus it seems that everyone got more serious in the experimental situation while in the presence of a black subject. However, no significant differences were found between the groups on overall aggression as was predicted by Hypothesis III. These findings are similar to those of Middleton (1959). Undeniably there seems to be a general "uneasiness," in racially-mixed groups, regarding racial humor appreciation. In general these data indicated that a "sense of humor" is somewhat determined by the "comfortable" qualities of the situation.

Measures Main Effect

A significant main effect for the measures was found ($F = 16.47$, $p < .0001$; 4/16 df); which indicated that the cartoon categories were significantly different from each other. The categories of Within Race Aggression, Within Race Neutral, Black Over White Aggression, and White

Over Black Aggression were each found to relate significantly to Total Humor Appreciation at the $p < .01$ level; while the remaining category of Between Race Neutral did not. Of the five categories, Within Race Neutral most highly correlated with Total Humor ($r = .917$, $p < .01$; 2/19 df). Thus we would expect that subjects who find Within Race Neutral cartoons funny will also exhibit a greater "sense of humor" in general.

These comparisons must be accepted with caution, however, for the important variable of "aggression" has been left uncontrolled. Moreover, Hypothesis IV which predicted a positive relationship between humor and aggression was not supported (correlation coefficient close to zero). This finding suggested that the degree of humor one expresses in any given situation is not contingent upon nor does it particularly relate to the degree of hostility one is feeling at the time.

Within Group Influence

Statistical computations with respect to the within group influence were based upon comparisons between the black subject in the heterogeneous group and the remaining

white subjects in that same group. This analysis differed from that used to assess the between group influence: specifically because it excluded the responses of the homogeneous group.

Cartoon Treatment x
Group Interaction

Hypothesis V predicted that the black subject would rate racial-aggressive humor stimuli funnier than would the remaining members of his group: no significant main effect was found in support of this prediction. However partial support for Hypothesis VI was found as is shown in Table 2.

Hypothesis VI predicted that the black subject of a racially heterogeneous group would rate pro-black cartoons funnier than would the remaining white subjects of the group; and vice versa, white subjects would most enjoy pro-white cartoons (as predicted by Reference Group Theory). These predictions were upheld: the black subject enjoyed pro-black humor to a significantly greater degree ($F = 5.0$, $p < .05$; 1/9 df) than did the remaining white subjects of the group. Moreover the white subjects tended to enjoy, though not significantly so, pro-white humor more than the black subject. In this specific instance, the data appears

TABLE 2
MEAN FUNNINESS RATING SCORE BY WITHIN GROUP
SUBJECT COMPOSITION AND CARTOON CATEGORY

Cartoon Category	Black <u>S</u>	White <u>Ss</u>	Difference
	Raw Score	Mean Score	
Within Race Agg.	9.80	8.97	.83
Within Race Neutral	7.40	8.97	-1.57
Black Over White Agg.	9.30*	7.47	1.83
White Over Black Agg.	6.70	6.83	- .13
Between Race Neutral	7.30	8.60	-1.30
Total Humor	40.30	40.83	- .53

*F significant at .05 level.

Note: The greater the mean score, the funnier subjects rated the cartoons. Scores could range from 5 to 20 for each category. Also, see Appendix F for "Univariate Analysis of Variance for Within Group Influence on Humor Categories."

to offer general support for Reference Group Theory predictions. Thus derogatory jokes directed toward an ingroup by a member of an outgroup were rated funnier by members of the outgroup. These data also indicated that the presence of the black subject tended to "inhibit" the responses of the white subjects. It is not clear, however, to what extent the black subject felt as if he was in control of

the situation, but his response pattern on pro-white humor did not seem to indicate any great degree of response-inhibition. In contrast, the black subject seemed to be influencing his fellow white group members toward a response that was similar to his own (especially regarding pro-white cartoons); thus, he became the focus point in the group.

Hostility Treatment x
Group Interaction

No significant relationship was found between humor and aggression as predicted in Hypothesis VIII. Similarly, no significant main effect was found for Hypothesis VII; which predicted that the black subject would be generally more aggressive than his white counterparts.

However the data clearly indicated (see Table 3) differences as to the most prevalent subhostility responded to within the group as follows: 1) The mean subhostility scores of the white subjects indicated that "indirect hostility" ($F = 12.92$, $p < .006$; 1/9 df) was the most prevalent feeling among them; while 2) the black subject seemed to find "negativism" (borderline: $F = 4.62$, $p < .06$; 1/9 df) the most viable modish operandum for dealing with the situation. These findings appeared to be in slight

TABLE 3

MEAN HOSTILITY SUBCLASS SCORE BY WITHIN GROUP
SUBJECT COMPOSITION AND HOSTILITY SUBCLASS

Hostility Subclass	Black <u>S</u>	White <u>Ss</u>	Difference
	Raw Score	Mean Score	
Assault	4.70	3.73	.97
Indirect Hostility	2.90	4.63**	-1.73
Irritability	4.30	4.46	- .16
Negativism	3.00*	2.13	.87
Resentment	2.50	2.20	.30
Suspicion	4.40	2.20	2.20
Verbal Hostility	7.70	6.60	1.10
Guilt	3.70	4.13	.43
Total Hostility	32.70	30.23	2.47

*F significant at .06 level.

