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‘Put Your Hands in the Air! And Keep Them There’: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Anti-racism in Black Standup Comedy as Illustrated in the Work of Trevor Noah

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Abstract

The present article investigates the use of anti-racist humor as a form of resistance. More specifically, it looks into the workings of anti-racism to challenge the held prejudice against black people. The focus is on the linguistic aspect of anti-racist resistance. The study analyses two shows of Trevor Noah, a black standup comedian, in light of the forty-five techniques comedians use. The successful incorporation of many humor techniques in tackling and reversing the sensitive issues of racism and prejudice explains why such a comedy genre is popular among audiences. According to the findings, Noah has indeed incorporated many of those techniques to give his jokes the intended impact on the audience. These techniques, giving prominence to the jokes, can help better understand the racial stereotypes within societies marked by racism thus, leading to more efficient approaches to addressing it.

Keywords: Anti-racism, Black Standup Comedy, humor techniques, humor discourse, resistance, racism, stereotypes

ملخص

يبحث هذا المقال في استخدام الفكاهة المناهضة للعنصرية كشكل من أشكال المقاومة. وبشكل أكثر تحديدًا، يبحث المقال في طريقة عمل مناهضة العنصرية لتحدي التحيز ضد السود. وينصب التركيز على الجانب اللغوي للمقاومة المناهضة للعنصرية. تحلل الدراسة عرضين لتريفور نواه، الكوميدي الأسود، في ضوء خمسة وأربعين تقنية يستخدمها الكوميديون، ويفسر نجاحه في دمج العديد من تقنيات الفكاهة في معالجة القضايا الحساسة المتعلقة بالعنصرية والتحيز وعكسها سبب شعبية هذا النوع من الكوميديا بين الجماهير. وقد قام نواه بالفعل، وفقًا للنتائج، بدمج العديد من تلك التقنيات لإعطاء نكته التأثير المقصود على الجمهور. يمكن لهذه التقنيات التي تبرز النكت أن تساعد في فهم أفضل للقوالب النمطية العنصرية داخل المجتمعات التي تتسم بالعنصرية، مما يؤدي إلى اتباع أساليب أكثر فعالية في معالجتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مناهضة العنصرية، الكوميديا الارتجالية السوداء، تقنيات الفكاهة، خطاب الفكاهة، المقاومة، العنصرية، القوالب النمطية، العنصرية

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Introduction

Humor is a means of spreading feelings as well as ideas. Those feelings are not necessarily positive; they might be harmful and intended for evil purposes. The same principle applies to ideas. Racism, a globally experienced evil, can be portrayed in humorous discourse. The opposite of racism, anti-racism, also uses the same means to its specific purposes. Anti-racism, sometimes referred to as reverse racism, represents a form of resistance against racism. And, since humorous discourse is an influential form of communicating feelings and ideas, anti-racism resistance has used it as an effective means to that end.

With a clear understanding of the impact of discourse on people's perceptions of world events and the various issues, the researcher aims, via the present paper, to critically unravel how humoristic discourse—standup comedy—contributes to anti-racist activism and how language, a double-edged sword, can be used by some ethnicities to self-emancipate and gain an even plane with other assumed superior ones. The need to tackle such a topic becomes more evident and necessary when figuring out the little attention given to such a niche and the lack of literature on it.

For such an aim, the paper lays out a brief overview of the significant studies covering the topic at hand, such as Lintott (2017), Lockyer et al. (2011), and Berger (1987), among others. It, then, tackles the notions of racism and anti-racism in the humor discourse. Several concepts are discussed, such as a definition of racism, racist discourse as a social practice, reverse discourse, humor functioning as resistance, etc. The paper further explains the method of analysis of selected jokes from two comedy shows of the standup comedian Trevor Noah. The researcher attempts to unravel whether Trevor Noah uses his platform to contribute to fighting racism in its systemic, interpersonal, and internalized forms in light of the forty-five techniques that Berger (2011) introduced. The significance of this research lies in the fact that it sheds light on an often overlooked area of critical discourse studies, as the literature covering this theme is almost non-existent. Thus, tackling such a critical topic offers insight for future research. The raised question, hence, is the following question: how does Trevor Noah, via the forty-five techniques, use anti-racism to push against racism and prejudice aimed at black people? The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings.

Literature Review

Interest in anti-racist discourse via humor is recent. Interest in this issue peaked after recent events of violence against black people, namely the death of Geroge Floyd, shed light on the societal issues that seem ever-recurrent in Western society as a whole, and the tackling of these issues by famous black comedians who have a global following, which made racism and anti-racism an urgent topic to bring forth for serious contemplation. Lintott (2017) investigated how humor, a form of artistic expression, can be used as a tool for rethinking and reevaluating traditional issues in Western society and how humor breaks down such complex issues in comparison to philosophy.

