

A Study of Ethnic Slurs: The Jew and the Polack in the United States

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECTS of the study of man concerns the alleged or actual character traits of different cultures and subcultures. In anthropology and psychology there is a vast literature devoted to "national character," ethnic psychology or *Volkscharakter*.¹ While some scholars have despaired of ever arriving at a rigorous description of the "modal personality" or fundamental character of different groups, there seems little doubt that different peoples do manifest different personality traits. Interest in such matters depends, of course, upon whether a particular investigator wishes to emphasize the essential similarities of peoples or to dwell upon the various differences.

There is an equally large literature on the apparently universal propensity of man to stereotype. Ever since the coining of the term by journalist Walter Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion* in 1922, social psychologists among others have actively sought to refine the concept and to document its existence and influence.² Attention has been given both to stereotypes of self and to stereotypes of others. In addition, there have been special studies concerned with the relationship between stereotypes and prejudice.³ It seems clear that stereotypes do contribute materially to the formation and perpetuation of deep-seated prejudices.

Yet, in examining the extensive national character and stereotype scholarship, one finds surprisingly little reference to the materials of folklore. Stereotypes are described almost solely on the basis of questionnaires or interviews in which an a priori set of adjectives, such as "honest" or "stingy," are assigned by informants to national or ethnic groups. One wonders, methodologically speaking, just how the researcher selects the initial list of adjectives and whether or not his personal

¹ For samples of this extensive literature, see Georges A. Heuse, *La psychologie ethnique* (Paris, 1953); Paul Grieger, *La caractérologie ethnique* (Paris, 1961); Don Martindale, ed., *National Character in the Perspective of the Social Sciences*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 370 (1967), 1-163; and especially the valuable bibliographical survey of J. C. H. Duijker and N. H. Fridja, *National Character and National Stereotypes* (Amsterdam, 1960).

² See the discussion by W. Edgar Vinacke, "Stereotypes as Social Concepts," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 46 (1957), 229-243.

³ Representative are Daniel Katz and Kenneth W. Braly, "Verbal Stereotypes and Racial Prejudice," in *Readings in Social Psychology*, ed. Eleanor E. Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugene L. Hartley, 3rd ed. (New York, 1958), 40-46; and G. Saenger and S. Flowerman, "Stereotypes and Prejudicial Attitudes," *Human Relations*, 7 (1954), 217-238.

bias in making up the list does not partially invalidate the results. What psychologists and others fail to realize is that folklore represents an important and virtually untapped source of information for students of national character, stereotypes, and prejudice. The folk have been making national character studies (that is, folk national character studies) for centuries.⁴ People A have numerous traditions about the character of People B as do People B about People A. And it is precisely these traditions that transmit stereotypes from one generation to another. The stereotypes are thus "already recorded" and would presumably be free from the inevitable investigator bias found in the unduly leading questionnaires. Furthermore, the folkloristic evidence may clarify a number of bothersome ambiguities. Most of the traits contained on the conventional questionnaire lists of adjectives have both positive and negative associations. Thus as Vinacke has pointed out, "thrifty" is positive while "stingy" is negative.⁵ The basic trait is the same, but the degree differs. The folkloristic context of a joke would ordinarily make it clear whether a Scotsman is being thrifty or stingy.

In the United States, as elsewhere, individuals acquire stereotypes from folklore. Most of our conceptions of the French or of the Jew come not from extended personal acquaintance or contact with representatives of these groups but rather from the proverbs, songs, jokes, and other forms of folklore we have heard all our lives.⁶ The stereotypes may or may not be accurate character analyses, that is, they may or may not be in accord with actual, empirically verifiable personality traits. The point is, rather, that the folk stereotypes exist and more importantly that countless people make judgments on the basis of them. There is probably no other area of folklore where the element of belief is more critical and potentially dangerous, not only to self but to others.

Comparison is a method of research that could conceivably aid in proving or disproving the degree of validity of folkloristic stereotypes. Does the French folk concept of themselves as French coincide with the delineation of French national character made by French psychologists, sociologists or social historians? And what of the American conception of French character? Is it the same or different from the German conception of the French? Or the Spanish? In part the question is whether folk stereotypes are cross-cultural or not. Some seem to be, for example, the Jew as mercenary and mercantile-minded. It has been suggested by Prothro and Melikian among others that cross-cultural agreement or "types" might tend to support the idea that such stereotypes contain at least a "kernel of truth."⁷ On the

⁴ For Chinese examples, see Wolfram Eberhard, "Chinese Regional Stereotypes," *Asian Survey*, 5 (1965), 596-608; for Turkish examples, see Wm. Hugh Jansen, "A Culture's Stereotypes and Their Expression in Folk Clichés," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 13 (1959), 184-200. For additional discussion of the relationship between jokes and stereotypes, see Walter P. Zenner, "Joking and Ethnic Stereotyping," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 43 (1970), 93-113.

⁵ Vinacke, 232.

⁶ See the interesting study of children's rhymes by Nathan Hurvitz, "Jews and Jewishness in the Street Rhymes of American Children," *Jewish Social Studies*, 16 (1954), 135-150.

⁷ E. Terry Prothro and Levon H. Melikian, "Studies in Stereotypes: V. Familiarity and the Kernel of Truth Hypothesis," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 41 (1955), 3-10. For further consideration of cross-cultural stereotypes see E. Terry Prothro, "Cross-Cultural Patterns of National Stereotypes," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 40 (1954), 53-59; W. Buchanan and H. Cantril, *How Nations See Each Other* (Urbana, 1953); and Wallace E. Lambert and Otto Klineberg, *Children's Views of Foreign Peoples: A Cross-National Study* (New York, 1967).

other hand, with the boost given to international propaganda efforts by the mass media, one must proceed with great caution. The fact that a fiction is shared cross-culturally does not necessarily make that fiction true. Still, cross-cultural agreement that Germans are militaristic would constitute much more impressive evidence than merely a single American folk stereotype of the Germans as militaristic.

Comparative studies of folk stereotypes may also be undertaken with just two groups. As Jansen attempted to show, two groups may produce a variety of inter-related stereotypes.⁸ If there are two groups (call them A and B, and one could substitute for A and B any one of a number of pairs of groups: northerners/southerners, Greeks/Turks, Jews/Gentiles) one would have the following potential stereotypes.

There is A's conception of A vis-à-vis B. (An example would be a white's conception of a white in contrast to a Negro.)