**F significant at .006 level.

Note: The raw score (black S) and the mean score (white Ss) indicate a hostile response on the BDI items. Total Hostility scores could range from 0 to 75. Also, see Appendix F for "Univariate Analysis of Variance for Within Group Influence on Hostility Subclasses."

contradiction to--but yet in support of--those of Buss and Durkee (1957). Factor analyses of their data revealed two factors related to the BDI: an "attitudinal" component of hostility (Resentment and Suspicion) and a "motor" component (Assault, Indirect Hostility, Irritability, and Verbal Hostility). In addition, Negativism was found to positively load with both factors. Thus some question arises as to whether Negativism for the black subjects was a "motor" or "attitudinal" component in this investigation. However, our data seemed to indicate that Negativism in this instance was more an "attitudinal" component of hostility for the black subjects. This finding was suggested by the fact that across treatments within the group, Negativism was found to negatively correlate with Indirect Hostility ($r = -.62$, $p < .05$; 1/9 df): implying a difference as to which factor should encompass which subhostility. However, since Buss and Durkee proposed that Indirect Hostility was a motor component, it followed in this instance, that Negativism was an attitudinal component. This reasoning did however seem to coincide with Buss and Durkee's definition of Negativism as: "Oppositional behavior, which is usually directed toward authority." Likewise Buss and Durkee defined Indirect Hostility as: "Roundabout behavior like malicious

gossip or practical jokes is indirect in the sense that the hated person is not attacked directly but by devious means." In essence, broad interpretations of these findings suggested that: 1) the black subject held a negative attitude toward the experimental condition, and perhaps especially directed toward the black experimenter; while 2) the white subjects were discharging negative affect through some form of "roundabout" behavior.

Summary of Results

Between Group Influence

Hypothesis I was not supported, i.e., the racially heterogeneous group did not have a higher total funniness rating score than did the homogeneous group.

Hypothesis II was partially supported, i.e., the homogeneous group did appear to enjoy pro-white humor more than did the heterogeneous group; however, they also unexpectedly enjoyed pro-black humor more than the experimental group.

Hypothesis III was not supported, i.e., no significant differences were found between the groups on overall aggression.

Hypothesis IV was not supported, i.e., no positive relationship was found between responses to racial-aggressive humor stimuli and the assessment of different kinds of hostility overall.

Within Group Influence

Hypothesis V was not supported, i.e., no significant main effect was found which would indicate that the black subject found racial cartoons any funnier than the remaining white subjects in his group.

Hypothesis VI was supported, i.e., Reference Group Theory predictions were correct to the extent that blacks enjoyed pro-black humor more than whites; while whites enjoyed pro-white humor more than blacks.

Hypothesis VII was not clearly supported, i.e., black subjects were not generally more hostile than their white counterparts. However, two distinctly different modish operandum were apparent: 1) black subjects had a negative attitude toward the experimental situation and/or the black experimenter, while 2) white subjects were more indirectly angry via some unknown mechanism.

Hypothesis VIII was not supported, i.e., no significant relationship was apparent between overall responses on the cartoon measures and those on the hostility inventory.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

The first point of discussion is concerned with the content of the specific cartoons used in this investigation. Though the cartoons were taken from a variety of sources such as Playboy, Muhammad Speaks, and the like, intuitively speaking, there most probably exist basic differences between the "content" of any particular cartoon as a function of the nature or scope of the source from which it was taken. Hence, a racial cartoon from Playboy is probably a "different" type cartoon than one from Muhammad Speaks. Though they may be different along several dimensions, a general "political" dimension seemed to be the most apparent attribute of the racial cartoons used in this investigation. Cartoons which were clearly political in scope were necessarily excluded from the initial pool; however, the bulk of both the Black Over White Aggression and the White Over Black Aggression cartoons were taken from Muhammad Speaks--a generally regarded "political" magazine.