Lockyer et al. (2011) used a different approach to studying humoristic discourse, namely an interdisciplinary one. They insisted on the importance of adopting an interdisciplinary paradigm in investigating humoristic discourse by merging several fields (psychology, biology, sociology, and linguistics) to reach a practical method of analyzing humoristic discourse.

Berger (1987) adopted an analytical approach to dealing with humor. He, specifically, focuses on the way jokes are funny, namely via the employment of punchlines that are witty

and concise. He, also, highlighted the superiority aspect of telling a joke at the expense of an individual, a group of people, or even oneself.

Racism

The issue of racism has existed for decades, and many ethnicities have been targets of it due to their skin color and/or cultural background. In this regard, Gilroy (2000) claimed:

> The world of my childhood included the incomprehensible mystery of the Nazi genocide. I returned to it compulsively like a painful wobbly tooth. It appeared to be the core of the war, and its survivors were all around us … It was clear, too, that some Jewish families had opened their homes to West Indian students who had been shut out from their commercially rented property by the color-bar. I struggled with the realization that their suffering was somehow connected with the idea of 'race' that bound my own world with the threat of violence. (p. 4)

Of the many phenomena that ever exist in the world, racism has to be one of the utmost ones. Its effect extends the realm of a specific era or a particular country. The political, social, and sporting levels represent areas where racism still visibly exists. The literature on this issue is undeniably significant, especially in sociology, psychology, and discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1993). The researcher will not define racism, per se, in this study. I will, instead, explain it by laying out what reverse/anti-racism is. The common belief is that racism demonstrates itself in relation to a person/group's ethnic identity, particularly the phenotype. When it comes to the generating of racism, it is essential to remember that ethnic prejudices and ideologies are social constructs rather than instinctive traits. A person does not interact with another person of a different ethnic background and immediately assumes he/she is superior to him/her just due to their skin color. Instead, such prejudiced behavior is acquired in society and from society through interaction with certain ethnicities, and its manifestation can be both oral and/or verbal (van Dijk, 1993).

Racism does not usually take a directly offensive stance against a target group by labeling it in given terms or behaving in ways that signal superiority or denigration. Racist people justify their actions and beliefs, even to themselves. The underlying motive, as van Dijk (1993) explained, is an unconscious racial domination by one ethnicity/group over another. This is, probably, because racism carries significant negative connotations with it that being self-aware of carrying such traits is difficult to bear for the supposedly 'superior' group itself. Therefore, under the guise of raising some issues, some attempt to rationalize racism. Van Dijk (1984) explained that some society members act unfairly and with prejudice against minorities in a racist society. The aim is to keep the power balance on their side, and this is done by treating them differently—because they see them differently, distancing themselves from them, holding them responsible for the economic and social problems of the country, treating them as less, etc.

Racism is a system that contains two components: a social component and a cognitive one. Here, the researcher focuses on the social component, since most analyses usually focus on the cognitive one (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Katz & Taylor, 1988; Essed, 1991; Wellman, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1994). More to the point, the social component manifests itself at the micro, everyday level of power abuse and at the global, macro level of institutions and organizations (van Dijk, 1993). In other words, racism exceeds the level of society to ascend to

a higher level, where the government's institutions segregate based on ethnicity, a practice known as 'institutional racism.'

On the discursive level, racism exists as well, as text and talk are social practices, as well. Racist discourse is a primary source of many of society's racist beliefs. This includes what people read in the press and on social media platforms (Malik, 2002). A vivid example is the manipulative actions of the media in promoting a biased image of black people. More to the point, Malik (2002) added that it is evident that television is not at all prejudice-free. It, indeed, actively manipulates the image and the narrative in its broadcasts to influence the perceptions of its audience toward a group of people. Black people, in this case, are portrayed as ignorant, violent, less intelligent, less civilized, etc. than their white fellow citizens.

Such actions have led to some countereffects on the part of the target groups. Wodak and Reisigl (1999) stated that racism has been utilized as a legitimate ideological tool to expose the target social groups to unacceptable acts and to also prevent them from thoroughly enjoying their social rights. However, those target groups have used the injustices practiced against them to forge a positive self-identity and to launch political movements as a form of resistance to get more autonomy and participation. Such political resistance is what is known as 'anti-racism.' The latter manifests itself in political, social and linguistic aspects—as we shall see presently in Section Two below.

