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The University of Southern Mississippi

RHETORIC WITH HUMOR:

AN ANALYSIS OF HISPANIC/LATINO COMEDIANS' USES OF HUMOR

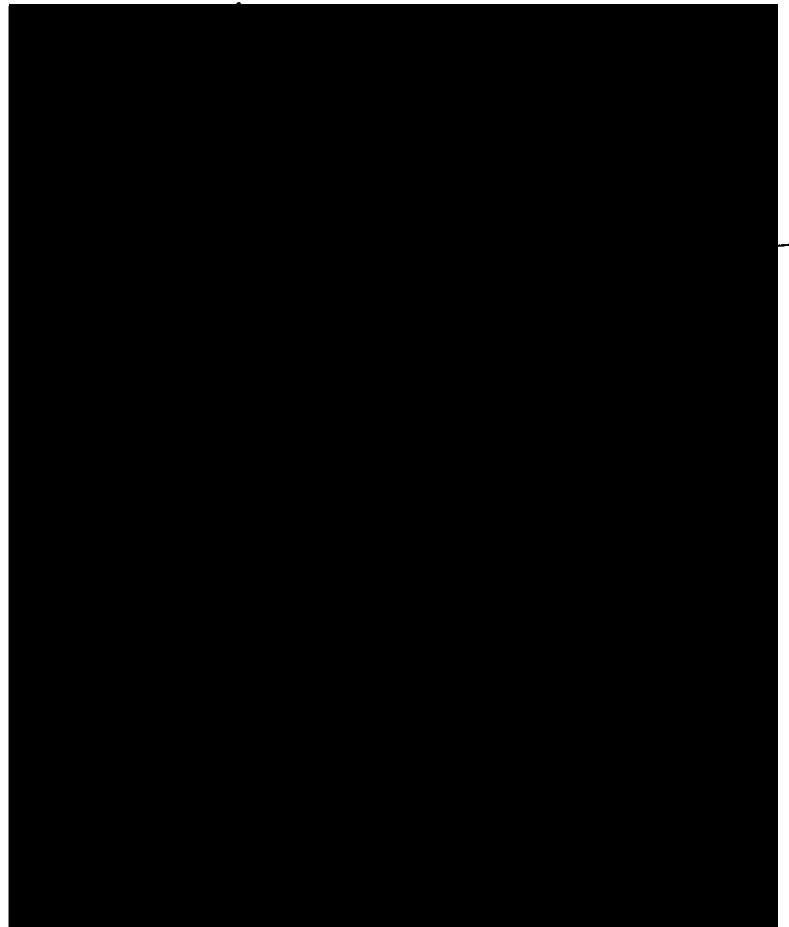
by

George Pacheco, Jr.

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved:



August 2008

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The University of Southern Mississippi

RHETORIC WITH HUMOR:

AN ANALYSIS OF HISPANIC/LATINO COMEDIANS' USES OF HUMOR

by

George Pacheco, Jr.

Abstract of a Dissertation  
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August 2008

ABSTRACT

RHETORIC WITH HUMOR:

AN ANALYSIS OF HISPANIC/LATINO COMEDIANS' USES OF HUMOR

by George Pacheco, Jr.

August 2008

Hispanic/Latino comedians' use of humor as argument is a rich environment to study. The relationship between the comedian (as the joke teller) and the audience (as the receivers of the joke) creates an environment where many topical boundaries fall, and the comedian is free to express him/herself without fear of persecution or ridicule. More specifically, this setting allows the comedian to use the platform as joke teller to communicate arguments to the audience through humor. Comedians who use humor rhetorically often communicate arguments about well-known stereotypes freely because audiences attend shows expecting to laugh.

Using Kenneth Burke's (1959) perspective by incongruity as a lenses, this study analyzes the strategies and meanings in the arguments made through humor created by George Lopez and Carlos Mencia from a rhetorical perspective. The primary goal is to create a method that communication scholars are able to apply not only to Hispanic/Latino comedians, but to the overall use of humorous messages with arguments. By establishing the importance of understanding messages created in a communicative setting where humor is expected, Lopez' and Mencia's strategies become clearer. In this case, this method revealed how Lopez and Mencia made strategic arguments through enthymemes and incongruity humor and how those uses of humor affect the stereotypical identities of the Hispanic/Latino population. The results of this study will be used to

examine potential rhetorical strengths of using humor not only for Lopez and Mencia, but also for humor users in general.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AV	Asian Voice
BV	Black Voice
JA	Japanese Accent
MA	Mexican Accent
SA	Spanish Accent
RV	Redneck Voice
WV	White Voice



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

Humor use in American society is so prevalent that it has a presence in almost every aspect. Fry (1994) argued, “no person or group of persons has been found to be without a sense of humor, except on a temporary basis because of some dire personal or national tragedy” (p. 11). Because humor does play such a wide role in human existence, it is difficult to pinpoint one area where humor is most useful. “Humor is an inherently mysterious and interesting phenomenon which pervades human life” (Veatch, 1998, p. 161). This ever-existing presence of humor in our society has lead researchers to examine humor and its power in a number of fields.

Early researchers revealed that humor could be an effective tool for persuading others (Goffman, 1967). Because humor in messages makes things more memorable and appealing humor has been found in everything from advertising to classrooms.

Advertisers regularly use humor in their attempts to persuade audiences to choose their products. “First, advertisers know that if they can get you to laugh with them, you will like them better. And if you like them better you are more open to their ideas. But there’s another reason for using humor that advertisers love: humor makes messages memorable” (Danbom, 2005, p. 669). By creating the memorable experience, humor users expect their audiences to gain more from the messages that are being generated.

Corporate trainers have adopted the use of humor in their sessions. By using humor, trainers are better able to maintain their audience’s attention, and help them to

understand the subject matter more clearly. “During formal training on HIV/AIDS, instructors are encouraged to use humor whenever possible” (Dziegielewski, Jacinto, Laudadio, Legg-Rodriguez, 2004, p. 75). Teachers also find humor helpful. “In an educational setting, the use of humor is a strategy that educators can use in facilitating and enhancing the learning process” (Dziegielewski, Jacinto, Laudadio, Legg-Rodriguez, 2004, p. 77). Humor use in classrooms has also been linked to students’ success.

Research shows that teachers who use humor in the classroom help students retain more information, and humor helps students and teachers build stronger relationships (Korobkin, 1988). These stronger relationships that are created make the classroom environment more controllable and fertile for learning. “Studies have reported that humor is effective in the college classroom to promote comprehension, create a positive environment, encourage student involvement, hold students’ attention, foster cognitive development, and manage desirable behavior” (Punyanunt, 2000, p. 32). These benefits of humor not only work for the teachers, they work for the students who must retain and be able to recall and explain the information presented in the classroom setting.

Research on health-related stresses and heart conditions shows that the use of humor has positive effects on patients. “Humor is good for your heart and circulatory system. Twenty seconds of laughter gives the heart the same workout as three minutes of strenuous exercise” (Danbom, 2005, p. 669). These types of real life applications make the study of humor and communication a vital key to better understanding its powerful presence on our society. By examining the many socially established uses of humor, researchers can further develop a better understanding of how humor works, and why it has such a firm grasp on so many aspects of the communication process.



Humor has also been linked to its ability to create and strengthen communicative messages. Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield (1991) argued that, “humor is typically perceived as a positive communication attribute, one that generates support, approval and goal attainment” (p. 206). Communicators who use humor do so to maintain audiences’ attention and present their messages to the audience in a more memorable way. This use of humor seems unintentional to audience members, “yet the invocation of humor is so commonplace among public speakers that the study of how humor works and what it works for is enlightening for those who wish to know why it is used so much” (Meyer, 1990, p. 76). These kinds of studies not only offer the message creator a clearer understanding of how the messages work, but how to make them work even better. The presence of humor in a message is shown to increase the value of the message, researching and understanding why this is true allows others to create more effective messages using humor.

By using humor, communicators are able to develop arguments and relay them to audiences without leaving the audience feeling attacked or offended. Humor’s usefulness carries over into persuasive acts. Communicators are looking to create messages to persuade audiences through humor, as in one well-known instance “the theories of humor suggest ways in which Reagan could and did use humor as an effective rhetorical appeal, while at the same time entertaining or ingratiating his audience” (Meyer, 1990, p. 76). Humor is communicating; therefore it can be used to make arguments. Because research shows humor to be so commonplace in our communication in various fields and environments, humor’s effectiveness as an argument creator are endless.

“Humor is part of every person from birth” (Ojha, 2003, p. 166). Despite this unlimited presence, theorists find it difficult to embrace one overall theory of humor. “There is no theory of humor that explains everything and that does not have serious deficiencies. Yet each theory does have something to contribute to our understanding of this all-pervasive, mysteriously enigmatic phenomenon” (Berger, 1987, p. 6). When theorizing about humor, scholars are forced to recognize the complexity and variety of humor and develop an understanding of how humor is applied to theory. “Trying to support a comprehensive theory of humor is difficult because it can be found in such a wide variety of settings” (O’Donnell, 2003, p. 3). Humor’s ability to immerse itself into so many facets of society has led researchers to examine humor as a serious form of research. Morreall (1983) argued that humor could be a physiological response to things like tickling, nervousness, and even fear.

There may be no boundaries when a joke teller uses humor. Carlos Mencia explained this dilemma by arguing that comedians can’t see a tragedy like other people can. While most people see the tragedy, and feel the tragedy, because it’s their job comedians have to look for the joke within the tragedy. This critical outlook on social situations makes the comic a social critic of sorts. “In taking the people’s view, the comedian sometimes challenges the accepted values in society and, therefore, within the talk in stand-up comedy, there often exists an element of ridiculing, moral, social, and political conventions” (Tsang & Wong, 2004, p. 771). Creating a situation this open to critical views allows the comedian to address social issues that may be un-addressable in any other situation. By making critical jokes, the comedian is communicating to the audience a specific, intentional message.

The relationship between the joke teller and audience can be fragile because the joke tellers bear the burden of making the audience laugh. This relationship consists of the reciprocation of a message that has been sent (by the joke teller) and a message that has been received (by the audience). The audience's laughter signals to the joke teller that the message has been received thus the humor message was communicated. "This receiver-centered nature of humor, focusing on the intended effect of a message on the hearers, suggests that a rhetorical perspective on humor will lead to insights into how humor influences audiences" (Meyer, 2000, p. 311). This communication process reveals an understanding between the joke teller and the audience about the subject matter. When the jokes told deal with a cultural stereotype, the audience's laughter signals an understanding of the stereotype's influence or presence in society. An enthymematic response is created through the audience's frame of reference. The audience gets the joke because of a personal experience or through knowledge gained about the stereotype and laugh because of the incongruities that exist. Members of the audience understand the incongruence and find the humor because they have personal experiences that allow them to laugh at the joke that is being made. People typically do not laugh at jokes that are not understood. By laughing at a racial joke it becomes clear that the audience recognizes the stereotype used and acknowledges the common socially imposed identity society has of that ethnic group. "Such social properties make humor a natural focus for communication study" (Meyer, 2000, p. 311).

Jokes may transcend or even oppose social norms for conversation topics or expressing social norms. At times these taboo topics, while considered unacceptable by a politically correct society, can safely be relayed to an audience in the form of a joke. As

part of his stand-up routine, Hispanic/Latino comedian Carlos Mencia refers to a time he was walking through a shopping mall and an Anglo male confronted him with “Hey, I locked my keys in my car; you’re a Mexican, you can get them out for me can’t you?” Of course, the punch line to this joke was that Carlos agreed to being able to get the keys out, walked over to the car and broke the window out, telling the guy, “Okay, go ahead, get your keys.” Another Hispanic/Latino comedian, Joe the One-Armed Mexican, recalls several experiences where non-Spanish speaking Anglos attempt to communicate with him in Spanish by adding an “o” to the end of words like, “Do youo speako englisho?”[sic] or, “Howo mucho foro thato caro?”[sic]; the punch line being “Io cano speako Englisho” [sic]. Stories and situations like these are not uncommon in comedic performances. Many comedians use a humorous story as a communication device for sending specific messages to an audience. Because these messages come in the form of humor, they can enter various situations in a non-confrontational way.

While the overarching goal of a comedian is to make the audience laugh, another motive is to persuade or influence the audience’s perceptions about the topics that are discussed. For many Hispanic/Latino comedians these humorous reactions may be a defense mechanism. Using humor to cope with the offensiveness of the stereotypes shields the comedian from his or her true feelings toward the stereotypes. For other comedians, humor may be an outlet for avoiding the aggressive behavior that could result from having the stereotypes imposed on them. Imposing images and preconceived notions on a person based on society’s stereotyped images creates stress for the person, and humor is a way of alleviating that stress, and the use of humor is a method for coping with negative stereotypes in an effort to take away any power the stereotypes may have.

Using the stage to present rhetorical messages to audiences allows the comedians to reach a large number of people, and attempt to influence perception with less fear of offending them. Communicators outside the comedic setting who attempt to carry out these types of message risk alienating their audiences because discussing offensive or taboo topics away from the comedic setting is often considered socially unacceptable.

Comedians actually must take humor seriously. “No doubt humor is a serious subject for a comedian because that’s how he or she earns his or her living. It’s a serious subject for others because it is an element of most human communications” (Palmer, 1994, p. 1). The seriousness humor has for comedians often allows them to strategically create the messages used. By managing the messages and uses of arguments comedians are able to control the flow of communication. Some have noted that “humor is simultaneously a form of social control that allows a society to regress and a form of cultural release that allows a society to aggress” (Shultz & Germeroth, 1998, p. 230). An attack on stereotypes is made possible by comedians making light of the stereotypes and encouraging audiences to laugh at the stereotypes without fear of repercussion. By approaching even the most taboo of stereotypes, comedians create messages with arguments for their audiences that make it okay to laugh. “Humor is a force that respects nobody; nothing is too revered, too holy to be ridiculed, and nothing is out of boundaries as far as humorists are concerned” (Berger, 1993, p. 156). This willingness of people to tolerate communicated offensive messages in the form of a joke attends to O’Donnell’s (2003) argument that “people always seem ready to attend to humorous messages, no matter how horrible the circumstances” (p. 1).

The idea that joke tellers and audiences alike are ready to make light of cultural stereotypes represents a perceived awareness of those stereotypes. Audiences are ready to laugh at the stereotype because of the incongruities that exist in the stereotypes. Their enthymematic responses are possible because of their understanding. A joke that Hispanic/Latinos don't own car manuals because they all know a guy named Manuel sparks laughter in the audience because of its incongruities. A car "manual" as we know it is a book offering the owner information about basic maintenance for that car. The assumption that Hispanic/Latinos all know someone named "Manuel" and that "Manuel" can fix cars creates an incongruity because of the pun associated with it. Such messages are an important part of creating an argument because they take on their own rhetorical significance for both the senders and the receivers. In a society invested with a fear of political correctness, joke tellers and their audiences operate without caution over offensive stereotypical depictions of ethnicity, sexuality, or any other socially sensitive topics. Such readiness signifies that humor has such a powerful presence on our society that it "must serve some sort of crucial function" (O'Donnell, 2003, p. 1). What is it about humor that removes the social stigma associated with racially charged messages? Why are society's politically correct standards sidelined for comedic performances? What power does humor possess that alleviates these otherwise unacceptable stereotypes? In answering this, it is vital to uncover what role humor serves in these communicated messages.

Of particular importance to this examination of humor as an argument will be Hispanic/Latino comedians. The U. S. Census Bureau estimated 42, 687, 224 people of Hispanic/Latino descent lived in the United States as of 2006, making the

Hispanic/Latino population the largest minority group in the country. Despite the influence of such a large population of people, Hispanic/Latinos continue to be perpetuated in the media as drug dealers, maids, and even migrant farm workers. With such a large population of people, it is inconceivable to assume that the entire population can be represented by so few negative stereotypes. Hispanic/Latino comedians are not new phenomena; comedians like Desi Arnaz, Freddie Prinze, Cheech Marin, and Paul Rodriguez have entertained audiences for years. However, today there are only two comedians, Carlos Mencia and George Lopez, that have reached into the highest levels of commercial success by having their own cable network television shows, a feat only reached by Desi Arnaz and Freddie Prince more than 30 years ago.

The styles these two comedians use are very different. Each creates a world for their audiences that centers on stereotypical issues that Hispanic/Latinos face, doing so in ways that not only challenge the stereotypes presented, but in many ways arguing to deflate those stereotypes in order to form a more positive identity for Hispanic/Latino people. Through their mainstream presence, Lopez and Mencia have elicited audience responses that vary from hearty laughter to anger to resentment and they continue to raise vital questions and arguments against the stereotypical issues they are dealing with. As an audience member, and a Hispanic/Latino, when I first heard George Lopez refer to a trip he and his family made to a baseball game during his youth, where he joked that “everyone had to ride in the same car,” I began to question what effects those types of jokes might actually have on stereotypes, and what it was about the use of humor that alleviated the offensiveness that accompanies stereotypes. I can remember countless times I’d heard such a joke or attack on Hispanic/Latinos and recalled stories passed

down to me from family members that said, “we only had one car.” Now here was a comedian using that same idea, reinforcing the stereotypes I have heard countless times, sharing it with millions, and making light of it in an apparent effort to argue that the stereotype does exist, but that it really does not encompass the entire population. This use of humor takes on the role of a communicated argument against the accuracy of the stereotype.

### Research Questions

If the relationship between the joke teller and the audience is a significant communication event, and if telling these jokes is a rhetorical action, then I argue that a rhetorical analysis of the communicative strategies of comedians’ use of humor to create messages with arguments is vital to understand such a popular means of influence. I thus used the methodology of rhetorical criticism to study messages about stereotypes created by Hispanic/Latino comedians and the influence those messages seek to have on Hispanic/Latino identity. As the rhetorical artifacts, I explored transcripts from the stand-up routines of two Hispanic/Latino comedians, Carlos Mencia and George Lopez. The styles employed by both comedians are very different, yet both use humor. This study focused on themes that emerge from the transcribed routines.

George Lopez’s approach to comedy focuses on personal experiences, in particular experiences with his family. His references to stereotypes often attend to the idea that stereotypes are often derived with some accuracy and in doing so argue that the stereotypes are known and do exist within the Hispanic/Latino population, but do not encompass the whole population. Carlos Mencia’s approach to comedy is quite different. He enters from a social commentator’s perspective. While he employs some personal



experiences in his routine, much of his material looks at how society views and uses these stereotypes. His style is very aggressive in that he holds back nothing in efforts to save face or not offend people in his audience. When confronting stereotypical issues he does so in a matter-of-fact way. The styles and material these two comedians offer is very different, but both provide examples of using humor as an argument through a communicative act.

In these two Hispanic/Latino comedians' use of humor exists the context for rhetorical acts. Messages created by the comedians are designed to elicit humorous reactions from the audience while creating a message with information to combat the perceived stereotypes the audience has of the identity of Hispanic/Latinos as an overall population. Because humor saturates so many areas of the human communicative process, and because the messages are communicated to audiences through the use of humor, I believe the following three research questions were particularly interesting to understand the strategies of the comedians as senders of those messages along with desired effects upon their audiences:

1. What stereotypes of groups exist in the transcripts of the comedians' routines?
2. How do those messages with stereotypes support or dispel the stereotypical images of the Hispanic/Latino identity?
3. How does the use of humor in their messages (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity?

In order to explore these questions, I studied the use of humor in messages in the comic setting. For example, comedians and their audiences are not just sources of entertainment. They also represent our freedom of speech as citizens of the United

States. However, although we are guaranteed that freedom of speech in this country, the widest ability to act on that freedom without repercussion generally falls within a comedian/audience framework. When discussing that idea in his routine, Mencia argued that:

I *have* freedom of speech; you *think* you have freedom of speech, that's the difference. And some of you don't get it, so let me make it very remedial for you, this is my job, I work on this stage. Now, all you people who *think* you have freedom of speech, tell my jokes at your job on Monday, and see if you don't get sent to sensitivity training! (Mencia, 2000).

This comedian/audience setting offers a unique environment where the comedian can communicate messages to the audience without fear of persecution or seclusion.

Communication scholars have a wide variety of methods available for examining humor and communication. I took a rhetorical approach. By conducting a rhetorical analysis of comedians' use of humor, I examined the ways those messages are communicated to the audience. More specifically, I wanted to explore how the use of humor as an argument depicts the stereotypes that affect Hispanic/Latino identity formation.

### Summary and Significance

To summarize, Hispanic/Latino comedians' use of humor as argument is a rich environment to study. The relationship between the comedian (as the joke teller) and the audience (as the receivers of the joke) creates an environment where many topical boundaries fall, and the comedian is free to express him/herself without fear of persecution or ridicule. Specifically, this setting allows the comedian to use the platform

as joke teller to communicate rhetorically to the audience through humor. In this case, Hispanic/Latino comedians can make arguments about well-known stereotypes. The significance of this study reaches far beyond the comedian/audience environment. Conclusions reached through studies such as this will help communication scholars gain a better understanding of the rhetorical use of humor, and its influence on an audience. I believe that this kind of research is also useful for gaining a better understanding of a relatively unexplored real world communicative setting.

The dissertation follows the following organization. Chapter II includes the theoretical discussion and review of important literature, along with definitions and explanations of key terms and concepts. Chapter III examines the artifacts that are key to the study and the research questions, and develops the method of researching the artifacts. Chapter IV applies the method and analyzes the artifacts, examining the research questions with the information gained through the rhetorical analysis. Chapter V includes a discussion of results, contributions to communication theory and concludes the study with limitations and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Rhetorical criticism offers the scholar a unique option in its application because it grants wide latitude for choice. “Three emphases set rhetorical theory and criticism apart from studies in other disciplines, including other communication disciplines: human action, the use of symbols, and the attempt to influence” (Lindley, 2003, p. 15). Since its early beginnings in Greek probate court, rhetoric’s presence has been viewed as central to human communication. Aristotle found rhetoric to be “the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle, trans. 1991, p. 36). Burke (1959) defined rhetoric as “the use of words by a human agent to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” (p. 41), and “rooted in an essential function of language itself, the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (p. 43). For the purposes of this study, this definition will provided the solid foundation for exploring comedian’s use of humor messages.

Because rhetoric is regarded as a human activity (Foss, 1996; Hart 1997), rhetorical action requires a person to make a purposeful choice. Because rhetoric requires such a choice, or a purposefully carried out action, rhetoric is persuasive in nature. For example, a person who yawns may communicate that he or she is tired, but it is not seeking to persuade another person and therefore not considered a rhetorical act. “Rhetorical theory does not merely seek to explain why certain phenomena create certain results. Rhetorical theory seeks to explain the strategies by which persons choose and incorporate certain features into their communication acts” (Lindley, 2003, p. 15). Foss (1996) argued that “speeches, essays, conversations, poetry, novels, stories, television

programs, films, art, architecture, plays, music, dance, advertisements, furniture, public demonstrations and dress” (p. 6) can all have rhetorical implications if their design is to influence an audience in any way. Hart (1997) emphasized the idea that rhetoric is about a human being making choices to try to influence other human beings.

Studying rhetoric requires the researcher to evaluate how people make those choices in communicating the messages designed to influence the audience. Rhetorical criticism, then, is the study of the messages communicators use to persuade an audience and the effects those messages have on the audience. These studies look at messages created in one instance and how those messages can be applied to other situations. To limit a study to one specific idea or situation is to limit the advancement of communication study as a whole. Scholars who use rhetorical criticism intend to look beyond one single application because it is important to advance the knowledge of communication in a variety of situations, and to advance rhetorical theory. According to Foss (1996), “the critic engages in rhetorical criticism to make a contribution to rhetorical theory” (p. 8).

Study of rhetoric is also a part of the advancement of theoretical perspective. To do so, one may use theory from both within and without the field of rhetoric. “Theories or concepts from outside the realm of rhetoric or communication studies may be utilized by the rhetorical critic if these theories contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon under study and help answer the research questions which have been proposed” (Lindley, 2003, p. 18). Such study offers an understanding that can be generalized to other situations, thus contributing to theories explaining rhetoric.

Although rhetorical studies in humor are not common within the field of communication, I argue that they are an important part of the field and can produce valuable information to better understand communication. This study not only provided an understanding of a use of humor and argument, but a view of humor as communication. Thus this literature review focuses on studies exploring humor and communication, as well as situated identity formation and stereotypes.

### *Communication*

“Communicating messages with language is the essence of what it means to be human” (Neuliep, 1995, p. 1). Humans use language and symbols as tools to create and share meaning. By communicating through the use of language, humans have sprouted growth through technological, medical, and education advances no other species is capable of. By practicing communication, humans are able to create messages and send them to receivers using symbols to create a response. “Communication elicits meanings, the internal responses that people make to the message stimulus as well as the internal stimulations that these responses produce” (Berlo, 1960, p. 278). Communication as defined by Ganguly (1976) is “any system of mutual interaction which generates meaningful experience between person and person or person and the world” (p. 224). As Berlo (1960) described it, “any communication situation involves the production of a message by someone, and the receipt of that message by someone” (p. 14). By looking at communication in such a simplistic way, we can eliminate the need for debating the definitions and move toward understanding communication and humor as it is applied in this study.

*Humor and Communication*

Humor has been a tool for dealing with difficult situations dating back to early history. “Benjamin Franklin used quips and humorous drawings to urge colonists to form a national identity, Samuel Langhorn Clemens poked fun at social customs. Humor has exposed social problems and forced us to confront taboo subjects” (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 308). Aristotle, for example, “felt that we must laugh when we see painless deformity” (Schaeffer, 1981, p. 4). Humor not only presents itself as a powerful tool for persuasion, it creates an environment where discussion of taboo topics can be approached publicly. No other environment exemplifies this more than a stand-up comedian and the audience.

Stand-up comedians can be viewed as taking a similar role to that of the fool in a comedy. They are the laugh-makers who speak to and for the common people, a collectivity to which they themselves may or may not belong, by presenting issues from points of view with which they identify on psychological process of identification and on subjects of universal appeal (Tsang & Wong, 2004, p. 771). Humor’s presence allows for taboo subjects to be addressed while limiting the offensiveness because the audience expects to laugh. This expectation by audiences makes taboo subject matter laughable because there is an understanding that the humor is creating an incongruity. Freud (1905) argued that it is the initial shock from the incongruity that causes the laughter to take place. The tension inherent in the subject matter is released by telling of a joke because it is “only a joke.” Audience members feel that “under normal circumstances these jokes would be deplorable, but because I came to laugh, I accept these comments as nothing more than jokes and am free to laugh.”

While audiences are expecting to laugh, a successful comedian must possess a certain amount of credibility. This credibility is not necessarily race driven; rather it is experience driven. Comedians' successful delivery of certain punch lines depends on their personal experiences. Were Lopez and Mencia rich by birth and white, their jokes about being poor and Latino would likely not carry the same validity. The fact that they are Latino carries less importance than the facts that they were poor and from the neighborhoods and environments they joke about. White comedian Ralphie May often makes many of the same types of jokes about Hispanic/Latinos, Blacks, and Asians but because he lives in the ghetto neighborhoods his experiences allow his jokes to carry some validity with audiences.

Comedians use humor to create persuasive arguments to sway an audience's perception of issues. Hauser (1986) defined arguments as "reasoned appeals based on evidence of fact and opinion that lead to a conclusion" (p. 46). Fisher (1984) furthered this idea by noting that humans are storytellers who base decisions on good reasons and logical progressions that help create conclusions based on those reasoned appeals. In reaching conclusions about differing groups of people, such conclusions could be partly a result of stereotypical images ingrained into our minds of what we think other cultures should be like. These stereotypes are presented to us through images in the media; comedians then choose to use humor messages to challenge those images that are ingrained in our psyche. "Humor as it turns out, is a whole brain experience, with networks of brain parts—call them "humor muscles"—passing signals quickly and efficiently to help us get a joke" (Ferber, 2006, p. 102). This passing of signals then leads to the desired response, laughter. "Humorous laughter is an ageless phenomenon



that scientists have always had difficulty understanding. These complexities include the cognitive, physiological, philosophical, and psychological aspects of humor”

(Dziegielewski, Jacinto, Laudadio, Legg-Rodriguez, 2004, p. 76). Freud (1905) made the claim that humor-laden behavior is something people do in order to socially deal with subjects that society labels sensitive or taboo.

Because these comedians often deal with such sensitive or taboo material they risk offending their audiences by going to far. For Mencia this notion of “too far” does not exist. He prides himself on jokes that many may claim are offensive. Mencia has built his reputation on pushing the limits of free speech. As an immigrant to the United States he argues that he values this freedom more than many naturalized citizens because he was not born in a place where such freedoms exist. In many ways this argument for pushing the limits strengthens his credibility and the length to which audiences will allow him to push the limits of free speech. As for the audience, the ability for a comedian to go too far is unique within each individual. Just as perceptions of humor are individually filtered (Meyer, 2000), each audience member is different and can tolerate certain subject matter more than others. The notion of what is too far is individually based and therefore cannot be universal to all audience members. Comedians like Mencia tend to purposely push the boundaries of the acceptable for the sake of comedy, entertainment, and, I argue, for enhanced persuasion on selected issues.

“Humor is elusive as an appeal or as a state of mind, difficult to create or to pinpoint. It is therefore difficult to study” (Meyer, 1990, p. 76). For most, the idea of having a sense of humor is not one that requires a lot of thought. “This universality of humor is further reinforced by the fact that surprisingly many jokes or situations will

strike surprisingly many, if not all people as funny” (Raskin, 1985, p. 2). The humor we find in the jokes that are told results from our personal frames of reference. The thought process required to draw on those frames of reference is instinctive. We instantly laugh at a joke without stopping to think about what it refers to because of this instinctive nature. “Research suggests that humor can tune our minds, help us learn, and keep us mentally loose and limber” (Ferber, 2006, p. 102). Much like vision or hearing, laughter is something that occurs with no real thought or reason; what an individual deems as funny, is funny. “A comprehensive definition of a sense of humor remains the supreme unattained goal” (Ruch, 1996, p. 250). Because of this, scholars claim that a better understanding of humor can be achieved through three main venues: incongruity theory, superiority theory, and relief theory.