On the other hand, most of the remaining black-white cartoons were taken from sources which are generally regarded as "nonpolitical" in nature. This general aire of politicalness, which seems to be apparent in most racial cartoons, is a somewhat undesirable and confounding characteristic to be dealt with in any particular humor study--especially when race is an experimental variable. Unfortunately, even "nonpolitical" publications, if they manage to be successful at all, appear to direct editorials, humor, advertisements, etc. to a specific audience (as a function of a certain perceived social-political milieu of that audience). For example, during the 1960's the political aire was one of rampant racial unrest, in contrast to the 70's which is currently dominated by widespread government scandal. Thus, the humor currently found in popular magazines tends to reflect this shift in political emphasis. One way to circumvent this apparent dilemma is to avoid the published magazine sources when designing humor instruments such as the one employed in this investigation. However, it does seem that a fairly nonpolitical sample of cartoons may be obtained providing (1) the initial pool is quite large--suggesting around a thousand cartoons and (2) a sufficient number of sorters can be matched (along a priori

characteristics such as educational level, race, social class, etc.) to provide reliable categorization. One other viable alternative which suggests itself, is to create (i.e., draw and caption) the jokes to be used for any particular investigation. However, this latter suggestion is particularly subject to the political bias of the creator--as perhaps are all such material. Furthermore, it may be feasible to have the cartoons rated along a sort of political continuum and subsequently devise a numerical index for politicalness; thereby lessening the degree of error inherent within the cartoons per se along that dimension. The scores for each cartoon or cartoon category might then be "weighted" according to such a precalculated numerical index. The point of course, is to examine and control for the content of the cartoon sample as much as possible so as to decrease the internal error or bias to be found in the cartoons themselves.

It seems intuitively obvious that most people have a feel for what is generally regarded as a "sense of humor"; but yet it seems to defy definition. When someone does not respond humorously to a saying or situation which we find amusing, we put a negative value judgment on that person's response suggesting that he is in "bad humor" or "grumpy."

While at other times, we often find that same individual "likeable" or in "good humor" when his amusements parallel our own. But what is humor? Might we argue that it is a multi-faceted entity with distinct components--ambiguous though they may be.

Humor is a personality characteristic! It is perhaps a trait that is well established during early infancy. Hence the "contented" infant, who smiles when his mother approaches may be exhibiting early signs of "good humor." Within the realm of such socialization, humor seems to be a learning phenomena. It can be reinforced or seemingly extinguished--nurtured or destroyed.

Humor has its obvious "perceptual" component, which appears to be highly contingent upon intellectual functioning and/or the ability to manipulate symbols. Thus for the preschooler who is not yet able to read, Saturday morning television may be generally more enjoyable than comic books; while the older child, with his increased cognitive ability may easily prefer the latter. Moreover, reading may itself be an "experiential variable" manipulatable within the individual's life-space.

Thus humor must somehow relate to the individual's life-experiences. He must be able to relate to that which

is perceived and responded to as amusing. For the most part, it is this quality or characteristic of relating that allows us humorous expression.

Much of humor plays-off one person against another, one group against another, in a world of real or illusionary power. Yet the persons or groups always seem to acquire certain societal characteristics in the way of stereotypes, institutional roles, and the like via doctor-patient, adult-child, master-slave, and psychiatrist-maniac relationships. Hence a certain "power" struggle between the roles per se seems to be reflected in the humor of society at any given point in time. The life-giving power of the doctor makes him an especially prominent cartoon figure. Doctor cartoons are funny mostly because the doctor does most everything but that which we would typically expect--yet all of us having gone to the doctor at some time or another, are able to relate to the antics of the profession. Humorously enough, many doctor cartoons which can be found in the "mature" adult publications such as Playboy, typically depict the sexually aroused doctor chasing the resisting patient or nurse around the waiting-room, or otherwise misbehaving out of character. While the doctor jokes in a typical black publication such as Ebony,

generally reflect a sort of "societal ill" directed toward poor black people by the well-to-do white establishment profession. Furthermore, a different kind of political or power-oriented doctor joke may be found in a New Yorker for instance. Some may find it amusing to see the doctor mistreating the president for some perceived illness originating from a governmental faux pas.

Humor has a "history" component, which is apparently rather subject to change over time. It therefore reflects certain societal norms or rules which tend to be well established within the societal structure. Thus humor is a function of the times! For instance doctor cartoons published during the 1960's were of a different content than those of the 70's. They now contain sketches of the recent technology such as the "heart by-pass machine" rather than the knife for instance. Similarly, hippy jokes are more concerned with drugs and sex rather than flowers and war; while racial jokes seem more concerned with personal identity rather than political awareness or injustice.

Thus humor is history! Undeniably, it is directed toward every person in society. It mocks every established institution and tradition. Reflecting the current trends of society, it can be indicative of shifts or changes in

societal norms. It reflects changes in technology, trends in international and internal policy, shifts in child-rearing practices, and in general, all that society is about. Moreover, humor is often not funny because it does in fact reflect such societal characteristics--unemployment, desegregation, sexual promiscuity, and the like.

Humor is therefore everything, humor is life! It is the person and his beliefs, the groups and their norms, the institutions and their traditions, the people and their games.

Moreover, humor is basic. It forces the bodily systems to function: the brain through information processing and symbol manipulation, and the body through communication and movement. What other entities can make that claim--aside from those most basic to human existence and survival. As the human organism appears to demand of itself periodic gratification or release of its two most basic needs (sex and hunger); so it seems must it obtain its fair share of laughter. So what of the man who laughs not, either at himself or at others--a rather pitiful sight indeed!