Humor from a Communicative and Meta-communicative Standpoint

Fry emphasized that a combination of communication and meta-communication is indispensable in humor, specifically in the punch line (cited in Weaver, 2010). Fry highly stresses that humor operates as a form of elevating one from the daily life routines to a slightly illusory state. It means that it is crucial to consider the semantic interpretation of a joke to serve its intended message—in this case, anti-racism. More to the point, per Weaver (2010), an additional semantic layer is added to the existent rhetorical structure of humor—this is related to reverse humor. This layer plays a significant role in the interpretation of a joke, since it might, unintentionally, confuse the recipient in terms of the original racist meaning, anti-racist meaning, and the rhetorical effect of the joke. Such misinterpretation might cause what is known as 'sign slippage.' Though this latter is as crucial to any form of humor as incongruity, since it is structurally similar to metaphor and other rhetorical devices, it might result in the appropriation of any meaning other than the intended one. Sign slippage is one feature of humor that makes it ambiguous and ineffective, especially when it comes to a sensitive subject such as reverse humor. That is why many comedians are subject to misunderstanding, and their jokes tend to backfire.

Anti-racism in Humor

Similar to the point raised in Section One, the existence of anti-racism offers social as well as discursive manifestations. In this study, the researcher focuses on the linguistic aspect, but he is fully aware that the two are not always clearly distinguished. In a general sense, anti-racism can be defined as a thought or action whose aim is to tackle the subject of racism or obliterate it. Racist beliefs are identified for the sake of determining action to properly deal with them (Bonnett, 2000). An appropriate remedy includes any forms of political and social activism on the part of the victim group. Relating this point to the previous section, it is safe to say that anti-racism takes different shapes based on how racism is defined. To that end, the anti-racist dynamic sometimes grapples against ethnic superiority and other times against discrimination. However, the universal aim remains to always address racial inequality

(Bonnett, 2000).

Anti-racism, from a discursive standpoint, and as a performance, does not subscribe to a particular social setting or historical era. Its existence traces back to earlier black comedic performances that dealt with then-contemporary racial stereotypes (Weaver, 2010). Of course, such resistance would not pass without reactions. Accordingly, that type of ethnic comedy generated some misunderstanding as to the intentions of comedians, because as tricky as the interpretations can be, some were thought to be ashamed of their race and color (Berger, 1998).

Before elaborating further on anti-racist humor, I would like to highlight—at this stage—some important pointers concerning humor as a phenomenon. This will help better clarify the subject at hand.

Humor, in itself and by itself, is hard to explain, and this is primarily due to the belief that the only way to understand humor is within its historical context rather than within any theoretical one. As a result, the chances of coming close to finding a common understanding of humor become slimmer (Attardo, 1994). The reason for such failure of understanding might be advocated a search for the secret to humor in several historical epochs, i.e. what people laughed about during one era. This is still a limited approach to inquire about such a slippery phenomenon. Nevertheless, that does not prevent one from attempting to define it. Technically and linguistically speaking, a joke—the verbalization of humor—"can be defined as short narratives, meant to amuse and generate mirthful laughter, that end with a punchline" (Berger, 2013, p. 45). Looking deeper into the essence of a joke, Douglas (1975) suggested that what makes it exciting is that it entertains the idea that life experiences are not merely organized and predictable, but also arbitrary.

More to this point, it is more about one's adopted attitude and viewpoint on things that makes him/her see many experiences differently. In other words, humor is basically about mindset. It might seem that humor focuses on futile matters and is, therefore, optional. But, in reality, it is a release valve from repeated daily routines (Berger, 1987). Evidence is that, according to Provine (2001), the average person laughs fifteen times daily. Similarly, Mulkay (cited in Ford & Ferguson, 2004) claims that, when in a humor mindset, people become more lenient with logical thinking and common sense and, thus, do not process jokes rationally. Such a dynamic can be a double-edged sword because a humoristic mindset can be a means to promote racist beliefs. Billig (2001) thought that "if jokes are a means of breaking social taboos, then careful attention should also be paid to the language of ethnic and racial jokes" (p. 8).

What do people laugh about? We laugh about many things that happen daily, from stupid comments on social media to memes, slips of the tongue, videos of people falling, etc. However, why people laugh is a more difficult question to answer. Many specialists (philosophy, and psychology) have tried to answer this question. Some suggest it is a release of innate aggression; others propose the involvement of cognition and meta-communications, while philosophers state that incongruity is what constitutes the hub of humor (Berger, 2013).

In an attempt to define reverse humor, Weaver (2010) stated that humor is a discourse or one of its elements that use signs for a reverse semantic impact standing in opposition to any racist meaning of a prior discourse. More to the point, there is a particular way of viewing reverse humor: It is not a simple matter of considering the meaning portrayed by an anti-racist comedian. There is more to it, and that is the original racist comment/idea that still lingers in the audience's mind and that can reappear and act rhetorically, hence skewing the intended

effect of the reverse joke. It is crucial that, at the outset, the phrasing of a reverse joke should take into consideration "how the images in humour both simultaneously 'play on' and 'play off' the long-established stereotypes" (Weaver, 2010, p. 32). One should, thus, keep in mind the polysemic nature of humoristic discourse as simultaneously having racist and anti-racist connotations (Weaver, 2010).