People communicate humor in so many different ways. Meyer (2000) argued that “communication is a key factor in nearly all theories of humor because of its resulting from a message or interaction perceived by someone” (p. 311). Superiority theory offers the explanation that humor is found in feeling better than the subject being laughed at. The relief theory of humor makes the argument that we find humor in situations where a feeling of tension and relief takes over and allows for the humor to present itself, and incongruity theory tells us that humor is a result of a break from the norm (Morreall, 1983). Superiority, relief, and incongruity theories of communication each offer researchers insight as to why people find certain communicated messages funny and how those messages can affect various situations. The following section examines each of the dominant theories of humor and communication and singles out one theory as the theoretical structure for understanding humor as a rhetorical argument in this study.

### Superiority Theory

“The oldest, and probably still the most widespread theory of laughter is that laughter is an expression of a person’s feelings of superiority over other people” (Morreall, 1983, pp. 4). According to Plato, “what makes a person laughable...is self-ignorance” (cited in Morreall, 1983, p. 4). Plato’s ideas about humor still find themselves intertwined in humor research today. Superiority theory offers us a sense of being better or on a higher level than the ones being laughed at. The superiority theory bases itself in the idea that we are ready to laugh at others who we deem not as smart, good looking, wealthy, or educated as ourselves. These feelings of superiority are what creates the humor for us even at the expense of others’ well-being. In examining the ways Hispanic/Latinos use humor to cope with negative stereotypes, superiority may weigh heavily on the reason for experiencing the humor, as “laughing at ignorance, hostile laughter, and laughing at the follies of children can all best be explained from this perspective” (O’Donnell, 2003, p. 10).

Gruner (1997) argued that even when we laugh at ourselves, we are using the superiority theory of humor. Our mistakes take us in a role of ignorance, thus we laugh at ourselves for making the mistake that makes us ignorant. Take for example a person who is running late for work who does not realize that rather than adding sugar to their coffee they add flour. That creates a feeling of superiority because it was a simple mistake that would not have occurred had the person not been late.

### Relief Theory

Relief theory says the experience of humor results from a release of tension, or an end to stressful events (Herring & Meggert, 1994; Meyer, 2000; Morreall, 1983).

With relief theory, the argument is that people laugh simply to feel better. “Often tension results from dissonance people experience after making a decision or sensing the approach of incompatible and undesirable thoughts or actions” (Meyer, 2000, pp. 312). Maintaining the ability to use and experience humor during stressful times provides us with a form of release, or liberation from that stress. At times these stressful mishaps are a result of choices we make, at other times they are attributed to choices others make. Regardless of the cause of the stress, the situation surrounding the events determines the presence of humor in the relief. “A theory of humor must incorporate both the audience and the situation, in their rhetorical sense” (Carrell, 1992, p. 7).

Application of relief theory can be understood more clearly when placed into the context of a person who is changing a flat tire. During this process he/she leans against the car and the car falls off the jack that was holding the car up. The relief that this person has in knowing that he/she could have been under the car in some way when that happened could lead to laughter in the feeling of relief for not being under the car when it fell.

### Incongruity Theory

Incongruity theory of humor suggests that humans laugh at situations that violate the norms we expect or become accustomed to. Morreall (1983) argued that funny is not funny unless the element of surprise is added. Although this holds a lot of truth, incongruent behavior is often the spark for what an individual finds as funny, and is an important ingredient to funny, but it is not a necessary ingredient. In order to understand this further it is important to understand Morreall’s (1983) definition of incongruity as that which is a “violation of a pattern in someone’s picture of how things should be” (pp.

60-61). The general rule for stereotypes, for instance, is that they are not usually discussed in open forum. Taking these stereotypes and making them the center of a comedic joke violates this expected norm of non-discussion. Incongruity theory attributes humor to laughing at an occurrence resulting from an unexpected, perhaps out of the ordinary, non-threatening surprise (Berger, 1976; Deckers & Devine, 1981; McGhee, 1979). This type of humor has long been attributed to the idea that humor is a result of a step out of the norm, or a break away from what is expected to happen. “Rather than focusing on the physiological or emotional effects of humor, the incongruity theory emphasizes cognition. Individuals must have rationally come to understand normal patterns of reality before they can notice differences” (Meyer, 2000, p. 313). From these differences, the element of surprise clashes with the expectations of what should happen, ending in a humorous situation.

#### The Enthymeme

Finding these incongruities requires audience members to use what Aristotle called the enthymeme. In an effort to make their experiences known and clear, many African American comedians have used social commentary about stereotypical experiences during their routines (Martineau, 1972). By using humor as social commentary the comedian is creating an argument in the humor. “The communicator develops arguments in an attempt to persuade the audience to share her or his reasoning” (Shultz & Germeroth, 1998, p. 23). In other words, the comedian develops arguments intending to persuade the audience to agree with his or her reasoning. By allowing themselves to be persuaded in such circumstances often without argument claims forthrightly stated, the audience members are enacting what Aristotle called the

enthymeme. “The enthymeme is a kind of rhetorical deduction based on audience-accepted warrants that yield probable conclusions” (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001, p. 118).

According to Aristotle, an argument is made when the audience has some type of working knowledge about the subject matter. The enthymeme shows that the audience has some kind of authoritative take on the argument’s claim. For example, “This leader has accepted invitations to lavish entertainments at the homes of the wealthy and therefore we must beware of him, for he is planning to pervert justice in their favor (suppressed here is the premise that those who accept expensive attentions are planning favoritism)” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001, p. 172). In order for an enthymematic conclusion to be drawn here the audience members must have some prior knowledge of a similar situation that causes them to conclude that because the invitations were accepted, favors will be asked and honored. This enthymematic conclusion is based on the experiences of the audience members. Aristotle also argued that, “the best enthymemes will be based on knowledge specific to one’s subject, such as politics or physics” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001, p. 176).

#### Perspective by Incongruity

Comedians’ use humor to create messages that can be understood through a perspective by incongruity. According to Burke (1959), “we intentionally use an instance that is dissolving, to lend weight to our contention that ‘perspectives by incongruity’ do not belong to a cult of virtuosity, but bring us nearest to the simple truth” (p. 309). By uncovering the possibility of simple truths different from understood truths, the perspective by incongruity violates what was perceived as the understood truth of a message. By creating simple truths in the same messages this incongruity shocks the

audience members' senses and through the use of humor in comedians' messages, that shock is more readily accepted by the audience. This "perspective by incongruity is a violation of our common sense assumptions about what properly ought to go with what, and it reveals hitherto unsuspected linkages and relationships which our customary vocabulary has ignored" (Whedbee, 2001, p. 48).

Burke argued that terms or ideas are not concrete in meaning. These meanings attached to terms are understood because of the meaning we are taught to understand. "By violating our expectations and introducing ambiguity into our vocabulary, perspective by incongruity serves as an "opening wedge" that fractures our sense of how the world does and ought to function" (Whedbee, 2001, p. 48). This functionality of language that we are accustomed to is a learned process of vocabulary development. The association we place on objects creates images of how we think things "ought" to be, but Burke's perspective by incongruity allows us to look beneath how we think things "ought" to be in order to understand better how things are. "In perspective by incongruity, Burke has a method that extends the use of a term by taking it from the context in which it [is] habitually used and applying it to another" (Blankenship, Murphy & Rowenwasser, 1974, p. 3). Thus we are able to reclassify things based on the new meanings we attach.

This path to the simple truth may be through the use of pun. "A pun links by tonal association words hitherto unlinked. 'Perspective by incongruity' carries on the same kind of enterprise in linking hitherto unlinked words by rational criteria instead of tonal criteria" (Burke, 1959, p. 309). The perspective by incongruity is the path to the simplest truth because it creates in a message the ability to see underneath the surface.

“The metaphorical extension of perspective by incongruity involves casuistic stretching, since it interprets new situations by removing works from their ‘constitutional’ setting” (Burke, 1959, p. 309). This perspective allows the comedian to create messages by including untrue information and allowing the audience to draw enthymematic conclusions based on their own frames of reference. “These arguments could create ‘new meanings’ for old phenomena and such new meanings could cause society to re-examine and question its existing orientation” (Levasseur, 1993, p. 203). Developing and examining these new meanings allows for a better understanding of messages because of the inherent meanings attached to the situations by examiner. “Planned incongruity should be deliberately cultivated for the purpose of experimentally wrenching apart all those molecular combinations of adjective and noun, substantive and verb, which still remain with us. It should subject language to the same “cracking” process that chemists now use in their refining oil” (Burke, 1964, p. 93). By “wrenching apart” comedians’ jokes the rhetor is able to uncover alternative meanings in the jokes. This is a planned incongruity. The words have an initial meaning, but the message carries a deeper meaning that can only be revealed through analysis.

This use of humor is funny because it violates what we expect. By applying perspective by incongruity to comedians’ uses of humor messages we are able to uncover a deeper meaning in the message because “perspective by incongruity could take place at levels beyond novel word associations. That is, it could create unlikely connections between evidence and claim” (Levasseur, 1993, p. 203). Once those expectations have been violated, new expectations form. “Humor today goes hand in hand with our rationality, too and not just rationality in the sense of cognitive sophistication, but in the



sense of a rational attitude toward the world. Part of this attitude is viewing things critically, because they are looking for incongruity” (Morreall, 1987, p. 203). Critical analysis encourages a more rational attitude because it creates a deeper understanding of the message. Every time a situation occurs and humor is experienced you grow because the brain is expanding to take on the new connections that are made (Ferber, 2006). Comedians use messages with humor to influence those connections by creating memorable messages.

#### Burke’s Perspective by Incongruity and Enthymematic Anti-Claims

In his writing, Burke (1959) described the use of symbols as mergers and vessels and argued “symbols are the acts of synthesis, capable of infinite analysis” (p. 86). He viewed the use of a symbols as a merger or “transcendence because a symbol is a vessel of much more content that is disclosed by its face value” (Burke, 1959, p. 87). In their use of humor as rhetoric, Lopez and Mencia employ symbols in the form of language and relay messages to their audiences. Because these messages are embedded in humor, they are able to convey the messages about the stereotypes without creating a hostile environment. The audience who finds humor in the messages that are created acknowledges the knowledge of the stereotypes addressed; there would not be humor if the stereotype were not known to often be incongruous. This acknowledgement emphasizes the magnitude of the stereotype. “A humor symbol enables us to admit a situation by belittling it” (Burke, 1959, p. 76). A perspective by incongruity argues that the relationship between symbols and the situations the symbols are used in offers the communicators “an orientation to the situation, an adjustment to it, or both” (Blankenship, Murphy, & Rosenwasser, 1974, p. 10). This incongruity created using

works that Burke described can empower the communicator by allowing him/her to create messages in incongruent realities. The reality that is perceived can be challenged with a reality that is created by the application of language as it is used to create the symbols that make up that reality. “Perspective by incongruity or ‘planned incongruity,’ is a methodology of the pun” (Burke, 1959, p. 309). Applying this planned incongruity to the humor messages that Lopez and Mencia create improves understanding of how these messages are created purposefully to address the stereotypes invoked.

To apply Burke’s planned incongruity to the comedy of George Lopez and Carlos Mencia I examined each unit of analysis chosen from the transcripts. Burke (1959) argued that the planned incongruity involved “casuistic stretching” since it interprets new situations by removing words from their “constitutional” setting. That removal of words and stretching allows for audiences to develop enthymematic conclusions based on the information given. By presenting the information to the audience in form of a humor message, Lopez and Mencia are creating incongruity because the messages contain information about stereotypes. Looking at that incongruent information, we can see how those messages are intentionally created and how audience’s enthymematic conclusions develop through an anti-claim.

Aristotle suggested that “in general, the enthymeme is the kind of reasoning an audience of non-experts can easily understand” (Bizzell & Herzerg, 2001, p.172). By creating humorous messages that audiences are able to reason a conclusion from, comedians are able to argue certain ideas without literally telling audiences what to believe. “An enthymeme entails not only a generative structure of an argument but also the argument itself” (Scott, 2002, p. 58). As a result, the language that is used to give

reason to the rhetoric is unique and common at the same time. “The enthymeme’s argumentative movement of force depends not only on a chain of reasoning, but also on adherence with a larger stance” (Scott, 2002, p. 57). Enthymematic assumptions are based on a “ body of persuasion that presents a claim, foregrounds a stance, and motivates identification with this stance by invoking a chain or premises and a cluster of value-charged proofs (often in the form of opposites)” (Scott, 2002, p. 58). According to Toulmin’s (1958) description, these assumptions are called “field-dependent” and are characteristic of arguments. Uncovering the field-dependent characteristics in the comedy of Lopez and Mencia is a key part of creating an analysis of persuasive functions and motives within the humor messages.

The data for this study reveals itself in the form of jokes invoking ethnic stereotypes emerging from the comedies of George Lopez and Carlos Mencia. Shultz and Germeroth (1998) also called this “practical reasoning” and argued that;

“The data of practical reasoning come in the form of case studies, that is, cartoons. From the case study (the cartoon), a general warrant is produced on the basis of similar precedents (in other words, the techniques of humor, which include stereotype, irony, and absurdity). Therefore, a provisional conclusion about the present case is suggested. This provisional conclusion is the anti-claim, which is the conclusion of the cartoon that the cartoonist seeks to deny through humor. Through the process of incongruity, the reader is led to the actual claim” (p. 236).

By purposefully creating messages through humor, Lopez and Mencia plan incongruity. Burke (1959) argued that, “a word belongs by custom to a certain category---and by

rational planning you wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category” (p. 308). This planning on behalf of Lopez and Mencia is designed to draw an enthymematic response from audience members that result in laughter. The joke is told; audience members who have an understanding of the joke laugh. Because Lopez and Mencia create their jokes using incongruities, they use Burke’s planned incongruity.

By focusing on the messages about the stereotypes, the enthymemes lead audiences to understand the claim (Toulmin, 1958). Through application of the perspective by incongruity the jokes are created to include anti-claims, or the images and stereotypes the comedians wish to deny by using humor. So one may make a joke about Hispanic/Latino people being hard to include in the census count because “when people come knocking on the door we hide because we never know who is knocking.” The anti-claim thus argues from a stereotype that all Hispanic/Latinos are illegal aliens and should have to hide. Incongruent to the anti-claim is that not all Hispanic/Latino people are illegal and thus indeed most Hispanic/Latino people should *not* have to hide—the actual claim the comedian is arguing for. “Through the process of incongruity, the reader is led to the actual claim” (Jonsen & Toulmin, 1988, p. 35) through use of the enthymeme. Practical reasoning allows us to understand that not all Hispanic/Latinos are illegal aliens and should not have to hide. The anti-claim is that Hispanic/Latinos are scared to open the door because all Hispanic/Latinos are illegal aliens; through reasoning an audience member is led to the actual claim or the argument that not all Hispanic/Latinos are illegal aliens and should have to hide. This incongruent use of practical reasoning by the joke teller is likely because the rules of practical reasoning allow humor in this context to be presented as the message. The message is incongruent because as citizens of the United

States we know that not all Hispanic/Latinos in the United States are illegal aliens, yet stereotypical images associated with Hispanic/Latinos are often of illegal aliens.

An argument's ability to influence or persuade stems from a rhetorical act. By using both fact and opinion, an argument acknowledges what is known factually and what is known based on what is believed to be true. Those beliefs can emerge from a variety of sources, particularly stereotypes. Socially accepted stereotypes are easily transmitted through the use of humor because joke tellers are expected to create incongruent situations, causing laughter. The audience expects to laugh because the joke teller has confronted a socially taboo topic by acknowledging and incorporating stereotypical images of a specific group. And yet, they know about the stereotypes and this knowledge can enthymematically supply missing or unstated premises or claims in an argument. By drawing on their own frames of reference, audiences' enthymematic conclusions represent a prior knowledge or recognition of the stereotypes in the jokes. Comedians are aware of this pre-exposed knowledge and create arguments in light of this understanding in order to affirm or reject the stereotypes. Analyzing the jokes through a rhetorical lens can break down these types of jokes in order to understand their rhetorical intent.

### *Stereotypes*

Unfortunately, one of the most problematic issues that arise from communication between cultures involves stereotypes. "The concept of stereotype has to be distinguished from the concepts of prejudice, ethnocentrism and racism. Stereotypes are conceived to store generalized knowledge about social categories and thereby implicitly evaluate these categories" (Hagendoorn, 1993, p. 33). Often these categories are based

on physical image or representation of a person or group rather than first hand knowledge of the person or group. “Attitudes toward racial and national groups are in good part attitudes toward race names. They are stereotypes of our cultural pattern and are not based upon animosity toward a member of the prescribed group because of any genuine qualities that inhere in him” Katz & Braly, 1933, p. 280). This stored knowledge then becomes an image that is associated with a particular group. “Walter Lippman (1922) was the first to use the concept of stereotype. He assumed that stereotypes were necessary to simplify a complex reality for memory” (Hagendoorn, 1993, p. 33). Unfortunately this oversimplification can lead to inaccurate images of groups. Mackie (1973) argued that stereotypes were only inaccurate beliefs one had about another group. Brigham (1971) claimed that the generalizing nature of stereotypes made them inaccurate. By defining stereotypes in this way, the conceptual evidence suggests that ‘stereotypes are inaccurate.’ However,

A stereotype, as we have seen, is not necessarily a source of error.

Knowledge of the generalized other is often helpful. To know universal or group norms is a good starting point – and especially so if the other is typical of his culture or class, that is to say, if his pattern of qualities approaches the “basic personality” of his group (Jussim, & McCauley, & Lee, 1995, p. 21).

To argue that stereotypes are completely inaccurate forces the researcher to support an unsupportable claim. It is inconceivable to believe that there is clear, documented proof that all stereotypes gained their origins through false pretense and therefore are inaccurate. For example, it would be inaccurate to say, “all Hispanic/Latinos are poor”

yet it would be accurate to claim, “Hispanic/Latinos are one of the most economically disadvantaged groups in the United States.” Because of this, defining a stereotype as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category” (Allport, 1954, p. 191) allows for the stereotypes to carry some validity, but not encompass an entire group. Allport (1954) furthered this idea by claiming, “stereotypes oversimplify reality” (p. 192). This oversimplification can be exemplified by considering the historical treatment of African Americans in the United States. The treatment of African Americans based solely on the stereotypes associated with the color of their skin is well noted in historical and scholarly work. In their early works Katz and Braly (1933) furthered this assertion:

We have conditioned responses of varying degrees of aversion or acceptance toward racial labels and where these tags can be readily applied to individuals, as they can in the case of the Negro because of his skin color, we respond toward him not as a human being but as a personification of the symbol we have learned to despise (p. 280).

Stereotypes are learned and because they are learned it possess the ability to cognitively decide whether or not to go along with the use of the stereotype or to choose another route.

With the massive influence the media has on the American society, very few positive images of Hispanics are unveiled within the media, and those images that do shine through are usually stereotypical. Images of the gangster, field worker, maid, and so many others are prominent in American popular culture, and using humor to combat these images is not uncommon. Whether these events occur at work with co-workers, at home with family, or alone at times when what is funny does not seem so funny,

humorous events are taking place. Much like beauty being in the eye of the beholder, funny is in the mind of the beholder. Each individual decides for him or herself what is funny, and when it is funny (Attardo, 1992; Carrell, 1992; Raskin, 1992).

For years, situation comedy producers used canned laughter to entice their audiences into finding humor in incongruous situations. Since humor is social or contagious, the canned laughter strategically placed within the show was hoped to improve the overall success of the shows while making it okay to laugh at the situation itself. This is similar to a comedian's use of stereotypes. By making fun of the stereotype the comedian is sending a message that the stereotype is known and uses humor to dispel or affirm the stereotype. Using humor in this way allows the comedian, while performing, to communicate an understanding of the stereotype while deflating the stereotype.

Through the media, negative stereotypes dominate the societal perceptions of Hispanics/Latinos. Depending on the region, terms like Hispanic, Latino, Mexican-American, Chicano, Cholo, Pachuco, Cuban, and Puerto Rican, are either acceptable or offensive (Fox, 1996). Geographically, Hispanic/Latinos maintain their own identities, and feelings of belonging to a space, or group (Calafell & Delgado, 2004). The struggles that Hispanic/Latinos experience in developing an identity are illustrated by the negative images carried through the media.

### *Situated Social Identity*

Too often, the development of a cultural identity is a process that goes unnoticed, and even unwanted. Our experiences, families, friends, education, ethnicity, and



neighborhoods all help shape the characteristics developed, and time quietly conceals this process leaving an identity behind. “The study of identity can be traced back all the way to George Herbert Mead who presented a framework for underwriting the analysis of numerous sociological and social psychological issues” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 285). Studies of identity have been carried out in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and communication, and have examined in depth the development of identities within individuals. However, this focus on the individual “is changing gradually, as the increasing cultural diversity in the U.S. draws attention to the need to understand the role of culture and ethnicity in development” (Phinney, 2000, p. 27).

Identity is not so simple a concept that one overlying definition can encapsulate it in its entirety. Allport (1937) suggested that there has to be a certain part of the individual’s personality that is constant. When a person goes to sleep at night he/she must know that when they wake in the morning they will still be the same person. This assurance is called identity. Geertz (1975) defined identity as “a bound unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distractive whole” (p. 48). Yep (1998) defined identity as “a person’s conception of self within a particular social, geographical, cultural, and political context” (79). Each of these definitions offer one constant, the presence of a constant or central set of characteristics. These characteristics make up identity.

The overall concepts of what identity is and what parts affect it vary between each individual. “In general, one’s identities are composed of self-views that emerge from the reflexive activity of self categorization or identification in terms of membership in

particular groups or roles” (Stets & Burke, 2000, pp. 225-226). A possible primitive definition for identity might be “who I am.” Within each of us is the general sense of who we are, and what roads or experiences lead us to the characters we become.

Individuals conceptualize what identity is from within, and cognitively choose to project out the identity we want others to see, and know. Because this general idea of identity is so broad, applying it to every person as one single concept would not work. Cultural identity is only one part of a group of changing identities (Kluckholm & Strodtbeck, 1961). In order to grasp a better understanding of identity, it is important to look at it in four distinct parts.

Personal identity “refers to an individual’s unique characteristics, irrespective of culture or social group” (Abrams, O’Connor, & Giles, 2005). During the personal identity formation, it is also important to note that various issues of group identity also play a role in personal identity. According to Brewer and Gardner (1996), “both interpersonal and collective identities are social extensions of the self, but differ in whether the social connections are personalized bonds of attachment or impersonal bonds derived from common identification with some symbolic group or social category” (p. 83). These bonds vary in a variety of situations and individual characteristics. Each individual develops a personal outlook for himself or herself. That outlook can be based on personal interests, intellect, physical appearance, or on group characteristics.

Cultural identity is defined by Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) as how important an individual’s culture is to him or herself. Geertz (1973) defined cultural identity as identification with a perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of symbols and meanings as well as norms/rules for conduct” (113). Yep (1998) offered,

“in short, cultural identity is a social construction that gives the individual an ontological status (a sense of “being”) and expectations for social behavior (ways of “acting”)” (79). Yep also added “cultural identities are co-created and re-created in everyday interaction. In other words we create our identities with those individuals with whom we interact (co-creation) and in the context of specific communication episodes and encounters (re-creation)” (p. 81). Culture is often confused with ethnicity or race (Webster, 1992); however culture is much deeper. Cultural identities can develop through having a shared group of meanings with a larger body of people, and “the identity that we avow may not be the one that is ascribed to us by others, biracial people are sometimes forced to place themselves in a category where they do not fit” (Nance & Foeman, 1998, p. 54). Growing up in a large, diverse inner-city ghetto develops a cultural identity for those who live there, even if they are not the same race.

Ethnic identity is described as a set of ideas about one’s own ethnic group membership, including self-identification and knowledge about ethnic culture (traditions, customs, values, and behaviors), and feelings about belonging to a particular ethnic group (Martin, Nakayama, & Flores, 1998). This part of identity development depends a lot on how much interaction people have with their ethnic groups. Typically the more interaction, the more ethnic identity develops and the larger role it plays in one’s overall identity. Ethnic identity differs from cultural identity in that it is specifically related to race. While cultural identities focus on a set of characteristics shared by a group of specific groups, ethnic identity is derived by racial lines such as Black, White, Mexican, Chinese and many more.

Group or social identity is the most collective part of identity. “Behavior becomes meaningful social action when it is perceptually integrated into a shared interpretive perspective” (Alexander & Knight, 1971, p. 65; Heider, 1958; Mead, 1934). In each social interaction behaviors are dependent upon the environment and the identity that groups wishes to portray. The development of group identity is an important part of an individual identity development, especially among members of minority groups that are having to function within a multicultural society (Phinney, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Learning to function within a multicultural society for a minority means learning to adapt to expectations set by the majority group. By gaining a social identity, the individual becomes empowered to adapt to various settings and fit in with the social surroundings. “Social identity is defined as one’s knowledge of membership in certain social groups and the social meanings attached to the group” (Abrams, O’Connor, & Giles, 2005). These attachments are dependent upon the individual situation. The development of these identities is dependent on what Alexander and Weil (1969) called “situated identity” (p. 140). “The term situated identity designates the dispositional imputations about an individual that are conveyed by his actions in a particular social context” (Alexander & Knight, 1971, p. 65). A person in a social situation will behave in such a way as to be identified by their behaviors. When we enter these various situations we enter a social environment where we will be identified by others. “When a person acts, he communicates information about the kind of person he presumes to be and obliges others to regard him as being that kind of person” (Alexander & Knight, 1971, p. 66).

By maintaining at least a basic understanding of these meanings, the individual can, at least in part, identify with the groups, allowing him/her to function within the group. "In other words, individuals seek to define themselves in terms of their immersion in relationships with others and with larger collectives and derive much of their self-evaluation from such social identities" (Brewer & Gardner, 1996, p. 83). Culture and social identification go hand in hand. Social identification can develop through any social group situation a person is a part of, whether it is a group of friends, co-workers, school clubs, or a religion.

Each of the four parts of identity can be operationalized with examples for clarification. Each of these parts can be exemplified with one question, answered in four different ways. "Who are you?" When answering this question from a personal identity perspective, one may answer, "I am Johnny, a quiet person who likes to read." When answering from a social perspective one may respond "I am Johnny, a member of the Democratic Party." Those who identify more with their cultural identity may respond, "I am Johnny, from Sunny Side Queens New York." This type of response lets the person who asked the question know automatically that there is a level of identity common to anyone that comes from this specific neighborhood. One who is identified ethnically may respond, depending on what region of the country they are in, "I am Johnny, a Hispanic/Latino, I am Johnny, a Mexican-American, or I am Johnny, a Chicano." Because this population has origins in so many countries and the attitudes in different parts of the United States are so different, obtaining a name for all has proven to be a debatable task. Each of these responses suggests how identity is represented and illustrates how individuals can express that identity.

As society's structure continues to change, so do the many factors that play a role in identity development. With limitless access to images via the Internet and mass media outlets, the social and cultural structure of society is evolving. More and more African American, Hispanic/Latino and Asian stereotypes are breaking through the glass ceiling that once limited their exposure. From this increase in exposure comes the increase in stereotypical perceptions. Mass media sources continuously inundate consumers with fictional images of the Latino drug lord, the Italian Mafioso, the African American gang-banger, or the nerdy Asian. While there is no denying that these characteristics exist within each population, the characteristics are not representative of the entire population. These changes bring a strong need to understand the identities, but an even stronger need to understand how stereotypes communicate the perceptions that help shape those identities within cultures.

The characteristics that make up these cultural identities are becoming more prevalent in what was once known as "White America." Asian styles are more popular in our homes, Latino foods and music are becoming more popular recreational choices, and African American attire has become a norm amongst many of the fashion conscious. Learning and understanding these changes and the groups that changes occur in is beneficial. Developing an understanding of the cultural surroundings assures the individual a place, and a working knowledge to survive in and communicate with other cultures. When functioning within an intercultural setting, our cultural identities help us understand and relate to situations, and "through research that investigates identity, we can begin to understand the impact of our multiple identities on intercultural interactions" (Martin, Nakayama, & Flores, 1998, p. 49). Identity studies help us to make sense out of

the many characteristics within other cultures. Often the characteristics are foreign to our frames of reference and being able to study identity and identity formation becomes a key to better relations. Because of the many factors that affect cultural identity, Collier and Thomas (1988) urged researchers who explore cultural identity to include other aspects of identity because of the many negotiated identities that can be related. More specifically for the purpose of this literature review, the relationship between cultural identity and their existing stereotypes is explored through a social perspective.

### *Cultural Identity Through Situated Social Interaction*

Cultural identity is a social construction that gives the individual an ontological status and expectations for social behavior (Yep, 1998). These behaviors are based on the identity desired by both the group and the individuals who make up the group.

“For situations to be socially defined there must be relative consensus about the meaning of actions. Within a population it is necessary that there be some agreement about the dispositional dimensions that are relevant to describe an individual’s conduct and about how a particular action is to be evaluated along those dimensions. When these conditions are met, then we can say that a situation has consensual meaning or social reality” (Alexander & Knight, 1971, p. 66).

This agreement of what constitutes a social identity in various situations clarifies what specific behaviors lead to that social identity for that social group in that social situation. Stereotypes then, used to represent a culture, stem from a cognitive grouping that humans do naturally. “Some have suggested that

stereotypes are part of the process of cognition, that we cannot exist without some sort of categorization process” (Hughes & Baldwin, 2002, p. 41). The media largely perpetuates many stereotypes. “Media portrayals of Hispanics in general, be it in popular culture such as television or movies, or in the mainstream press through depictions of the Latino experience in this country in newspapers or magazines, have been stilted at best and racist at worst” (Chavez, 1996, p. 27). Yet citizens’ perceptions in the United States are largely based on the media, thus Hispanics are perceived as lower class or less productive as citizens. “Although they now constitute America’s largest minority group, the legacy of negative stereotypes directed at Latinos (such as greasers) persists” (Jacobson, 2003, p. B7). Time and time again television portrays characters from this large group as underachievers, gang members, maids, laundry workers, and so forth. “Pictorial stereotypes are legal. And they are often compelling. But neither legal nor aesthetic arguments suffice in justifying when it’s morally permitted to publish images that injure” (Elliot, 1996, p. 3).