There is B's conception of A vis-à-vis B. (An example would be a Negro's conception of a white in contrast to a Negro.)

There is A's conception of B vis-à-vis A. (An example would be a white's conception of a Negro in contrast to a white.)

There is B's conception of B vis-à-vis A. (An example would be a Negro's conception of a Negro in contrast to a white.)

There is A's conception of B's conception of A vis-à-vis B. (An example would be a white's conception of a Negro's conception of a white in contrast to a Negro. This may or may not be the same as a Negro's conception of a white in contrast to a Negro.)

There is B's conception of A's conception of B vis-à-vis A. (An example would be a Negro's conception of a white's conception of a Negro in contrast to a white. The question here would be whether the Negro stereotype of the white stereotype of the Negro was or was not identical to the white stereotype of the Negro.)

There is A's conception of B's conception of B vis-à-vis A. (An example would be a white's conception of a Negro's conception of a Negro in contrast to a white.)

There is B's conception of A's conception of A vis-à-vis B. (An example would be a Negro's conception of a white's conception of a white in contrast to a Negro.)

The possibility of having "stereotypes of stereotypes" in addition to the conventional stereotypes is no mere theoretical premise. There are not only stereotypes in jokes; there are plays upon the stereotypes, e.g., where a Negro will make fun of the white stereotype (or what he believes to be the white stereotype) of the Negro. Sometimes the stereotype and the "stereotype of a stereotype" are mutually reinforcing. For example, one American concept of the Frenchman is that he is a great lover (which may in fact be part of the larger Latin Lover stereotype that includes Italians and Spaniards). In addition, there is another American stereotype to the effect that the French consider Americans to be poor lovers. (Thus there is some congruence between A's conception of B on the one hand, and A's

⁸ Wm. Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," *Fabula*, 2 (1959), 205-211, reprinted in Alan Dundes, ed., *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), 43-51. An earlier delineation of the theoretical possibilities of stereotypes of "self" and "other" may be found in Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (New York, 1955), 47.

conception of B's conception of A on the other.) The latter stereotype is illustrated in the following text:

A French girl was very despondent over a sad love affair so she went to the banks of the Seine and jumped in. A man passing saw her jump in so he dove in after her and pulled her out. But she was already dead. Oh, she'd taken off all her clothes—she was nude. So he ran to get a gendarme. In the meantime, another Frenchman came along and he saw this girl lying nude on the banks of the Seine so he ran up and started to make advances. And since she didn't seem to resist him, he started to make love to her. In the meantime, the other Frenchman came back with the policeman and he said, "Monsieur, monsieur, stop, stop, she's dead." And the man jumps and says, "Oh, sacrebleu, I thought she was American."

Jokes like the above together with other folkloristic treatments of stereotypes may be loosely classified under the rubric of ethnic slur. One difficulty, however, is that ethnic slur, like the French term *blason populaire* normally connotes a pejorative nuance.⁹ Yet clearly many elements of folk stereotypes have positive value. Jews tell and enjoy apparently antisemitic jokes just as Catholic priests relish anticlerical tales. The term "ethnophaulism" proposed by Roback refers to "foreign disparaging allusions."¹⁰ Whether an ethnic slur is truly disparaging depends in part upon who is using it and to whom.

Another difficulty with a concept like "ethnic slur" is that it crosses genre lines. An ethnic slur may consist of a single word, for example, "frog" referring to a Frenchman. Or it may be an extended epigram or proverb: "With a Hungarian for a friend you don't need an enemy." "Count your fingers after you shake the hand of a Hungarian." "How do you make a Hungarian omelet? First you steal a dozen eggs . . ." "Both a Hungarian and Rumanian will sell you their grandmother, but only a Rumanian will deliver her." There is some ambiguity in the last example. On the one hand, anyone so callous as to make money by selling his own grandmother is obviously not to be trusted. On the other hand, the Hungarian is contrasted with the Rumanian insofar as the Hungarian fails to live up to his bargain to deliver his grandmother. This failure is negative insofar as it is yet another instance of the untrustworthiness of Hungarians; they do not fulfill contracts. At the same time, it is positive in the sense that the Hungarian is a trickster who in the final analysis would not actually sell a member of his own family into bondage, while the Rumanian would. The Rumanian, by contrast, is more honest but not so clever as the Hungarian whose ruthless behavior he attempts to imitate.¹¹ Still another problem with the notion of ethnic slur is that there are many slurs that are not strictly speaking ethnic. There are slurs having to do with a geographical region or city, such as, "Did you hear about the big new prize contest? The first prize is one week in Philadelphia; the second prize is two weeks in Philadelphia." A similar anti-Philadelphia slur is, "The best thing about Philadelphia is the Express [train] to New York." There are many other anti-Philadelphia slurs al-

⁹ The classic study, Henri Gaidoz and Paul Sebillot, *Blason populaire de la France* (Paris, 1884), is primarily concerned with slurs about different regions of France. There is, however, one section devoted to foreigners, pp. 332-378.

¹⁰ The term proposed by A. A. Roback in *A Dictionary of International Slurs (Ethnophaulisms)* (Cambridge, Mass., 1944) has received little acceptance. However, see Erdon B. Palmore, "Ethnophaulisms and Ethnocentrism," *American Journal of Sociology*, 67 (1962), 442-445.

¹¹ For other anti-Hungarian proverbs, see Roback, 81.

though the comments on its being a "dead" town with little to do or its lack of late night life are no doubt applied to other cities, for example: "I spent a week in Philadelphia one day" or "I was in Philadelphia once, but it was closed."¹² There are obviously also slurs involving religion, and in fact part of the stereotype of the Jew would have to be considered a religious rather than a pure ethnic slur.