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

Several different conclusions were derived from this investigation, each of which addresses itself to specific areas of concern. First, the formulations derived from Reference Group Theory appeared to be intuitively correct. Though differential findings were offered in support of Reference Group Theory predictions (especially on the critical categories of pro-white and pro-black cartoons) it was concluded that those predictions were the most stable formulations of the investigation. Pro-black and pro-white cartoons, as was expected, seemed to be more sensitive to what was arbitrarily termed the "influence effect." Utilizing a similar repeated measures design, future research would do well to increase the size of the experimental group population. Thus an inherent shortcoming of this investigation was a feeling of "lack of power" as was evidenced by the many borderline statistics.

Second, it would appear that the black and white subjects who participated in this investigation had about the same level of overall hostility. Though it is debatable as to whether or not "repressed unconscious strivings" are in fact measurable; it is concluded that the magnitude

of these strivings generally hold lesser consequences for the individual--in contrast to the mode he uses to release or lessen the intensity of the affect caused by such strivings. Intuitively, blacks seem to project their psychic-selves "outward" (via a negative attitudinal component of hostility); while whites seem to project themselves "inward" (via a roundabout or indirect component of hostility). It follows that the cartoons served as a releasing mechanism for the whites, while the experimenter and/or the situation did so for the blacks. Future research should necessarily examine the projective quality of humor stimuli along a general "in-out" dimension. Moreover, special consideration should be given to the racial characteristics of the experimenters, matching them as closely as possible on such personal characteristics as educational level, race, and social class particularly.

And third, the experimental design used for this investigation was apparently not adequate enough to encompass all the desirable combinations of group composition. Thus, only two racial group types were investigated in this study: 1) a "homogeneous" type with a black/white subject ratio of zero black/4 white and 2) a "heterogeneous" type with a black/white subject ratio of 1 black/3 white. It

is suggested therefore that future investigations use three, rather than two, distinct group types as follows:

1) homogeneous, 2) balanced, and 3) heterogeneous. Using a similar design to the one employed in this investigation would yield the following continuum of group types according to black/white subject ratio: 1) zero black/4 white, 2) 1 black/3 white, 3) 2 black/2 white, 4) 3 black/1 white, and 5) 4 black/zero white. In essence, such a design would employ two racially distinct "homogeneous" groups (i.e., zero black/4 white and 4 black/zero white) and two racially distinct "heterogeneous" groups (i.e. 1 black/3 white and 3 black/1 white). The "balanced" group (i.e., 2 black/2 white) then becomes a sort of control group; in which case the number of balanced groups used in any particular investigation may wish to be doubled for a truly balanced effect.

Moreover, we would expect groups of the 3 black/1 white and the 4 black/zero white ratio to exhibit a more marked humor response pattern (especially on pro-black cartoons) than was shown in this investigation. We would also expect such groups to exhibit less "negativism" toward a black experimenter per se, but it is not clear whether or not this high level of negativism would itself decrease

as a function of the experimenter's race. We would argue intuitively that no significant change in attitude would be apparent, though perhaps an attitudinal shift from the experimenter (either black or white) to the situation might be shown. Furthermore, we would expect these black groups to respond much more favorably toward pro-black humor.

Lastly, then, a design using three, rather than two, distinct groups might encounter difficulties assessing the "influence effect." Noteably, large numbers of black (especially) and white subjects would be needed to produce the suggested levels of the group types. Thus, depending upon the available subject pool, future investigations might consider sex rather than race as the main experimental variable.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

Here is your cartoon booklet. It contains cartoons and a rating sheet. The rating instructions are given on the rating sheet. Rate each cartoon successively in the order in which it appears in the booklet, starting at the beginning of the booklet.

Do not skip cartoons. The rating sheet follows the order of the cartoons as they appear in the booklet. You will be given approximately 10 minutes to complete this task. However, there is no need to rush--you will have more than enough time to complete your ratings.

When you have finished your ratings, please remain quietly in your seat until the proctor calls time.

Once time has been called and the cartoon materials are collected, you will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire. Please answer all of the questions to the best of your knowledge.

APPENDIX B

CARTOON BOOKLET COVER SHEET

APPENDIX B

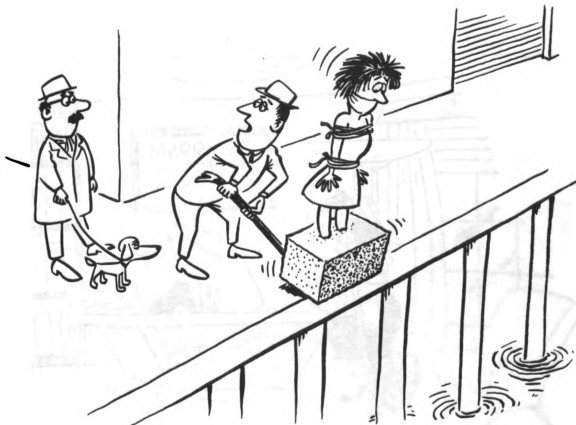
CARTOON BOOKLET**Please do not write in this booklet**

APPENDIX B1 (1-4)

WITHIN RACE AGGRESSION CARTOONS

(The number in the upper right hand corner of each page indicates the sequential order of the cartoon as it appeared in the Cartoon Booklet)

APPENDIX B1(1)
WITHIN RACE AGGRESSION



"No, just a trial separation."