Malik (2002), in an attempt to provide an alternative view to the reading of reverse comedy, raised a question as to whether the images of 'blackness' on television reinforce or eradicate the long-held stereotype regarding black people. In other words, are people supposed to laugh at or with black comedians? This point relates to the thought that television channels do discriminate between people appearing on their screens based on their ethnicity. This approach might be limited. Weaver (2010) stated that it is false because it does not take into account the variety of polysemic meanings of the reverse comedy discourse.

As a form of resistance against political oppression, reverse humor has played an impactful role. Bryant (2006) emphasized the ideal role jokes played during the Czech quest against the Nazi occupation that had put complete obedience expectations on their part. Jokes were a means the Czech patriots used to prove that their identity still existed despite all attempts to "Germanize" them (p. 136). Bryant (2006), then, proceeded to dissect those jokes. They were unclear and structurally ambiguous for anyone to get into trouble by cracking them. They were also ironic and undetectable by the Nazi authorities. This approach guaranteed that only the Czech people could enjoy using them as a release from the tyranny of occupation. Political humor is used not only to signal a sense of identity but, also, to make political demands and convey messages overtly (Camps-Febrer, 2012).

Many examples of the use of political humor to fight oppressive regimes can be stated. In Egypt, for instance, former late president Gamal Abdel Nasser emphasized the monitoring of all forms of satire that ensued after the defeat of the so-called Six-Day War in 1967. It reached the point of him issuing a warning, via a speech, toward mockery targeted at the army (Camps-Febrer, 2012). In Syria, three formats of political satire emerged during their uprising: cartoons and signs, theatre or mocking performances, and oral messages (jokes, chants, or slogans) (Camps-Febrer, 2012).

Black American comedians relied on tropes (hyperbole, burlesque) to tackle some stereotypes. Sotiropolous (2006) stated that black comedians deliberately used racist stereotypes in a way to distance themselves from the images of the roles they were playing rather than embracing them as representative behavior. Moreover, Cantwell (1992) detailed how performers used burlesque to juxtapose opposites of, for instance, 'negritude' as attempts to reverse racism.

Methods

The present section, with the intent of unraveling how black standup humor is used as a form of resistance against racist prejudices that are directed toward black people, focuses on an explanation of Berger's model (2011) of the forty-five techniques, in addition to another crucial aspect for the correct interpretation of jokes, which is the author's style. Moreover, it discusses other paralinguistic and esthetic features that are necessary to consider when analyzing jokes. The section details essential information about the potential intersecting of techniques within the same joke. Finally, it provides a comprehensive contextual background of the settings of the comedy shows performed by Trevor Noah to give context to the reader.

Speaking from a technical standpoint, it is crucial to highlight the four categories of humor as identified by Berger (2011). These techniques belong under the following categories: identity, language, logic, and action and visual phenomena. More details on the humor categories and their related techniques will be provided in the discussion section. But, for now, the researcher will discuss other technical aspects. Humor uses a frame to make it clear to the recipient that whatever is coming next is humorous. Frame is not easy to establish, especially if the topic is sensitive and the audience might be uncomfortable with it (Berger, 1987).

Another point worth considering is the author's style and its reflection on the techniques he/she uses. The most accurate way to identify an author's style is to focus on the techniques he/she implements in his/her performance (Berger, 2011). One of the generally used techniques is repetition, which in itself is intended to create laughter in the audience

Several factors come into play when it comes to the performance of jokes: facial expressions, body language, makeup and props, voice, sound effects, and scenery (Berger, 2011). Standup comedians do not generally use makeup in their performances. When it comes to the scenery, a background picture is used, and it might be a set one for all performances and not necessarily reflecting the theme of a given performance. Standup comedians usually produce sounds with their mouths without reliance on external means of sound production. For the rest of the factors, standup comedians rely on them heavily when imitating other characters.