The study of social identity and stereotypes plays an important role for scholars seeking to bridge the gap of cultural misunderstandings. “This concern with identity, social interaction, and social relations gave rise to the new tendency in studying identity—focusing on direct relationships between communication and identity” (Jung & Hecht, 2004, p. 266). The idea that communication and cultural and ethnic identities help shape each other strengthen the need for this kind of research, and creates a wealth of opportunity for research because of the countless applications that are available. The social groups we place ourselves in



create communicative situations, and from each of those situations we derive a culturally unique communicative style. “Shared group membership is the ultimate form of culture in the traditional perspective” (Hall, 1992, p. 52). Scholars of identity study diverse interactions of people of different races, genders, sexuality, creeds, and cultures (Allport, 1954). “Stereotypes are generally conceptualized as exaggerated, over-generalized, oversimplified beliefs used to categorize people” (Christian & Lapinski, 2003, p. 248). Because cultures are often identified stereotypically, it is important to study and understand the identities within each culture. “An individual’s identity is created through internalization and negotiation of ascribed identities by others. The co-created identity is avowed in communication and adjusted again by other ascriptions” (Jung & Hecht, 2004, p. 266). These ascriptions create perpetuated images that are then applied to specific groups as an identity. “Identity can be interpreted as a continuous variable by tracking the systematic similarities and differences between persons who are said to ‘belong’ in some way to a culture group” (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 105). Through the study of situated social identity, stereotypical identities placed on groups are pointed out, allowing for a more culturally sound understanding of cultural differences. Many of these stereotypes are considered to be valid because they are based on actual members found within the culture; however the stereotypes do not encompass all members.

Because cultural identity has the ability to make known the origins and traditions carried out through various cultures, it is amazing that the amount of studies conducted within the Hispanic/Latino culture are so few. There are 39 million Hispanic/Latino

members in the United States and still there are so few credible, extensive studies on the cultural interactions of this group of people with mainstream society (Stavans, 2003). With such a highly populated and diverse group it is inconceivable to believe this culture as a whole has so little to offer to scholarly research. However, “group membership (racial or otherwise) does not guarantee shared knowledge or values” (Hall, 1992, p. 53). Communicating interculturally creates a more clear vision of other cultures. Because Hispanic/Latino stereotypes are all inclusive, meaning they generally do not differentiate between the races that make up Hispanic/Latinos, we must view them as generalized conceptions held about the group and cultural identities of Hispanic/Latinos. Through identity-based research, scholars are able to evaluate culturally diverse nonverbal behaviors, undisclosed means of jargon used by different cultures, and explain traditions followed by different cultures. The current study suggested the importance of situated social identity studies in understanding Hispanic/Latino comedian use of humor to combat socially imposed negative stereotypes.

Social identity develops as a consequence of memberships in particular groups within one’s culture. “Membership in a disparaged minority group can create psychological conflict; minority group members are faced with a choice of accepting the negative views of society toward their group or rejecting them in a search for their own identity” (Tajfel, 1978; Phinney, 1989, p. 34). The characteristics and concerns common to most members of such social groups shape the way individuals view their characteristics (Lustig & Koester, 2003, p. 141). Those who belong to a cultural group and claim that the group identifies them are using social identity. Researchers and theorists in social identity suggest that people are “motivated to join the most attractive

groups and/or give an advantage to the groups to which one belongs (in-group)” (Worchel, Rothgerber, Day, Hart, & Butemeyer, 1998, p. 390). People naturally favor their own people; “people will provide more resources to their own groups, rather than to out-groups. When in-groups are identified, an individual decides the extent to which the group is central to his or her identity” (West & Turner, 2000, p. 407). By breaking up these aspects of life into sub-categories we are able to create smaller more understandable sections allowing for a much easier existence. We use social categories like white, black, Australian, Christian, Muslim, student, bus driver, because they are useful in understanding the categories to which they belong (West & Turner, 2000). Assigning sub-categories is an easy way that humans have learned to associate meaning with people, animals, places, and many other aspects of our world. Placing any particular association on an object becomes that object’s identity. How we see them, interact with them, and even describe them are all results of the category in which we place them. The objective behind doing this is that we achieve a convenient, known image (Infante, Rancer, & Womack, 2003, p. 21). A desirable identity is something we each work towards having, both for ourselves in how others see us, as well as the identity we use to identify others.

We identify with groups we perceive ourselves to belong to. Identification carries two meanings. Part of who we are is made up of our group memberships. That is, sometimes we think of ourselves as “us” vs. “them” or “we” vs. “they,” and at other times we think of ourselves as “I” vs. “he or she” or “me” vs. “him or her” (West & Turner, 2000). At times we think of ourselves as members of the group and at other times we think of ourselves as unique individuals. Much like the categorization idea, our

identity is developed and emphasized by the groups in which we are placed, or in which we place others. There are many group members who are naturally associated negatively because of the group in which they are identified. By assuming that most Hispanic/Latinos are drug lords or gangbangers, the stereotype assumes a negative cast or perception. Media-induced caricatures project these images the most that are then related to the culture as a whole. Even while understanding that the stereotypes are negative, we should also be aware that there are members who do fit the stereotypes. The drug lords do exist within the population, but they are a small minority of the population. Allowing the stereotypes to be projected on the population as whole creates an automatic assumption that all Hispanic/Latinos fit the description. These automatic associations generally have a negative effect on the amount of progress the person allows him/herself to maintain. According to Claude Steele, psychology professor at Stanford University, “minority students are afraid of living up to the myth of intellectual inferiority” (Charles & Massey, 2003). Such is the case for many other individuals who are identified negatively because of the groups in which they are a part. Whether we are accepted for our lifestyle, or the groups in which we are identified, it is an effort to feel good about how others see us. The strength of social comparison is that in order to evaluate ourselves we compare ourselves with others who are physically, mentally, or emotionally similar to ourselves.

The Hispanic/Latino population is composed of many different and unique cultures from all over the world. These are called *co-cultures*, which are groups of individuals who are part of the same larger culture. But, through unity and individual identification around such attributes as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion,

they create their own identity (West & Turner, 2000). This means that while each of these groups may have a culture of its own, celebrate holidays of its own, carry out traditions of its own, and even speak a language of its own, society will still group them together as a whole. Because of this, Hispanic/Latinos need an identity that each co-culture can adopt in order to strengthen the cultural identity of Hispanic/Latinos as a group. For example, when we see African-Americans, we automatically lump them together under the African-American umbrella, and because of this the group as a whole has been perceived as one. Whites as a whole no longer argue whether or not they are Irish, Scottish, German, English, and so forth; they each fall under the umbrella of being part of the *white community*, while choosing to celebrate the deeper roots within their own co-culture. Through the willingness to self-identify, Whites and African Americans have become the most powerful groups in our country. Each of these power cultures has identified many co-cultures as forming one large identifying culture. Hispanic/Latinos, on the other hand, spend more energy arguing or defending their Mexican identity, or Cuban identity, which is fine at a more local level within our communities, but as the largest minority group in the country without a firm unifying identity on a large scale, Hispanic/Latinos will continue to hold one another firmly in a socially powerless position.

#### Summary of the Literature

As a society, one thing that we cannot escape is stereotypes. Once a stereotype has been accepted as part of a culture's perceived identity, regardless of what steps are taken to break away from it, those stereotypes will continue to exist. Whether those stereotypes are based on color, race, dress, creed, or sexuality makes no difference in how

people will choose to categorize a group. “Although individuals may define themselves as a member of a certain ethnic group, they may not perceive themselves as being a typical member of it” (Abrams, O’Connor & Giles, 2002, p. 226). Yet many are stereotyped into the roles associated with the group as a whole. These are the roles that many Hispanic/Latino comedians combat with humor, in an effort to disassociate the stereotype from the population as a whole. Much like stereotypes, humor plays such a large role in our society that making efforts to do without humor would be much more difficult because the message would not reach as many audience members; thus Hispanic/Latinos using humor to their advantage becomes a valid option.

“We can approach the structure of humor in terms of its most fundamental element: the joke as an argument” (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 311). Using humor to cope with the stereotypes is to ridicule them. To show that they are false to the actual identity of Hispanic/Latinos is one form of grasping the roots of developing identities. Identities are built on images, images are built on stereotypes, and stereotypes are built on perception. As humans, whether we would like to admit it or not, categorizing each other is inevitable. Humor can be a tool for encouraging and embracing of alternative images because it is through those images that cultures distinguish themselves. Humor can also be an argument for or against the culture. “The rhetor who uses humor is putting forward an argument about some aspect of his or her world in which incongruity is proof of the rhetor’s premise, and a laugh from the audience it affirms” (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 311). Humor is an element that can change from one point in time to another. Much like a feeling of sadness, humor and laughter depend on the surroundings. Yet their use by communicators may help to change perceptions of a culture.

As noted in the related review of literature, studies on communication, identity, humor and communication and stereotypes are vast, while the studies on the use of humor as a rhetorical tool are limited. These limitations in available work do not signify a weakness in the study of humor as rhetoric; rather they provide perspectives that may be useful, not only for this study, but for future studies as well. The research questions posed for this study are a vital means of developing a better understanding of humor's rhetorical abilities. In order to explore humor's usefulness in creating arguments about stereotypes I asked three questions: What stereotypes of groups exist in the transcripts of the comedians' routines? How do those messages with stereotypes support or dispel the stereotypical images of the Hispanic/Latino identity? How does the use of humor in their messages (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity? Each of these questions is vital in understanding the effectiveness of the humor messages relating to stereotypes used by Lopez and Mencia.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine the rhetorical strategies employed by comedians George Lopez and Carlos Mencia in the messages they create through a rhetorical analysis of the messages used in their comedy routines. Researching an artifact through a rhetorical study permits exploring the creation of influential and persuasive messages, and rhetorical analyses allow researchers to deconstruct parts of the whole artifact to focus on. Hart (1997) argued, “rhetorical criticism provides general understandings via the case study method” (p. 25). This method forces the rhetorical scholar to choose and limit the sample used in a study. By limiting the sample used to a specific set of texts from a much larger sample the rhetorical critic must be careful to incorporate texts that raise important questions. “The critic’s challenge is to tell the largest possible story given the necessary limited evidence available” (Hart, 1997, p. 25). By limiting the text used for analysis the rhetorical critic is able to examine a specific set of information intensively to answer the questions raised by the study.

In selecting a “unit of analysis” (Foss, 1996, p. 15), the rhetorical critic evaluates what areas of the artifact to focus on. As part of a larger whole, the selected part of the artifact that will be analyzed is key to creating a study focusing on answering the research questions. There are a number of purposes behind the unit of analysis. First, it creates a narrow area to focus the research on. An overall analysis of an entire artifact is an impossible feat because of the unlimited features inherent within each researcher’s goals and each artifact’s presence. By choosing what specific aspects of an artifact the researcher wants to analyze, he or she is able to create research best suited to their



interests. This ability to choose a focus area of an artifact aids in answering the research questions, and by doing so the rhetorical critic is required to justify the decision to select the unit of analysis chosen, and present the information about the artifact that will answer the research questions. Finally, the researcher must create a link to the theoretical aspects of the discipline. By connecting the analysis to existing theory, the researcher is able to extend the knowledge available in understanding the theory, and in understanding the artifact.

### *Humor in Rhetoric*

I focused on the intent of these messages to influence audiences and the idea that these messages share in an effort to create arguments against the stereotypes they address.

“As a language, a discourse, involving writer, audience, and motive, humor as a fashioning instrument qualifies as a rhetorical means which persuades and convinces through identifications with various groups. As such it has been (and still is) employed and manipulated by writers to work upon audiences to shape their values and conceptions of culture” (Click, 1994, p. 13).

Through this study I sought not only to expand our understanding of rhetorical theory, but also to create what Foss (1996) called a “contribution to the improvement of our abilities as communicators and consumers of symbols” (p. 8). By gaining a better understanding of how these comedy routines are used we can discern how the messages are used to remove power from the stereotypes they refer to.

A rhetorical method is useful because I argue that these comedians are creating rhetorical messages through their uses of humor. A rhetorical approach also fits because “rhetoric has also come to describe a perspective by which humans analyze and describe

the use of language and other symbolic means in persuasion” (Lindley, 2003, p. 11). By describing and analyzing the stories told by Lopez and Mencia, we are able to better understand motivations for creating the messages in the stories, and how the language was manipulated to make such messages persuasive. In understanding this manipulation a clearer understanding of the messages’ purpose is derived. Rhetoric as the available means of persuasion can help rhetoricians gain understandings of influence and persuasion; however rhetoric can also be used to analyze language and the symbolism used to create language. By analyzing both language and symbols used to create the language, rhetoricians are able to apply the two perspectives to an understanding the messages create. “Both understandings of rhetoric are founded on two premises: 1) human beings make choices and 2) those choices can be influenced by the manipulation of symbols” (Lindley, 2003, p. 11). More specifically for the purposes of this study, those symbols are created and manipulated through the use of language. Ethninger, Benson, Ettlich, Fisher, Kerr, Larson, Nadeau, & Niles (1971) noted that “rhetorical studies are properly concerned with the process by which symbols and systems of symbols have influence upon beliefs, values, attitudes, and actions, and they embrace all forms of human communication, not exclusively public address nor communication within any one class or cultural group” (p. 208). Although research looking at the rhetoric of humor is limited, research involving rhetoric, humor and culture offers a wide range of support and theoretical base to create a study of this nature.

Foss (1996) claimed that a rhetorical analysis must follow three major steps. A researcher must select the artifact and create research questions that deal directly with the artifact studied. For this study the selected artifacts are the comedy of George Lopez and

Carlos Mencia. The messages created and communicated to audiences through their use of humor raised three research questions dealing with how those messages are communicated and how that communication is an intentional argument created by the joke tellers.

### *Identifying the Artifacts*

In order to understand or derive meaning from an artifact, it is crucial to first gain a complete understanding of the artifact. This analysis examined the comedy of George Lopez and Carlos Mencia. The analysis began by identifying the unit of analysis as only the jokes based on ethnic stereotypes that are taken from the transcripts of each comedian's routines. All other jokes found in the transcripts will be discarded for this study because they don't pertain to the study of ethnic stereotypes. By limiting the unit of analysis to only those jokes referring directly to ethnic stereotypes I was able to focus on what messages with arguments exist within Lopez and Mencia's comedy, how those messages with arguments support or dispel the stereotypical images of the Hispanic/Latino identity, and how using humor a rhetorical tool works to re(construct) the Hispanic/Latino identity.

By applying Burke's perspective by incongruity the analysis examined the selected units in order to decipher what enthymematic claims these jokes expect audiences to supply. The findings of this analysis were be used to answer the research questions proposed for this study. Applying this tool of analysis to the messages created a better understanding of the communication process in this environment and argue that as part of that process (the joke teller tells a joke, the audience laughs) the message creators were using the enthymematic responses to address the perceptions the audience

holds about these stereotypes. In addition, I analyzed how those messages influence the development of identity within the Hispanic/Latino population. The next section discusses George Lopez and Carlos Mencia's biography, comedy style, and commercial successes. Doing this will not only help clarify each comedian individually, but will aid in distinguishing each comedian's style of humor as it is applied throughout the remainder of the study.

### George Lopez

George Lopez is one of the most recognizable comedians working today. Having worked in comedy for over 20 years, Lopez has built his career telling his story using humor to appeal to audiences. "When George Lopez began making people laugh, comedy was a shield for him. Now it's a banner" (Lee, n.d., p. 1). Born April 23, 1961, in Mission Hills, Los Angeles, California to a Mexican American family, he was abandoned by his birth parents at an early age. Left to be raised by his biological grandmother and step-grandfather, Lopez learned at an early age how to deal with little attention through humor. Many of his comedic routines center around many of the childhood experiences he had and he uses those experiences to entice audiences into finding humor in his experiences. "What I think I learned was what I initially thought was a God-given talent turned out to be a wall that I'd put up to deflect emotions from penetrating and actually hurting" he stated in an interview with Lee (n.d., p. 1). After battling a genetic disorder that caused his kidneys to slowly deteriorate, he received a kidney transplant with a kidney donated to him by his wife Ann Serrano. Today Lopez continues to tour and is co-creator and star of American Broadcasting Company's (ABC) hit situation comedy *The George Lopez Show*.

Lopez's comedy is known for its stereotypical portrayal of the Hispanic/Latino population. In an interview with Katy Vine (2004) he defended his comedic style by arguing that, "Normally what happens is you get some attack from Latino groups because the material is hard-edged. But it's based in truth and the truth hurts" (p. 30). This realistic outlook on things has led to large amounts of success for Lopez. For years it was even the source of a lot of Lopez's anger. "I think all Latino performers have a chip on their shoulder. They don't think their record company's doing enough for them, they don't think that white people get it, or they think they're being held back because they are Latino. (And) I was one of the angriest" (Deggans, 2003, p. 46). This attitude and approach to the issue has helped Lopez become the successful comedian he is today because of the truthfulness found within the jokes he created.

Along with all the commercial success, Lopez has achieved several awards including "Cultural Artist of the Year" from the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations (Comedian wins Harvard award, 2004). In 2003 Lopez was also the recipient of two Imagen Awards, highly coveted awards for Hispanic/Latino entertainers who "celebrate positive portrayals of Hispanics and promotes the advancement of Hispanics within the entertainment industry" (N. A., & N., n.d.).

In order to carry out this analysis each of the selected routines was transcribed. These transcripts are taken from Lopez's complete library of performances that can be purchased in music or video stores across the country. The first script came from a CD titled *Alien Nation*. This show was recorded 1998 at The Ice House Comedy Club in Pasadena California. The next selection was titled *Right Now Right Now*, and was performed and recorded in 2001 at The Icehouse Comedy Club in Pasadena California.

The third performance was titled *Team Leader* and was recorded at The Icehouse Comedy Club and released in 2003. The fourth selection, a DVD titled *Why You Crying?* was filmed at The Terrace Theatre Long Beach Performing Arts Center in Long Beach, California in 2005. The next CD, titled *El Mas Chingon*, was recorded at The Icehouse Comedy Club in Pasadena California and released in 2006. Lopez's first ever HBO Comedy Special, titled *America's Mexican*, served as the sixth routine to be transcribed. This show was filmed in Phoenix, Arizona at The Dodge Theatre and released in 2007. All of the routines were written and performed by George Lopez and each of the CD's or DVD's selected for analysis was recorded in front of a live audience and unedited for content or language. I was able to attend a live performance of George Lopez's "America's Mexican" tour and found it to be very similar to the HBO recording. Many of the jokes were formulaic in structure and language but varied in delivery based on specific interactions with the audience.

### Carlos Mencia

Carlos Mencia is one of the most controversial comedians working today. Mencia has an entirely different approach to humor, both in delivery and style. While much of his material focuses on Hispanic/Latino stereotypes, he furthers it by making light of many cultures and issues both in the news and in society in general. After a show in Tucson, Arizona, Mencia was heavily criticized for joking about Mexican immigrants who refuse to honor the American way of life. "Let me tell you why white America is mad at you. You come to this country because it's better, then you wave a flag for the country you came from like it's better" (Burch, 2006). Mencia attributed this type of attitude toward immigration and racial issues in the United States to his own life as an

immigrant. Born October 22, 1967 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras to a Honduran father and a Mexican mother, Mencia was sent to the United States when he was a young boy to live with and be raised by his aunt and uncle in East Los Angeles. After graduating from high school in 1985, Mencia attended California State Los Angeles where he majored in electronic engineering, then after performing at an open-mic night for the first time he decided comedy was the career he would follow.

Marked by controversy, Mencia's comedy career spans over 10 years. He achieved a lot of success early on in his career by hosting a television series called "Loco Slam." Much of the material subject matter Mencia deals with in his routines is presented in the most brutally honest fashion. In response to critics who claim his brand of comedy is offensive, Mencia argued;

"If you want to blame anything, blame the ghetto for who I am. I am from a neighborhood where 2 percent of the people graduate high school and went to college. I've been shot and stabbed and I've seen people die in front of my face. I saw this guy get killed and I couldn't open my door because we would have gotten killed. So some guy says 'I can't believe you said that (in a joke).' I say: 'what a luxury.' We have a country that's so wealthy and easy, that people can be offended by a joke. I bet you people don't get offended by a joke in Iraq, that's the luxury we have in this country that people don't even realize" (Deggans, 2006, p. 31).

Not only has this attitude and controversy led to success on stage, in 2005 Comedy Central made a deal with Mencia to create a half hour sketch comedy show called *Mind of Mencia*; along with the show, Comedy Central agreed to sponsor a nationwide tour.

The brashness of Mencia's comedy style has become the focus of both his fans and his critics. Focusing on race, sexual orientation, politics, religion, and social class structures, Mencia goes out of his way to violate what are socially considered politically correct topic or commentary boundaries. Critics argue that Mencia uses these jokes for cheap laughs, however Mencia argues that he attacks all races and religions equally in effort to encourage his audiences to think about what is going on in the world around them. "In the year since he sold out two shows at the 1,400-seat Rialto Theatre Downtown, Mencia has honed his chops and become even sharper in his delivery and his observations, which at times elicited uncomfortable laughter from the racially and age-diverse audience. But it's what he says that gets your attention. Whether you agree with him or not, he got you thinking" (Burch, 2006). This no-barrier approach to comedy catapulted Mencia into the spotlight. During an interview, Mencia noted, "I do an interesting job of balancing a stereotype with how to use the stereotype. These guys want to be American. They work really hard. They're good at what they do. It has many layers. And it causes this weird thing where you want to get mad, but you're not sure. And that's what I like" (Deggans, 2006, p. 30).

The routines selected for this analysis encompass Mencia's available library. Each of the selected materials is pre-recorded and available for purchase in many music and video stores across the country. The first was released in 2001 and is titled *Take a Joke America*. This routine was performed at The Comedy Works in Denver, Colorado and transcribed from a CD. The second also comes from a CD and was released in 2002. This album was titled *America Rules* and was released in (2003). Mencia's CD release titled *Unmerciful* is the third routine transcribed and scanned for thematic categories.



This routine was performed and recorded in 2003 at a show in Kansas City. The fourth routine used was a DVD titled *Not for the Easily Offended*. This performance was released in 2003 and filmed at The Improve Comedy Club in San Jose, California. The next routine was released in 2004 and titled *Down to the Nitty Gritty*. His latest release, titled *No Strings Attached*, was the final routine transcribed for this study. Released in 2006, this routine was filmed in San Francisco, California. All of the routines were written and performed by Carlos Mencia. Each of the CD's or DVD's selected for analysis was recorded in front of a live audience and unedited for content or language.

### *Applying the Method*

To answer the questions of this study, the unit of analysis chosen must extract the meanings created by the comedy of George Lopez and Carlos Mencia. Because each artifact encompasses a variety of topics, only jokes based on ethnic stereotypes served as the unit of analysis for this study. Because of the complexity of humor and its use as a message, Burke's (1959) perspective by incongruity served as the key tools for analysis. Although each comedian employs his own style in delivery and message creation, the use of humor messages by each comedian cannot be understood without an examination of each selected unit, and analyzed with Burke as the lens. Using the work of Burke, an analysis of Lopez and Mencia's use of humor messages was created and an understanding of the humor messages role as a possible argument and tool for use in identity formation was revealed.

As part of their routines Lopez and Mencia have embedded symbols in their routines. These symbols according to Burke (1959) are "capable of infinite analysis" (p. 86). The comedians' use of humor as a rhetorical tool in the form of language as symbols

offered an analysis where the rhetor examined the artifact for claims and anti-claims. Because the messages are carried out through the use of humor, they are presented in a way that does not blatantly threaten the audience or their beliefs. By not making the audience feel attacked, the comedians are able to express specific rhetorical messages about the stereotypes in their humor while accomplishing their goal of entertaining the audience. By finding the humor in the messages about the stereotypes the audience acknowledges the existence of the stereotypes addressed and feels free to laugh at the incongruity of it because it is in the form of a joke. This enthymematic response is based on what the audience knows and/or believes prior to the telling of the joke. Burke (1959) would argue that the perspective by incongruity creates this relationship between the joke teller, the audience, the situation and offers the communicators the option to reject or accept the messages. By intentionally creating these messages the comedians' are planning for the incongruity of the jokes to result in laughter from the audience. The plan is that the jokes will draw out the enthymematic response, and the audience laughs, acknowledging knowledge of the joke's subject matter. By focusing their messages on stereotypical issues the enthymematic responses become the claim or anti-claim for what is discussed in the joke. This incongruity is based in the audience's ability to practically perceive the persuasive meaning in a humorous message.

The foundation of arguments and humor rests on ideas; these ideas serve as a structural compass for the communicator using them. "People use humor to try and understand things that do not appear to make sense. We like to think of our world as an orderly place where things happen for good reasons. When our sense of this order is disturbed or purposely violated, we are troubled but we can also laugh" (Rybacki &

Rybacki, 1991, p. 323). By creating messages using humor, the communicator acknowledges certain flaws in reasoning; “[t]he essence of humor arises from some contradictions in reasoning” (Shultz & Germeroth, 1998, p. 235). Understanding how a message is developed and where an incongruent humorous argument is formed enables the researcher to better understand the rhetorical structure of humor messages as arguments. Berger (1993) referred to this process in his discussion about cartoon humor; he argued that cartoons develop meanings to make people laugh, and by doing so influence the audience’s perceptions of what they are laughing at. The process of understanding these messages and the ways they occur in comedians’ humor is difficult because of the many perceptions that exist with each audience of each comedian. “Decoding humor in this way helps us understand and cope with life’s incongruities cognitively, enabling us to appreciate these violations of our sense of order and thereby strengthening it” (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 323). Developing a cognitive understanding of the humor as it is used allows the audience member to more fully understand the humor’s application to stereotypes. “Works of humor are often incredibly complex” (Berger, 1993, p. 15). Because of its complexity, creating an analysis of humor using the text benefits us by furthering research about using humor messages.

Analysis for this research focused on the comedy routines of George Lopez and Carlos Mencia. “The stand-up comedian frequently intends to make the audience better informed about social problems and more receptive to changes as a result of insights experienced through the act of decoding humor” (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 327). Lopez and Mencia create their jokes for an unspecific target audience. Their commercial

success depends on this universal audience because of the various touring locations and diverse audiences. Because many of the stereotypes addressed are so pervasive in the way Hispanic/Latinos are identified, Lopez and Mencia expect their Hispanic/Latino audience members will get the jokes because of their own personal experiences. The jokes are aimed at Latinos who have a working knowledge of the stereotypes but they are also aimed at non-Latino eavesdroppers. These non-Latino targets are equally important because they are the ones who either employ such stereotypes or believe such stereotypes because they lack personal experiences. Either way they are an important part of the target audience because the arguments being made by in the jokes are designed to address these stereotypes.

The analysis delved into 12 pre-recorded comedy routines from 1996 to 2007. All text provided for this analysis was transcribed from the performances of each comedian during a recorded or filmed performance. These performances vary from HBO Specials to material from early career performances. Once each of the performances was transcribed, units of analysis were selected based on the jokes using ethnic stereotypes and placing them in categories based on the stereotype it deals with. Each routine provided a lengthy transcription. Because of this it was important to break down the routines specifically by what the research questions sought to answer. The track/chapters found in each recording needed to be broken into smaller more specific jokes/stories. From this detailed breakdown jokes were organized based on their relation to the research questions. From these transcripts, 48 total humorous stories fit the research parameter of dealing with a racial or ethnic stereotype. Importantly, each of the jokes/stories used deals with a stereotype, but RQ1 specifically sought stories that primarily identified a

stereotype. Other stories took stereotypes further, but 20 joke/stories were employed to carry out a basic identification or acknowledgement task. RQ2 sought to identify jokes/stories that affirm and/or dispel Hispanic/Latino stereotypes and the analysis found 15 jokes/stories did this. Finally, RQ3 sought to uncover what jokes/stories worked to (re)construct Hispanic/Latino stereotypes and 13 jokes primarily served this function. Table 1 provides a complete list of the jokes used. For clarity each comedic “bit” was given a title which was not created by the comedians but only used for reference in this study. A complete transcribed list of jokes used can be found in the Appendix.

***Table 1***

Jokes by Comedian	
George Lopez	
RQ1: Jokes that identify ethnic stereotypes	6
1. No Blacks Allowed	
2. Other Illegal Aliens	
3. Drop In A Bucket	
4. Gangbangers and Drywallers	
5. He’s Been Crying, Hurry!	
6. The Work Force	
RQ2: Jokes that affirm or dispel stereotypes	7
7. Find Every Mexican Available	
8. Onions and E.Coli	
9. The Double Standard	
10. Aint Going Nowheres	
11. You Don’t Sound Mexican	
12. Credit Card Holders Only	
13. The First Alien	

RQ3: Jokes that (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity 4

14. Backs to the Camera
15. Shoes and Belts
16. They're Gonna Understand
17. That Image is Tired

### Carlos Mencia

RQ1: Jokes that identify ethnic stereotypes 14

1. Gotta Break an Egg
2. Can't Hold in Laughter
3. The Scary Neighborhood
4. A Real Tattoo
5. Arroz y Frijoles on the Side
6. The Dashiki
7. You Can't Take the Ghetto Out
8. Misunderstood Asians
9. Smart Asians
10. The Green Beaner
11. You're All Mexicans
12. Mexicans Do It To
13. Who Builds the Fence?
14. The Crab Effect

RQ2: Jokes that affirm or dispel stereotypes 8

15. No Looking For Me
16. A Chopping Cart and Oranges
17. Across the Board
18. You're Bi-Lingual
19. Getting Athletes
20. What We Don't Do
21. It's Simply Ignorance
22. 40 Million Dollars a Year

RQ3: Jokes that (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity	9
23. Call Me A Beaner	
24. A Group Called ‘Other’	
25. Keeping It Real	
26. The Pointy Boots	
27. But I’m From Here	
28. Pochos	
29. Watch It On CNN	
30. Give Me An M16	
31. All Groups	

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Once the text was analyzed for recurring themes enacted by each of the comedians, each of the three categories delineated above was analyzed for its uses of messages, enthymematic conclusions and its implications for Hispanic/Latino identity and what they *say* about Hispanic/Latino identity.

“The communicator develops arguments in an attempt to persuade the audience to share her or his reasoning” (Shultz & Germeroth, 1998, p. 235). In order to develop a better understanding of Lopez and Mencia’s rhetorical motives, one must understand the structure of the humor messages that are being used. Study of these messages was limited to references to stereotypical images of ethnic groups, with emphasis on Hispanic/Latinos. So the stories or “bits” were isolated and only ones focusing on ethnic stereotypes were analyzed. This allowed exploration of how, through the messages created in their humor, Lopez and Mencia are able to challenge the cultural beliefs held by the audience.