APPENDIX B1(2)
WITHIN RACE AGGRESSION



"I've followed your advice to contradict my husband . . . now what's the next step?"

APPENDIX B1(3)
WITHIN RACE AGGRESSION



"Speak up, stupid—he asked you what's wrong with our marriage!"

APPENDIX B1(4)
WITHIN RACE AGGRESSION



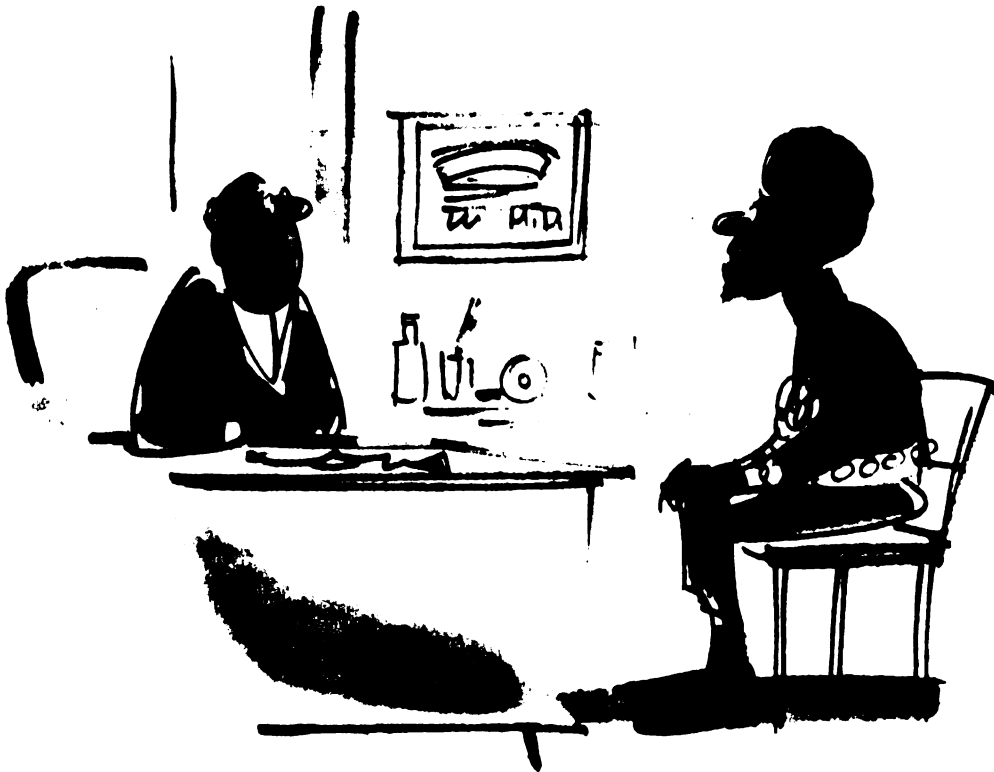
"Sure my name is Tom, and you're my nephew. But that doesn't give you any right to call me Uncle Tom!"

APPENDIX B2 (1-4)

WITHIN RACE NEUTRAL CARTOONS

(The number in the upper right hand corner of each page indicates the sequential order of the cartoon as it appeared in the Cartoon Booklet)

APPENDIX B2(1)
WITHIN RACE NEUTRAL



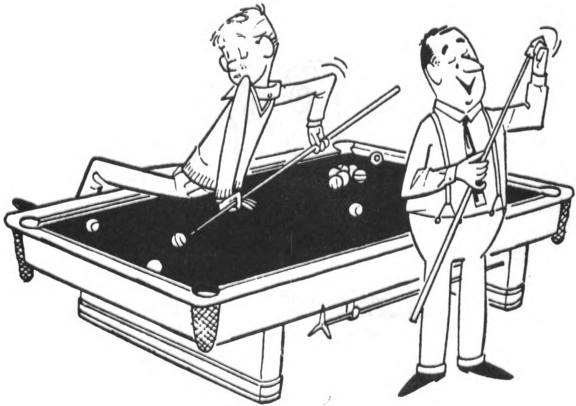
"I just feel rundown, tired, and sort of nonmilitant."

APPENDIX B2(2)
WITHIN RACE NEUTRAL



"Yes, dear, of course, dear, will do, dear, no, dear, in a jiffy, dear...."