Berger (2011) suggested a list of forty-five techniques of humor that he distilled from various resources in the light of which my analysis of the selected jokes will be performed (p. 3). Here is the complete list:

Table 1. *Humor techniques*

LANGUAGE	LOGIC	IDENTITY	ACTION
Allusion	Absurdity	Before/After	Chase
Bombast	Accident	Burlesque	Slapstick
Definition	Analogy	Caricature	Speed
Exaggeration	Catalogue	Eccentricity	
Facetiousness	Coincidence	Embarrassment	
Insults	Comparison	Exposure	
Infantilism	Disappointment	Grotesque	
Irony	Ignorance	Imitation	
Misunderstanding	Mistakes	Impersonation	
Overliteralness	Repetition	Mimicry	
Puns, Wordplay	Reversal	Parody	
Repartee	Rigidity	Scale	
Ridicule	Theme/Variation	Stereotype	
Sarcasm	Unmasking		
Satire			

Note 1. Adapted from Berger (2011, p. 3)

There are some critical points to consider about the techniques' workings. First, it is expected to encounter more than one technique in a single joke. An insult is not regarded as funny, per se, though it is a technique. The combination of some techniques alongside insults is what makes a joke funny. Therefore, it is sometimes not easy to separate the techniques from each other. In some instances, distinguishing the dominant technique among several simultaneously used ones can pose an arduous challenge to the researcher. Second, the above techniques do not focus on why people laugh; instead, they focus on what instigates laughter. Moreover, considering the 'play frame' of the joke is crucial for the interpretation. Again, an insult is only funny when the play frame indicates a fantasy-like narrative as part of the general situation of the joke.

The selected jokes are segments from two standup shows performed by Trevor Noah, a South African comedian, political commentator, and formerly the host of the late night show, 'the daily show.' The first show is entitled 'it's my culture'and was performed in Johannesburg, South Africa (2013). The second show is entitled 'lost in translation' and was performed in Washington DC, the United States of America (2015). Trevor Noah is widely known for tackling issues of racism and prejudice, having grown up in South Africa during the time of apartheid.

Some segments will be quoted as they are, while others, lengthy, will be summarized with emphasis on parts that are of interest to this study. It is important to note that this analysis refers to the comedian's convictions, not mine.

Analysis

The discussion of the findings will be done thematically based on what Noah has discussed in his two shows under analysis. Each theme begins with a historical and/or socio-cultural background to put the reader into the appropriate context to understand the anti-racism in the jokes.

Equality in Job Opportunities

South Africa is known to have gone through apartheid (1948-1990), a period during which black people faced discrimination with fewer job opportunities than their white fellowmen. After the eradication of apartheid, there were calls for equality in employment regardless of ethnicity. However, the actual implementation of such equality was not successful. In this data segment, Noah (2013) jokes about the calling of some South African ministers for equality in chances to make the national rugby team:

> … and then you get these ministers who are like [imitating their accent] "We demand a quota system. We want more black players in the national rugby team." And black people are like [imitating their accent and tone of voice] "Maybe you, baba! Maybe you! Me, I'm here. [doing football/soccer gestures] (Noah, 2013)

This passage has recorded five humor techniques. Noah (2013)begins with an impersonation of those ministers. Impersonation belongs to the identity category i.e., assuming the identity of another person by pretending to be him/her. The technique aimed to degrade those ministers who, instead of focusing on more important issues of equality, are naively asking for more black players in the national rugby team. The technique known as ignorance/gullibility/ naiveté (the logic category) paints those ministers as "stupid, fools" (Berger, 2011, p. 21). Those ministers also (the exposure technique, the identity category) inadvertently expose themselves as incompetent and fraudulent. They are inept because they make a colossal error (the mistakes technique, the category of logic) of focusing on secondary matters instead of the discrimination that still exists after the eradication of the apartheid. Such

errors stem from poor judgment. Moreover, they are frauds for focusing on non-essential matters instead of real-life serious issues. Noah (2013) envelops his anti-racist message in a satirical tone (the satire technique, the language category) intended to deride and humiliate the South African institution that upholds discrimination between its people based on ethnicity. Satire is expressed in the surprised reaction of black people who refuse the idea of more opportunity to join the rugby team and express their surprise and disapproval by pointing out that they want to stick to football/soccer—less violent—and leave rugby to the South African white people, since they are more interested in it, not due to any discrimination against them.

Noah (2013)targets and challenges institutional racism in this segment performed in his home country in the show 'it's my culture.' It is quite uncommon to find as many humor techniques in such a short segment. This is probably one of the main reasons for the popularity of Noah, especially in a country like South Africa that still struggles with such critical racial issues although the majority of the population is black.

Challenging Stereotypes

Noah (2013) begins this segment in the same show (it's my culture) by talking about the time he had lost his voice and had to undergo surgery. He happened to have met fans before the surgery, which caused him some embarrassment, because, abiding by the doctor's orders, he had to remain silent and only gesture to people in response. He reported to have found difficulty the most dealing with Indian people, but not white people. At the outset, this seems to be a form of praise for the latter. And, this is where he reverses the discourse and implies some criticism toward the perceived image of white people in comparison to black ones. The stereotype is that white people are more civilized, accommodating, and courteous than black people.