### Summary

I believe that Lopez and Mencia's use of humor messages provides rhetorical analysis with a high level of significance. The environments and situations in which these messages are communicated provide the joke tellers an uninhibited venue for sharing even the most offensive jokes without social outcry. The lack of concern over what is normally thought to be offensive or politically incorrect creates an environment rich in rhetorical messages because there is little or no backlash for approaching these topics in such a way. Unlike most societal situations, comedians are free to discuss and make light of even the most sensitive or offensive subjects. Although the styles of these two comedians are very different, the methods they use work toward creating similar messages about many of the same stereotypes. Such commonality offers a point of comparison and suggests the intentional presence of these messages in these comedic routines.

This study sought to answer three research questions: What stereotypes of groups exist in the transcripts of the comedians' routines? How do messages with stereotypes support or dispel the stereotypical images of the Hispanic/Latino identity? How does the use of humor in their messages (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity? Transcripts were taken from each of the pre-recorded shows delivered to a live audience by the comedians. Once those transcripts were created, I carefully extracted the humor messages dealing with ethnic stereotypes. The keys to the rhetoric found in the humor messages are the claims and the anti-claims. If the jokes are funny, that is how audiences will recognize how outrageous their common images are of the Hispanic/Latino population's identity. The audience signals an understanding of the humor messages by laughing or similarly



reacting to the messages. This enthymematic response is the audience's conclusion. By laughing at the joke; audience members recognize the incongruity of the jokes' reference to the stereotypes. It is through these messages that audiences will recognize that an argument has or has not been made.

Chapter IV of this study applies this method of analysis. I chose this pair of comedians not only because of the rhetoric they use in their routines, but also because of their high levels of success. Lopez and Mencia each have successful network television shows that grant them access to millions of audience members each week. Along with these shows, each one has performed their routines on successful tours around the United States and obtained a highly coveted HBO Comedy Special. By using this pair of comedians, I sought to demonstrate the rhetorical nature of humor use by comedians and the power the messages created are intended to have upon audience members.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS

Chapter III considered Burke's perspective by incongruity as a rhetorical tool for examining the use of humor messages created by comedians George Lopez and Carlos Mencia in their standup routines. Using the Burkean perspective by incongruity to analyze Lopez and Mencia's humor messages allowed for a deeper understanding of the messages' rhetorical content. "Perspective by incongruity involves altering an orientation or expectation by viewing an incongruity, which is inconsistent or not in agreement" (Bostdorff, 1987, p. 64). This study analyzed the comprehensive library of each comedian released during the years 1996 through 2007. The jokes found in these two comedians' shows are based on facts and opinions. "Facts are often maneuvered to make a case for an opinion by the comedian, who uses language to actively engage himself (and involve the audience) as members of social categories, groups, professions, organizations, communities, etc., as other language users do" (Tsang & Wong, 2004, p. 772). This purposeful use of humor is designed to engage the audience in thought while eliciting laughter. The national success gained by both Lopez and Mencia in reaching their own cable televisions shows, along with a variety of CD/DVD releases, signifies their powerful presence in popular culture making them a worthy artifact for this study.

This chapter presents the information found in the selected jokes created and seeks to uncover what messages exist within those jokes. Lopez and Mencia use their language and personal experiences as Hispanic/Latinos to relay specific messages to their audiences. In order to analyze selected purposive messages effectively, the jokes selected for the study dealt with specific ethnic stereotypes. It was important to limit the artifact

to these ethnic stereotypes because of the wide variety of topics dealt with by the comedians. This limited look at ethnicity also allows for a more focused artifact when looking at the Hispanic/Latino identity issues. To further that specificity, the jokes selected were then broken into three separate thematic groups based on the research questions. Group one dealt with jokes that identify the specific ethnic stereotypes within the transcripts. Group two were jokes that support or dispel stereotypical images of the Hispanic/Latino population, and group three were jokes that worked to (re)construct a Hispanic/Latino identity. By doing so, this analysis answered three research questions:

1. What stereotypes of groups exist in the transcripts of the comedians' routines?
2. How do those messages with stereotypes support or dispel the stereotypical images of the Hispanic/Latino identity?
3. How does the use of humor in their messages (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity?

Chapter IV presents the analysis of the selected jokes from Lopez and Mencia to answer these questions.

#### Joking About Stereotypes Using Stories

In talking about their families and other life experiences, Lopez and Mencia employ narratives. For each of these comedians, the show is more of a series of stories and in these stories are interwoven punch lines and arguments. Application of the perspective by incongruity relied on the use of narrative storytelling by the jokers because the audience must be able to cognitively discern a link between what is being said in the story and what is meant through the story. Lopez and Mencia created specific rhetorical messages and shared them with their audiences. Those rhetorical messages are

designed to argue for or against specific issues and are created through narratives that can be perceived through the narrative paradigm.

Scholars of arguments would argue that an argument is based on sound rhetorical logic and reasoning. Fisher (1987) noted that;

The perspective or narrative rationality does not exclude the long tradition of rhetorical logic; it is a rhetorical logic itself. Other rhetorical logics, however, have dwelt on argument, argumentative genres, and specific standards of argumentative assessment. The perspective of narrative rationality focuses on all forms of human communication as carriers of good reasons and on a system of evaluation that incorporates the available standards of argumentative assessment but offers additional considerations (p. 17).

The narrative paradigm places the ability to create arguments in stories by not allowing only “logical” communicative acts to be more argumentative than others. Fisher contested that all human communication obtains the ability to argue as long as “good reasons” are present. “No matter how rigorously a case is argued --- scientifically, philosophically, or legally --- it will always be a story, and interpretation of some aspect of the work which is historically and culturally grounded and shaped by human personality” (Fisher, 1987, p. 17). Lopez and Mencia use this type of logical story telling to dispel and affirm stereotypes of the Hispanic/Latino population. Through these stories of personal accounts, the comedians also present incongruities to their audiences that allow the audiences to understand purposeful messages. In doing so, they are creating these incongruent messages specifically for their audiences and allowing the audience to enthymematically conclude meaning from the message based on their own frames of

reference. This dramatic use of incongruity reaches a bigger audience because by nature humans are storytellers.

Because Lopez and Mencia offer their narratives to audiences in a time-controlled setting, they employ what Hart and Daughton (2005) refer to as “native features” of a narrative:

1. Narrative occurs in a natural timeline. A story must be completed with a beginning, middle and ending.
2. Narrative includes characterization. The narrative is a story of what people do and how. To gain interest or perspective that narrator will offer character insight vocally by identifying the characters.
3. Narrative presents detail. By adding things like accents, character descriptions, scene descriptions the narrator attempts to captivate the audiences’ imagination.
4. Narrative is primitive. At its root, the use of stories to pass knowledge precedes all written text. Often stories are used to pose lessons to children and pass on family and cultural traditions.
5. Narrative doesn’t argue obviously. To make an outright argument is to remove the power of interpretation and understanding from the audience. Rather a narrative allows the audience to devise their own meaning and encourages the audience member to react. (pp. 88-89)

In order to better understand this use of narratives as an argument-forming tool, we need to break down the essential elements of a story. According to Stoner and Perkins (2005), “all stories must be told. At a minimum we can distinguish the narrator,

the characters, the plot, and the setting” (p. 187). The narrator is the “how” of a story. How does this story present itself? The narrator will embody the characters. “The characters are the people or things that function like people” (Stoner & Perkins, 2005, p. 187). Through the characters an audience member is able to gain details and other pertinent information from the narrator. These details include the plot of the story. A good story will have reason, revealed by the narrator through the plot in order to give the audience a sense of meaning and create interest. Finally, each of these elements takes place in the setting. The setting groups all the details of the actual story to develop “themes of the story that help us interpret characters’ actions” (Stoner & Perkins, 2005, p. 187). Lopez and Mencia each embody these elements in their use of stories. In doing so they created a cognitive dialogue with the audience that allows the formation of specific messages with specific arguments and presenting them to the audience in such a way that an audience member might be able to discern them. “The comments made in the show are both factual and opinionated. Facts in this show are often maneuvered to make a case for an opinion by the comedian, who uses language to actively engage himself (involve the audience) as members of social categories, groups, professions, organizations, communities, etc” (Tsang & Wong, 2004, p. 771). This intentional creation of messages made Lopez and Mencia more than mere comedians; it makes them social critics with messages designed to influence the audiences’ thoughts and beliefs on socially relevant issues.

To grasp the use of humor for persuasive messages by Lopez and Mencia all 12 (6 each) recorded and filmed shows available were transcribed and analyzed by tracks (CDs) or chapters (DVDs) in order to uncover the rhetoric within the jokes. Because of

the length of each show and the variety of material each comedian covered, it was important to focus on jokes that dealt specifically with ethnic stereotypes to answer the research questions. During this process I found that many of the tracks/chapters dealt with two or sometimes all three research questions. To remedy this, each track/chapter was broken into smaller more specific jokes or stories. From those 12 shows, 48 jokes/stories emerged for analysis. Those jokes/stories were then categorized based on the research question they most worked to answer. Although all 48 dealt with ethnic stereotypes, only 20 jokes/stories were focused on to answer RQ1 because their primary goal was to identify the stereotypes that exist. RQ2 looked at jokes/stories that affirm and/or dispel Hispanic/Latino stereotypes; 15 jokes/stories fell into this category. The final RQ sought to identify jokes/stories that re(construct) a positive identity for Hispanic/Latinos; the analysis uncovered 13 jokes/stories that primarily did this. This was the breakdown of the 48 jokes/stories used as artifacts analyzed for this study.

***Table 2***

Jokes by Groups	
1. Identify ethnic stereotypes	20
2. Support/dispel the stereotypical images of Hispanic/Latino identity	15
3. (Re)Construct Hispanic/Latino identity	13

Only the parts of the stories relevant to the analysis will be quoted in the text below and a complete transcribed list of jokes can be found in the Appendix.

*RQ1: What Stereotypes of Groups Exist in the Transcripts*

In order to uncover how Lopez and Mencia created messages to influence their audiences and answer the posed research questions, one must look at how Lopez and Mencia use humor to discuss stereotypes in general. To do so, the 20 joke/stories were analyzed and broken into 5 specific categories: jokes about white stereotypes (4), jokes about black stereotypes (4), jokes looking at Asian stereotypes (3), and finally a look at how Lopez and Mencia approach the Hispanic/Latino stereotypes (9). These jokes were used to identify the specific ethnic stereotypes used in their shows.

RQ1 dealt specifically with identifying the ethnic stereotypes in the routines. Using these 20 ethnic jokes/stories to identify the ethnic stereotypes is important to the other two research questions because it specifically introduces the Hispanic/Latino stereotypes that are vital to RQs 2 and 3. To understand what stereotypes support/dispel Hispanic/Latinos or what jokes (re)construct the Hispanic/Latino identity one must first uncover what stereotypes are present. This series of jokes/stories sought primarily to invoke stereotypes perpetuated in society; the analysis examined what ethnic stereotypes existed within the transcripts. These incongruent messages are designed specifically for audiences to understand the messages created. Once the jokes that laid out the stereotypes were analyzed for RQ1, the remaining joke/stories that emerged through analysis were used to answer RQs 2 and 3.

Joking with the White Man

Looking at how these two comedians approached the white ethnic culture, Mencia offers the audience his brief take on the history of the United States and what could be a basis for ethnic relations in the U.S.



### Gotta Break An Egg

Look at where we are right now, scared. (White Voice, WV) “Why did he say that? Why did he do that?” White people telling jokes behind our backs cause you are afraid that I am not going to get it. No, you tell it to my face. I don’t like this new age white man. That’s because you don’t have the balls to say what you feel you want me not to say what I feel. I don’t like it; I like the old white man. He had a plan, he had something in mind. He had this in mind. He knew, but he understood, he used to say things like “you gotta break an egg to make an omelet.” Yeah! Today it’s like “you gotta break an egg to make an omelet, unless you use egg beaters.” I like the old white man. He landed on Plymouth Rock and there were already people here. A pilgrim went up to the Captain and said (English Accent, EA) “Me Lord, there are people already here, we cannot create a society upon which one already exist. We must return back home to England.” And he said (hit hand with microphone) “Shut up we’ll kill them, take their shit and call it Thanksgiving.” That’s what you did people. White people you killed all the Indians and then when they died you went “Oh my God, there goes the help. What are we going to do now?” The white man never flinched, he said, “Build some boats and go get some niggers.” See look at you people (WV) “no, that’s not what happen, that’s not what happen. We invited black people on a cruise and it didn’t work out, yeah that’s what happen.” Meanwhile black people on the boat are going (Black Voice, BV) “How you gonna make a brotha row his own cruise? Dis is wrong man!” You know why I like the old white man? Cause he wasn’t racist. He was racial. White people

have killed white people in this country. Once when we fought against England, and twice when we fought against ourselves. That's how I loved that white man, he was awesome, he knew when we gotta change things. North went to the south and said (WV) "Hey man, all men are created equal. It's a fundamental building block of what this country is all about. Just because he is black does not mean he is not a man. You must let him free, you must allow that man to be free."

(Redneck Voice, RV) "What bitch, you wanna take that from me? Hell no, you want my nigger to go free, your gonna have to shoot me." Not now, now I do joke about Native Americans and people go (WA) "don't do jokes about those people Carlos." Cause everybody pretends they care about Indians, everybody does. (WV) "We care Carlos." Nobody does, there is not a person in this room, or watching the show at home that is buying a house because you want to give it to an Indian because you feel sorry for them cause you took their land. None of you! But you'll pretend "I don't want to laugh at that joke because the Indians." I don't care! I am sure there are some Indians in here right now. Don't come up to me later crying talking about "they took our land!" Yeah, well you should have fought smarter. You gotta know when to hold them and know when to fold them baby. You know who fought a smart war? Mexico fought a smart war. The Mexican/American war is that long. Why? Cause Indians, they just fought for to long. White people went (WV) "hey bitch, (machine gun sound) prrrrrr. Indians were like "We can take em, (slowly motions pulling and shooting arrows). Mexican thought they could kick white ass too, talking smack. (Spanish Accent, SA) "Listen Senior White Man ju will go down. Ju will go down at the fron of

my bullets. Ju will know what it is to be killed by a Mexican.” And then white people went (WV) “What you little brown bitch, prrrrr.” (SA) “Okay, wait, time out, time out, time out, no, no ellos tienen el prrrr, and we we're like pow pow pow, NO. Okay white man its over, ju can keep it, we're leaving, ju can keep it, keep it, keep it.” And then a little Mexican kid said (SA) “Pappy where are we going?” And he said (SA) “Shhh, we're coming back, shh. They are going to build a Home Depot and we'll be back, and the one in Burbank is going to have an office!!” And that's what they did, they left the country. And they went and stood by the border. And one of them said (SA) “okay, we are going to have to stay here until I see the sign, when I see the sign then I go like this (waves hand in circle above head) and everybody goes.” See some of you are laughing and going, “whatever dude, there's no sign.” But yeah there was, and the white man knew there would be a sign, and he was prepared for it. It was in the mid 60's. Check, the Mexican migration into the United States began largely in the mid 60's, what happen in the mid 60's? I'll tell you what happen. The black people looked at the white man and said (BV) “Listen man I am tired of you treaten me the way you do man. You make a brotha run fast and bring back gold metals for this country. Then you treat me like a second-class citizen. Well it aint happenin no more and the advantage is over. We aint going to the back of the bus, we aint drinking out of no other fountain, you understand me? I will be going to school with your daughter. And my black people will never ever go out into those fields and pick for your white ass no mo.” And the white man never even flinched.

“You don’t have to. Julio!” (SA) “Que paso mi jefe! THE SIGN (with hand circling over head).” (Zieglor & Steinberg, 2006).

The synoptic style of this joke about the history of the United States makes this joke/story very effective in describing the events that occurred over a long period of time. In the beginning of the joke he argued that race relations in the U.S. have become so guarded by political correctness, that people (mainly white people) are afraid to say or do anything when it comes to open and honest relationships with minority races. This idea is made clear by the name “new age white man” which he used to describe a white person today who is afraid of offending or existing with today’s minority races openly and honestly. He then offers a staunch contrast to the new age white man with a long discussion about the “old white man.” The old white man was openly aggressive to Indians and involved in horrible atrocities that took place during the foundation of the United States. The old white man was openly racist towards blacks to the point that the United States went to war against itself because of those strong beliefs. In that discussion he made a key notation that “white people have killed white people in this country.” From here he moved on to describe the Mexican American War and the surrendering of land that took place at its end. The old white man “never flinched” at the loss of free slave labor and instead employed illegal immigrants at a much lower wage rather than paying American citizens at a much higher wage. The obvious claim he made with this joke is that because black people stopped being slaves, Hispanic/Latino immigrants migrated to the U.S. in large numbers. The less obvious anti-claim is that a common theme of American history points towards profit above all, including the law and human safety. This incongruent message points audiences towards a truth that still exists today, that many American

owned businesses employ Hispanic/Latino immigrants because they are cheap labor. This unethical practice is illegal, but profitable.

The joke as a story has all the essential elements. Mencia serves as the narrator. At times he employs the use of several different voices to discern the various characters in the story and clear progression of the plot and setting with the time period and use of examples. Because the joke is laced with so much dialogue and so many different characters, Mencia was able to create the messages he desired, which in this case is not that he wished white people to return “literally” to the days of open racism towards minorities, but that white people in general have become so obsessed with the idea of political correctness that relationships with minorities often exist at only the surface level. The story is also effective because it creates an incongruity with the audience. Alone, perspective by incongruity is not enough; it requires an understanding and cooperative attitude among audience members. (Bostdorff, 1987). As a minority himself, one would not assume he would be so candid or open when discussing these types of events from U.S. history. The fact that he is not only candid in the discussion but actually mentions “I like the old white man” is meant to create an enthymematic response with the audience-- one that not only grabs the attention at that moment but maintains that attention through the rest of the story.

These enthymematic responses from the audience can be understood by the reader when Mencia opens dialogue with the audience, “see look at you white people, (WV) ‘no that’s not what happen, that’s not what happen.’” Those audience members who were disagreeing with the story did so because of an enthymematic response to the message. In his argument Mencia is claimed to support the racist old white man, however, Mencia

purposefully created this incongruent situation where he, a minority member, is praising the old white man, meanwhile the audience's laughter suggests disagreement and signals the message has been received and the argument has been communicated via the anti-claim. The anti-claim is not that he supports open racism but that he supports an environment where minorities can exist unguarded by a need for political correctness, rather one that is conducive to open and honest relationships between minority people and white people.

The next couple of jokes take this idea of a dishonest relationship a bit further. First, Mencia offers his take on how this strong attachment to political correctness may be affecting white people.

#### Can't Hold in Laughter

We gotta start fucking letting it go, let it go white people cause you know what, you can't hold in laughter. When something is funny, it's funny! And you hold it in white people, it's like a fart inside your body, it wants to get out, if you don't let it out, some negative shit is gonna happen! White people, do you think it's a coincidence that white people do all the crazy sports in America? Do you think it's a coincidence white people? Why do you think you fuckers go skiing all the time? Cause you couldn't laugh at the black or beaner joke, you have to go out on the moguls to let it out (Mencia, 2003c).

With this joke Mencia makes reference again to the lack of honesty in white and minority relationships. By claiming that "white people do all the crazy sports in America" is a direct result of their lack of honesty with minorities, Mencia is joking but he is building on his argument. Audiences' ethymematically reach an understanding with this

incongruent message based on personal experiences. Media coverage of the X-Games are represented by white participants thus Mencia makes the claim that by maintaining an inability to be open and honest in multi-racial relationships, white people are forced to release those tensions through other means. Through much of his shows he takes note of this by saying things like, “look at all the white people looking around to see if they can laugh at the black joke.” To correlate that need to laugh with the idea that whites do all the crazy sports is to say that there is so much built up racial tension inside it takes an extreme sport to relieve that pressure. This connection that Mencia made allows him to connect the audience more closely to the joke. In the second joke of this discussion he took it a step further adding not just a refusal to laugh, but an outright fear of minorities and minority ghetto neighborhoods.

#### The Scary Neighborhood

And I hate to get racial this early in the show. But we all know what race is doing the crazy shit. Do I need to point to the white people? You crazy fucking white people. You will play with any fucking animal out there. You will actually go in the water and spread blood so the fucking sharks get closer. Most people go “shark get the fuck out of the water.” White people go, (WV) “here they come let’s get in!” You white people astonish me. I turn on the discovery channel. You will go to any goddamn place on the earth to fuck with crazy animals. You will go to the fucking Congo, you will go to goddamn Peru, and you will go to fucking Brazil and the Amazon. You will go anywhere to find a fucking animal and play with it. But won’t go to Oakland cause a nigger might shoot you (Mencia, 2003b).

Here he not only claimed that there is no need for political correctness but that there is an acute fear of a minority group, and that this fear is so great that the chance of swimming with sharks, and traveling the world to learn about deadly wild animals is safer than the ghetto neighborhood, in this case Oakland, California, a well-known mostly black ghetto known for having a large gang population. From this claim we are led to the incongruent anti-claim of this argument. If the claim is that white people do so many crazy things because of built-up racial tensions, the anti-claim made here is that the simpler solution would be to laugh at funny jokes regardless of their racial content and to work toward a more honest and open relationship between whites and minorities.

Although much shorter than the initial joke, these two shorter jokes still maintain the essential elements of a narrative story. In both instances Mencia played the narrator and the main characters. Voices are used to create more detail and the plots and setting progress within the timing of the story. Through both of these jokes Mencia sought to argue not only the absurdity of not laughing at jokes that deal with minorities, but also the absurdity of white people being so ready and willing to travel all over, but afraid to enter a ghetto neighborhood.

In the last joke dealing with a white ethnic stereotype, Mencia branches away from the idea of political correctness and race relations and moves into a much more personal subject matter like tattoos and the phenomena of white people having tattoos of tribal symbols.

#### A Real Tattoo

Look, if you are going to get a tattoo, get something good, something that says, you! Something real, don't be white and have a tribal tattoo! What is that?



(White Voice, WV) “Dude this is from the Navajo Tribe.” Really and what tribe are you from Chad? What fucking tribe are you from? If you are white, you don’t put tribal tattoos on all right! You put a tattoo of you killing Indians, that’s a real fucking tattoo! A little tattoo of you going like that (poses, then hits microphone) that’s a real fucking tattoo! And then next to that another tattoo of you taking their fucking money now that you’re trying to tax them! Yeah, your just bending an Indian over and he’s all “Hey ya ya ya, hey yaa!” (WV) “That’s right bitch, I am taking your land and your money mother fucker!” Look at some of the white people, (WV) “man, he fucked us up quick!” Well, don’t have a goddamn stupid ass tattoo! That would be like a Mexican having a tattoo of a KKK (Mencia, 2004).

This joke is placed in a different context than the previous jokes. Here we have Mencia in an almost dialogue with the audience. He immediately moves into the incongruity of this joke in that white people having tribal tattoos is like “a Mexican having a tattoo of a KKK.” This statement is incongruous because the KKK has a history of bad relations toward minority cultures and relates because the Indians and white people also have a history of bad relations. He furthers that incongruity with “(WV) “Dude this is from the Navajo Tribe.” Really and what tribe are you from Chad?” By pointing this out and using a common stereotypical white name he argued that as a white person there is not a tribal connection. By using such incongruities in this joke Mencia has purposefully made the argument that because the history of white people and Indian people is so violent, the idea of a white person with a ‘tribal’ tattoo is an insult to the Indian people. Better yet he pointed out that to be accurate the tattoo should be of a white person killing an Indian.

This story still functions as an argument and makes his claim through personifying an audience member's voice with (WV) "Man he fucked us up quick!" Such a comment presents the incongruity of the joke. A white person with a tattoo of a tribal symbol is incongruous because a 'tribal' symbol represents the history and culture of the Indian people. The use of symbols to the Indian people is at the heart of Indian culture, symbols were sacred and meaningful. To have white person donning that symbol as a fashion statement presents incongruity because the white people attempted to eradicate the Indian people. Because the claim is coming through in a personified voice of an audience member, the anti-claim is revealed in that same statement. The actual claim is that (WV) "man he fucked us up quick" and is followed by "that would be like a Mexican having a tattoo of a KKK" which leads to the anti-claim or the incongruent core of this argument which is the idea that such a tattoo on a white person is disrespectful to the people who hold such symbols in high regard.

Though each of these jokes dealing with a white stereotype appears to be offensive in nature, there is an underlying theme in each of them. Whether he talked about the 'old white man' or tribal tattoos; Mencia called for a more open and honest relationship between whites and minorities--not one open to racial discrimination or hatred, but one that is free of unnecessary racial tensions imposed by societies need to be politically correct. Although it may seem he is calling for political correctness with the argument against white people donning tribal tattoos, the real call there is for honesty and respect for the symbolic nature of what a 'tribal' symbols stands for, not political correctness.

*Joking with the Black Man*

This section explores jokes that deal with specific stereotypes about the black man. This first joke by Mencia goes into an account of what labels are given to minority groups and more specifically how those labels are often inaccurate.

Arroz y Frijoles on the Side

I'm not going to call a black man an African American. What kind of bullshit is that? That's so disrespectful. First of all, you're the only non-immigrant in this fucking country. Yeah, what do you have for dinner at thanksgiving bro? Straight out American food. Macaroni and cheese, Kool-Aid, ham hocks, black-eyed peas with ham...straight up. Grandma doesn't come out of the kitchen saying, (BV) "Baby, I made you some jumdum-bobolee (some indecipherable African sounding dish)." What do you have for thanksgiving dinner? And then you have fucking arroz y frijoles on the side motherfucker don't you? Don't you have rice and beans on the side to let you know you live here now, but you're a beaner motherfucker. You're goddamn right you do. And white people, it's the same fucker. You go to white homes and there's some purple cabbage shit on the side you've never seen before. What the fuck is that? (RV) "Oh that's my great-great grandma's. She brought that shit over from over there." Black people don't have that shit bro. All the rest of us chose to be here. Except for you brother man, we all know the boat story. Look at you; some of you don't want to laugh...what the fuck? Bro, I feel sorry for you in a way but in another way you fucking fell for that boat shit a little too easy. What the fuck, someone said Carnival Cruises and y'all didn't even ask where's this shit going? (BV) "Come

on, Carnival Cruises, Rufus let's go!" Like in two weeks later... (BV) "Come on this fucking cruise sucks man! How you going to make a motherfucker row in his own goddamn cruise?" You're an American brother man, more so than anybody here. "No we don't get it...what do you mean?" You don't know jack shit about Africa bro. That's the reality of it. I speak Spanish. I go to Mexico and they go "oye cabron como estas?" and I answer them "pues yo estoy bien y tu?" If I bought your ass a ticket to Rwanda and the plane landed and the door opened up they saw your black ass, got happy, and went "jumdum-bobolee." What are you going to do get a flashback? (BV) "I'm home! Jum-dum-bum(goes on in indecipherable African type language)." No...you are going to be like (BV) "Jumdum-bobolee Denver mother fucker! America in da house." (Mencia, 2000).

Unlike the first jokes this story is much more forthcoming with its purpose. The teller immediately opens the joke with the claim, "I'm not going to call a black man an African American." He goes further in the next couple of sentences to argue that doing so is disrespectful. As Americans we are so ingrained with the name 'African-American' that we don't stop to think that the name itself implies a connection to Africa, a connection that the many black people do not have. This is a problem on a multiple levels.

First, not all black people are from Africa, there are black people that come from various other countries such as Haiti, the Bahamas, or Jamaica that are grouped into the African-American umbrella and while partaking in such grouping makes economic and political sense, the name itself, 'African-American' does not. The second problem with this label reveals itself in the lines, "you are the only non-immigrant in this fucking country," followed later by, "You're an American brother man, more so then anybody

here. You don't know jack shit about Africa bro. That's the reality of it." This incongruent dialogue is noting that other immigrants often have family and friends in their home country. Black people in America typically do not have such relationships. He takes note that black people in this country share very little in common with black people in Africa. The continent of association, which is Africa, is truly a foreign land with people far different than the black American.

This particular joke does not seek to deny the roots of where black people originated; it makes that claim that black people being called African-Americans is disrespectful because they are not immigrants because they did not "choose" to be here, the incongruent anti-claim. They were sold and shipped here and have since established their family systems as Americans with no ties to Africa. He used the Thanksgiving Day meal to exemplify the ideas with black people eating what we consider to be purely American food; meanwhile people who are descendants of actual immigrants still maintain their ancestral roots with traditional dishes. All of this takes place in a story with all the elements, a narrator, characters, plots and settings used to complete the narration.

The next joke dealing with black stereotypes takes this idea of African heritage and uses it to make a point about the obvious.

#### The Dashiki

You gotta call people on their shit. I saw a black man wearing a dashiki the other day. For those of you who don't know, a dashiki is you know that African wear, you know the one where you go, "oh that African shit." That's a dashiki. So I said, "yo man why you wearing that dog?" (Black Voice, BV) "Because when

people see me in this shit, I want people to know where the fuck I really come from!” You’re black, DUH!! I doesn’t matter what you fucking wear stupid! (Mencia, 2004).

This particular joke is not meant to contradict the previous joke, rather it is the joke teller seeking to point out the incongruity of the response given to the question, “Because when people see me in this shit, I want people to know where the fuck I really come from!” Based on the stereotypical perception that black people are all from Africa and as such should be labeled African Americans (the claim), such a costume would not be necessary (the anti-claim).

#### You Can’t Take the Ghetto Out

And I am glad that we got a fucking black guy in charge right now of the Army, fucking Colin Powell. See everybody sees Colin’s light skin, and they listen to him speak articulately. But you can’t get rid of the fucking ghetto in a man. That motherfucker knew what it was like to be slaved, to be put down, to be fucked. Nobody could be more America than him. See you white people, you don’t understand cause you have been free for a long time. You don’t have the perspective that the brother and I do....We got Colin Powell in charge and that’s fucking great cause I know that mother turns ghetto as soon the cameras go off. I know that he finishes his speeches and says, “Last question, yes? Ah, no that is information we cannot pass on, we will divulge that as soon as we can if it is not conflicting with National Security, but as far as I know I could not even answer that question. Thank you very much, we’ll talk to you next time.” You know that

they close the doors and he goes in there where are the generals of all the fucking military and he goes (BV) “Listen up mothafuckas!” (Mencia, 2003a).