The inadequacy of the term "ethnic slur" concerns essentially the definition of "folk" itself. Some folk groups are ethnic groups, and in such cases the label ethnic slur seems to be very appropriate; however, there are many folk groups which are not ethnic, and in such cases the term seems inappropriate. This is clear if one accepts the modern, flexible definition of "folk" as meaning not a peasant society but any group whatsoever sharing at least one common factor.¹³ The linking factor could be ethnicity, but it could just as well be political or religious affiliation, geographical location, or occupation. Any group is potentially both producer and victim of slurs. Some slurs are very much in-group traditions; some are strictly out-group traditions; some are used as often by the in-group as by the out-group.¹⁴ One reasonably empirical and eminently practical way of determining whether a given group does have a "folk" identity separate from the general culture surrounding it is to determine if that group has, or is the subject of, slurs. In medicine, general practitioners have jokes about proctologists, such as calling them "rear admirals." In academic life, university professors have jokes about deans, "Old deans never die, they just lose their faculties." Within Catholicism, one finds jokes about Jesuits, often commenting upon their intellectual rather than mystical approach to life and religion, for example, "There was a meeting of three clergymen, and the three were in a room. There was a Dominican, a Franciscan, and a Jesuit. In the middle of the meeting, the lights go out. Undeterred by the darkness, the Dominican stands up and says, 'Let us consider the nature of light and of darkness, and their meaning.' The Franciscan begins to sing a hymn in honor of our Little Sister Darkness. The Jesuit goes out and replaces the fuse." It is sometimes difficult to collect such in-group traditions inasmuch as the subgroups may close ranks when confronted by what they take to be a threatening outsider who is only posing as a harmless folklorist-collector.

In using the term "ethnic" or "national slur," then, one needs to keep in mind that it is a functional rather than generic category and also that there are slurs having nothing to do with ethnicity. The ethnic slur depends upon an alleged national or ethnic trait. More often than not, the trait or traits are mocked and demeaned. What is of primary interest here is determining precisely the trait or set of traits the folk has singled out for emphasis.

Not only have the folk undertaken informal national character studies in the form of ethnic slur or national stereotype traditions, but they have even gone so far as to attempt modest comparative studies. Although admittedly of limited scope, such comparative listings of slurs do indicate the general tendency of man

¹² For additional place name slurs found in the United States, see Ed Cray, "Ethnic and Place Names as Derisive Adjectives," *Western Folklore*, 21 (1962), 27-34; and the various additions to his list, such as George Monteiro, "And Still More Ethnic and Place Names as Derisive Adjectives," *Western Folklore*, 27 (1968), 51.

¹³ Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*, 2.

¹⁴ See Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore."

to compare his group with other groups. In almost all of the multigroup ethnic slurs, in which a host of cultures are lampooned, we find a similar compositional technique. Members of different cultures are placed in an identical situation or are each made to perform the same act. It is the responses to the fixed situation or the different ways of carrying out the set task that provide the outlet for supposedly stereotypic behavior. Consider, for example, the remarks made by wives from different countries after conjugal intercourse.

American wife: Gee, honey, that was great.

French wife: Mon cherie, what a beautiful lover you are.

Jewish wife: I should have held out for a fur coat.

German wife: Ach, mein herr, what authority. How masterful.

English wife: There dear, do you feel better now?

In this one example we find typical ethnic slurs expressed with the usual praise-worthy economy of the folk. There is the French glorification of lovemaking, the Jewish concern for material reward, the German love of authority, and the English coldness in personal relations combined with the notion that sexuality is a wifely duty devoid of pleasure. Of course, these traits often occur in single slurs. For example, there was the Englishman who was making love to his wife. And he said, "Oh! Pardon me, darling. Did I hurt you?" And she said, "No, why?" And he said, "Oh, you moved."

Another typical multigroup ethnic slur concerns an international conference of scholars who are reading papers on various aspects of the elephant. The Englishman gives his on "Elephant Hunting in India." The Russian presents "The Elephant and the Five-Year-Plan." The Italian offers, "The Elephant and the Renaissance." The Frenchman delivers "Les amours des elephants" (or in some versions "L'elephant dans la cuisine"). The German gives "The Elephant and the Renazification of Germany" (or in other versions "The Military Use of the Elephant" or "Ein kurze Einfuhring in das Leben des vierbeinigen Elephanten"—in 24 volumes, but he dies after preparing the 17th volume for press) and finally the American rises to give his paper on "How to Build a Bigger and Better Elephant." This joke is found in many European countries with different nationalities and traits portrayed.

Sometimes it is the telling of a joke itself that provides the critical point of ethnic contrast, as in the following example.

When a Frenchman hears a story he always laughs three times, first when he hears it, second when you explain it to him, and third when he understands. That is because a Frenchman likes to laugh. When you tell a joke to an Englishman, he laughs twice, once when you tell it and a second time when you explain it to him. He will never understand it, he is too stuffy. When you tell a joke to a German, he only laughs once, when you tell it to him. He won't let you explain it to him because he is too arrogant. Also Germans have no sense of humor. When you tell a joke to a Jew—before you finish it, he interrupts you. First, he has heard it before; second, you are not telling it right; and third, he ends up telling you the story the way it should be told.

As a matter of fact, there is a whole series of joke-slurs in the United States whose only point is that Englishmen are unable to retell American jokes they have heard. The punchline consists of the Englishman's botching the original punch-

line. The patterning of these slurs is quite constant. The Englishman hears an American tell a joke; the Englishman retells the joke incorrectly, thereby indicating that he has not understood it. Here is an example that plays on the colloquial phrase "a slip of the tongue."

An Englishman was at a dinner party and his host, while carving a boiled tongue, inadvertently knocked it off the table into his guest's lap. The host immediately said 'Lapsus linguae,' and it raised such a laugh that the Englishman wished to repeat it. At a dinner party he gave, the Englishman purposely knocked the meat into somebody's lap and repeated the phrase. But nobody laughed. It was a leg of lamb.

Having considered some examples of international slurs, we may now turn to national and subcultural slurs. In the United States, however, with its unmelted "melting pot" of immigrant groups, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between international and subcultural ethnic slurs. An anti-Italian slur probably refers to Italian-Americans rather than Italians, but it may refer to both. Sometimes, the point is simply to force the utterance of the folk reference term, "What does a pizza sound like when you throw it into a wall? Wop!" (One folk etymology for the word "wop," a common term of disparagement for Americans of Italian descent, is that in the early 1920s many Italians tried to enter the United States illegally. These would-be immigrants were rounded up by U.S. officials and sent back to Italy with documents labelled W.O.P. which supposedly stood for "Without Papers" referring to the papers needed for legal immigration.)¹⁵ Probably the most common anti-Italian ethnic slur concerns cowardice. Here the reference is clearly to Italians rather than Italian-Americans, although the latter are presumably tarred with the same brush. An example is the following joking question. "What's this?" (narrator raises both hands well above his head as if to surrender). Answer, "An Italian getting ready for World War III (or an Italian out on war maneuvers)." The same gesture is also the answer to the question, "What's the Italian soldier's salute?" Cowardice is also the subject of the following slurs: "How many speeds does an Italian tank have? Five. Four in reverse and one forward—in case they're attacked from the rear." "What happened two hours after the Arab-Israeli war broke out? The Italians surrendered." There are other anti-Italian slurs but these are representative.¹⁶

In analyzing the content of ethnic slurs, one of the critical questions is whether or not a specific character trait is limited in distribution to one particular ethnic group. For example, one anti-Italian joke reported by Simmons is "How many Italians does it take to change a lightbulb? Three—one to hold the bulb and two to turn the ladder." However, this joke is also told about Polacks and many other groups. If this joke is simply a floating tradition of the "moron-noodle-numskull" variety, then it raises the question of the extent to which it is feasible to undertake a meaningful content analysis of ethnic slurs. Just how specific and consistent are the ethnic slur traditions attached to any one particular group? There is no doubt that stereotypes may change in time, subject to the vagaries of historical events. For example, in 1941, Americans perceived the Japanese as sly, treacherous and

¹⁵ For alternative theories of the origin of "wop," see Roback, 70, and Palmore, 444.