> …It gets boring, and, then, it starts getting difficult, because you'll start meeting people that know you, and they wanna have conversations. You know, fans in the street, friendly people. White people were the best to meet, I won't lie, because white people, they're just like. They're impatient. I like that, you know. White people don't have time for anything. They don't like to wait. They seem always in a hurry, always something to do. They used to come up to me and they're like [imitating their accent] "Hey! Trevor Noah, right? The comedian" [Noah can't speak because of a problem with his voice] "what? You're not talking?" [Noah gestures again] "Oh, no voice? Alright. Cheers there. Bye."
>
> **Noah continues:** gone. Out of my life. No stress. I loved it, I loved it. So great for me. Not so great for white people, though. That's why they pay so much in traffic fines. No, it's true [Noah addressing the white audience]. No, guys. If you were just more patient, you wouldn't pay half as much, because black people hardly pay anything, hardly anything at all. Black people get in the traffic, and you just relax the situation. You just relax everything. You just get there. The guy will come to your window:
>
> **police officer:** *baba!* [unclear word] *your seat belt*.
>
> **Black person:** *ah! Seat belt!*
>
> **Metro cop:** *yeah. No seat belt.*
>
> **Black person:** *seat belt!*
>
> **Metro cop:** (demands license)
>
> **Black person:** *ah! License!*
>
> [The conversation continues with the metro policeman demanding the driver's license

and the black person stalling and repeating "seat belt, license" until the metro policeman lets him leave without any fine.]

I have seen white people at roadblocks. They have no patience. They get angry at the metro cop. They get so angry like he did something wrong. Did you see them? They get stopped:

Metro cop: *sorry, sir. You were speeding.*

White person: *ah! Bloody hell! You guys are everywhere. Nobody can drive anymore in this place, man! You guys are at every bush. I don't know if it's a bush or a metro cop. What the hell is going on here, man? They should start calling the* [unclear name] *police, man. What the hell? What are you gonna do? You're gonna give me a ticket or something?*

Metro cop: *no, I was just saying* [gets interrupted]

White person: *ah! bloody hell! Just give me a bloody ticket.*

Metro cop: *ok, you wanna a ticket? I'll give a ticket, now.*

White person: *yeah, just give me the bloody ticket!*

Metro cop: *ok! And your indicator is not working! A thousand!*

Noah: *white people just have no patience. They just have none.* (Noah, 2013).

In this segment, Noah (2013) used nine humor techniques. He capitalizes on impersonation (the impersonation technique, the identity category) to increase the laughter and to put the audience more into the play frame of the joke. When he describes that white people are the easiest to explain his voice problem to, he is implying the opposite of what is said; he is exposing (the exposure technique, the identity category) their true identity that is contrary to what people originally held: They are not as civilized as many people assume they are. They are impatient, which implies a lack of interest in other people, an attitude that might imply a sense of superiority.

Noah (2013) proceeds to compare (the comparisons technique, the logic category) black people to white ones when faced with an uncomfortable situation (the coincidences technique, the logic category). Black people, here, are portrayed as calm when they get into an embarrassing situation (the embarrassment technique, the identity category). The image Noah (2013) paints is the opposite of what black people are stereotypically famous for: violent and less civilized. In the conversation, the black man successfully de-escalates the situation until he leaves without receiving a ticket.

On the contrary, a white man, when stopped by a metro policeman, behaves entirely differently. His response shows a lack of control and some bizarre behavior (the eccentricity technique, the identity category). To generate more laughter from the audience and reverse the deeply held stereotype, Noah (2013) resorts to exaggerating (the exaggeration technique, the language category) the responses of the white man toward the metro policeman. The main aims behind this joke are to portray white people as "ridiculous"—what Aristotle argued is the basis of comedy", and to show how people from different ethnicities differ in their perceptions and reactions when it comes to a given activity (Berger, 2011, p. 37). In this case, Noah (2013) reverses and challenges the stereotype of the superiority of the white person over the black one.

Racism Based on Phenotype

The last segment from the show 'it's my culture' discusses another matter of racism, where Noah (2013) used three humor techniques as a form of anti-racism: absurdity, allusion, and stereotypes. The context behind this joke is that, in South Africa, a person's high/low status

is relative to his/her skin color. And, more gravely, according to Noah (2013), mixed-race people want to associate with the white skin-color label, instead of the black one due to the assumed superiority of the white phenotype.