APPENDIX B2(3)
WITHIN RACE NEUTRAL



"Watch carefully and Daddy will teach you the game. This, now, is called chalking the cue."

APPENDIX B2(4)
WITHIN RACE NEUTRAL



***"This is a recording.
You have been dialing the
wrong recording."***

APPENDIX B3 (1-4)

BLACK OVER WHITE AGGRESSION CARTOONS

(The number in the upper right hand corner of each page indicates the sequential order of the cartoon as it appeared in the Cartoon Booklet)

APPENDIX B3(1)

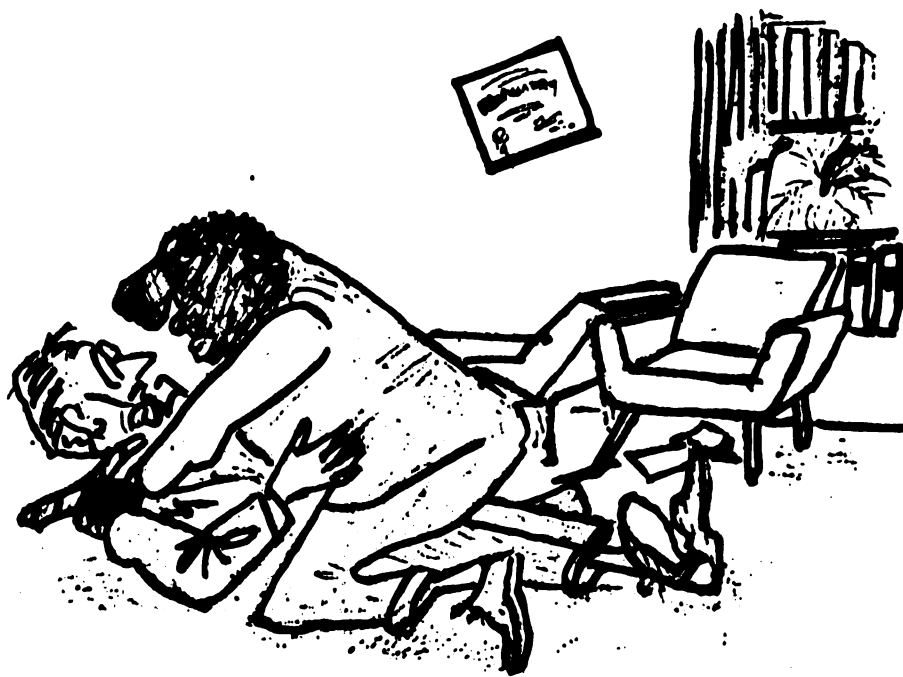
BLACK OVER WHITE AGGRESSION



"What did you ever do for me, Mister?"

APPENDIX B3(2)

BLACK OVER WHITE AGGRESSION



"I take it back! I take it back! You're
not extremely hostile!"

APPENDIX B3(3)

BLACK OVER WHITE AGGRESSION



"A SOUL BROTHER HAD A BRICK IN HIS REAR POCKET!"

APPENDIX B3 (4)

BLACK OVER WHITE AGGRESSION



"Your references are fine and your aptitude tests excellent, but I don't like your face."

APPENDIX B4 (1-4)

WHITE OVER BLACK AGGRESSION CARTOONS

(The number in the upper right hand corner of each page indicates the sequential order of the cartoon as it appeared in the Cartoon Booklet)

APPENDIX B4(1)

WHITE OVER BLACK AGGRESSION



**"YOU'RE CHARGED WITH LARCENY — FLEEING THE SCENE
WITH A POLICE OFFICERS SHOE!"**

APPENDIX B4 (2)

WHITE OVER BLACK AGGRESSION



"We're all filled up here, too!"

APPENDIX B4(3)

WHITE OVER BLACK AGGRESSION



APPENDIX B4(4)

WHITE OVER BLACK AGGRESSION



"HANG ON FOR A MINUTE, HE'S DOING HIS THING."

APPENDIX B5 (1-4)

BETWEEN RACE NEUTRAL CARTOONS

(The number in the upper right hand corner of each page indicates the sequential order of the cartoon as it appeared in the Cartoon Booklet)