¹⁶ For other examples, see Roback, and Donald C. Simmons, "Anti-Italian-American Riddles in New England," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE*, 79 (1966), 475-478.

sneaky, but twenty-five years later these traits are largely absent. Generally speaking, however, I would say that traits of a stereotype manifested at any one point in time demonstrate considerable consistency. And I would also argue that many ethnic-slur traditions have proved remarkably stable over long periods of time. Part of the consistency and stability may be explained in terms of pattern strength. In what I would term a multiple-trait stereotype, it is precisely the combination of traits that makes a particular stereotype unique, and it is the combination of traits that contributes to the stereotype's remarkable if maleficent staying power. As an illustration of the consistency of the patterning of multiple-trait folk stereotypes, I should like to consider briefly the Jew and the Polack as they appear in current American oral tradition.

In discussing the generic Jew as he appears in American ethnic slurs, I shall treat the Jew as opposed to the gentile.¹⁷ One could profitably deal with Jewish subcultures by means of ethnic slurs, for example, the Russian Jews versus the German Jews or Orthodox versus Conservative versus Reform Judaism. For the present purposes, however, it should be sufficient to delineate some of the more typical traits of the Jew in general as he is depicted in ethnic slurs. What are these traits?

1. One of the dominant traits is the concern with making money. The following texts should serve to illustrate this trait.

When Billy Graham sang "All I Want Is Jesus," five thousand people joined the Protestant church. When Pope Pius sang "Ave Maria," ten thousand people joined the Catholic church. When Pat Boone sang "There's a Gold Mine in the Sky," one hundred thousand Jews joined the Air Force.

Jesus Saves; Moses Invests.

Have you heard the Jewish football yell that goes: "Get that quarter back!"

How do they take a census in Israel? They roll a nickel down the street.

2. A related trait is the alleged penchant for mercantile trade; for example, the Jew is depicted as always looking for a bargain, or looking to make a sale:

God came down to a Babylonian one day; he says, "Say, I have a commandment; I'd like to give it to you." And the Babylonian says, "Well, what is it?" "Thou shalt not steal." And the Babylonian says, "Well, no thanks." So God went over to an Egyptian and offered him the same deal. And when the Egyptian heard it, he said, "No thanks." And then God met Moses and God said, "I have a commandment for you." And Moses said, "Well, how much is it going to cost me?" "Nothing." And Moses says, "I'll take ten."

In this illustration of the stereotype, it is surely noteworthy that the Jewish Moses doesn't even bother to ask what the commandments are. More important than what they are is what they cost. The critical factor is the bargain insofar as there is no charge for the commandments. Moses says he'll take ten, and he has not even asked what it is he is getting. But usually, in the stereotype, it is the Jew who offers the cut rate:

This is station KVV, Tel Aviv, 1400 on your dial, but for *you*, 1395!

¹⁷ For other considerations of the generic Jew in American folklore, see the previously cited works by Roback and Hurvitz, and especially Rudolf Glanz, *The Jew in the Old American Folklore* (New York, 1961).

Perhaps one of the bitterest examples of the exalted importance of commerce is the joke in which two clothing manufacturers are waiting anxiously for a telegram of confirmation or cancellation of a big business order. Finally a telegram arrives. Neither wants to open it. Confirmation? Cancellation? Finally, one opens the telegram. "Good news, Morris," he says to his partner, "your brother died." A final example of this part of the stereotype pasquinades the Negro as well:

A Protestant, a Negro, and a Jew die and go to heaven. When they get there, St. Peter says to the Protestant, "What do you want?" The Protestant answers, "Nice food, a nice pasture, and some nice sheep." St. Peter then asks the Negro what he wants. The Negro says, "A big flashy Cadillac, a million dollars, and a big white house." St. Peter then asks the Jew what he wants and the Jew replies, "All you got to give me is a suitcase full of trinkets and the address of that Negro."

The point here, of course, is that the Jew elects to gain wealth by taking it away from someone else through a sharp and unfair business trade. In terms of the joke's premises, he presumably could have been given the wealth by St. Peter just as the Negro had been. However, as the stereotype suggests, the Jew is consistently portrayed as being business oriented before all else.

3. A prominent trait is the desire for status, often achieved by males by becoming professional men and by females through their marriage to professional men.

What did Mr. Mink give Mrs. Mink for Christmas?
A full-length Jew.

Normally the path to such financial success is presumed to lie in careers in medicine or law.

Two Jewish women meet on the street, one with children. The other says, "Such beautiful children, how old are they?"

"The doctor is seven and the lawyer is five."

In the same vein is the following:

There is a little Jewish lady running along the seashore yelling, "Help, help, my son, the doctor, is drowning."

Still another expression of this facet of the stereotype is found in the following joking question:

What is the definition of a C.P.A. (Certified Public Accountant)?
It's a Jewish boy who can't stand the sight of blood and who stutters.

I suspect that this particular ethnic slur might not be understood by all members of the outgroup. The point here is that a Jewish boy who can't stand the sight of blood cannot become a doctor and similarly a Jewish boy who stutters cannot become a lawyer. Hence the only course left is to become a C.P.A.

The Jewish female's means of attaining status has traditionally been through a good marriage, preferably to a doctor. This stereotype is illustrated by the following texts:

In a crowded theater, a Jewish lady trips and falls down stairs. In mortal pain and half dying, she screams, "Is there a doctor in the house?" Finally, a man comes over and says, "Yes, Madam, I'm a doctor."

"Doctor, I have a young daughter who is of marriageable age."