> We've become angrier and angrier, almost more focused on the negative aspects of race. We used to be the rainbow nation. Now, the colors are going their separate ways. I saw a story that made me sad the other day. The University of Cape Town decided to have a vote within the university, right? And, their vote was 'who's the most beautiful race in south Africa?' that's what they were voting about. Voting results came out; white people won the vote. It's Cape Town. What is more interesting was the dynamic of the voting, because what happened was the white people voted for themselves, yeah? The black people also voted for themselves. Colored people voted for themselves also, but, then half of them voted for white people … and that's how white people won. Now, I've got two problems with this competition. It's a tiny bit Nazi-ish. The most beautiful race?Really? It's a slippery slope; you gotta be careful. What's next? The least needed race? Huh? You gotta be careful. And the second problem I have with this is the conclusion itself. How could anyone make a decision? There's no such thing as the most beautiful race. All women of any race can be beautiful. There's no such thing as the most beautiful race. (Noah, 2013)

The main picture that is painted by Noah (2013) here is the nonsensical (the absurdity technique, the logic category) idea of comparing races based on beauty. This technique stresses that individuals who enjoy high regard in society utter some unreasonable and meaningless statements and ideas (Berger, 2011). This technique overlaps with the allusion (the allusion technique, the language category). That is why he resembles such a vote to what the Nazis did by comparing their race to others and considering it as superior. The allusion is a common and effective humor technique since it draws attention to the blunders people commit (Berger, 2011). Noah (2013) moves to the third humor technique (the stereotypes technique, the identity category) by highlighting where half of the votes of colored people went, to the white side. Here, the stereotype is that the white race is superior in appearance. That is why half of colored people chose it as 'more beautiful' as if they are probably implying that they wish they were white, hence more beautiful. Noah (2013) concludes this segment by questioning some beliefs, warning about the lengths toward which such actions might go in the future, and affirming that beauty exists in all ethnicities; it is only for the non-prejudiced to see it clearly.

Police Brutality Against Black People

This segment, which is part of the show (beginning of the show) 'lost in translation,' is very long. Thus, a comprehensive summary, instead of quoting, will be more useful. Sub-segments of the original one will discuss the identified techniques for clarity.

Daring to raise political and racial issues has led to the increased popularity of Trevor Noah. His anti-racist stance in his comedy gave him leverage about the discussion of these topics, especially since he comes from one of the hotbeds of racism in the world, South Africa.

He begins the show by discussing the sound 'woohoo!' people make to show excitement. He embarks with an impersonation (the impersonation technique, the identity category) of white men and women using the sound 'woohoo!' After, he quickly shifts the orientation of the joke by bringing the many connotations of that sound. He draws a comparison (the comparison technique, the logic category) between white and black people and

their different reactions (the theme/variation technique, the logic category) to the 'woohoo' sound, which, to black people, represents the sound of a police siren. The two techniques overlap perfectly in the way they introduce the topic of the relationship between police and black people in America. When talking about the perception of black people to the sound 'woohoo!', Noah (2013) transforms it into the sound of the police siren (the imitation technique, the identity category).

Woohoo !Oh my God! The cops are here! [in a white woman's voice] (Noah, 2013)

The line of comparison does not stop here. Noah (2013) shifts back to white people and compares their reaction to the police—a good one—by invoking a stereotype of the differing treatment of police to white people. That is why, in Noah's words (2015), "*white people love calling the police*." He ridicules them (the ridicule technique, the language category) by how excessively and needlessly they tend to call the police. According to him, it is 'party time' for white people—they make the 'woohoo!' sound. Additionally, a famous expression in parties is 'put your hands in the air!' But, for black people, it continues as 'and keep them there.'

Another sub-segment is when Noah (2013) narrates his experience driving on the highway when a police car appeared behind him. Inside the car with him was his friend, Dave, a white American. He describes how he got tense when he saw them, contrary to his white friend who remained indifferent (the theme/variation technique, the logic category). Again, there is also an overlapping use of comparison (the comparisons technique, the logic category) regarding their reactions. As his friend questions his exaggerated tenseness, he responds by restating a stereotype (the stereotypes technique, the identity logic) that has been surfacing in American society, leading to some protest movements such as 'black lives matter.'

As the scene evolves, the police car pulls him over. He impersonates (the impersonation technique, the identity category) the white police officer. Then, he uses exaggeration (the exaggeration technique, the language category) by using a swear word that means almost uncontrollably urinating or letting excrement leave his body; he could not even understand what the orders of the police officer were.

In this sub-segment, Noah (2013) discusses the various police shootings of black people and the controversy they raised. In summary, he talks about some cases, such as Trayvon Martin and Walter Scott. Noah (2013) ironically (the irony technique, the language category) enumerates the absurd (the absurdity technique, the logic category) conclusions he has reached to avoid getting shot. He amplifies (the exaggeration technique, the language category) his behavior when hearing the news of the different shootings, an incident that resulted in him behaving strangely (the eccentricity technique, the identity category). Using a ridiculing (the ridicule technique, the language category) language (the movie Star Wars), he attempts to reveal (the exposure technique, the identity category) the prejudiced and biased nature of some policemen when dealing with black people. Here, he implicitly justifies his exaggerated nervousness when the police car pulls behind him.