With this particular joke about the black stereotypes, we see an association being made to create a message. The story takes us through a description of Colin Powell making reference to his light skin and ability to speak well. This description serves as a picture for the audience. It does not in any way insinuate that he has achieved this position because he is a light skinned black man. Rather the description allows the storyteller to paint the setting and give the needed details to the story. As the story progresses we are brought into a press conference where we get to see and hear the character in action. The teller personifies the voice and stance along with using his microphone to create the reality of the press conference. Then the answering of the question is a clear, crisp tone. The teller has painted his picture. The audience can see an image of a light skinned black man doing a press conference and hear him answering a question. He is the image we see on the television, tall, confident and well spoken. Next the storyteller takes us behind the scene where immediately that image is shattered with the utterance (BV) “Listen up mothafuckas!” It is at that point the incongruity of this image is presented. Prior to that the story teller painted us a picture of a confident, well spoken, light skinned black man who has worked his way through the military ranks to a prestigious position of power and control, but with a simple utterance that image is broken and the audience is immediately forced to see a new image of the same man. Only this image is more stereotypical like the images we see on the news, movies, and television shows. This new image of the same prestigious military leader is that of a slang-talking ghetto kid from the streets—and that is why it is incongruent to the audience. The audience was given perspective, they

were shown an image through dialogue and detail, then had that image ripped away with a simple utterance. The incongruity is that such a high-ranking official is not expected to sound like that.

Next one may encounter a much different type of story about the black man. Here, Lopez went through a series of stereotypical issues, but rather than base it on an outside source as Mencia's accounts have, this story is told as his firsthand account of how the stereotypes exist and were imposed upon him.

#### No Blacks Allowed

My grandmother like a lot of Latinos are racist toward different cultures, you know, black people. My grandmother, I had a girlfriend that was 13; she was black, and beautiful. I loved her. So I am walking home with her, my grandma sees me, and all she has to do is honk. "Mira, fucken boogie nights, get your ass in the car. Mira, Peaches and Herb, hey Herb get your ass in the car. Pinche Denzel, get your ass home!" You know the fucked up part, I was darker than her.....And now that she is old, she needs round the clock nurses. So I decided to teach her a lesson before she leaves earth, so all her nurses are black. There are 12, and everyone is blacker than the other. The last 2 are almost purple that's how black they are. And she will call me up, and she don't know their names, and she will be like (MA) "Diana Ross wants to give me a bath." Who? (MA) "Diana Ross, la negra me quere limpiar el culo, I don't need the dream girls to clean my ass." Five minutes later, "What now?" (MA) "Chaka khan stole my sweater. I know you don't believe me, but Chaka khan stole my sweater!" Who?



“Chaka khan! Sonofabitch! Talk to them Denzel, they’re your people.” (Lopez, 2007).

At the beginning of this joke Lopez mentioned a defined stereotype that exists among Hispanic/Latinos and that is the dislike of the black population. Although I myself never encountered such an idea, the stereotype is common among Hispanic/Latinos. Taking notice of these stereotypes is important to develop a better understanding of how these cultures are looked at in the comedy routines. Identities are situated and seeing how these comedians discuss other cultural stereotypes will help in understanding how Hispanic/Latinos stereotypes are used and applied.

#### Joking with the Asian Man

Perpetuated throughout our society are the images of Asian people who are smaller, smarter and speak with an accent. This section looks at those ideas as they were found in the text of the transcribed comic scripts. First, a joke used by Lopez to discuss the importance of noting that Asians enter the United States as illegal aliens at a high rate as well shows a problem that the United States fights does not face with Mexico only. Although the discussions within the media lead people to believe Mexico is the only source of illegal immigrants, Lopez wanted to make it clear that many Asian countries have immigrants in the U.S. as well.

#### Other Illegal Aliens

You wanna talk about illegal aliens; I think we should look at the Asian people. I went to see Circus Olay in Las Vegas; those chinos can get in a little ass box. I think we start there first. Your gonna go to McDonalds and order a happy meal

and 11 chinos are going to pop out. “He got on my toy and he rode away.”  
(Lopez, 2007).

He opened the joke by bringing up the general idea of illegal aliens. This serves as a brief attention-getter for the story he is moving into. Next, in order to assure the audience that he is not referring to Hispanic/Latino illegal immigrants, he says, “I think we should look at the Asian people.” The term “Chinos” is a slang term used by Spanish speaking people when referring to people of Asian decent. By drawing specific attention to Asians he has done two things, one eliminating the assumption that is perpetuated in the U. S. media which continues to associate all talk about illegal immigration to the Mexican boarder, and second he labeled a specific group that has a high number of illegal immigrants. This idea of Asian people immigrating into the U.S. in high numbers is best exemplified by looking at major cities across the U.S., which have designated neighborhoods called “China Town.” Made famous in New York City, today they can be seen in cities from Boston and Dallas to San Francisco and Seattle. Having grabbed the audiences’ attention, he inserted the joke based on the stereotypical physical size of Asians as smaller than Americans.

Opening the discussion about Asian stereotypes with this short story by Lopez allowed us to have a better understanding of the stories that follow because he included two main issues: Asians as smaller in size and Asians as a large illegal immigrant population. Next we see how Mencia identified this population:

#### Misunderstood Asians

Laugh at everybody...no, but we can laugh when people come into our community and bring some bullshit rules. How the fuck can you be from the

Orient and get angry with me when I call you an oriental? Fucker, that's where you're from—The Orient. I just added the 'a' and the 'l' fucker, that's all I did! You're oriental! (AV) "No!" Well, the fucking rugs you make are oriental! The food you cook is fucking oriental! (AV) "I know what the fuck is oriental, but I am not oriental. I am an Asian Pacific Islander or Polynesian." Yeah, well, I never got the fucking memo. Right? Fax me with your bullshit next time Quam-Lee. You can't even make an honest mistake today and go, "Hey, um, are you Chinese?" (Japanese Accent, JA) "Oh no fucker! I am Japanese!!" Holy shit Quasimoto! Fuck don't get mad, I was close! What the fuck! You're acting like a called you a black midget or some shit, you know? (JA) "Chinese people don't look like Japanese people!" I'm like, yes, you fucking do! What are we supposed to carry eye charts now so we never screw up anymore? Oh my god, you have a 2 centimeter epicanthic fold...you're from Narsaki! (Mencia, 2000).

The ability to tell the many different types of Asian people apart is not inherently simple. To open this story Mencia urged the audience to "Laugh at everybody"--a behavior he encourages often through his shows, as he often leaves no groups of people out when it come to creating these jokes. By personifying the different voices he gave more distinction between the generic Asian Voice and the more distinct Japanese Accent. Doing this made the distinction more clear not only for the idea being discussed, but for the audience who was listening to this conversation. In this next joke we see the Asian stereotype take form in education.

### Smart Asians

“No you’re wrong Carlos. The school system sucks Carlos.” No, if the school system sucks why is it that Asians kick our ass in that same school system. Want me to tell you why? Honestly? No bullshit! Parents! The rest of America, “Charley, this is your first day of class Charley; you go out there and do your best Charley. The best you can and that’s all we expect from you Charley.” Asians? (AV) “This is the first day of school. The most important day of your life. If you come home with report card with one B I kill you. Now go be happy today.” Cause they’re on a whole other level. And you gotta give props to Asians. We really gotta get props to you. You achieve scholastically like no other in this country. You are unparalleled when it comes to academic achievement. What the fuck happens to you behind the wheel of a car? (Mencia, 2003b).

Through venues like the news media’s discussions of the U.S. education system and popular culture movies and television we’ve perpetuated the stereotype of Asians as the smart studious type and this idea has become commonplace in public conversations. Mencia took that idea and discusses it not only to bring it to our attention, but also to affirm such stereotypes. The claim that the school systems are damaged falls on deaf ears with Mencia. By arguing that Asians are not only learning but excelling in these school systems, Mencia made his claim; the schools are not damaged. He pointed out the different expectations Asian parents have versus those of other parents as the defining factor. This leads to the incongruent anti-claim; it is not the schools that are damaged, but the constant pressure to maintain a politically correct society has pushed us into mediocrity. This push has damaged the way students in this country perceive education.

Lopez and Mencia both mention this in their jokes. The idea of competition has become a negative standard. Where Asians are taught to compete and work to achieve, political correctness teaches students one standard way of thought and disregards competition and achievement. This joke really sets up much of the discussion and basis for the jokes and anti-claims these two comedians work with.

### Hispanic/Latino Jokes

Stereotypes of the Hispanic/Latino as illegal immigrants from Mexico, the Hispanic/Latino as a laboring worker, gangster and person of poor health have flooded media outlets for years. Newscasts feature gang violence as a two sided epidemic involving on one hand the African Americans and on the other the Hispanic/Latinos. Rare is a mention of the violent act of any of the white Los Angeles street gangs such as the Nazi Low Riders, Skinheads, Aryan Brotherhood, or the Hell's Angels. This kind of concentrated focus drives unwitting onlookers to adopt these stereotypes as fact or truths. In this first joke of this section, Mencia took this idea out of the U.S. and Mexico and argued that these stereotypes are so well known that even in Ireland the Mexican is a cliché of stereotypes.

### The Green Beaner

Stupid people mess it up for everybody else. Stupid people like Mexicans who wear green on St. Patrick's Day. "What are you doing?" (MV) "I don't want nobody to pinch me and shit!" "Well it's not your holiday cabron, your name is Raul, not McMierda, take off the fucking green! It's an Irish holiday you dumb ass! What do you think you go to Ireland one day and they wake up going (Irish Accent, IA) "Hey there laddy, guess what we're celebrating this morning? That's

right, it's Cinco de Mayo! I painted the cow on the side of the door and everything! We're all driving to London, just to cross a border, all 14 of us in one car. Even me 16 year old daughter is going to try and get pregnant today.”

(Mencia, 2004).

Although he made fun of Hispanic/Latino people who wear green on the holiday of the Irish culture, he tried to create an incongruent reaction. Beneath the surface Mencia talked about these stereotypes in first person from an Irish perspective. In doing so Mencia made the claim that these stereotypes of the Hispanic/Latino people are so pervasive that even in Ireland people know about them.

By creating jokes about Hispanic/Latino stereotypes, Lopez and Mencia are able to not only interject personal experiences, they are perceived as reliable sources by audiences because they are comedians who happen to be Hispanic/Latino. Through the media and personal experiences many of these stereotypes have become a part of the identity attached to the Hispanic/Latino population. Lopez and Mencia's open honesty about such stereotypes is key to understanding and learning to move beyond these stereotypical images. In these first series of jokes Lopez and Mencia approach the stereotypes that all Hispanic/Latino people in the U.S. are illegal immigrants from Mexico. First, Mencia describes:

#### You're All Mexicans

We look alike I know my mom is from Mexico and my dad is from Central America. I personally was born in Central America but I grew up in East Los Angeles and you know Mexican traditions but I wasn't actually born in Mexico I was born in Central America all right white people, Nebraska. Look at you, some

of you are looking at me like (Redneck Voice, RV) “what part, you better be kidding boy.” Fucking relax. I was actually born in Honduras, Honduras. But not like it really fucking matters in L.A. or anything you know, so many fucking Mexicans, you’re just fucking Mexicans is all you are, it doesn’t matter what you fucking say. (White Voice, WV) “Hey man you’re fucking funny bro where you from?” I can say anything, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and they will look right at me right in the fucking face and say (WV) “so what part of Mexico is that?” You don’t know how lucky you are white people. You’re fucking white wherever you go man here you’re white, L.A. you’re white, San Francisco you’re white Houston you’re white, you go to Miami fuckers you’re still white. I go to Miami I’m fucking Cuban. What the fuck is this shit? Brother man don’t laugh you’re a brother man wherever you go to. (Black Voice) “What’s up nigga what’s up wit you dog?” You’re a brother wherever you go the only shit that changes is Westside / Eastside. That’s the only shit that changes Midwest, Midwest. Here you’re black, L.A. you’re black, Chicago you’re black, and New York you’re fucking black. Fucking watch this I go to New York what am I in New York. Puerto Rican! You see how everybody knew! Fuck you; you mother fuckers you said that shit you racist pieces of shit fuck you. You didn’t have to be so quick and answer and shit. (Mencia, 2003c).

By joking that it does not matter where he is really from, everyone assumed he is from Mexico; Mencia created an awareness within his audience members about the many different Latin countries where Hispanic/Latino people could have roots. This awareness

is built upon when he names several different possible countries. He took this awareness even further with this next joke about the different levels that exist within these different Hispanic/Latino people.

#### Mexicans Do It Too

I saw something the other day I thought was unbelievable. I don't know if you know this but they opened up, in Burbank California, a little center for the wetbacks to hang out at in front of Home Depot across the street, YES! So they don't have to stand in the rain, it's got a little kitchen and an office, the wetbacks are spoiled right there. "Hey why don't you go outside?" (SA) "I don't have to I'm inside the office." They got a little drive through, you show up and it's like (SA) "hey what do you need?" (White Voice WV) "Um, I need three people to do my roofing." (SA) "No problem, three Mexicans, let's go, get in the car." (SA) "Welcome to Juan in the Box can I take ju order please." (WV) "I need two guys to do tile." (SA) "Two Mexicans, get in the car, let's go." (SA) "Welcome to McRaul's can I take ju order please." (WV) "Uh, I need someone to clean my Port-a-Potty." (SA) "Oh, uh, send the guy from El Salvador, let's go." Look at the white people there like (WV) "what, oh my God!" The Mexicans are like (SA) "YEAH!! We no gonna do that, El Salvador, Nicaragua, go go go!" 'Cause there are hierarchies, we're not just beaners, there's levels, like you white people, there's you white people then there's (hits head with microphone and hums country song), it's a different white person. Asians, you know. This is a big Asian city and nobody knows more than you 'cause if you are Chinese you're on top, if you're Vietnamese, you're pretty much the niggers of that community. See you



guys are going “ahhh” the Chinese people are going (Chinese Voice CV) “how does he know dis?” If you’re Japanese and you bring home a Vietnamese lover your family is like (Japanese Accent JA) “How could you do this to us?” And if you’re a Philippino, you’re the beaner of the Asian community! Cause you’re just like us, your indigenous people that got banded by some Spaniards. (Ziegler & Steinberg, 2006).

By pointing out these types of hierarchies that exist within the Hispanic/Latino immigrant population Mencia creates such distinctions within his audience. The first joke creates an awareness, and this joke made that awareness clear. Because we are trained to see things as this or that, we see Hispanic/Latinos as Mexican based on proximity. Mexico is the closest Latino country bordering the U.S., thus syllogistically most Hispanic/Latino immigrants in the U.S. must have migrated from Mexico.

Another of the common stereotypes that revealed itself through analysis is that of the Hispanic/Latino as the migrant labor worker. Though there are a large number of Hispanic/Latinos in the U.S. who are labor workers, not all are. Mencia speaks to the popularity of this idea when he joked about a proposal to build a fence along the U.S. and Mexico border.

#### Who Builds the Fence?

You know what they said in California? I saw it on C-SPAN, people we vote for, (WV) “Um, I propose we kick all the illegal aliens out of the country, and then we build a super fence so they can’t get back in.” And I went, um, who’s gonna build it? If the wetbacks are gone, there goes the work force. (Ziegler & Steinberg, 2006).

By making the claim that “If all the wetbacks are gone, there goes the work force,” Mencia argues that Hispanic/Latinos play a vital role in the U.S. economy. As the largest minority in the U.S., Hispanic/Latinos do a large amount of manual labor jobs for U.S. business owners. In bringing light to just how many Hispanic/Latinos there are in the U.S., Lopez jokes that

#### Drop in a Bucket

If immigrations laws pass they say that 1.2 million Mexicans would have to go back to Mexico. 1.2, sabes que, that’s 7 quinceaneras, that aint shit, THAT AINT SHIT! 1.2, that’s 7 quinceaneras and 2 weddings. That’s not going to make a dent vato. (Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

With total numbers nearing 45 million across the U.S., Hispanic/Latinos have grown into a place within the economic structure that keeps the U.S. functioning. With an estimated 10 million Hispanic/Latinos being undocumented workers, the U.S. economy relies heavily on these people making their positions as labor workers even more important.

Lopez furthers this with

#### Gangbangers and Drywallers

Let me ask you this, who do you think is running this country? Guess (mariachi music plays, Lopez lets out a “grito” Mexican scream). Yeah! “That’s who!” Look at all the white people, (WA) “I am so scared right now, I so scared, I wanted to try and find a guy to do tile, but now I am afraid to ask. I am so scared, the guy next to me looks like he does dry wall, but I am assuming right now that they are all gang related.” (Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

In telling this brief story Lopez is doing more than joking. By insinuating that Hispanic/Latino people are running the country Lopez has created a message for the audience. That message lets the audience know that Hispanic/Latino people play an important role to the economic status of the country. Mencia tells a similar story:

#### The Work Force

See I like teaching lessons this way, instead of hey you shouldn't do that, I say the opposite. That's why white people, please kick all the wetbacks out of this country please because I want to see what happens tomorrow, cause you don't get it, do you think black people are going to go to the San Joaquin Valley and start picking again? (Shakes head no) When beaners are gone, trust me black people are not going to be like (Black Voice BV) "Man we gonna move to the San Joaquin Valley, HEY HEY!" That ain't gonna happen. White people are going to find themselves in Fresno picking fruit singing, "swing low sweet."

(Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

Continuing with the idea that Hispanic/Latino people are an essential part of the way things are done in the U.S. Mencia took the joke further by referring to what would happen if Hispanic/Latino people were no longer a part of the country's work force. Mencia is not degrading black or white people in this joke; he is referring to the types of jobs Hispanic/Latino immigrants are placed in, and more specifically to the wage that is paid for doing these jobs. The reference he made in the beginning of the joke ties directly into the idea of the jokes having an anti-claim. "See I like teaching lessons this way, instead of hey you should do that, I say the opposite." The use of incongruent anti-claims made in the jokes created by Lopez and Mencia are essential to the audiences'

enthymematic understanding of the jokes. The incongruent message is that Hispanic/Latinos presence in the U.S. is so important that if removed, the U.S. economy would collapse because its losing its work force. This anti-claim is that Hispanic/Latinos have positioned themselves in jobs that many Americans do not want, nor would do for minimal pay, and in doing so they have secured a place for themselves in the U.S.'s economic structure.

Common in many of the jokes both comedians make are references to Hispanic/Latinos as gang members. Based in truth, this is one of the more common stereotypes found in the U.S. media of Hispanic/Latino people. Even though it is based in on a truth, does not make it universal. In this next joke Mencia not only identifies this stereotypical group of people, but he addresses the issue of Hispanic/Latinos who are not gang members.

#### The Crab Effect

But everybody wants to make you feel guilty about something or another. It's like when you move out of the ghetto. Are you one of those beaners that did good by yourself, did good by your family, now you've moved out of the ghetto? What do you get? The people that live in the ghetto all mad at you! (SA) "Hey homes how come you left the ghetto homes?" "Cause I was tired of you shooting at me! Is that a good fucking reason to leave!" (SA) "You act like I hate you homes. I don't hate you I hate white people." "Really, I find it very interesting that you hate white people, but you only kill Mexicans! Why is that? Are you dyslexic or some shit?"...What retardedness is that? And because I grew up in the ghetto I am suppose to understand gangbangers. If you are here, I don't get you and I

never will. And right now you might even be hating me, that's what I don't understand, I get the, "We're protecting the neighborhood!" Really, from who? I want to meet all the white people goddammit that are going to rise up and say (RV) "We're taking East L.A. back! These goddamn beaners with their King Tacos all over the place, what kind of bullshit is this? We're taking it back, but be careful; it's being protected by Casper and Little Puppet!" (SA) "Hey homes, if we don't protect our shit, then who will protect our shit?" "You're shit! Pendejo you rent!" (Mencia, 2004).

Here we find Mencia is a self discussion on the issues within a Hispanic/Latino ghetto. By personifying a Hispanic/Latino gang member's voice in the joke he is adding the first person element which allows the audience the opportunity to make the connection or relate to the conversation. Because this stereotype is only based on a truth and not a universal truth, many Hispanic/Latino audience members may have an enthymematic understanding of this conversation within their own experiences. The obvious claim within this joke comes from the gang member who argues that they are defending what is there's, but the final line leads the audience directly into the incongruent message which is that few gang members are home owners. To claim that they are defending their land, their neighborhood is incongruous because they do not own the land. Often these rent houses are owned by real estate ate companies or property investors, land lords who own several houses in effort to subsidize their income. Often the white people who the gang member claimed earlier in the joke to "hate". Through this incongruent message Mencia is realizing his anti-claim which is that as a Hispanic/Latino from the ghetto the whole

gangbanging activity does not make sense to him. And that the image is just a stereotype, it in no way encompasses the population as a whole.

Along with these images of Hispanic/Latinos in the U.S. as immigrants from Mexico, labor workers and gang members the analysis found another common stereotype, the Hispanic/Latino with the Spanish Accent. Dating back to Desi Arnaz, the first dominant Hispanic/Latino to enter the mainstream of popular culture, Hispanic/Latinos have been thought of as either not speaking English, or speaking broken English. As an immigrant from Cuba, Arnaz was not purposefully speaking with an accent as part of his character; that was simply the way he spoke. However, since those early years Hispanic/Latino mediated images have carried on with that stereotype. Movies like the 1988 *Stand and Deliver*, 1993's *Blood in Blood Out*, and Television shows like *That 70's Show* or *I Love Lucy* have portrayed these characters as accent-laden communicators. Lopez joked about this stereotype when he claimed that

He's Been Crying, Hurry!

We are different people; we speak Spanish and people don't want to hear it. You speak Spanish and people; you ever see them, their asses get all tight. (SA) "La cosa me dijo el hombre." (WV) "There they go!" It's like a forty-dollar fine to speak Spanish in some states. You start speaking Spanish and they call 911, (WV) "911 hello, hi, yeah hurry they are here, hurry! How do I know, he just said jellow instead of yellow, HURRY! I don't know his name I can't read his neck. But it says something about "Chugo" or "Chago, Challos? It's in Old English font that I am not familiar with, there is a 13 there, I don't know maybe

his age? Apparently he has been crying, he's got a teardrop under his eye. Oh he's coming over here!" (Lopez, 2001).

Here, Lopez joked that even the act of mispronouncing words through a Spanish accent strikes fear into onlookers. Doing so, he argued that the stereotype pervades our discussions of Hispanic/Latinos. By having the caller describe the person with specific characteristics such as the tattoo on his neck, or the tear drop tattoo under his eye, Lopez plays on the audiences' enthymematic understanding of the Hispanic/Latino as a stereotypical gangbanger. Through each of their shows Lopez and Mencia carry out this stereotype using a Spanish accent for all characters who are Hispanic/Latino. Because they know this accent is primarily associated with Hispanic/Latino people, creating this accent not only adds more humor to the routine, it assures that the audience will get the joke.

The jokes that specifically identify ethnic stereotypes set up the scene for the remainder of the study. By analyzing all the ethnic jokes, I worked toward developing an understanding of the situated identity these comedians have of ethnic groups other than Hispanic/Latinos. This understanding serves two main purposes: 1) in order to understand why the jokes are created with their specific messages we must understand how other ethnic cultures are perceived by the message creator; 2) identifying the stereotypes first sets up the scene for answering the final two research questions.

*RQ 2. How do Messages with Stereotypes Support or Dispel the Stereotypical Images of the Hispanic/Latino Identity?*

Creating narrative jokes to open cognitive conversations about stereotypes allows the comedians to not only speak out against negative stereotypes, but also to affirm

others. In this social venue comedians are free to express any idea or argument without social contempt by most audience members. With that knowledge, comedians are willing not only to discuss negative stereotypes but also affirm their beliefs in certain stereotypes. In order to gain a more clear understanding of what jokes affirmed stereotypes and what jokes negated them it was necessary to break them into three sections. The first section looks at the comedians affirming stereotypes of Hispanic/Latinos as immigrants through the use of 4 distinct jokes. Next I looked at 5 jokes that affirmed Hispanic/Latino stereotypes through racially profiled images. To look at the jokes that negated the stereotypes, 6 jokes were analyzed and discussed.

### *Affirming the Immigrant Stereotype*

#### No Looking for Me

Let's talk about fucken shit that's going on, like all my fucken relatives that were left in Mexico and Honduras, you know the fucken wetback ones. They are all fucken showing up at my door all of a fucken sudden. They're like, (Spanish Accent) "Aloha Carlos, I got here!" "Who the fuck, how the did you get here? What the fuck are you doing here? I thought they fucken clamped down and made the border tighter?" (SA) "Oh no, they no looking for me!" Ain't this a bitch, goddammit white people keep them away too! You're so fucken worried about the goddamn beaner, you forgot "Huuuh Huuhh" was getting in here! See that's the problem, fucken too centered! (Redneck Voice, RV) "Goddamn we gotta stop them illegal aliens from coming in and takin' our jobs!" While "Huuuh Huuhh" was fucken building bombs right next to you and shit! (SA) "Pendejo no look at me, LOOK AT HIM! Why do you give me that much chit man? I not



going to blow anything up! How can you get mad at me, I pick strawberries? I cut ju grass motherfucker; I am the one in front of Home Depot at 5 o'clock in the morning. Ahmed is not in front of Home Depot, he is at Radio Shack!" (Mencia, 2003a).

Mencia affirmed the existence of Hispanic/Latino people as illegal immigrants. Doing so does not create a generic representation of every Hispanic/Latino person in the United States, but it does affirm the existence of a population who are illegal. In making reference to, "I thought they fucken clamped down and made the border tighter?" Here Mencia referred to the strong push to increase security levels at U.S. borders after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks that resulted in the loss of several thousand American citizens. He then spun that idea into an argument about the U.S.'s general focus on the Mexican border with, "You're so fucken worried about the goddamn beaner, you forgot Huuuh Huuhh was getting in here!" This incongruent anti-claim is meant to draw attention within the audience to the fact that while the public discussion about immigration is focusing on the Mexican border, other borders are being ignored and that creates a severe threat to the U.S. security. By telling the audience that "you forgot Huuuh Huuhh was getting in here!" Mencia is assuring that an enthymematic understanding of the September 11 attacks will be realized by the audience and the argument of a public discussion on immigration being to centered will become clear to them.

A common thread that appears through several different jokes by both comedians is that the public debate about immigrants centers around Mexico and Mexican immigrants; in bringing that to light Mencia is essentially telling the audience that

because this public debate centers around the Mexicans and the Mexican border other borders received less focus thus allowing for the terrorists to enter the U.S. without being noticed. Meanwhile, the conversation is focusing on people who, while illegal, come the U.S. in search of work and a better life. These immigrants search for the American way of life, not to destroy it. This point is further exemplified when Mencia approached the issue of immigration with this commentary:

#### A Chopping Cart and Oranges

(RV) “Shit we should have closed all the fucking borders and never had this goddamn problem in the first place!” First of all, America is built on the blood of immigrants. Immigrants will show us how fucked up we are and how complacent we are at the opportunities we have. That’s why we need immigrants. Look, white people, you never thought of selling oranges on the freeway. You never got off the 405 and Jamboree and thought (RV) “hey man I could do some shit here!” Its took fucking Julio who got dropped off here from Nicaragua to get dropped off there and look at the fucking freeway and go (SA) “Chit, I see opportunity! I see the future. A chopping cart and oranges, maybe some peanuts.” Don’t laugh too hard black guy, you guys sell roses fucker! Come on white people don’t sell shit on the freeways. You just have signs (SA) “can I have some change?” You lazy motherfucker! How about you sell some shit their Jonathan! You know what I mean? Nobody gets it now. We need these immigrants. These immigrants are what make us fucking strong! (Mencia, 2003a).

Through both of these discussions Mencia did not deny the Hispanic/Latino as an immigrant stereotype exists, but rather noted that they exist but do not encompass the

entire population and are not living in this country as a drain on resources. By contending that “immigrants will show us how fucked up we are and how complacent we are at the opportunities we have,” the “we” refers to American citizens who do not take full advantage of the endless number of opportunities that are available to Americans. Through the commentary Mencia argued that the stereotypes that exist of the Hispanic/Latino immigrant are based in truth, but along with that the stereotype of this group of people as lazy and burdensome to both the U.S. economy and people is mostly false. Through the enthymematic references Mencia created the dialogue in such a way as to use the audience’s incongruent perspective to create the anti-claim. This incongruent anti-claim argues that while it is understood that Hispanic/Latinos as illegal immigrants exist, their search for a better life not only makes them an asset to the economy but a valuable part of the work force doing jobs that most Americans choose not to do. Lopez extends this argument:

#### Find Every Mexican Available

And let me tell you this, people don’t want us here; that is insane. That is the most insane thing to not want Latinos in the United State. We do all the jobs that no one in America wants to do. That’s what we do! Who do you think is rebuilding New Orleans? Guess! (Mariachi music and grito). You know who? FEMA that’s who, Find Every Mexican Available! FEMA! That’s right, us, like it or not. At 5:30 in the morning, we are working; we are not at Starbucks playing fucking SUDOKU. (Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

After asking the audience, “Who do you think is rebuilding New Orleans?” Through the P.A. system Mariachi music starts to play throughout the coliseum. Mariachi music is a

Mexican traditional music played acoustically by one or more musicians. Recognized by its unique sound, this music is considered by many to be a common identifying characteristic of the Hispanic/Latino population. By having such music play over the P.A. system Lopez was solidifying his argument that Hispanic/Latino people are the ones not only rebuilding New Orleans, but are found at the heart of jobs most Americans do not want to do. He builds upon this argument with

#### Onions and E.Coli

Let me say this, the country is not what you thought it was. Everything that you touch, Latinos touch first. We're there every day early, everything you touch. Let me give you some examples. Taco Bell had some tainted green onions. (WA) "Oh God, I got E. coli from them." Some tainted green onions showed up at Taco Bell, white people get E. coli and the whole world stops. Who picks the onions? Latinos! You talk shit about us; it gets down to the fields. (SA) "I didn't hear you, what did they say about us? They don't want us here, we're lazy, and we're depleting the system? Mira, quieren onions, mira! (Rubs microphone on crotch and butt pretending to be an onion) Asta me culo buey! Here take that shit to Taco Bell. There's you chalupa right there. Think outside the bun. We don't fucking eat there, what do I care?" Everything you touch, we touch first. That's why we're here. Chevy could not be more confused. Their slogan right now is This is Our Country. Oh, I don't think it's your country anymore. You wanna know whose country it is, guess (mariachi music and grito). (SA) "Not no mores." Mariachi music is the heart and blood of the Mexican people, that music right there. (Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

Hispanic/Latino immigrants work hard to get into the United States because of the opportunities that exist here that do not exist in their home countries. Too often the public discussion about Hispanic/Latino immigrants centers on this idea that Hispanic/Latino immigrants should be kicked back to their countries and that they have no business here because they are illegal immigrants. Unfortunately, what is not revealed in this discussion is the integral role these people play in a capitalistic society. Big business dwells around the bottom dollar; as a result, it is economically more beneficial to pay immigrants a wage far below the minimum allowed by law and continue to charge higher prices for these products. In this same way, consumers searching for the best bargains drive the economy, the general perception is that cheaper is better. Both of these pressures to lower prices result directly in immigrants obtaining work. The claim made in these two jokes is that Hispanic/Latinos immigrants are not welcome in the United States; however, we see the incongruity in the anti-claim that, welcome or not; Hispanic/Latino immigrants are an essential part of the American economy. Publically the discussion about Hispanic/Latino immigrants is one of negativity. "They are taking our jobs!" "They are a burden to tax payers." It is through Burke's incongruity that these images can lead to a more positive discussion. The cheap labor provided by these immigrants is a key to the price American consumers pay for produce and other products in the store. Without these workers the prices would increase and the conversation would no be about the burden of these immigrants, but if how to bring them back so that the prices in the stores would go back down.