Two Jewish women are walking along, and one says, "Ach, my son—he gives me both sorrow and pleasure." So her friend asks her, "How does he give you sorrow?" And she says, "He's a homosexual." So her friend asks, "How does he give you pleasure?" And she says, "He's going with a doctor."

Did you hear about the Jewish girl who accidentally married the Good Humor man? (Good Humor men are ice cream vendors in the streets. They normally wear white uniforms, somewhat similar to the white hospital coats worn by doctors.)

5. Another feature of the folk stereotype, but a physical rather than a motivational one, has to do with the so-called large Jewish nose. Sometimes, this feature is combined with another stereotypic trait:

Why do Jews have big noses? Air is free.

Usually, however, the nose appears alone as in the following sick joking question:

Do you know what happened to the pregnant Jewish woman who took Thalidomide? She had [gave birth to] a ten-pound nose.

One of the most elaborate expressions of this element of the stereotype consists of a folktale parody:

Once upon a time there was a little Jewish girl, and her name was Little Red Rosenthal. Little Red Rosenthal lived at the edge of the woods with her mother. One day Little Red Rosenthal's boubie [grandmother] was sick. So Little Red Rosenthal's mother gave Little Red Rosenthal a basket with pchaw, kishka, sup mit kreplach, and shtrudel for Little Red Rosenthal to take to her boubie. Her mother told her to be very careful of the wolf and not to talk with him and to go straight to her grandmother's house. On the way Little Red Rosenthal met the wolf and he said, "Darling ver are you goin'?" "I'm going to take this basket of food to my boubie," she replied, and went on her way. The wolf went ahead, straight to the boubie's house and ate up the boubie. When Little Red Rosenthal got to her boubie's house she knocked on the door. "Kom in," said the boubie.

"Boubie! What big ears you have!"

"The better to hear your beautiful voice mit, my dear."

"Boubie! What big eyes you have!"

"The better to look on you mit, my dear!"

"Boubie! What a big nose you have!"

"*You* should talk!"

5. The stereotype traits having to do with money, business, professionalism, and nasal physiognomy are perhaps the most obvious and recurrent. Nevertheless, this by no means exhausts the stereotype. Among the other traits that occur in ethnic slur tradition is the alleged propensity of some Jews for pro-Semitism (as opposed to anti-Semitism). According to this trait, Jews tend to interpret or evaluate anything that happens in the world in terms of its importance to Jews. A text illustrating such stereotypic ethnocentrism is the following:

One day during the time when Babe Ruth was the hero of every boy in America, little Bennie came running in to his grandfather and excitedly yelled, "Grandfather, grandfather, Babe Ruth just hit his sixtieth home run." His grandfather gave him a long, somber look and acidly replied, "So, how's this going to help the Jews?"

But if pro-Semitism is part of the stereotype so is anti-Semitism. A most important facet of the stereotype is the Jew who tries to disown or conceal his heri-

tage. The gist of the trait is that Jews should not or rather cannot stop being Jewish. Often this is revealed in the punchline of a joke in which a traditional phrase of Yiddish folk speech proves the continued Jewishness of the character. Here is a representative text:

A young Jewish couple from New York decides they want to go to Florida for a vacation but the hotel they want to stay at is restricted. ("Restricted" means that Jews are not welcome and that the clientele is supposedly restricted to white Christians.) The man tells his wife he thinks it will work out and they will be able to stay at the hotel just as long as she doesn't open her mouth, because nobody will know they are Jewish. So they make the trip, and everything goes just fine. They check into the hotel, and the wife never opens her mouth. They go up to their room and pretty soon the wife decides she would like to take a swim. The husband tells her to go ahead but reminds her not to say anything. So she goes down to the pool for her swim. She sticks her toe into the water and it is just terribly cold, and she yells out, "Oi vey!" Then looking around horrified, she adds, "Wat ever dat means."

Perhaps the best examples of the Jew's unsuccessful attempts to renounce his heritage are found in the large number of Jewish-Christian jokes. The idea is essentially that a Jew cannot convert to Christianity however much he may try.

Do you know the one about the little old devout Orthodox Jew who decides in the latter part of his life to turn to Catholicism? Well, the Catholic church is so delighted, because this is wonderful propaganda for the universal appeal of the church, and they invite him to speak at the next congregation. So the little Jew gets up and says, "Fellow goyim . . ."

In order to understand this joke, one needs to know that "goyim" is a humorous disparaging Jewish term for non-Jews or gentiles. There are many Jewish jokes that end with the utterance of this term. The point in the above joke is that the Jew, even when supposedly converted, cannot do other than consider the Catholics as goyim, that is, as members of the out-group as opposed to the Jewish in-group. Another example of a "goyim" joke that serves as a pro-Jewish story thereby reinforcing group solidarity is the following:

The Israelis decide to make a huge bell by melting down all the guns used on the Gaza strip, and they're going to send this bell to be rung on the day of the Pope's coronation in St. Peter's Square. So on the day of the coronation, the Pope gets up and says what a glorious tribute this is to brotherhood, and so on, and there is great anticipation; and he turns to the monk who is waiting to ring the bell. The monk pulls the cord and the bell rings out "Goyimmmmm."

One of the finest comments on the practical reasons for the conversion from Judaism to Christianity coupled with the editorial judgment as to the ultimate sham of such an attempt is the following tale:

There was this Jewish man who moved to an all Catholic neighborhood. And he couldn't make a friend because of his religion. What's more, everybody hated him because on Friday night, when everyone would cook fish, this man would cook chicken and the neighborhood would reek with the smell of chicken. So finally this Jew decides to give in to the social pressures exerted on him, and he decides to become a Catholic. So he goes to the church, and he tells the priest that he wants to convert. So the priest says, "Fine. All you do is cross yourself every time you see someone and say, 'Once a Jew, now a Catholic,' and be sure to follow all the laws, and come to church and eventually you'll become a Catholic." So the man goes around crossing himself saying, "Once a Jew, now a Catholic" and he goes to church. And soon he has a lot of friends. But he still cooks chicken on Friday

nights, and no one can figure out why. So the neighbors report the fellow to the priest. And one day the priest visits the ex-Jew, and he tells him that he has heard that he was still cooking chicken on Friday. And the Jew denies this. No matter how much proof the priest presents, the ex-Jew still will not admit that he cooked chicken on Friday. So the priest says, "Okay, I'll believe you." And the following Friday the priest decides to go over to the new convert's house. And as he approaches the house, he can smell chicken cooking. So he asks himself what's going on and he decides to peek in the kitchen window and see if the man is cooking chicken. And he looks in the window. Here's the ex-Jew standing over a pot, cooking a chicken. And he's crossing the chicken saying, "Once a chicken, now a fish."