APPENDIX B5(1)
BETWEEN RACE NEUTRAL



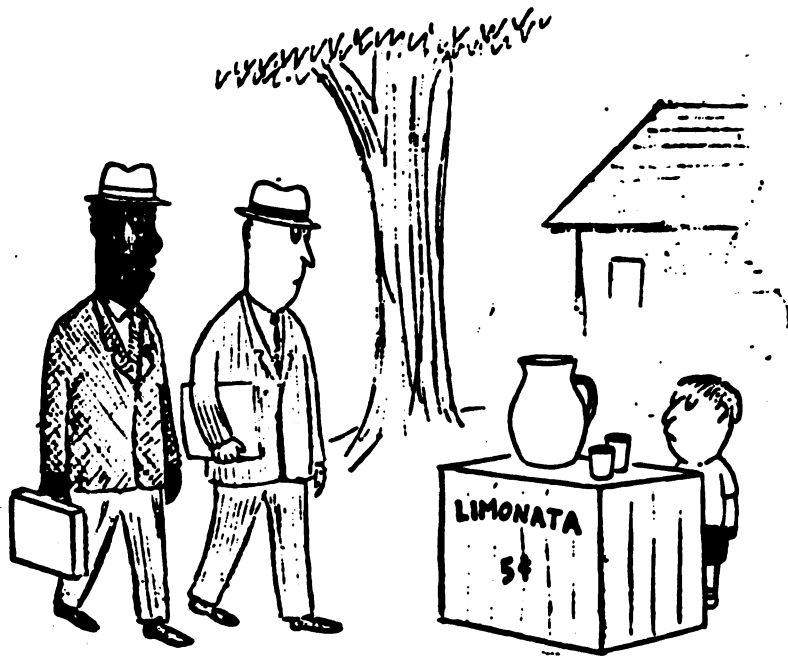
"Our cup runneth over."

APPENDIX B5(2)
BETWEEN RACE NEUTRAL



"Well, if we're still not permitted to marry, at least maybe we'll be allowed to go out on dates."

APPENDIX B5(3)
BETWEEN RACE NEUTRAL



"A Mafia front if I've ever seen one."

APPENDIX B5(4)
BETWEEN RACE NEUTRAL



"The folks have seen me on the sixth-hour news, among the audience at the Bob Hope show and twice on Walter Cronkite."

APPENDIX C

FUNNINESS RATING SHEET: FORM A

APPENDIX C

FUNNINESS RATING SHEET: FORM A

You are to give each cartoon a score according to how funny it is to you. Use the following scale:

- 1--Not at all funny
- 2--Slightly funny
- 3--Moderately funny
- 4--Very funny
- 5--Extremely funny

_____Cartoon #1

_____Cartoon #2

_____Cartoon #3

_____Cartoon #4

_____Cartoon #5

_____Cartoon #6

_____Cartoon #7

_____Cartoon #8

_____Cartoon #9

_____Cartoon #10

_____Cartoon #11

_____Cartoon #12

_____Cartoon #13

_____Cartoon #14

_____Cartoon #15

_____Cartoon #16

_____Cartoon #17

_____Cartoon #18

_____Cartoon #19

_____Cartoon #20

APPENDIX D

BUSS-DURKEE INVENTORY FOR ASSESSING

DIFFERENT KINDS OF HOSTILITY

APPENDIX D

BUSS-DURKEE INVENTORY FOR ASSESSING

DIFFERENT KINDS OF HOSTILITY

This inventory consists of numbered statements. Read each statement and decide whether it is true as applied to you or false as applied to you.

If a statement is TRUE or MOSTLY TRUE, as applied to you, circle the "T" to the left of the statement. If a statement is FALSE or NOT USUALLY TRUE, as applied to you, circle the "F" to the left of the statement. If a statement does not apply to you or if it is something that you don't know about make no mark on the answer sheet. Remember to give YOUR OWN opinion of yourself.

CIRCLE ONE

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| T | F | 1. I seldom strike back, even if someone hits me first. |
| T | F | 2. I sometimes spread gossip about people I don't like. |
| T | F | 3. Unless somebody asks me in a nice way I won't do what they want. |
| T | F | 4. I lose my temper easily but get over it quickly. |
| T | F | 5. I don't seem to get what's coming to me. |
| T | F | 6. I know that people tend to talk about me behind my back. |
| T | F | 7. When I disapprove of my friends' behavior I let them know it. |
| T | F | 8. The few times I have cheated, I have suffered unbearable feelings of remorse. |
| T | F | 9. Once in a while I cannot control my urge to harm others. |
| T | F | 10. I never get mad enough to throw things. |
| T | F | 11. Other people always seem to get the breaks. |
| T | F | 12. Sometimes people bother me just by being around. |
| T | F | 13. When someone makes a rule I don't like I am tempted to break it. |

- T F 14. I tend to be on my guard with people who are somewhat more friendly than I expected.
- T F 15. I often find myself disagreeing with people.
- T F 16. I sometimes have bad thoughts which make me feel ashamed of myself.
- T F 17. I can think of no good reason for ever hitting anyone.
- T F 18. When I am angry, I sometimes sulk.
- T F 19. When someone is bossy, I do the opposite of what he asks.
- T F 20. I am irritated a great deal more than people are aware of.
- T F 21. I don't know any people that I downright hate.
- T F 22. There are a number of people who seem to dislike me very much.
- T F 23. I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me.
- T F 24. People who shirk on the job must feel very guilty.
- T F 25. If somebody hits me first, I let him have it.
- T F 26. When I am mad, I sometimes slam doors.
- T F 27. I am always patient with others.
- T F 28. Occasionally when I am mad at someone, I will give him the "silent treatment."
- T F 29. When I look back on what's happened to me, I can't help feeling mildly resentful.
- T F 30. There are a number of people who seem to be jealous of me.
- T F 31. I demand that people respect my rights.
- T F 32. It depresses me that I did not do more for my parents.
- T F 33. Whoever insults me or my family is asking for a fight.
- T F 34. I never play practical jokes.
- T F 35. It makes my blood boil to have somebody make fun of me.
- T F 36. When people are bossy, I take my time just to show them.
- T F 37. Almost every week I see someone I dislike.