### Affirmation Through Racial Profiling

Funny stories about a serious issue like racial profiling can be used to affirm certain stereotypical issues that exist within the Hispanic/Latino population.

#### Across the Board

(WV) “But we all need to all get checked at the airport for security purposes.” No we all need to get checked at the airport ‘cause white people don’t have the balls to racially profile Ahmed as you did and still do us. You see for every 2 blacks or 2 Hispanics in jail for a drug related crime there is only 1 white person in jail for a drug related crime, yet outside of jail for every black or Hispanic that are involved in illegal narcotics there are 5 white people that are involved in the same illegal narcotics. Why is it that we are in jail with the more propensity? And do you know why? Because there are more cops in San Jose and Watsonville and Salinas and Oakland than there are in Sunnyvale, because we racially profile niggers and spics. Now don’t get me wrong, I don’t mind if you racially profile white people, I’m just asking you to do it across the board. (Mencia, 2003b).

Mencia did not argue that Hispanic/Latinos and blacks are unjustly imprisoned because they are innocent of the crimes. He looked to create an awareness that white people are guilty of the same types of crimes but because of the neighborhoods these two groups are associated with, minorities are targeted more heavily by law enforcement than their white counterparts who generally live in nicer neighborhoods away from inner city ghettos.

Lopez interjects his idea about this double standard treatment with this joke:

### The Double Standard

You don't agree that there is a double standard? Let me explain it to you this way, you get 6 Caucasian people and put them in a car that's called car-pooling! You put us in a car, (siren sound) (WA) "All right gang bangers, get out!" (MA) "What, come on Tia gangbanger, get out." (Lopez, 1996/2005).

By joking about this kind of treatment Lopez and Mencia sought to create awareness in their audiences. Lopez jokes that "What, come on Tia gangbanger, get out!" to emphasize the ridiculousness of the situation. Mencia took this idea even further when he joked about this use of a double standard:

### You're Bi-Lingual

But you gotta know who you are in America! Hell in America I am a nigga and a nigger too, that's right, you see white people, look at the white people going (WV) "Fuck he knows!" Hell yeah I fucking know, if me and this black guy are in a car later on tonight and we get pulled over by a redneck cop, that fucker comes out and goes (RV) "Niggers, get out of the car now!" Well I am going to be the first nigger out of that fucking car. You think I am stupid? You think I am going to be in the car "well fuckers, you hear him! Hey don't look at me like that he said 'niggers' not 'niggas.' You know what I mean. The cop is going to come up and go (RV) "You too nigger" (Hits microphone) "AHH, you said nigger, I even told them to get out fucker! You did not say spic or beaner, fucking asshole get your nomenclatures correct dickhead, I speak Spanish motherfucker!" (RV) "Well hell then you're a bi-lingual nigger get the fuck out of that car asshole!" (Mencia, 2003c).

Mencia differentiated between the words “nigger” and “nigga” as part of another joke he made in the show where “nigga” was used as a term of endearment by several of his black friends who call him that and allowed him to call them by the same term. Adding the ‘r’ at the end removes any endearing qualities, especially when used by a white person. He specifically emphasizes that the police was not only white, but “a redneck cop” because it adds humor to the story and helps to create a clearer picture for the audience. The obvious claim that is being made in this joke is that the police treat black people and Hispanic/Latino people equally poor. However through the incongruent anti-claim Mencia is creating, the audience is able to understand another message. That message is that regardless how he was addressed the mistreatment is based in the skin tone and not the names used to acknowledge skin tones.

Acknowledging that racial profiling exists is not supporting it. Mencia used this joke to align himself with the idea that this practice exists, as such it should exist for all, not only for Hispanic/Latinos and blacks. Mencia exemplified this use racial profiling and stereotypes well in this next example of joke telling. Leading up to this story Mencia is upset about a basketball player who refused to be a part of the U. S. Olympic basketball team. Mencia then moved into this story about using the stereotypical afflictions to bring home Gold Medals from the Olympics.

#### Getting the Athletes

We don’t make American citizens play on our team; this is the problem. White people are wining gold medals for us in swimming? Why, white people should not have to swim for this country. Thank you for doing it white people, but we have Cubans in this goddamn country, and they’re better swimmers than you, so



Julio, get in the pool if you win, you stay, if you lose, (SA) “A la verga!” I want to see Cubans in the water and have people with bullhorns going, “Coast Guard, Coast Guard!” (SA) “No, ju never going to catch me!” We have the right to bear arms in this country. What we don’t have, any medals in any shooting events. Why? Because nobody knows, I know, let me be the man in charge of getting our athletes. I know people in this country that are unbelievable shooters. They can shoot a moving target while in a moving vehicle with fucking hydraulics. That’s how good these people are! Casper, Little Puppet hell I know gang-bangers named Sniper! But what do we have, we have other people toting the line. We don’t have any high jumpers in this country any more, why? Cause the fence is electric. That’s what we need ladies and gentlemen, to make the fence electric so they can’t touch it. Now they are gonna jump. I know a lot of you white people are like, (WV) “Carlos, you guys don’t jump the fence?” No, we climb it, that’s why we have pointy boots, they fit in the fence! What’s the world record in the high jump, 8 feet? So we lower it to 8 ½ feet, now we got beaners jumping 8 ½ feet, that’s the record, boom now we got the gold medal. But we only do that in California, in Texas we raise the fence to 25 feet now we got Pole Vaulters. See where I am going with this? I want to see a little Mexican going, (SA) “I’m gonna make it!” “How in the fuck did you clear 25 feet?” (SA) “Because the pointy boots are arrow dynamic! The little tassels on the side show me which way the wind is blowing.” (Ziegler & Steinberg, 2006).

First he looked at Cubans as good swimmers. Cuba’s proximic relation the U.S. has allowed for many Cubans fleeing harsh conditions in Cuba to attempt sailing, floating

on small rafts, or even swimming to the nearest U.S. border in Florida. By talking about such experiences so bluntly Mencia affirmed the presence of such stereotypes. Many Cuban people in the U. S. are illegal and many did survive the difficult passage from Cuba by water to the U.S. This made the joke that “Cubans are good swimmers.” Adding to the humor in presenting the stereotype is the comment about “having people with bullhorns going, “Coast Guard, Coast Guard”!” Such a joke is meant to enhance the already known stereotype of Cubans swimming to the U.S. by noting that the U.S. Coast Guard is after them.

Next Mencia moved the story from illegal Cubans to Hispanic/Latinos as gang members. Here he again made note that there is a large population of the Hispanic/Latino population that are gang members. These stereotypes exist based on reality. By arguing that they should be forced to partake in the Olympics as “shooters” because “they can shoot a moving target while in a moving vehicle with fucking hydraulics” Mencia pointed toward the violent nature of gang members doing a drive-by shooting. Drive-by shootings are common among gangland disputes over territory. He made note of “hydraulics” to add to the stereotype of these Hispanic/Latino gang members driving cars known as “Lowriders.” Lowrider cars often have hydraulic systems installed as part of the overall aesthetics. By using common Hispanic/Latino ghetto neighborhood nicknames like “Casper, Little Puppet and Sniper” Mencia assured the audience recognizes these characters. Popular movies like the 1988 *Colors*, 1992 *American Me*, or the popular characters created by David Gonzales called Homies each have characters with these names. Having such a mainstream presence, Mencia used these names to complete the stereotypical image he was creating.

In the last part of this joke Mencia paints for his audience the stereotypical image of a Mexican immigrant in the United States. Pointing first to the fence that lines the borders between some parts of Mexico and the U.S., Mencia calls attention once again to the pointy boots many in this population tend to wear. In joking about Mexican immigrants climbing the fence into the U.S. Mencia not only acknowledges one of the methods used to get across the border, he argues that such an action could be used to the U.S.'s advantage.

The primary function of this series of jokes is not only to make the audience laugh. Mencia is made an argument by acknowledging each of these stereotypes. He argues that each of these stereotypes does exist and the stereotypes are based in some truth. Forcing people to participate in the Olympics is a backdrop to the claims being made. Verbally Mencia claims that because the stereotype says Cubans swam to the U.S. they should be swimmers for the U.S. Olympic team. Verbally Mencia also claims that because the stereotypes say there is a large population of Hispanic/Latino gang members that carry out violent drive-by shootings in their gangland wars, they should be on the U.S. Olympic shooting team. Mencia claims that because the stereotype says illegal Mexicans enter the U.S. by jumping a fence, the fence itself should become a training tool to create Olympic High Jumpers and Pole Vaulters for the U.S. Olympic teams. Underneath all of this, or the anti-claim being made, is that although these stereotypes do exist based in some truth, with the right motivation and training these kinds of people can become beneficial to the United States. Although not verbally expressed, this idea is the anti-claim. Hispanic/Latino immigrants and citizens have value to the country and by employing the strengths of the Hispanic/Latino people the U.S. can benefit in many ways.

He takes the practice of racially profiling people even further in this next joke about post-September 11 airport conditions:

#### What We Don't Do

My name is Carlos Mencia I am a beaner a wetback and a spic. I swam here or I jumped the border. I vend tacos, I cut grass, I wash dishes, I hang out in front of fucking Home Depot, I put a lot of people in one fucking car, my daughter gets pregnant earlier than any goddamn race, we do all that shit, but you know what we don't do? We don't blow up fucking planes dick head! Why are you checking my shit! Are the plane's tires missing hubcaps or some shit? Cause if they are then I understand?" (Mencia, 2003b).

Leading into this joke Mencia talked about how tighter security measures at airports across the U.S. have become a problem for everyone, but more sore for Hispanic/Latinos. Because there are some similarities in appearance between people from the Middle East and Hispanic Latinos and because Hispanic/Latinos are often racially profiled by appearance alone, Hispanic/Latinos have come under more scrutiny when flying. With this joke Mencia not only acknowledged the racially prolific images of Hispanic/Latinos as illegal migrant workers whose jobs consist of manual labor and have a teenage pregnancy problem, he adds "are the plane's tires missing hubcaps" to refine his claim that racial profiling has such an influence on how Americans view Hispanic/Latinos that each of these stereotypes will be recognized. A plane missing hubcaps would indicate that a Hispanic/Latino person stole the hubcaps, thus warranting the treatment Hispanic/Latinos experience at airports today. The obvious claim is that racially profiling Hispanic/Latinos has created many stereotypical identifiers. The incongruent

anti-claim Mencia argues is that of all these stereotypes, none of them are of a terrorist and being treated more poorly at airports and shielding such treatments under the guise of terrorism is not warranted.

### Lies and the Stereotypes that Tell Them

Along with creating jokes that affirm certain stereotypes as existing within the Hispanic/Latino population, Lopez and Mencia use many of the same stereotypes to dispel the false “truths” the stereotypes invoke. Where previous jokes simply affirmed the existence of many stereotypes, these jokes dispel the application of those stereotypes as truths. Lopez exemplified this idea of dispelling perceived stereotypical truths with this joke about immigration and citizenship:

#### Aint Going Nowheres

Let me tell you this about immigration so you finally hear it from a Latino....we ain't going nowhere eh! NOWHERES!! The stupidest thing to do is to assume we are all from Mexico. (White Voice, WV) “Well what part of Mexico are your ancestors from??” Los Angeles bitch! I got a breathtaking view of the king taco, it's lovely. (Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

Too often, non-Hispanic/Latino Americans make the assumption that all Hispanic/Latinos in the U.S. are or were born of parents or grandparents who are immigrants. The reality is that many Hispanic/Latino people have no family connection to Mexico or any other Latin country. Lopez's response when asked what part of Mexico his ancestors are from is a common reaction by many Hispanic/Latinos. “Los Angeles bitch!” This kind of response not only signifies a naturalized citizenship in the U.S. but the ever more common 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation American Hispanic/Latino. Thus the

obvious claim being made is that not all Hispanic/Latinos in the U.S. are or are related to illegal immigrants. From this the anti-claim is that there are many Hispanic/Latino people who are multigenerational Americans who happen to be of Hispanic/Latino descent.

Lopez again attributes these kinds of assumptions to the American media and how Hispanic/Latino People are portrayed within the media outlets all across the country.

#### You Don't Sound Mexican

If you listen and you watch Mexicans on television you think that we all have accents, we're all you know. I called a restaurant to make a reservation and I said my name is Lopez and the woman said, (WA) "Well you don't sound Mexican." What are we supposed to sound like? Cheech? (MA) "I'd like to make a dinner reservation for two tanananana tan tan tan. (Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

Through the media we see Hispanic/Latino characters like those in *American Me* (1992), *A Day Without A Mexican* (2004), *Con Air* (1997), *The Three Amigos* (1986), and *From Dusk Til Dawn* (1996), to name only a few, speak with an accent. Lopez and Mencia both used this idea in their shows. Any time either of them talked as a Hispanic/Latino character in a joke their voice immediately took on a Spanish accent. By joking that the lady on the phone expected him to "sound like Cheech" he is making reference to the popular comedy duo from the 1970's and 80's Cheech and Chong, two characters known by many for their zany antics and impossible knack for finding trouble. The idea is that Hispanic/Latinos should have accents and be categorized as ignorant, according to Lopez.

### Credit Card Holders Only

It's ignorance that's the enemy more so than anyone of any particular color, ignorance! I was in line to get tickets for a concert, it was like 90 people and I was in the back and the lady says, (WA) "Excuse me Senior?" I was like "senior," wow, I better start using more Oil of Olay to cover up these crow's feet. She said to me, (WA) "this line is for credit card holders only!" I was like (MA) "Oh, I'm sorry, come on donkey (makes a donkey noise)! Forgive me, come on donkey. (Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

By not knowing or having a stereotypical understanding of a group of people many false assumptions can be made. Here the lady assumes that because Lopez is a Hispanic/Latino that he does not have a credit card. One can look at this in many ways. One, Hispanic/Latinos are perceived as illegal and thus cannot even obtain a credit card. This assumption is of course false because even in Mexico credit cards are issued to people. Two, because he is a Hispanic/Latino he is poor and cannot obtain a credit card because poor people have bad or no credit. Either way what is true of this situation is that she, like many, assume Hispanic/Latinos are second-class citizens unable to have the same luxuries as their counterparts. Lopez's claim with these two jokes is that stereotypes have situated Hispanic/Latinos in society as second-class. The incongruity found in the anti-claim is the polar opposite: many Hispanic/Latino people are fruitful, productive citizens who speak well and work for the means to entertain themselves.

This situated presence in second-class citizenship opens the door for negative racial profiling. Before, Mencia discussed racial profiling and the benefits that can result from it. Counter to those benefits are the negative stereotypes from racial profiling, and

none more prolific in the public debate about Hispanic/Latino immigrants than “they are coming to the U.S. and taking our jobs.”

### It’s Simply Ignorance

See my friend, the liberal guy again goes (WV) “Dude man, its not right to racial profile, it’s like we have been doing for years.” Well actually no, its not. If you don’t like black people, and you’re white, it’s simply ignorance. Right? Black people aren’t taking your shit. Black people are not taking your jobs. You’re just afraid for no fucking reason. Same shit for a beaner, you know what I mean? If you have a fucking job working in a building at Taco Bell making decisions, you’re not worried about fucking Julio coming and taking your fucking job, you’re just a dick! (Mencia, 2003a).

In this debate about Hispanic/Latino immigrants taking the jobs of Americans, Mencia argued a fact that often goes unmentioned. Immigrants do not enter the U. S. and continue in their chosen career, if such career even existed. Immigrants in the U.S. take whatever job they can find. Fortunately there are companies across the country that are willing to look past citizenship and hire these immigrants at a much lower wage.

Mencia’s clear claim here is that in the public debate about immigration those who argue that Hispanic/Latinos are coming to take our jobs are often politicians, lawyers, teachers and other professionals who maintain an interest in current events. The anti-claim created the incongruent message that this is not true. Hispanic/Latinos who migrate to the U.S. do not practice law, or medicine. These immigrants work in the fields picking fruits and vegetables, they work in meatpacking facilities, often they are forced to work



in conditions that would be deemed inhuman by any American workers. Lopez extends this argument:

#### The First Alien

Illegal aliens come from all over the world, not just the hole in the fence in San Diego. This is a nation of aliens, going back to the first one, Christopher Columbus. They don't know what to do with the border. They want to put glow-in-the-dark powder? Oh yeah, that's good, so that way if you get it on yourself, when you come across at night, you glow. (WA) "Identify yourself!" (MA) "Casper the friendly Mexican." (WA) "Thank you very much, float on, thank you." You think that Mexicans come to the United States and take the good jobs away from the Americans? Oh yeah, you can see it, (WA) "Well I am only working in computers until something in produce opens up!" I take my hat off the people working in the fields 'cause I don't think anyone else could do that shit. How long would a Caucasian migrant farm worker last? They would not last one row, they'd be out there in the sun, (WA) "Fuck it's hot, I could use some Country Time lemonade! Hmm, my Birkenstocks are all muddy, there's no shrooms out here you liars, its lettuce!" (Rickenbaugh & Miller, 2005).

Immigrants work to mow yards, replace roofs and build structures in the hot sun often more than 8 hours day with no overtime pay. These jobs are so well known as a staple of Hispanic/Latino immigrants that Mencia even wrote a joke dealing with the reversal of such a situation. Here he extends the joke about Tiger Woods' 40-million dollar per year salary and how different things would be if he were making that much money:

## 40 Million Dollars a Year

Shit, 40 million a year...I'd have a white Gardener. Let's see, Ramón, take the week off fucker, Jonathan cut my shit. (SA) "Oh Carlos has money, look he's the only guy with a white gardener!" And every time he would want to quit because they take too many pictures, I'd give him a raise and shit, you know? (RV)

"What the hell is this bull shit, Carlos? What the fuck I'm here to cut grass not be your little goddamn white fucker take a goddamn picture boy. What the fuck is this bull shit? I quit" I'll give you \$500 bucks more a week. (RV) "Hell, it ain't that fucking bad!" He'd be posing for pictures...(RV) "go ahead, Julio, take a picture of this! Tell your friend to act like he's telling me what to do, come on Mexican boy, tell me what to do and I'll look mad and shit!" (Mencia, 2000).

In this particular story Mencia told his audience what things would be like if he were making 40 million dollars a year. By joking that "I'd have a white gardener" the audience is instantly pulled into this reversal of roles. By taking the stereotype of the wealthy white man and the immigrant Hispanic/Latino gardener and reversing them, Mencia forced his audience to enthematically imagine this situation based on what they perceive reality to be like. In essence the line, (SA) "Oh Carlos has money, look he's the only guy with a white gardener" makes the joke's obvious claim. This situation is out of the ordinary because it is shocking to the character. Then we see the use of money to entice the white gardener to continue working despite the conditions. (RV) "Tell your friend to act like he's telling me what to do, come on Mexican boy, tell me what to do and I'll look mad and shit." This statement leads directly into incongruity of the anti-claim, which is that white employers are often so accustomed to mistreating

Hispanic/Latino immigrant workers that it has become commonplace in these situations. What should be a relationship of employee/employer takes on a new dynamic when the employee is an immigrant.

Whether affirming or dispelling the stereotypes, these jokes offer a unique insight into the use of the stereotypes. The stereotypes exist and are common in a variety of situations. Lopez and Mencia show that being willing to invoke the stereotypes makes all the difference in making arguments about their implicit claims. By using the jokes to affirm the stereotypes they are taking away the power from the stereotype. By using jokes to dispel the stereotypes they are arguing that the stereotypes have no power to begin with.

*RQ 3. How does their use of humor in their messages (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity?*

By joking about issues that dispel or affirm Hispanic/Latino stereotypes, Lopez and Mencia build through their stories a more concise Hispanic/Latino identity. In their routines the comedians make jokes that can be looked at as jokes about stereotypes, jokes that affirm and/or dispel the stereotypes, and jokes that help build an identity for Hispanic/Latinos. In analyzing the jokes about building an identity, the jokes can be divided up into two categories, 1) jokes that construct a Hispanic/Latino identity and 2) jokes that reconstruct a Hispanic/Latino identity. This first set of jokes show how Lopez and Mencia joke to construct an identity.

#### Constructing an Identity

Through many of the stereotypical images Lopez and Mencia discuss in their shows, terms like 'beaner' and 'wetback' are repeated. While not proper, these terms are

used and recognized in reference to Hispanic/Latino people. *Beaner*, as it is used, is a reference to the stereotype that Hispanic/Latino people eat mainly rice and beans. The word *Wetback* is a reference to Mexican immigrants crossing the border by swimming across the Rio Grande River into the U.S. Referring to Hispanic/Latino people with these terms often perpetuates the stereotypes, but Mencia argues that these words do not have the effect they are meant to have unless they are allowed to.

#### Call Me a Beaner

You know, when I get mad if people call me a beaner? If like the next day I woke up in the morning and I had to cut my fucking neighbor's grass, then I'd be pissed, you know what I mean? If it like affected me—wetback—“what the fuck! Oh shit! I can't stop cutting the grass!” Is it true; is it true? (Mencia, 2000).

By taking this attitude towards these terms meant to negatively affect Hispanic/Latino people Mencia used them to argue that these terms do not have the power they are often claimed to have. Using phrases like “if it like affected me” shows Mencia's clear stance on this idea of the words not having power unless they are given power or have a negative result on the person. Simply the use of the word itself with no lasting affect cannot demean or demoralize the spirit of anyone unless they are allowed to. The claim here is that the words themselves need not offend, but through the incongruent anti-claim Mencia has created leads the audience to the understanding that words only have power when the person gives them that power. By making this anti-claim, Mencia is worked on the ground level for constructing a Hispanic/Latino identity. He is not only saying that the words mean nothing unless given power, but he is also pushing Hispanic/Latino people to realize this and work past it in the struggle to develop an identity.

With this idea in mind, next we see Lopez attempt to construct an identity by talking about the physical image of the Hispanic/Latino in the media. In contrast to the first joke where Mencia was referring to the words used to refer to Hispanic/Latino people; here Lopez calls attention to a physical image. Images create a much more lasting frame of reference cognitively because in seeing the image repeatedly, people develop an association to the image. Thus when the media portray the same negative images of the Hispanic/Latino drug dealers, gangbangers, maids or farm workers, associations become generalized among the population as a whole, and people associate Hispanic/Latinos as these negative or lower class characters. By joking about the lack of Latino performers, Lopez sets the stage for his audience, working to build a scene where the audience can realize that all Hispanic/Latino people do not fit in these media-determined categories:

#### Backs to the Camera

It's nice to be a Latino performer, there are very few of us, we are like Condors, because there's like three of us, me, Paul Rodriguez, and the guy that sells insurance on Telemundo in the bumble bee suit. Now if I can get those two guys to fight to the death, I'll be in the mix. You don't see us! You don't see us on television; television is not friendly to Latinos. There are actually statistically more Mexicans with their backs to the camera, then facing it! How are you gonna be a household name like that (MA) "All pora!" (WA) "Spread em bastard, spread em bandito!" How can you get fame off that? When you watch salsa commercials, we are not even in salsa commercials (Lopez, 1996/2005).

By calling attention to these media-perpetuated images, Lopez again points out the existence of the stereotypes, jokingly referring to himself, Paul Rodriguez and an insurance salesman on a Spanish television network to create this realization with his audience that there are very few positive Hispanic/Latino people in popular culture. He goes on to argue that “There are actually statistically more Mexicans with their backs to the camera, then facing it!” The reference to having their backs to the camera can lead to multiple ideas, none of which are positive. When we think of someone having his back to a camera we imagine him being chased or running from someone, usually law enforcement people or we imagine a person who has already been apprehended and is being arrested. Lopez makes the claim that the images of the Hispanic/Latino as a criminal run rapidly through various media outlets. Through Burke’s perspective by incongruity Lopez is making his anti-claim that, as a Hispanic/Latino artist, taking on these sorts or roles will only continue to further perpetuate these types of stereotypes, and that it is important to take more positive roles in effort to build a better image within the media of Hispanic/Latinos. Though the statements, “How are you gonna be a household name like that?” or “how can you get fame off that?” we are able to uncover the anti-claim that he is making which implies that “if as a working Hispanic/Latino actor you take these stereotypical roles as the villain, fame will elude you.” In order to construct a more favorable identity and in order to break free from these stereotypes, working Hispanic/Latino actors need to avoid these negative roles and embrace more challenging roles that show Hispanic/Latinos in a more positive light.

In this next joke, Mencia takes these stereotypical images out of the media and places them into a real life setting. Statistically, Hispanic/Latino people do poorly in the

public education system. Here Mencia jokes about the ridiculousness of this based on simple historical facts:

#### A Group Called 'Other'

Sometimes I'm embarrassed to be a Latino, especially when I read statistics that say that we are on the bottom of the list for scholastic achievement. We! Do you know how embarrassing that is to know? That we're of Aztec or Mayan descent, that you're people invented the zero, the perfect calendar that does not have a leap year, thereby no six hours, thereby no 29<sup>th</sup> of February. A zero ladies and gentleman, do you know what that meant to mathematics? All complicated forms of mathematics and negative numbers came from the value of nothingness. That is what beaners invented, yet when you look at scholastic achievement in the United States of America, number 1 Asian American, number 2 Caucasian American, number 3 African American. And I know you guys are saying, "Well at least we're number 4, right?" No, number 4, and here's the sad part, number 4 is a fucking group called 'other'! Other is kicking our ass in school! Do you know who other is? They go to school in the little yellow bus and they wear helmets, that's other! Retarded kids are kicking our ass! "You're retarded." (MDV) "Not as retarded as beaners! I'm number 4 your number 5, number 5!" (Mencia, 2004).

Through this brief historical explanation Mencia makes his claim that because Hispanic/Latino people are descendants of the Aztec or Mayan people who created what many mathematic scholars believe to be the most important number, zero, and a perfect calendar, doing poorly in school is not only disgraceful, but damaging to the identity of

Hispanic/Latinos. As the joke progresses and he breaks down the order of scholastic achievers, and the incongruent anti-claim became more apparent. By joking about this group called “other,” Mencia is not making fun of mentally disabled students; rather he is making fun of Hispanic/Latinos who are not mentally disabled and still cannot achieve higher ratings than those who are mentally disabled. The incongruity of the anti-claim is that Hispanic/Latino people should be embarrassed to be rated so poorly in educational systems. As descendants to people responsible for ideas still used in the educational systems today, Hispanic/Latino people as a whole are genetically capable of high scholastic achievement. Lopez adds to the capability and innate determination of Hispanic/Latino people with this joke:

#### Shoes and Belts

They don't know what to do about illegal immigration. President Bush is like, oh my God, can we try the wall, now they want to dig a ditch, and put alligators in the ditch, I'm like you know what motherfucker, put alligators in there, in an hour they'll be shoes and belts. GO FOR IT VATO! There will be souvenirs in an hour and a half. (MA) “Seniora, quieres comprar un cinturon, crocodrilo, crocodrilo. Tocarlo, what you want my friend, its belt, tusch it. (Lopez, 2007).

A further anti-claim argues that it is difficult to construct an identity behind numbers that represent the whole population is such a negative way. In order to continue constructing a positive identity for Hispanic/Latino people, these achievement statistics must change. Joking about the abilities and determination of Hispanic/Latino people serves the construction of identity because it shows how determined Hispanic/Latinos are; they are so determined that a creature as vicious as an alligator will be killed and turned into boots



by people whose instinct is survival. These jokes paint a positive identity of people who are historically capable and driven by a need to survive and succeed.

One of the things Mencia felt is necessary to construct an identity for Hispanic/Latino people is communication. In this next joke, Mencia calls for open communication between people of various ethnic backgrounds as such open communication can be used to eliminate confusion and erratic behavior between people who choose not to communicate with each other but only communicate through organizations.

#### All Groups

We listen more to the NAACP then we actually listen to black people, how fucking pathetic is that shit? You want to ask me something then ask me. We all got our groups. They are full of shit, all of those groups, they represent themselves, they don't represent us. Do you think they have our shit in mind? Fuck no, they're asking us to give them money. What the fuck, why the fuck don't they hook me up, motherfuckers. This is supposed to represent me! "Well you want us to represent you, you gotta hook a motherfucker up!" Fuck that shit. And we all got our group, Mexicans we got LULAC and MALDEF, black people you've got the NAACP, white people you've got the KKK! You see how white people went OH! See how you are fuckers! Oh, you don't want the KKK to represent you, but when the NAACP says some shit, you listen don't you! But you expect us to be different, when the KKK says that white people hate me, you expect me to understand that as an American that that's not true, that most white

people are cool, right! Well I expect the same shit from you white people.

(Mencia, 2003c).

The punch-line here really puts the whole thing into perspective, mocking how groups are allowed to communicate instead of individuals: “But you expect us to be different, when the KKK says that white people hate me, you expect me to understand that as an American that that’s not true, that most white people are cool, right! Well I expect the same shit from you white people.” Too often, spokespeople for these groups openly express their discontent with certain things that go on in the media and they do so with broad terms like, “We feel” and “as a whole” but these groups do not represent everyone. In order to construct a new identity, Hispanic/Latinos need to be able to communicate their opinions and ideas individually, not with blanket statements made by interest groups that claim to represent entire groups. Through this intentional incongruent message within the joke, an anti-claim is made that in order to construct this identity, Hispanic/Latino people need to be recognized as individuals with insight and thought capabilities. Generalizing all Hispanic/Latinos or any other ethnic group based on the organizations that claim to represent them takes away the individual characteristics that make up a group of people. Expressing this in joke form to the audience allows Mencia the flexibility to not only get the ideas out, but to create an enthymematic fulfillment of the argument within the audience.