The point is, of course, that the Jew has become a good Catholic only to the extent that a chicken can become a fish! Clearly the Jew uses the magic conversion formula strictly as a practical measure. If a Jew converts, argues the stereotype, there must be an eminently practical and pressing reason for it, and in any case, the conversion does not alter the essential Jewishness of the individual. This is illustrated in the following story:

There is a devoutly religious Jew who is on his deathbed. His family clusters around to hear his last wish. To their surprise, he asks them to send for a priest. They are shocked and ask if he means a rabbi. No, he wants a priest, he insists. Despite their dismay, the family obeys the command and sends for a priest who converts the old Jew and administers the last rites according to the requirements of Catholicism. After the priest leaves, the family rushes in to demand an explanation. Why after living his whole life as a religious Jew did he now suddenly at the very end convert to Catholicism? His answer: "Better one of them should die than one of us!"

The failure of conversion attempts is also featured in jokes about the Christian nuclear family of the New Testament. The Jewish origin of Christianity is stressed, often by noting that Jesus was a Jew. Q: What happened in A.D. 13? A: Jesus was "bar mitzvahed." The following text also demonstrates the nature of "Jewish origin of Christianity" jokes.

This lady went down to a restricted hotel in Miami. She went up to the manager and said, "Podden me, so I'd like to have a small room." The manager said, "Sorry, all our rooms are taken." Just as he said that, a man came down and checked out. "Isn't that vunderful," she said, "Now I can have a room." The manager said, "Look here, I don't want you to think I am prejudiced or anything, but we don't allow Jews in this hotel." "That's O.K., I don't happen to be Jewish. I'm Catholic." "No! I can't believe it," the manager said. "I'm telling you, I'm Catholic." "Do you know your catechism, then?" "I'm knowing my catechism." "Who's the son of God?" "Who's the son of God? Jesus son of Mary." "Do you know how he happened to be born in a stable?" "Coitenly nu, a son of a bitch like you wouldn't give a Jew a room."

In modern American society, however, there is a fear among Jews that they may be losing their identiy. This loss of identity may be caused by successful conversions to Christianity or by Jews marrying non-Jews. Thus the following text contains not only the "Jewish origin of Christianity" theme, but also the fear that Christianity may be replacing Judaism:

A Jewish man is very disturbed when his son comes home from college on vacation and tells him that he is converting to Christianity. The man rushes to tell his neighbor about it and the neighbor says, "Strange you should mention that. My boy also came home from college and he also converted to Christianity." The two men commiserate and try to think of what they should do. They decide to see the rabbi. They tell the rabbi their problem and the rabbi says, "Strange you should mention that. My son also came home from college

and converted." Now the men are really upset. They ask the rabbi what to do. He decides there is only one thing to do. They must all go down to the temple and pray to God. They pray to God and tell Him of their troubles. Suddenly they see a flash of lightning and hear a crack of thunder and a booming voice rings out, "Strange you should mention that."

A final trait in the stereotype concerns the antipathy to intermarriage. Jews are endogamous and there is often resistance to the idea of a Jew marrying a non-Jew. Here is a classic example.¹⁸

There's this girl from a very Orthodox Jewish background and she goes away to school. One day she phones up her mother and she says, "Mom, I'm getting married." And so the mother says, "*Mazel Tov*, my dear. Congratulations." So the daughter says, "But Mama, he's not Jewish." So the mother says, "That's all right, dear, I'm sure he's a nice boy, you picked him out, he's a nice boy." So the daughter says, "Another thing about him, Mom. He's Negro." So she says, "Vell, you picked him out. I'm sure he's a fine boy. I'm sure he's got a fine job." So the daughter says, "Well, about the job, Mother. He doesn't have one." So the mother says, "Vell, he's a good boy, he'll get a good job." Then the mother asks, "Ver are you going to live?" So the daughter says, "Well, uh, Mom, that's what I called about. We were wondering if we could stay with you." So the mother says, "That's vunderful, daughter, you can stay with us. Your father will sleep on the couch and you and your husband can take the bedroom." So the daughter says, "But where are you going to sleep, Ma?" So the mother says, "Don't worry about me, as soon as I hang up I'm going to drop dead." (An alternate punch line is: "Don't worry about me, but would you mind turning off the gas when you come in.")

The double standard of the intermarriage problem is also the subject of stereotyping. The Jewish girl must marry a Jewish boy, but the Jewish boy is more free to marry a Gentile girl. This is made clear by the following text.

A Jewish girl brings home a *shagits* (non-Jewish boy) that she wants to marry. And she introduces him to her father. And the father asks, "Is he Jewish?" And she says, "No Dad." He says, "I will never permit my daughter to marry a *shagits*." So they have a conference about it and the boy says, "Well, look, Dad, supposin' I'm converted. I'm perfectly willing to go through the ritual to be converted into Judaism. I'm in love with your daughter and I want to marry her." The father said, "Well, that's different." So the boy goes through the whole business. He's circumcised; he goes through the whole ritual. And when they're ready for the wedding, the daughter falls out of love with him. She says she doesn't want to marry him. So the boy comes rushing to the girl's father and he says, "You know, Dad, I did everything I could possibly do. I agreed to become a Jew and I did. I've been circumcised and now your daughter doesn't love me any more and she won't marry me. What shall I do?" The father says, "Marry a *schicksab* [non-Jewish girl] like the other Jewish boys."

The father's inconsistency is obvious. He insists that his daughter marry a Jewish boy, but he recognizes the tendency for Jewish boys to marry Gentile girls. The girl is clearly intrigued by the prospect of marrying a non-Jew for when the latter becomes a Jew, she is no longer interested. The loss of identity through Christianization or intermarriage are genuine concerns of the Jewish community in the United States, and thus it comes as no surprise to see such anxieties expressed in folklore. These latter jokes are probably told more by Jews than non-Jews, but almost all of the above texts are in fact told both by Jews and non-Jews.

¹⁸ This particular text is reported in a similar form by Bernard Rosenberg and Gilbert Shapiro in their essay "Marginality and Jewish Humor," *Midstream*, 4 (1958), 70-80, where there is also an enlightening discussion of such themes as the impossibility of the true conversion of a Jew to Christianity.