- T F 38. I sometimes have the feeling that others are laughing at me.
- T F 39. Even when my anger is aroused, I don't use "strong language."
- T F 40. I am concerned about being forgiven for my sins.
- T F 41. People who continually pester you are asking for a punch in the nose.
- T F 42. I sometimes pout when I don't get my own way.
- T F 43. If somebody annoys me, I am apt to tell him what I think of him.
- T F 44. I often feel like a powder keg ready to explode.
- T F 45. Although I don't show it, I am sometimes eaten up with jealousy.
- T F 46. My motto is "Never trust strangers."
- T F 47. When people yell at me, I yell back.
- T F 48. I do many things that make me feel remorseful afterward.
- T F 49. When I really lose my temper, I am capable of slapping someone.
- T F 50. Since the age of ten I have never had a temper tantrum.
- T F 51. When I get mad, I say nasty things.
- T F 52. I sometimes carry a chip on my shoulder.
- T F 53. If I let people see the way I feel, I'd be considered a hard person to get along with.
- T F 54. I commonly wonder what hidden reason another person may have for doing something nice to me.
- T F 55. I could not put someone in his place, even if he needed it.
- T F 56. Failure gives me a feeling of remorse.
- T F 57. I get into fights about as often as the next person.
- T F 58. I can remember being so angry that I picked up the nearest thing and broke it.
- T F 59. I often make threats I don't really mean to carry out.
- T F 60. I can't help being a little rude to people I don't like.

- T F 61. At times I feel I get a raw deal out of life.
- T F 62. I used to think that most people told the truth, but now I know otherwise.
- T F 63. I generally cover up my poor opinion of others.
- T F 64. When I do wrong, my conscience punishes me severely.
- T F 65. If I have to resort to physical violence to defend my rights, I will.
- T F 66. If someone doesn't treat me right, I don't let it annoy me.
- T F 67. I have no enemies who really wish to harm me.
- T F 68. When arguing, I tend to raise my voice.
- T F 69. I often feel that I have not lived the right kind of life.
- T F 70. I have known people who pushed me so far that we came to blows.
- T F 71. I don't let a lot of unimportant things irritate me.
- T F 72. I seldom feel that people are trying to anger or insult me.
- T F 73. Lately, I have been kind of grouchy.
- T F 74. I would rather concede a point than get into an argument about it.
- T F 75. I sometimes show my anger by banging on the table.

APPENDIX E

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR BETWEEN

GROUP INFLUENCE ON CARTOON CATEGORIES

APPENDIX E

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR BETWEEN GROUP INFLUENCE ON CARTOON CATEGORIES

Cartoon Category	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous	t	df	p <
	Mean Square	Mean Square			
Within Race Agg.	105.58	80.43	1.16	1/9	1
Within Race Neutral	84.64	80.39	.05	1/9	1
Black Over White Agg.	82.50	55.76	3.94	1/9	.01
White Over Black Agg.	51.08	46.68	.77	1/9	1
Between Race Neutral	88.36	73.93	1.86	1/9	1
Total Humor	1967	1659	2.39	1/9	.05

APPENDIX F

UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR WITHIN
GROUP INFLUENCE ON HUMOR CATEGORIES AND ON
HOSTILITY SUBCLASSES

APPENDIX F

UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR WITHIN GROUP
INFLUENCE ON HUMOR CATEGORIES

Cartoon Category	Mean Squares	F	df	p
Within Race Agg.	6.922	.67	1/9	.44
Within Race Neutral	24.524	2.73	1/9	.13
Black Over White Agg.	33.599	5.00	1/9	.05
White Over Black Agg.	.174	.01	1/9	.92
Between Race Neutral	16.848	1.80	1/9	.21
Total Humor	2.852	.18	1/9	.89

UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR WITHIN GROUP
INFLUENCE ON HOSTILITY SUBCLASSES

Hostility Subclass	Mean Squares	F	df	p
Assault	9.370	1.13	1/9	.32
Indirect	29.964	12.92	1/9	.006
Irritability	.266	.03	1/9	.86
Negativism	7.569	4.62	1/9	.06
Resentment	.918	.13	1/9	.72
Suspicion	48.488	4.19	1/9	.07
Verbal	12.166	3.59	1/9	.09
Guilt	1.840	.19	1/9	.67
Total Aggression	60.910	.58	1/9	.47

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