Noah (2013) finishes his recount of the encounter with the police officer who pulled him over, as he gave him a confusing answer (the absurdity technique, the logic category) that stems from a stereotype (the stereotypes technique, the identity category), implying that if a black person drives an expensive car, he/she highly likely has stolen it or acquired it through illegal actions.

Media's Prejudice Against Black People

Concerning this theme, I sufficed on a short excerpt due to the significant length of the whole sub-segment. Thus, a summary would be more appropriate. The United States is known for high police killings of black people, even when unarmed. Noah (2013)purports that a prejudiced assumption exists that black people are more bent on committing crimes and that they are held to a different standard in police confrontations and searchings. Hence, police forces are more likely, according to claims by 'black lives matter' activists to be shot simply because of their skin color, assumedly criminals.

> I turn on the TV, and, then I see Walter Scott, a fifty-something-year-old man, running away from the policeman, getting shot, running away!... and, again, the media, for some strange reason, just seems to forget what the main of the discussion is… Day two, they're like "Who was Walter Scott?"… Apparently, he had a charge of assault against him in 1987. So, he gets shot for it? (Noah, 2013)

In the same sub-segment where Noah (2013)discusses the brutality of the police toward black people, he also highlights the reactions of the various news outlets to those incidents. Noah (2013) impersonates (the impersonation technique, the identity category) both male and female news anchors. He satirically (the satire technique, the language category) reiterates their nonsensical (the absurdity technique, the logic category) excuses for the actions of the police. He brings to the surface (the exposure technique, the identity category) the media's prejudice toward black people. The prejudice portrays itself in the questions they raise instead of putting the spotlight on the actions of the police.

Media's Excuses for White People

Here, similar to the previous sub-segments, I could not quote it due to its length. For context, the United States allegedly suffers from white supremacy. Hence, as stated before, people of color are not held to the same esteemed standard as white people. The final sub-segment revolves around the topic of white privilege. Noah (2013) introduces the case that when a white person commits mass murder, the media uses several invalid excuses (the absurdity technique, the logic category) as to why those actions should not constitute a terrorist act in contrast (the comparison technique, the logic category) to the situation when the murderers are black people or Middle Easterners. He again impersonates (the impersonation technique, the identity category) a female news anchor, describing the white shooter as a "lone gunman with no ties to society" (2015). He satirically (the satire technique, the language category) questions whether the shooter did not have friends, even on Facebook. Therefore, he is challenging the stereotype (the stereotypes techniques, the identity category) implying that terrorism is related to ethnicity and religion rather than to actions, and the *de facto* reality that white people are exempt from being labeled as 'terrorists.'

He sarcastically (the sarcasm technique, the language category) demands that white people should not be deprived of their 'right' to be terrorists if they worked diligently to achieve that status just because they are white. He considers that to be racist by the media toward white people. In other words, he is exposing (the exposure technique, the identity category) the 'double standards' of the media in the way it deploys the different labels to the various ethnicities, passing unnoticed—or often unrecognized—privileging to the white people.

Conclusion

The present study has focused on the linguistic aspect of anti-racist humor, namely the humor techniques comedians use to challenge racist stereotypes and prejudices, taking Trevor Noah's comedy as an example.

The combination of humor and race is not common in discourse studies, let alone the focus on anti-racism. Racism finds form due to an unjustified belief in superiority because of social constructs, such as one's skin color and culture. It is a prevalent behavior that occurs in some societies daily.

Anti-racism can be witnessed in discourse as well as in society. Combining the study of anti-racism with humor is difficult due to the lack of literature. Another reason is that humor itself is challenging to grasp. It is possible to understand what makes people laugh, but not why they laugh. Anti-racist humor has been used as political resistance against oppressive political regimes for a long time, and that includes resistance against racism.

From a critical discourse analytic standpoint, the paper highlights how, indeed, the language used in the media or government institutions can perpetrate unjust, bigoted, and—in this case—racist narratives against certain ethnicities and/or groups for the sake of maintaining the superiority of one ethnicity, culture, and/or social class over another. It has concluded that a wide variety of techniques have given this form of resistance an appeal amongst audiences, resulting in the rise of influential black comedians who use their platforms to resist those forms of prejudice against underprivileged ethnicities and challenge the status quo of stereotypes surrounding the privileged white ethnicity. Such narratives lead with time to deeply held beliefs and, even, to legislation favoring one group over another. Hence, language can veritably function as a social act.

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