In this final joke Lopez hypothesizes about future relations and understandings between Hispanic/Latinos and their place in society. Although stereotypical, Lopez recounts his experiences of living in a predominantly white, upper-class neighborhood

where nannies are used by parents to look after their children. From this idea he infers the following:

#### They're Gonna Understand

I give it up to all the ladies who are working as housekeepers, you know and they are raising these kids that the mother goes back to work, the nannies, nombre, now they're not maids anymore. And where I live I see them, they walk the kids with the strollers and they think that my wife and I are husband and wife nannies. We're pushing our kids and their like "oh, look, they work together." You know that, so all the white kids now that are being raised are being raised by Latinos. That's an important thing to remember because in 15 years, 20 years, 30 years, these are kids that are gonna understand Latinos, understand the food, and understand the rhythm in the music. (Lopez, 2003).

In the statement "that's an important thing to remember because in 15 years, 20 years, 30 years these kids are gonna understand Latinos" Lopez foreshadows the construction of an identity for Latinos. He argues that once people develop an understanding of the culture the relationships will change. Much of the tension that exists between the cultures is because of a lack of understanding. As nannies, these Hispanic/Latina women will teach the children about Hispanic/Latino culture, the languages, customs, and beliefs. As the children grow, this knowledge that has been instilled within them will also grow and carry over into their decisions and actions. Lopez argues that this will benefit the Hispanic/Latino people because it will create an environment more conducive

to Hispanic/Latino culture and can help to shape more positive images of Hispanic/Latino people.

### Reconstructing an Identity

A vital part of constructing an identity is reconstructing an already existing identity. Many of the stereotypes found within these transcripts are perpetuated within the media. Shows like *COPS* and movies like *Scarface* and *The Three Amigos* present images of the Hispanic/Latino as the villain, often taking the persona of the uneducated, drug dealers, murders, gang members. Lopez looks at these images with disdain and seeks to reverse those images within his audience's cognitive dialogue by telling them:

#### That Image is Tired

You go to the movies, we're always dealers. Always drug dealers and maids and pimps, that's tired. That's why when you see movies that have us, like that movie *My Family* that came out. The title had a subtitle. How ignorant do you think that we are that we can't figure out *My Family = Mi Familia*. (MA) "Oh! I'm going in!" (Donkey noise). That title had a subtitle; they don't do that to any other movies. You don't see *Water World = Mundo de Agua*. *Forrest Gump = El Pendejo*. (Lopez, 1996/2005).

This type of media portrayal continues to create damaging images of the Hispanic/Latino. The use of subtitles in movies about Hispanic/Latinos is telling audiences that Hispanic/Latinos not only fit the images they see in the movies and on T.V. but they are uneducated, non-English speaking people who need these subtitles to understand things that English speaking white Americans take advantage of. The punch line he offers in the end is designed specifically for Spanish-speaking members of the audience. When

making reference to the Forrest Gump movie he subtitles it “El Pendejo” which translates into a slang phrase meaning “The Dumb Ass.” “Perspective by incongruity encourages people to reclassify their outlook on the social world” (Rockler, 2002, p. 18). Making such a joke and raising attention within the audience to this incongruity, Lopez tries to reconstruct the stereotypical images of Hispanic/Latinos by ridiculing negative stereotypical images and invoking unifying shared images.

In this next joke, Mencia also reconstructs the Hispanic/Latino identity; doing so in a way that acknowledges the many stereotypes. Media portraits of Hispanic/Latino immigrants and real life images of Hispanic/Latino images are not that different. Mencia uses those stereotypical characteristics and argues that they are damaging to the Hispanic/Latino image.

#### Keeping It Real

And this Aztec Warrior is hanging out in front of Home Depot! Now everybody at this point knows that he’s not only a beaner, he’s a wetback. Everybody knows, but no, he has to accessorize. He’s gotta wear the fucking pointy boots, the shit, those tight ass jeans that actually split the nuts! That is disgusting, you should never have camel toe if your name is Raul, that is wrong goddammit, I don’t care where you come from. Then they have the Stetson hat and I don’t know why wetbacks have to add an ‘e’ in front of words like Stetson? “What kind of hat is that?” (MV) “Pues es un Estetson!” “What kind of drink do you want?” (MV) “Un Esprite.” One of these days white people, try it. Go to Home Depot and a get a wetback in your car. Then go run a stop sign, you’ll hear them in back, (MV) “Estop, Estop, Estop!” Like this is not enough, he’s got a belt that

starts off with Mexico right on the belt buckle! Then it chronicles his whole trip here, Guanajuato, Necaxa, Mexicali, Chiapas and where he lives now, Ebakersfield, with the 'E' in front. As if that is not enough for everybody to realize that he is a wetback beaner, he gets into a fucking pickup truck to go home with a fucking cow painted on the side! Then they spell their last name in Old English letters on the back! When did Old English become authentic Mexican? Then they honk the horn (La Cucaracha Theme plays). What the fuck are you doing? (MV) "Because a long time ago our people used to work for the ranches. This reminds me of where we started and helps me to keep it real." If I was white and from Berkley I would probably be shedding a tear and writing about your ass, but I am not, I'm a beaner and this whole fucking thing is embarrassing! (Mencia, 2004).

By dissecting these images, Mencia paints a picture of a Hispanic/Latino immigrant. These images are so well-known that the audience is able to visualize the picture. Accessorizing, as Mencia calls it, with pointy boots, tight jeans, and a cowboy hat only adds to the negative images fed to people in the media. With this joke, Mencia urges these immigrants to alter their appearance, to assimilate into the culture. Making these kinds of claims leads into Mencia's incongruent anti-claim: as long the appearance matches the images in the media, the stereotypes will continue to be negative and the identity of Hispanic/Latinos will continue down its negative path. "Perspective by incongruity is powerful because, if successful, it jars people into new perceptions about the way reality can be constructed and may encourage people to question their pieties" (Rockler, 2002, p. 18). Assimilating into the culture will allow for Hispanic/Latinos to

blend in and contradict the images portrayed in the media, thus creating an environment where Hispanic/Latinos can reconstruct a more positive identity. He takes the point to another level with this next joke about these immigrants themselves being eager to break out of this image.

### The Pointy Boots

Have you ever noticed that only wetbacks dress like wetbacks! Is there a law that says you can't take off the pointy boots until you get a green card? Is that a fucking law? When they finally get their green cards they're like, (MV) "Chinga su madre, finally! My God these boots have been killing me for years! Up and down goddamn Home Depot, cling cling." And it's always the darkest most Mexican-looking wetback, and I know some of you white people are like, (WV) "what do you mean darkest looking wetback?" Cause there are different beaners. See beaners are not a race, we are an ethnicity. That's why there are white beaners but people don't think about that. (Mencia, 2004).

A common misconception about Hispanic/Latino people is the dark skin, dark hair, and dark eyes. While many do bear these characteristics, many Hispanic/Latino people are blonde, light skinned and blue eyed. Because images in the media are so negatively driven, this image is rare. By bringing this to light, Mencia creates an incongruent situation within the audience, thus reconstructing how Hispanic/Latinos are identified. Verbally he claims that even the immigrants do not like wearing these types of clothes. But by creating an incongruent moment, Mencia allows the audience a chance to imagine a new Hispanic/Latino image.

In an effort to break away from the images of Hispanic/Latinos as immigrants from Mexico, a series of jokes attacks the use of labels to lead the audience to the realization that many Hispanic/Latino people are American citizens. Some are natural born citizens; some applied for citizenship, but regardless they are American citizens.

#### But I'm From Here

We want to fucking label...Oh Carlos, you're a Mexican American. No. Don't ever fucking call me that. Call me a Mexican but know that I'm from here, like some guy from Brooklyn is Italian. Like when the *Godfather* came out, they called it an American story, not a fucking Italian story, an American story. That's all I ask. Treat me the same as other immigrants and I'm fucking cool with that and I'm down. That's all I ask. Nothing special. But don't fucking Mexican American. Fuck that. Why am I a Mexican first when I live here? What is this bullshit? (Mencia, 2000).

The key question of this joke speaks volumes toward what Mencia wants to present to audience members. "Why am I a Mexican first when I live here?" As an immigrant himself, Mencia prides himself on the ability to call himself an American. By pointing out the incongruity of creating these labels for people who were either born in America or chose to come here and became citizens, Mencia again works towards a reconstructed identity. The label "Mexican American" is a poor descriptor of people who live in America and are considered Americans. He takes the point even further in the next joke about "Mexican American" and "Mexican" relations:



### Pochos

Yeah, they don't like us in Mexico. They have a negative word for us, white people. A negative word for us in Mexico. They call us pochos. It's negative nomenclature toward people of Mexican decent who live in America.

Translation—pocho to English means literally—wetback. Think about that white people. How the fuck can we be wetbacks here, and there? How the fuck is that possible? What is this bullshit? We come over here, (RV) “Go back where you come from, wetback!” We go over there, “(MV) “Vete a la chingada pinche pocho!” What is this? I'm not legal anywhere! Fuck you! What do we have to buy a house on the fucking river now? (Mencia, 2000).

This joke paints a very clear picture of what many Hispanic/Latino people face. As a naturalized citizen one would assume that someone somewhere made the choice to leave Mexico, and by being an immigrant who chose to go to the U.S. you made the choice to leave Mexico. Either way, there is a certain level of hostility in some Mexican people towards people from the U.S. This creates an incongruent situation here because the treatments here in the U.S. and in Mexico are similar. Mencia offers some commentary in this next joke to clarify this and to further reconstruct an identity for Hispanic/Latino people:

### Watch It On CNN

You white people think (WV) “Yo man, you guys are all Mexican!” Fuck no, you break it down to the simplest thing, that's when you know who you are! If Mexico were to go to war tomorrow white people, fuck you, we are staying! Do you understand that shit? (RV) “What you gonna do Carlos?” “I'm gonna watch

it on CNN like you motherfucker! Fuck you think I'm gonna do? Bosnia is at war, they're white, go help them!" (RV) "Well I aint that kind of white boy!" "And I'm that not kind of beaner!" Yeah, I know what it's like to be looked at differently. First of all, white people; let's get it straight. When I say Mexican, I mean Mexican from here, okay you understand that? A Mexican from here. There's a fucking difference. There's two kinds of Mexicans, white people, that means two—there's two. White people you think there is only one kind of Mexican—oh contraire. No, there's fucking two. There's us, English speaking, articulate, and a very intricate part of the fabric of American society—that is who you see here tonight. You seem to confuse us with that fucker in front of Home Depot. (yells indecipherable Spanish) Hold the fuck up Bubba, that's not me fucker. No, no no...that fucker who cuts your grass, he cuts our grass too! And he does a better job at our house because we tell him in Spanish! All right...and sometimes he's family. Like some people are like, "we don't...well what do you mean Carlos? We don't get it...you mean there's two kinds of Mexicans?" Oh yeah, like there's two kinds of white people. Don't act ignorant fuckers. You know, there is you white people and then there is redneck trailer trash. You know exactly what the fuck I'm talking about. Oh now you know, don't you? (CHV) "You've seen them?" Oh, I've been to K-Mart. You know that skinny ass trailer trash that has no ass that looks just like some legs coming out of daisy duke shorts? You know, you think she is wearing shoes and you get close...Oh my god that's her foot! Jesus Christ! How do you get a callous that big on your foot! Well white people; I know the feeling that you get in the pit of your stomach

when you see that. That's exactly how we Mexicans feel when we see a dude in a pinto with flames on the side, Virgin Guadeloupe painted on the hood of the car, big ass tires in the back with hydraulics, a giant antenna with no stereo, the last name of their entire family spelled on the back. That's when we're going, "where's a drunk driver when you need one?" (Mencia, 2000).

This joke makes the strongest attempt to reconstruct an identity. By making a comparison between Mexicans and white people on two separate occasions, Mencia points out the incongruities of the stereotypes and the images people of have Hispanic/Latinos. First, in the argument about going to war, he openly claims that because white people are white they should go fight for other white countries. The anti-claim here is that American white people will not go fight for other white countries because they are Americans; similarly it would be ludicrous to assume that Hispanic/Latino people would fight for Mexico because they too are Americans. Next he attempts to create a clear distinction between Hispanic/Latino American people as part of American society, and those who continue to feed the media stereotypes of what Hispanic/Latinos look like. By making the argument that "White people you think there is only one kind of Mexican—oh contraire. No, there's fucking two. There's us, English speaking, articulate, and a very intricate part of the fabric of American society—that is who you see here tonight. You seem to confuse us with that fucker in front of Home Depot." Mencia works toward reconstructing a positive Hispanic/Latino identity with the audience. "To create new values is simultaneously to create new motives, new behaviors, and in general, new ways of perceiving the world. Insofar as self-identity is a product of one's beliefs, behaviors, motives, and values, a change in perspective produces a change

in self-identity” (Whedbee, 2001, p. 49). By painting a picture of Hispanic/Latino people as an essential part of society, Mencia leads the audience to a reconstructed image of Hispanic/Latinos. He makes this even clearer by comparing the two kinds of Mexicans to the two kinds of white people. “Oh yeah, like there’s two kinds of white people. Don’t act ignorant fuckers. You know, there is you white people and then there is redneck trailer trash. You know exactly what the fuck I’m talking about.” To build upon this reconstructed identity for Hispanic/Latino people, this comparison is essential. The Burkean “perspective by incongruity is a strategy that can be used to look at aspects of the social world in new ways” (Rockler, 2002, p. 18). Painting this picture in such a clear way forces the audience to recognize the incongruity of the anti-claim. Hispanic/Latinos are a very important and integrated part of American society. Although there are many illegal immigrants and although not all Hispanic/Latino people are hard working positive members of society, many are and they deserve recognition. In the end, Mencia extends his argument even further:

#### Give Me an M16

I want to tell you straight up, white people. You don’t need to build no fucking concentration camp for me if we go to war. “Because you’re from there.” No, look at me, and I’m fucking telling you right now, if tomorrow, America goes to war against those fucking federation states or whatever of Mexico, you don’t put me in a concentration camp, you give me an M-16 and you give me orders. I’ll fucking shoot Julio in the ass in a heartbeat, you understand me? As a matter of fact people, I’ll help the charge. I already crossed the border this way; I know the way back, fuckers! (Mencia, 2000).

Here, Mencia makes his loyalties clear, going directly against the expected stereotype. Through invoking such stereotypes and making anti-claims as countering their ridiculous implications, both comics seek to reconstruct Hispanic/Latino identity.

### Summary

This analysis has provided detailed descriptions of the use of humor in the stand-up comedy routines of George Lopez and Carlos Mencia. Through the use of humor, Lopez and Mencia created jokes with specific rhetorical messages for their audiences. As noted in Table 2, these jokes dealt with ethnic stereotypes, jokes that support or dispel stereotypical images of the Hispanic/Latino population and jokes that help to (re)construct a more positive image of the Hispanic/Latino identity.

**Table 3**

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Key Findings	
1. Jokes of Ethnic Stereotypes	
White Ethnic Jokes	4
Black Ethnic Jokes	4
Asian Ethnic Jokes	3
Hispanic/Latino Ethnic Jokes	9
2. Jokes that support or dispel stereotypical images of Hispanic/Latino identity	
Affirming immigrant stereotypes	4
Affirmation through racial profiling	5
Lies and the stereotypes that tell them	6
3. Jokes that (Re)Construct Hispanic/Latino identity	
Constructing an identity	6
Reconstructing an identity	7

In each of these jokes, perspective by incongruity was possible through the use of words that enthymematically related to audiences able to draw the intended conclusions from them. By using humor in their messages and sharing them with audiences as narrative stories, Lopez and Mencia took advantage of an environment where “anything goes.” As comedians they are free to express any opinion, idea, or belief because this communicative setting is conducive to openness. One might argue that comedians are not free to discuss what ever topic they feel like, citing the Michael Richards incident where a white comedian was attacked in the media for his off color comments about black people. But if you look at that situation, it was not the comedy that fell under attack. Michael Richards broke both the fourth wall of the stage and the character of the comedian and verbally attacked a black member of the audience. He did so as Michael Richards the person, not as Michael Richards the comedian using jokes to make people laugh.

Through their uses of humor to create intentional messages Lopez and Mencia use the ideas put forth by Burke’s perspective by incongruity to not only entertain their audiences, but to influence their thoughts and ideas. Through their rational planning Lopez and Mencia created very specific messages for their audiences and made claims for their audiences that were presented in jokes and stories as anti-claims. “The transformation achieved with perspective by incongruity is not a process of persuasion in the usual sense but of conversion (‘division’ and ‘identification’). An audience is not ‘persuaded’ to accept a particular belief or policy as such, but instead, support for a belief or policy is inherent to a particular subject position” (Whedbee, 2001, p. 49). Lopez and Mencia invoked incongruity richly through their humorous narratives to acknowledge

and poke holes in well-known stereotypes about the Hispanic/Latino population.

Because of their position as comedians, they were free to address and discuss even the most taboo subject matter with an audience consisting of people from all parts of the country and members of many different ethnic backgrounds. Having such a large audience to work with made the use of these messages an important venue to research.

Through this series of selected jokes we saw how the jokes are meant to do more than make people laugh; they are designed to influence audience members' perceptions and beliefs about Hispanic/Latino people as a whole. The analysis not only revealed this rhetorical use of humor, but also shows how each message analyzed was constructed to influence cognitive dialogue within the audience members. These artifacts in the form of selected jokes analyzed help audience members better understand the stereotypes of Hispanic/Latino people. In doing so they also help audience members understand why these stereotypes are often harmful and how to look beyond them to a more positive image of Hispanic/Latino people.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Though progress has been made toward creating a unified society blind to skin color, stereotypes continue to dominate racial perceptions. This steady presence of stereotypes in our societal structure forces us to cognitively adopt the images of various racial cultures without realizing it. Mass media's saturation of popular culture with stereotypical images in news programs, newspapers, movies, and television has such a powerful presence in our everyday lives that these stereotypical images become part of the fabric of society. Because of this, studies examining the stereotypes and the channels where these stereotypes get communicated are vital to understanding the identity process. In an effort to make their experiences known and clear, many African American comedians have used social commentary about stereotypical experiences during their routines (Martineau, 1972). Building on research from Shultz and Germeroth's (1998) study of social attitudes toward disabled people, Koziski's (1984) study on comedians as anthropologists, Tsang and Wong's (2004) study about constructing identity through comedy, and Alexander and Weil's (1969) study on situational meaning, this study proposed and answered three research questions relating to Hispanic comedians Carlos Mencia and George Lopez: (1) What stereotypes of groups exist in the transcripts of the comedians' routines? (2) How do messages with stereotypes support or dispel the stereotypical images of Hispanic/Latino identity? (3) How does the use of humor in their messages (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity? By answering these questions, this study not only identified the messages about stereotypes that exist in the jokes, but explored the rhetorical arguments that jokes using stereotypes make.



By using humor as social commentary the comedian creates an argument in the humor. “The communicator develops arguments in an attempt to persuade the audience to share her or his reasoning” (Shultz & Germeroth, 1998, p. 23). So the comedian, along with entertaining, develops persuasive arguments. “When creating an argument the key element is called the claim” (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1985, p. 87); that claim is the desired conclusion or the reason for the argument. Looking at arguments from this perspective suggest they consist of a train of reasoning that leads to a specific conclusion (Toulmin, 1958). The claim “is the explicit appeal produced by the argument, and is always of a potentially controversial nature. A claim may stand as the final proposition in an argument or it may be an intermediate statement which serves as data for the subsequent inference” (Brockriede & Ehniger, 1960, p. 45). The claim of an argument, according to Toulmin, is the most major statement a critic can address in an argument. To lead to the claim, the message creator seeks to communicate the data of an argument.

### *The Nature of Anti-Claims*

Shultz and Germeroth (1998) took the idea of a claim as key to an argument even further by using Burke’s perspective by incongruity to transform the claim into the anti-claim. The anti-claim is the general claim the message seeks to deny. Message senders structure intentful messages with general claims. Through invocation of a perspective by incongruity, the standard general claim is contrasted by an anti-claim, and the anti-claim denies the general claim. So when Mark Twain stated, “To cease smoking is the easiest thing I ever did. I ought to know, I’ve done it a thousand times.” His general claim is that it is easy to quit smoking, however through a perspective by incongruity the message really argues that it is not easy to quit smoking and that is the anti-claim. This same

application applies to Lopez and Mencia's use of humor. By making their jokes, Lopez and Mencia are making general claims about Hispanic/Latino stereotypes, and through a perspective by incongruity those general claims are denied by anti-claims.

Shultz and Germeroth's study sought to reveal the persuasive messages within quadriplegic cartoonist John Callahan's gag cartoons. Arguing that "gag cartoons, as a particular genre of humor, provide a unique form of public argument" (p. 229), Shultz and Germeroth analyzed Callahan's cartooning of disabled characters to uncover what stereotypes the cartoons seek to deny. Those denials were termed anti-claims. Shultz and Germeroth concluded that the cartoons served as more than just humor, as the cartoons were intentionally outrageously exaggerated to argue against the stereotypes that stigmatize people with disabilities. "Through our analysis of Callahan's cartoons, we seek to reveal how gag cartoons can aid the reader in unmasking and, thereby, confronting his or her attitudes and stereotypes" (Shultz & Germeroth, 1998, p. 242). The cartoons were intended to change the attitudes of the readers about people with stereotypes. A similar effect can be said of Lopez and Mencia whose jokes sought to influence the attitudes of audience members about Hispanic/Latino stereotypes.

Koziski's (1984) research about standup comedians as anthropologists made the argument that "many standup comedians jar their audience's sensibilities by making individuals experience a shock of recognition" (p. 57). The comedian's job is to make the audience laugh; in doing so many comedians seek out real life instances that the audience can relate to and understand. By doing so the comedians are more than mere joke tellers, they are social commentators.

They break down social life into its basic elements--searching for categories, isolating domains and identifying rules. They may talk about social behavior in terms of analytic concepts used by the anthropologist—that is language, social structure, kinship rules, economics, technology and the effects of these on everyman in the audience. These comedians may describe the network of customs that are immediately linked to a particular cultural practice (Koziski, 1984, p. 58).

Through this research the understanding of the work of the standup comedian as only a joke teller is greatly enlarged. Standup comedians are story tellers and social critics. In seeking to make audiences laugh they go beyond a surface level joke into the important cultural aspects of their settings. They create jokes that audiences can understand and that reveal truths about many of the cultural aspects in their societies. Koziski also argued that comedians are similar to anthropologists because they see things in a similar way. “The standup comedian and the cultural anthropologist look deeper beneath the surface of human behavior at the thought forces at work in human consciousness” (Koziski, 1984, p. 73). By looking at the things from a deeper level, analyzing Lopez and Mencia’s jokes and finding the anti-claims represents their positions as more than just comedians, but as social critics with a message.

This idea is taken a step further by looking at Tsang and Wong’s (2004) research in constructing identity in comic discourses. This article focused on the comedic use of language as a tool of identity construction. By using humor to involve audiences, the comedian seeks to construct an image within their audiences. The audience involvement that Lopez and Mencia seek is an enthymematic understanding of the anti-claims,

signaled by laughter. Through the use of language including shared connotations, comedians maintain the audience's attention and present humor with specific messages. This use of language to construct identity in humor messages is intentional and rhetorical in nature and specific to the comedian/audience setting because that situation allows for the open discussion of taboo topics.

Such freedom to discuss taboo subject matters publicly is a result of the comedian/audience setting as a specific and unique situation. Alexander and Weil (1969) argued that situation of an event dictates what is acceptable behavior. This use of situated identity is vital to the comedian/audience setting because the comedian is identified by the audience as the joke teller whose job is to make the audience laugh. The audience expects incongruent statements designed to make them laugh. Thus the comedian is free to use material otherwise considered unacceptable in other situations. Lopez and Mencia use the comic stage as an opportunity to discuss stereotypes in an open forum with success because they have lived many of the issues their jokes are referring to. Having grown up dealing with many of the characters in their jokes, having grown up in the neighborhoods in many of their jokes and having first hand experience with many of the stereotypes they address gives Lopez and Mencia a certain amount of credibility with the audience. The audience is more willing to accept these types of jokes from someone who has lived the jokes because of that first hand credibility. They are perceived as more credible because of those experiences. By creating messages that intend to influence audiences' perceptions, Lopez and Mencia situate themselves as social commentators with persuasive messages using anti-claims designed for audiences situated as willing receivers of such messages.

In this study, the message creators, Lopez and Mencia, sought to communicate social arguments through their situated identity as comedians. They understand that audiences expect to laugh at jokes that are told, yet by incorporating their serious messages into a joke they do not violate any of the audiences' expectations. They tell a joke and the audience laughs. However, because they are using the jokes to carry arguments to the audience, they are able to address stereotypes, dispel the negative ones, support the positive ones, and (re)construct a more positive Hispanic/Latino identity. By allowing themselves to be persuaded in such circumstances, often without argument claims forthrightly stated, the audience members enact what Aristotle called the enthymeme. "The enthymeme is a kind of rhetorical deduction based on audience-accepted warrants that yield probable conclusions" (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001, p. 118). Lopez and Mencia created rhetorical messages for audiences to draw conclusions from. By purposefully creating these incongruent jokes Lopez and Mencia's rhetorical arguments counted on the audiences' acceptance of an intended message. Once the audience processes the story as "data" and understands its claim is really an incongruent anti-claim, they attach a meaning or a conclusion to the rhetorical message that accepts its argument. This enthymematic process is possible because the messages are based on stereotypes that audiences find familiar; when the comedian openly makes a claim about the stereotype the audiences' enthymematic understanding of the joke's incongruity enables understanding of an anti-claim.

Through their intentional use of humor to create rhetorical messages, Lopez and Mencia seek to influence their audiences' perceptions about Hispanic/Latino stereotypes. Using jokes as the data for this analysis uncovered several accounts of the comedians'

use of practical reasoning within their jokes. By expecting their audiences to practically reason through the joke's claims, Lopez and Mencia expect the audience to reach a provisional conclusion beyond the obvious claim. Through their use of humor Lopez and Mencia make outlandish, incongruent claims about Hispanic/Latino stereotypes; however though the use of practical reasoning and the enthymeme the audience understands the alternative meanings within the jokes. Because the general claim is so outlandish the process of incongruity leads the audience to the actual claim, or the anti-claim.

Comedians use anti-claims by making a statement so outrageous as to evoke laughter, and such laughter indicates that the audience "gets" that such a claim is outlandish and its opposite is, in fact, true. This study explored Lopez and Mencia in their use of anti-claims by focusing on three areas, 1) what ethnic stereotypes exist; 2) how those messages with stereotypes support or dispel stereotypical images of the Hispanic/Latino identity; and 3) how does using humor in these messages work to (re)construct Hispanic/Latino identity.

#### *Identifying Ethnic Stereotypes Through Enthymeme and Incongruity*

First, this study identified the ethnic stereotypes that exist within the comedians' rhetorical messages. These stereotypes were identified and discussed in order to uncover what ethnic stereotypes of the Hispanic/Latino population were invoked by them. A common idea found within the transcripts was a need to break away from the politically correct stronghold of polite society that restricts communication about racial or ethnic differences. In order to develop and understand cultures different from our own, fears of persecution for asking questions and becoming interactive with different others in a quest for understanding must be overcome. Allowing the ability to laugh at and discuss ethnic

cultures different from our own will help create a more open environment where real discussions can take place, advancing our understandings of each other in the eyes of these comedians. By using humor to shed light on the many stereotypes that exist, not just of Hispanic/Latinos, but of a variety of other cultures, Lopez and Mencia are sparking a conversation about ethnicity in attempt to build an understanding. Through the use of humor the comedians are bringing to light the otherwise taboo stereotypes in a public setting. By doing this Lopez and Mencia are forcing their audiences to have a conversation, cognitive or otherwise, about the existence of such stereotypes. Their narrative accounts of personal experiences are told to audiences, who then laugh because they can relate to the stories through their own experiences. They draw enthymematic understandings allowing them to not only laugh, but receive the purposeful persuasive message. When Lopez and Mencia joke about different cultures, they attach stereotypical voices to those characters; this aids the audiences' awareness of the humor's message. By using voices like these the comedians are assuring the audience of what characters they are talking about. This assurance allows the audience to run the information through their frames of reference in order to ethymematically comprehend what is really being said. The jokes openly claim one thing about the stereotypes, but in their anti-claims they are arguing the opposite, stirring up a cognitive discussion within the audience. This is the essence of creating a perspective by incongruity; to make a literal claim that symbolically means something else.

Communicating stereotypical issues to audiences using humor creates incongruities through their simultaneous familiarity yet impossibility when treated as universal fact. Comedians' use of humor to create messages with arguments can be

understood through a perspective by incongruity. According to Burke (1959), “We intentionally use an instance that is dissolving, to lend weight to our contention that ‘perspectives by incongruity’ do not belong to a cult of virtuosity, but bring us nearest to the simple truth” (p. 309). One path to the simple truth is through the use of pun. “A pun links by tonal association words hitherto unlinked. ‘Perspective by incongruity’ carries on the same kind of enterprise in linking hitherto unlinked words by rational criteria instead of tonal criteria” (Burke, 1959, p. 309). Often we find that creating jokes about cultures different from our own is off limits. Because Lopez and Mencia are both Hispanic/Latinos, to hear them joke about white, black, or Asian cultures is one incongruity. According to Burke, perspective by incongruity is attaching new meanings to words or concepts to allow for new understandings. From these comedians’ viewpoints, the other culture stereotypes take on a new life. By discussing what they see in other cultural stereotypes as well as those of the Hispanic/Latino population, Lopez and Mencia urge their audiences to openly discuss the stereotypes and to become enlightened with new perspectives on the people behind them.