Whether one takes offense at an ethnic slur depends upon the identity of the teller and the identity of the audience. Some Jews take offense at ethnic slurs regardless of whether the raconteur is Jewish or not. Others enjoy the slurs *en famille*, but would resent them if related by a person they considered to be an anti-Semitic gentile.

There is an endless amount of Jewish humor and the present sampling is merely to delineate various features of the stereotype of the Jew in American folklore. The principal traits are obvious enough: the concern with money, trade, status, professionalism, the large nose, the undesirability and, in fact, impossibility of renouncing one's ethnic identity as a Jew, a prideful consciousness of the Judiac elements in Christianity, and a fear for the loss of ethnic identity through conversion to Christianity or through marriage with gentiles. Much of the stereotype has existed for some time in the United States, not to mention other parts of the world.¹⁹ The point here is that there is a fairly consistent, composite stereotypic picture of the Jew. Most of the traits in question are not attributed to other national or ethnic groups. Sometimes one trait may be, as in the stinginess slur: What's the difference between a Jew (Scotsman) and a canoe? A canoe tips. But it is important to note that the particular combination of stereotypic traits is unique. Thus, while both Jews and Scotsmen are alleged to be unusually stingy, this may be the only trait the two stereotypes share. Scotsmen are not said to have large noses and are not depicted as being particularly anxious to become doctors, for example.

There was even a psychological experiment in which jokes about Jews and their supposed stinginess were transformed into jokes about Scots and the same trait. Jewish subjects continued to find the jokes less humorous than gentile subjects.²⁰ It is also worth noting that not all of the stereotypic traits "recorded" in folklore are reported in the psychologists' studies of stereotypes.

As a final test of the specificity of the multitrait ethnic slur stereotype, I should like to contrast the Jewish traits with those of the Polack as found in a recent popular cycle of ethnic slurs.

Polack jokes have been noted by folklorists and by the mass media.²¹ The fact that some of the jokes told about Polacks in the midwestern section of the United States are the same told about Italians or Puerto Ricans in the eastern states suggests that we may have nothing more than a "lower-class" stereotype that can be equally well applied to any immigrant group registering low on the social scale

¹⁹ See Roback, 46-47.

²⁰ See H. A. Wolff, C. E. Smith, and H. A. Murray, "The Psychology of Humor: A Study of Responses to Race-Disparagement Jokes," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 28 (1934), 341-365.

²¹ See Roger L. Welsh, "American Numskull Tales: The Polack Joke," *Western Folklore*, 26 (1967), 183-186; and such popular booklets as the anonymous *Race Riots: An Anthology of Ethnic Insults* (New York, 1966) and E. Zewbskewiecz, J. Kuligowski, and H. Krulka, *It's Fun to be a Polack* (Glendale, Calif., 1965). Parallels for many of the texts cited in this paper may be found in these collections. For more recent treatments, see Mac E. Barrick, "Racial Riddles and the Polack Joke," *Keystone Folklore Quarterly*, 15 (1970), 3-15; Jan Harold Brunvand, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnic-Regional Riddle Jokes," *Indiana Folklore*, 3 (1970), 128-142; and especially the comprehensive listing in William M. Clements, *The Types of the Polack Joke*, *Folklore Forum*, A Bibliographical and Special Series, Number 3 (November, 1969).

at any given moment.²² Nevertheless, the fact that the American cycle of Polack slurs manifests traits similar to those found in European (especially German) stereotypes of Polish people (stereotypes reported some years ago)²³ suggests that there may be some continuity in Polack ethnic slurs in particular. Here at any rate are some of the dominant traits.

1. The Polacks are poor.

Why is the Polish suicide rate so low? Did you ever try jumping out of a basement window?

What's a Polish barbeque? A fire in a garbage can.

What is a description of a Polish funeral? Ten garbage trucks with their lights on.

How do you describe Polish matched luggage? Two shopping bags from Sears.

What is a Polish vacation? Sitting on someone else's steps.

2. The Polacks are dirty.

Why aren't Polacks allowed to swim in Lake Michigan? Because they leave a ring.

Why did the Polish couple get married in the bathtub? They wanted a double ring ceremony.

How do you get eighty-six Polacks in a Volkswagen? Throw in a nickel.

How do you get Polacks out of a Volkswagen? Throw in a bar of soap.

The first of these joking questions could conceivably fit the stereotype of the Jew, but the second related part would not be appropriate.

Where do Polacks hide their money? Under the soap.

Do you know how to get a Polack out of a bathtub? Turn on the water.

3. Polacks are stupid.

The teller of the joke puts his left hand behind his head. He puts his right hand perpendicular to his face and above his eyes as if looking for something. Then he asks, "What's this?" Answer: "A Polack looking for his left hand." In another charadelike slur, the narrator covers his eyes with his left hand and stomps the ground wildly with his right foot and asks, "What's this?" Answer: "A Polack looking for land mines." In others, the body movement is found in the answer rather than the question. How does a Polack tie his shoe? He puts one foot up on a chair and ties the shoe on the foot on the floor (instead of the one in the chair). Why do Polacks have hunched shoulders and sloping foreheads? Because every time you ask them a question, they go . . . [gesture of shrugging their shoulders, indicating they don't know the answer] and every time you tell them the answer, they go . . . [gesture striking the forehead with the palm of the hand indicating "Of course, how stupid I am"]. Reminiscent of gesture is the statement that "Polish mothers are strong and square-shouldered from raising dumbbells."

Why does a Polack wear a hat while taking a crap? So he'll know which end to wipe.

Did you hear about the Polack who was asked if he would like to become a Jehovah's Witness? He said he couldn't because he didn't see the accident.

Definition of a cad: A Polack who doesn't tell his wife he's sterile until after she's pregnant.

Did you hear about the lazy Polack. He married a pregnant woman.

What is the definition of gross ignorance? One hundred and forty-four Polacks (A gross is, of course, twelve dozen.)

²² See Simmons, 476.

²³ See Roback, 110-111, where, for example, there is a Silesian slur referring to a Polish clothing pattern as being a "loud" design implying a lack of taste. The lack of taste in clothing design and color seems to be part of the Polack stereotype in the United States also.

Did you hear about the Polish space scientists who're planning to land a man on the sun? When asked if the sun's heat would burn him up, they replied they had thought of that and they were going to land him at night.

Why did the Polack lose his job as an elevator operator? He couldn't learn the route.

Did you hear about the Polack racing driver who entered the Indianapolis 500? He came in last and he made 14 pit stops, four for repair and maintenance and ten to ask directions.

What's this? (A piece of paper, on the left side of which is written the word "in" with an arrow pointing from left to right. On the right side is written the word "out" and there is also an arrow pointing from left to right.) Answer: A Polish maze.

How do you keep a Polack busy? Give him this (a square piece of paper on both sides of which is written, "Please turn over.")

Do you know why they don't give Poles a coffee break? It takes too long to retrain them.

What is stamped at the bottom of Coca Cola bottles in Poland? Please open other end.

What has an I.Q. of 300? Poland.

4. Polacks are inept.

How did the Polack get 35 holes in his head? Trying to learn to eat with a fork.

A woman ran into a police station yelling, "Help, I've been raped by a Polack." The officer said, "How do you know he was a Polack?" She said, "Because I had to help him."

A Polack and an Irishman were out hunting when a beautiful naked girl ran by. The Irishman yelled, "Hey lass, are you game?" She replied, "Yes." So the Polack shot her. (The Irishman meant "game" in the sense of "willing to be daring, that is, in terms of sexuality"; the Polack understood "game" in the sense of the object of hunting.)

Did you hear about the Polish fish? It drowned.

5. Polacks are vulgar, boorish, and tasteless.

What is a Polack's biggest decision before attending a formal dance? Whether to wear red or green socks.

The Polack was asked in a political discussion, "What would you do with Red China?" He said he would put it on a purple tablecloth.

How do you tell the bride at a Polish wedding? She's the one with the clean T-shirt (or with the sequins on her tennis shoes, or with braided armpits).

How do you tell the difference between the bride and groom at a Polish wedding? The groom is the one with the finger in his nose.

How do you break a Polack's finger? Punch him in the nose.

What do you find when you turn a Polack's nose inside out? Fingerprints.

What happens to a Polack who picks his nose? His head collapses.

Why do Poles go around with their initials written on the backs of their hands? They want to have monogrammed handkerchiefs. (It is interesting that Roback reports the German idiom *einen Polnischen machen* meaning to blow one's nose into the hand.)²⁴

How do you kill a Polack? Hit him on the head with the toilet seat while he is taking a drink of water.

There seem to be a large number of jokes associating Polacks with feces, such as, How do you brainwash a Polack? Give him an enema; Why do Polacks carry a piece of shit in their wallets? For identification. See also the similar texts reported by Simmons.

These Polack ethnic slurs should serve to illustrate the nature of the stereotype. There are, of course, many others, though they do not demonstrate any consistent trait: What's the difference between a Polack wedding and a Polack funeral? One less drunk. Who won the Polack beauty contest? Nobody. Why do Poles learn English? So they can read Joseph Conrad in the original [language]. Did

²⁴ Roback, 110.

you hear about the Polish heart transplant? The heart rejected the body. Did you hear about the breakthrough in Polish medicine? They transplanted an appendix.

It should be obvious that the most common stereotypic features of poverty, dirtiness, stupidity, ineptness, and vulgarity are not to be found in the stereotype of the Jew. By the same token, the principal mercenary and status-seeking elements of the Jewish stereotype are not to be found to any great extent in the Polack stereotype. Interestingly enough, the folk had already made a comparison of the Jew and the Polack stereotypes. One version of the common "What are the three shortest books in the world?" has the answer: *Italian War Heroes*, *Jewish Business Ethics*, and *The Polish Mind*. A similar contrast is afforded by the following cross-breed riddles: What do you get when you cross a Negro with a Polack? A retarded janitor. (Here we find the Polish trait of low mental ability coupled with the menial occupational trait of the Negro stereotype.) What do you get when you cross a Negro with a Jew? You still get a janitor, but he owns the building.

One possible reason for the popularity of the Polack (or Italian) joke cycle is that it takes the heat off the Negro. Lower-class whites are not militant and do not constitute a threat to middle-class white America. White jokes involving stereotypes of Negroes had to become more and more disguised as overt "Rastus and Liza" jokes yielded to elephant jokes and "colored" riddles involving (g)rapes.²⁵ With the Polack cycle, it is the lower class, not Negroes, which provides the outlet for aggression and the means of feeling superior. The examples make it quite clear that the folk do differentiate stereotypes. While there will always be floating slurs or numskull tales that may be attached to almost any group, there are also definite constellations or clusters of character traits contained in folk stereotypes.

Despite the clearcut pejorative cast of most of the ethnic slurs, it is important to realize that most of the slurs are told and enjoyed by members of the group concerned. Jews help perpetuate the stereotype of the Jew and perhaps to a lesser extent Polish-Americans tell the Polack jokes. Part of the reason for this may be that ethnic slurs are part of ethnic identity. While many may protest that the slurs are nothing but false caricatures, they may secretly take pleasure in the fact that their group is vital enough to stimulate such traditions. Then again there is also the possibility that the stereotypes may have some basis in ethnographic fact. If Jews are at all materialistic, if Jews do stress family solidarity, if Jews are ambitious in terms of the careers of their children, then these slurs serve to reinforce the group's value system.

In any case, whether the stereotypes are accurate or not, the fact is that they exist. And it may be very important to know what a group thinks it is like, just as it is important to know what other groups think a group is like. These traditional self-images and images held by other groups may even be more important than how the group actually is. If a fat boy believes that fat boys are jolly or if he thinks that other people think that fat boys are jolly, then he may force him-

²⁵ See Roger D. Abrahams and Alan Dundes, "On Elephantasy and Elephanticide," *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 56 (1969), 225-241, for an analysis of the elephant joke cycle as it relates to white stereotypes of Negro males.

self to play a jolly role. This is why the study of group images is essential; and if this is so, then to the extent that such images are transmitted and perpetuated by folkloristic materials, the task of analysis definitely falls within the province of the professional folklorist.

No doubt some will argue that the study of ethnic slurs may serve no other purpose than to increase the circulation of such slurs and by so doing unwittingly assist the rise of further ethnic and racial prejudice. However, a more realistic view would be that the slurs are used by the folk whether the folklorist studies them or not. Most children in the United States hear these slurs fairly early in their public school careers. I would maintain therefore that an open discussion of the slurs and an objective analysis of the stereotypes contained therein could do no harm and might possibly do a great deal of good in fighting bigotry and prejudice. Only by knowing and recognizing folk stereotypes can children be taught to guard against them so that they may have a better chance of succeeding in judging individuals on an individual basis.

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