Comedians as rhetors use the humor in their messages to influence what the audience believes by creating arguments for those beliefs. Humor as an argument is a persuasive tool, not only because it aids in memory and retention of information, but because in the comedic setting it allows for an open discussion. Approaching taboo topics is not acceptable in polite society, but in the comedian/audience setting these subject matters are commonplace. Because of this social topic restriction, humor is often needed as a tool for carrying out these rhetorical arguments. Hauser (1986) defined argument as “reasoned appeals based on evidence of fact and opinion that led to a



conclusion” (p. 46). The idea that an argument contains both facts and opinions creates a solid foundation for the practice of using humor as an argument because it acknowledges the use of known truths and perceived truths. By incorporating what is known as truth based on factual evidence, and what is perceived as truth based on opinion or assumption, the joke teller creates arguments that reflect a notion of reality. Hauser (1986) furthered this idea by noting “through arguments, rhetors attempt to provide an audience with a solid basis for holding a belief and coordinating its actions with its beliefs” (p. 46). As an argument, these jokes use rational thought to achieve some claim. A joke not only needs a rational claim to be rhetorical, it also needs to have reasoned appeals. To make a rational claim, the joke must possess some factual truths or assumed opinions. Here Lopez and Mencia present these facts and opinions in narrative format for their audiences to draw an enthymematic conclusion. Without these facts and opinions, a joke is just a joke.

By using narratives to make these rational claims, Lopez and Mencia are purposefully creating rhetorical messages. This use of rhetorical narratives is vital to the messages being sent because they can infiltrate the audiences’ cognitive process without cause for immediate alarm, thus serving their persuasive goals. By not causing audiences to instantly react to the taboo subject matters of the messages, the comedians are able to enter the cognitive stream of thought and subtly arouse the audiences’ enthymematic process. Fisher (1987) argued that this rational use of narrative stories is a rhetorical logic. By creating specific messages with conclusions that are drawn enthymematically through narrative logic, the comedians are attempting to influence audiences’ thoughts, beliefs and actions. This use of narration to produce rhetorical messages is “logic applied

in attempts to induce other persons to accept, reject the alleged ‘truth claims’ of disputed or doubtful propositions” (Fisher, 1987, p. 15). By applying these logical implications in narrative messages, the messages become rhetorical tools of persuasion. In their jokes, Lopez and Mencia have intentionally created incongruent narrative messages using logical implications in attempt to influence audiences’ thoughts. Fisher (1994) furthered this argument about logical use in narrative messages with “I shall maintain that narrative rationality, the logic that attends the narrative paradigm, entails a reconceptualization of knowledge, one that permits the possibility of wisdom” (p. 21).

By using humor in these narratives Lopez and Mencia are adding strength to their rhetorical messages by overcoming social taboos. Acting as a social lubricant, humor in this setting allows the comedians to freely express their ideas. By creating incongruous humorous messages, the comedians are able to surpass the socially taboo boundaries set by a sense of appropriateness or political correctness. Because incongruent messages rely on the initial shock to the senses, these types of jokes become stronger because more audiences will accept the messages. The same message in a classroom or some professional setting would not have the same strength because the audience would resist allowing such a message to be communicated. The comedian/audience setting is devised with an incongruent expectation. The comedians are going to tell jokes, and the audience expects to laugh at those jokes. This pre-determined situation is conducive to incongruent humor. By incorporating rational claims into those incongruent messages, Lopez and Mencia are strengthening the rhetorical implications built into the narrative jokes.

*Supporting and Dispelling Stereotypes*

Secondly, this study set out to explore how use of humor and stereotypes supports and/or dispels the images of the Hispanic/Latino identity. In doing so, the analysis uncovered jokes that both affirm and dispel stereotypes. In those used to affirm stereotypes, several issues repeatedly arose. When affirming a stereotype, the comedians acknowledged an existing population of Hispanic/Latino people within the U.S. These people exist; they are part of the population. However, the comedians told stories with jokes about Hispanic/Latinos not being the only group of immigrants, but because the public conversation centers around Mexico, the perception is that Hispanic/Latinos are “the immigrant” in a discussion about immigrants. By making this part of the discussion the comedians rhetorically seek to influence the audience toward the idea that “yes, there are Hispanic/Latino immigrants in the U.S., but this is not the only group of people migrating here.” By affirming while making more complex such stereotypes as these, the comedians created another argument for their audiences. By acknowledging the Hispanic/Latino’s presence as immigrants, the comedians argue that this is a group of people who came to the U.S. to work. Jokes about selling oranges on the interstate and touching so many products before consumers do make arguments for the work ethic and positive impact this group of people has on the economy. Enthymematically, the audience is able to attach meaning to this use of humorous messages. These are conversations that go unspoken because of their taboo nature. By initiating the conversation in the form of a joke, the comedians are counting on their audiences to understand the jokes based on their own experiences. Based on the overpowering presence of the stereotypes affecting the image of Hispanic/Latino people, audiences

recognize the stereotypes used, but the way they are used by the comedians creates a different meaning. Lopez and Mencia acknowledge the stereotypes, but do so to present an incongruent perspective. Some Hispanic/Latinos are illegal immigrants, but they are a vital part of the American economy. There are some Hispanic/Latino gang members, but not all Hispanic/Latinos are gang members; many are hardworking individuals who serve the needs of their communities.

These humor messages are created to make audiences laugh, but they are also created to help audiences see the stereotypes in a different light. According to Aristotle, an argument is made when the audience has some type of working knowledge about the subject matter. The enthymeme requires that the audience has some kind of authoritative take on the arguments' premises. For example, "This leader has accepted invitations to lavish entertainments at the homes of the wealthy and therefore we must beware of him, for he is planning to pervert justice in their favor (suppressed here is the premise that those who accept expensive attentions are planning favoritism)" (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001, p. 172). In order for an enthymematic conclusion to be drawn, the audience members must have some prior knowledge of a similar situation that causes them to conclude that because the invitations were accepted, favors will be asked and honored. With the jokes made by Lopez and Mencia, the audience must have some prior knowledge about the stereotypes. The use of humor must invoke within the audience certain reactions based on their experiences with the stereotypes. By laughing at the jokes the audience is saying to the comedians, "I get it." Why the audience member "gets it" can be the result of any number of experiences which will vary from person to person, what is important is that they "get it." They will laugh at the messages because of the

enthymematic frame of reference, but they may take a persuasive argument from the messages because a perspective by incongruity will allow them to attach a different meaning to a specific message.

Once an audience's expectations have been violated, new expectations form. "Humor today goes hand in hand with our rationality, too, and not just rationality in the sense of cognitive sophistication, but in the sense of a rational attitude toward the world. Part of this attitude is viewing things critically, because they are looking for incongruity" (Morreall, 1983, p. 203). Every time a situation occurs and humor is experienced one grows because the brain is expanding to take on the new connections that are made (Ferber, 2006). Comedians use messages with humor to influence those connections by creating memorable messages. The incongruity theory of humor claims that this connection sparks laughter because of the shock to one's thinking associated with the message. Experiencing humor in this way helps one to release pent up tensions in regards to that particular subject. People laugh at the unexpected taboo joke because it is such a shock given their patterns of expectations. Freud (1905) thought this experience of laughter was healthy because it provides the element of relief and helps to make taboo subjects less stressful. "Verbal humor involving tension release can be seen when a comedian tells a joke to an audience by making fun of stereotypes. By this, the comedian helps relieve the feelings of tension that people normally have regarding the topic" (Fatt, 1998, p.2). Such unusually acceptable incongruent messages created by Lopez and Mencia help to create an open environment where taboo subjects are okay and alleviate the tensions that these taboo topics create. By using humor to shock audience members,

rhetorical messages are sent by the comedians and received by audience members without social outcry.

Of the three primary theories of humor, incongruity can be applied most often to the jokes made by Lopez and Mencia. Through their use of incongruity the comedians were able to create messages that shocked the audiences' senses. Doing so allows them to discuss taboo subjects without causing social disarray because their jokes violate what is expected from the acceptable social norms. This violation sheds light on the outrageous and often inaccurate stereotypes of Hispanic/Latinos. Through this intended violation Lopez and Mencia seek to open a cognitive discussion with audience and through the enthymeme and Burke's perspective by incongruity, lead the audience to the anti-claims. Audiences rationally reason their way through the obvious claims of the jokes to the provisional conclusions intended by the jokes, the anti-claim. Through these reasoned anti-claims Lopez and Mencia attempt to influence their audiences cognitively.

Though incongruity has the most impact, these jokes may also spark feelings of relief and superiority within the audience. "The spontaneous applause, laughter, and humor the jokes succeed in engendering in the audience are of various types, relief, incongruity and disparagement" (Tsang & Wong, 2004, p. 280). Through the incongruent feelings sparked by the humor, Lopez and Mencia also can create feelings of superiority and relief amongst the audience members resulting from the initial shock of the joke. When Lopez jokes about who is really running the country, the initial shock is achieved through joking about Hispanic/Latinos in the fields doing jobs that nobody else wants and that is where the feeling of superiority could initiate even more laughter. Initially audiences may be shocked by the thought of Hispanic/Latinos playing such an

important role in the economy, but as that initial shock wears off, Hispanic/Latinos may feel a sense of pride or superiority behind the message and non-Hispanic/Latinos may feel relief at the thought of anyone in such a menial job still having a significant impact on the economy. Feelings of superiority result from feelings of being better than the person being laughed at. By being ready to laugh at others, people are projecting their own status as above or superior to others who are not as smart, good looking, wealthy or educated as ourselves. By telling jokes about disparaging stereotypes Lopez and Mencia's audiences laugh because of these feelings of superiority. Lopez joking about who is running the country creates a sense of superiority with audiences through incongruity because the stereotype places Hispanic/Latinos in menial jobs, but through incongruity audiences are led to the anti-claim which argues that the U.S. economy is dependent on these menial jobs.

Along with incongruity and feelings of superiority causing laughter, the comedians also initiated laughter through feelings of relief. Relief laughter is a result of audience members laughing at jokes that release tension or stress. These feelings of relief are common when the discussion of ethnic or cultural practices become public. When Mencia jokes about people calling him a beaner and that the only way for it to affect him would be for him to wake up doing yard work, the humor creates a sense of relief for himself and audience members who can relate. Relief laughter results because being called such a name cannot result physically in having to do that kind of job. This use of laughter could also result from a situation where one sees another person be embarrassed publicly causing feelings of relief and laughter in others who observe the

event. The feelings of relief are a result of a person being relieved that it was not “me” who was embarrassed in that situation.

Despite the significant presence of incongruities in the jokes told, relief and superiority theories of humor were present in many of the jokes told. An incongruity may shock the audience, leading to feelings of superiority over those who do not have the new perspective provided by the comedian’s story, or relief that differences in society are manageable or “not so bad after all.” Superiority and relief keep audiences thinking beyond the incongruity, which helps to strengthen the rhetorical impact of the jokes.

As the comedians created incongruities in their messages, audiences interpret meanings from the jokes through enthymemes to reveal the anti-claim. Audiences then understand these incongruent anti-claims as the jokes center on popular stereotypical images of Hispanic/Latinos. These stereotypical images exist as a perceived identity of Hispanic/Latinos, so by making a joke about all Hispanic/Latinos being illegal immigrants, audience will enthymematically understand that not all Hispanic/Latinos are illegal, thus the joke has created incongruity to shock one’s expected mental pattern, causing laughter and making an anti-claim. Such message generation and audience reaction help to affirm and dispel stereotypes. Lopez and Mencia’s jokes are understood and the reaction associated with that understanding works toward affirming or dispelling the stereotypes.

*(Re)Constructing Hispanic/Latino Identity*

Finally, this study sought to uncover how the comedians’ jokes worked to reconstruct a Hispanic/Latino identity. Along with the jokes that identify the stereotypes and the jokes that support or dispel the Hispanic/Latino stereotypes, Lopez and Mencia



created jokes to help construct an identity and reconstruct a tainted identity for the Hispanic/Latino population. By approaching stereotypes using humor Lopez and Mencia are assured that the majority of the audience will not be offended and will receive the specifically designed messages. This enables them to create messages that openly address the stereotypes that identify Hispanic/Latinos. By first bringing the stereotypes to light in such a public setting, then supporting or dispelling the stereotypes' accuracy, Lopez and Mencia are working toward reconstructing identities that already exist. These jokes do more than point out the obvious to the audience, they argue that since the stereotypes exist it is important to acknowledge them and use them. With so many of these stereotypes widely used and understood by their audiences, these jokes took the stereotypes and worked to reverse the images they project. In describing the stereotypical visual characteristics of a Hispanic/Latino gangbanger, Lopez's reconstructs the identity by arguing that the stereotype is so overexaggerated that it cannot be completely true. Making this joke argues that because of the overexaggerated image created the incongruent anti-claim is that not all Hispanic/Latinos could possibly fit this description thus reconstructing a negative social identity and making it more positive. By creating these rhetorical messages the comedians were able to discuss the use of names like "beaner" "spic" and "wetback" in order to argue that such names are not by nature damaging. Rather, these kinds of words only obtain power when a person allows them to have power. Using these words in their jokes is a persuasive device. The comedians want their audiences to believe that the words as a whole cannot damage the identity of the Hispanic/Latino population as much as "acting out" the words can. Lopez talked about this in his joke about the number of Latinos on T.V. His rhetorical message to the

audience was that by playing these negative character roles, Hispanic/Latinos are keeping the stereotypical images of Hispanic/Latino people alive. In order to fully construct a positive image Hispanic/Latinos need to take on positive roles and refuse these demeaning images. His jokes do not seek to deny the existence of these negative characters within the population; rather he seeks to acknowledge their existence in all populations and encourage Hispanic/Latino actors to break away from these roles.

The rational claims made by the comedians are intended to guide audiences to a more positive image of the Hispanic/Latino population. The overexaggerated images their jokes present work to lead audiences to a more realistic image of the everyday Hispanic/Latino. By working to reconstruct images of the Hispanic/Latino people, Lopez and Mencia argue that acting out the stereotypes is more damaging to the image than the stereotypes themselves. The incongruity of these messages is designed to shock audiences into an understanding that the images portrayed in the media are not a universal constant. These images exist, but in order to move past them to a more positive identity, Hispanic/Latinos need to move beyond not only the physical representations of the stereotypes, but avoid playing these types of characters in performance roles because they help to perpetuate the images further.

Socially accepted stereotypes are easily transmitted through the use of humor because joke tellers are expected to create incongruent situations, causing laughter. The audience expects to laugh because the joke teller has confronted a socially taboo topic by acknowledging and incorporating stereotypical images of a specific group. And yet, they know about the stereotypes and using this knowledge can enthymematically supply missing or unstated premises or claims in an argument. By drawing on their own frames

of reference, audience's enthymematic conclusions represent a prior knowledge or recognition of the stereotypes in the jokes. Comedians are aware of this prior knowledge and create arguments in light of this understanding in order to affirm or reject the stereotypes. Analyzing the jokes through a rhetorical lens can break down these types of jokes in order to understand their rhetorical intent. For instance, this joke by Lopez had clear intent:

Let me tell you this, in 25 years, this is going to be a pretty diverse country, whether you like it or not! We are not in Kansas any more tontos! In 25 years the majority of people are going to be African American, Asian, and Latino people. Did it get quieter in this room? I'll be a grandfather, telling scary stories to my grandkids, "Ok, your grandpa is going to tell you a scary story! A long long time ago, when your grandpa was a little boy there used to be people who had white skin." "AHHHH!!! Really grandpa?" "Really mijo, like the man who cuts our grass!" (Lopez, 1996/2005).

Lopez ends this joke with a comment "really mijo, like the man who cuts our grass." Doing so creates an incongruity because the stereotype employed often is that of the Hispanic/Latino person as the gardener. Enthymematically the audience will understand the incongruity in this joke because of this current stereotype. This joke reconstructs the Hispanic/Latino identity through Lopez's use of the anti-claim suggested by that final incongruent statement. Currently the stereotype portrays Hispanic/Latinos as gardeners, but through his use of humor Lopez paints a picture of the future where Hispanic/Latinos have overcome these stereotypes. By using this anti-claim Lopez is arguing that

Hispanic/Latinos will overcome these stereotypes and create a more positive image for themselves.

By creating rhetorical messages within their jokes, the comedians are attempting to influence audience attitudes and beliefs about stereotypical issues—and using humor makes those messages stronger. Lopez and Mencia are creating arguments that reconstruct Hispanic/Latino identity through their use of humor, using it as a rhetorical tool.

### *Culturally Situated Identities*

The formation of an identity is not an easy process. Cultural identities and social identities work together. It is through our situated social identities that our cultural identities are focused, but it is through our cultural identities that our social identities can exist. Whether through birth or personal choice, we immerse ourselves with a cultural identity, but the social aspects within the larger culture that we chose adopt help us narrow our social identities within the cultural setting and becomes “who we are.” Cultural identities are important to the audiences’ enthymematic understanding of the intended messages because the jokes create arguments that construct a more positive identity for Hispanic/Latino people through discussions of common stereotypes. Many of these stereotypes are perceived as having a negative effect on the Hispanic/Latino population, by using humor Lopez and Mencia work to clarify those perceptions. By creating jokes that both affirm and dispel these stereotypes the comedians argue that the stereotypes affect the overall identity only when they are allowed to. Using humor to cope with the stereotypes allows comedians and audiences to ridicule the stereotypes. By joking about the stereotypes the comedians are showing the audiences that such negative

stereotypes may possess some truth, but their effects on Hispanic/Latino identities could be minimal. With such minimal effects people can either work towards constructing a positive identity for Hispanic/Latinos or reconstructing an identity that already exists through the stereotype and making it more positive. Humor use is a tool comedians use to help audiences embrace the more positive images. By making the enthymematic connections the audience acknowledges the jokes' rhetorical intentions, thus jokes that reconstruct Hispanic/Latino identity work well because the resulting identity is more positive.

Although the overall concepts of what identity is and what affects it vary between individuals, this enthymematically deduced positive identity is culturally based and useful to the Hispanic/Latino population as a whole. Stets and Burke (2000) argued that although one's identity is composed of self-views, those self-views result from group memberships. These groups do not encapsulate a concrete identity; rather they help to shape a perceived identity. Geertz (1973) called this identity taken on based on groups a cultural identity and argued that this shared system of symbols and meanings is a perceived acceptance and not necessarily a guaranteed acceptance. By joking about these stereotypes, comedians argue that the stereotypes exist, but are not universal. Alexander and Knight (1971) also argued that individual behavior is only meaningful as social interaction when it is intentionally claimed. Thus, social interaction is an identity that individuals within a population can carefully construct based on a variety of situations (Alexander & Knight, 1971). Group-based intentional behavior is a culturally situated identity and humor is a tool that allows comedians to use humor to work toward reconstructing a more positive identity through ridiculing the stereotypes.

### *Humor as Conflict Avoidance*

Within the United States, people are known for being uncomfortable with argument and divisiveness (Dundes, 1987). We do not like direct verbal confrontation. This desire to avoid conflict is particularly strong when dealing with people of other cultures and the stereotypes associated with that culture. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) described this attitude towards argument as being built by the language used to describe the argument; they held that Americans use conceptual metaphors when dealing with arguments that are so ingrained the act is often unnoticed (e. g., “Your claims are *indefensible*,” “He *attacked* every *weak* point in my argument,” and “I never *won* and argument with him” (pp. 4-6). This use of metaphoric language allows argument uses to go unnoticed. Even though they are unnoticed, they are still arguments in their conception. To attack a weak point for comedians is to subtly counter it with a stronger point. The comedians make these types of arguments in their use of humor. By using their position on a stage with a dedicated audience, Lopez and Mencia are able to use language to build arguments and present them to audiences without creating conflict. Making these arguments in these settings removes the uncomfortable direct verbal conflict and allows for arguments to be made through the anti-claims.

Because arguments can be applied to language metaphorically, viewing them from the metaphoric perspective allows the arguments to be subtly sent to the receiver. “Arguments from this perspective are considered to be a dangerous and serious business; however, humor, when presented as an argument--while dangerous--is perceived to be (somewhat deceptively) not such ‘serious business’” (Shultz & Germeroth, 1998, pp. 229-230). Through their use of narratives to carry out their rhetorical messages, Lopez

and Mencia are subtly creating arguments. Because the arguments are coded in humor, unsuspecting audiences draw conclusions based on their enthymematic responses. By ‘getting’ the joke, the audience member is ‘getting’ the argument. Because this process is so subtle, the use of humor to make these arguments reveals its power. Through the ability to reach large audiences with these powerful arguments, Lopez and Mencia’s rhetorical messages are serious business.

Rybacki and Rybacki (1991) argued that humor could be used as a way of accepting or acknowledging thoughts that society considers taboo, even forbidden. “Humor is such an essential ingredient in communication that it has been referred to as a lubricant for social life” (Zinker, 2003; Dziegielewski, Jacinto, Laudadio, Legg-Rodriguez, 2004, p. 75). The use of humor breaks down stressful situations and allows participants to become more relaxed and open to the environment. Comedians as rhetors use the humor in their messages to influence what the audience believes by creating arguments for those beliefs. Because those arguments are made in such a subtle way and delivered to large audiences the communicated taboo messages do not raise objection from audience members. Comedians are free to create rhetorical messages for audiences and deliver them to large audiences whose enthymematic experiences will aid the reception of the intended rhetorical message.

#### *Making Arguments Through Humor*

Lopez and Mencia created rhetorical messages using humor. One key argument is made by creating jokes about ethnic stereotypes and using those jokes to urge audiences to break out of the politically correct stronghold and work towards developing more open and honest multi-racial relationships. By using humor to shed light on such

taboo subjects, Lopez and Mencia are able to create rhetorical arguments and present them to audiences who attend shows as willing participants. Next the comedians are creating jokes that both affirm and dispel Hispanic/Latino stereotypes. In doing so the comedians acknowledge a certain portion of the Hispanic/Latino population as part of the negative images, but urge audiences to move past that small percentage in order to see that not all Hispanic/Latinos fall into this categorization. The idea that an argument contains both facts and opinions creates a solid foundation for the practice of using humor as an argument because it acknowledges the use of known truths and perceived truths. By incorporating what is known as truth based on factual evidence, and what is perceived as truth based on opinion or assumption, the joke teller creates arguments that reflect a notion of reality. Hauser (1986) furthered this idea by noting “through arguments, rhetors attempt to provide an audience with a solid basis for holding a belief and coordinating its actions with its beliefs” (p. 46). These jokes make audiences laugh, but more importantly they help audiences see people in a different light.

Humor is funny for one major reason—because it violates what we expect. By applying perspective by incongruity to comedians’ uses of humor messages with arguments, “perspective by incongruity could take place at levels beyond novel word associations. That is, it could create unlikely connections between evidence and claim” (Levasseur, 1993, p. 203). By joking that “wetbacks” are the only people who dress like “wetbacks” in one instance, then that as soon as they get green cards the clothes change first, Mencia’s incongruent message moves beyond the normal association with work. Mencia is not simply making light of the clothes that these people wear, he is arguing that the desire to be American is so strong within these immigrants that once the green card is



granted, the assimilation begins with outward appearances and this works toward constructing a more positive image. Constructing this positive identity is essential to the advancement of Hispanic/Latinos through the media that reach a wide audience. Jokes about everything from the images in the media to performance in the school systems are attempts to persuade the audiences that a positive image is possible, but it needs to begin with the image that people project of themselves. This enthymematic conclusion is based on the experiences of the audience members. Aristotle argued that “the best enthymemes will be based on knowledge specific to one’s subject, such as politics or physics” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001, p. 176). The perspective by incongruity is the path to the simplest truth because it creates in a narrative argument the ability to see underneath the surface claim. “The metaphorical extension of perspective by incongruity involves casuistic stretching, since it interprets new situations by removing works from their ‘constitutional setting” (Burke, 1959, p. 309). This perspective allows the comedian to create arguments by including untrue information and allowing the audience to draw enthymematic conclusions based on their knowledge that it is largely untrue. “These arguments could create ‘new meanings’ for old phenomena and such new meanings could cause society to re-examine and question its existing orientation” (Levasseur, 1993, p. 203).

A clear example of throwing an incongruous perspective at the audience came in Mencia’s joke:

See white people, don’t inhibit your shit, this is the temple of laughter. I swear to God, I do a black joke and half you fuckers laugh, the other half is like (WV)“ha ha, are they hear?” (RV) “The beaner is trying to trick us!” You can’t do that shit any more white people! I wanna be treated like a fucking equal. That means

when you're pissed of at me, fucking tell me! I'm sick of white people dodging the bullet just cause your afraid they are going to think you are racist, I am sick of this shit! If somebody at McDonalds is black or Mexican and they do a shitty fucking job serving you, tell the motherfucker cause you'll do it to white people! That's the difference right there. If a white guy gives a white guy shitty service, he'll tell them. (WV) "Hey, excuse me, come here. Does this burger look like you just cooked it, fucker? I don't think so, now get me my goddamn burger properly like it looks in the picture!" But if a black guys gives him a fucked up burger, (WV) "excuse me, can I speak to your manager?" Fuck the manager white people! It's cause your guilty and we use it against you, I know I've fucking done it before. I'm serious, we could use it against you, all we have to do is fucking "racism" and white people are (WV) "oh we're sorry!" That's it, fuck that white people, don't fall for that bullshit! Some black guy gives you shitty service, tell him! (WV) "Hey, excuse me, um, I ordered before he did and you seem to give him the order before me and we ordered the same thing, will you get my fucking burger!" He's like, (BV) "what's up, oh, I get it, you want a nigga to get you shit right! Does that make you feel good master, to make a nigga get you shit, huh motherfucka, is it cause I am black!" Don't fall for it white people, don't get all scared, tell them! (WV) "No, it's not cause your black, its cause we are at McDonalds and you happen to have the hat, the suit and the tie on asshole! Now get me my fucking burger!" (Mencia, 2003c).

Through this particular joke, Mencia furthers his call for a more open and honest relationships between racial groups. To do so he argues that white people need to be

unafraid to disagree or be treated fairly by minority groups. Enthymematically, Mencia is relying on the audience to have prior experiences or at least knowledge of such an experience; that is what helps him to create incongruity. The ending of the joke is where he calls his audience to re-examine and question the existing orientation.

By reaching an enthymematic conclusion to the joke's logic, the audience may receive Mencia's rhetorical message. In contrast, with such comedians as Jeff Foxworthy or Larry the Cable Guy one could argue that the opposite is true, that the use of humor is designed to reaffirm the stereotypes that exist rather than dispel them. I argue that some comedians do choose to use humor to reinforce stereotypes, and this may be true of Larry the Cable Guy whose real name is Dan Whitney and is neither a "southern hillbilly" as his character is portrayed nor is he a southerner in general. Dan Whitney purposefully chooses to take on the character role of Larry the Cable Guy. His jokes are a complete character act. From the fake country-laden accent in his voice to the claims of Southern Hillbilliness, Dan Whitney plays a character who chooses to make jokes that reinforce stereotypes. Jeff Foxworthy, on the other hand, uses humor to argue against stereotypes. His line of Redneck jokes is similar in creation to the jokes made by Lopez and Mencia in that they are all so overexaggerated they cannot be completely true. Foxworthy even notes in his show that, "There are a lot of misconceptions about the South. A lot of people think that everybody from the South is a Red Neck but you don't have to talk like this to be a Red Neck. I've been to 48 states and there are Red Necks everywhere you go." I would argue that his lead into the list of over exaggerated Red Neck jokes is the set-up for the anti-claims to follow. The images he describes are so exaggerated that the

same ideas can apply, the images exist, but do not encapsulate all white people or people from the South in general or even all “blue collar” workers.

Using Fisher’s narrative paradigm as a tool of argument and Kenneth Burke’s (1959) perspective by incongruity as lenses, this study analyzed the strategies and meanings in the arguments made through rhetorical humor created by George Lopez and Carlos Mencia from a rhetorical perspective. One goal was to create a method that communication scholars are able to apply not only to Hispanic/Latino comedians, but to the overall use of humorous messages with arguments. By establishing the importance of understanding messages created in a communicative setting where humor is expected, Lopez’ and Mencia’s strategies become clearer. In this case, this method revealed how Lopez and Mencia made strategic arguments through enthymemes and incongruity. The results of this study can be used to examine potential rhetorical strengths of using humor not only for Lopez and Mencia, but also for humor users in general.

#### Limitations

When taking on a study of this nature, one must recognize important limitations to the research. The limitations to this study dealt with a variety of issues. The first limitation can be broken into two parts; first the artifact was chosen based solely on the amount of commercial success each comedian has achieved. This allowed for the researcher to create a narrow and specific artifact to analyze, and also created a limited scope of data. There are hundreds of working Hispanic/Latino comedians with material suitable to this type of study; however in an effort to narrow that list and create a focused artifact it was important to find a shared characteristic. For this study that shared characteristic was the network television show signifying the commercial success that

each of the comedians has achieved. This limitation does not suggest that the artifact is incomplete; it only recognizes that the results could have been different with a larger set of comedians. Second, this study was not only limited in the number of comedians chosen, but also by the kinds of comedians chosen. In order to gain a more complete understanding of how the use of comedians' humor relates to the formation of ethnic or cultural identity it is important to obtain data from a variety of sources. The use of only Hispanic/Latino comedians signifies a possible pre-existing knowledge or bias to the stereotypes. By incorporating a variety of comedians the data would have more depth and perspective from which to look at the stereotypes and how they influence the formation of the Hispanic/Latino identity as well as that of other cultural or ethnic groups.

The second limitation results from the uniqueness of the study. Much research has explored humor, identity and incongruity, but the combination of these topics in this study invoked resulted in few articles and resources available upon which to base and structure the analysis. The primary source for the idea of an anti-claim was Shultz and Germeroth (1998). This article looked at comic strips by John Callahan about physical disability and made the argument that the humor in the comics is from the images they project. Because Callahan himself is disabled, the images were created with humorous intention. Using this article along with Morreall's and Burke's ideas about incongruity as a template I was able to construct the methodology for this study in order to analyze these jokes for meaning.

### Future Implications

Future implications of this research offer several possible branches for the present study to be furthered. Rhetorical studies look at an artifact in order to understand what is going on within the artifact. Through this process the rhetor uncovers new and even more in-depth questions or problems with the present study that set a stage for future studies. In this study the data pointed out that the comedians make light of many negative stereotypes, and critics of the comedians' material argue that doing so only strengthens others' belief in the stereotypes. A future project could look at how the jokes affect audiences by conducting interviews or focus groups on people after hearing the jokes.

Another possible research project is to become an observer and attend one or more shows of each comedian in order to create an ethnographic study of the audiences and their reactions to the jokes. Some of the jokes told are more offensive than others; doing such a study would provide the first hand knowledge needed to give voice to and analyze the audience reactions. Previous studies on humor have struggled to focus on the audiences, who in the end decide what is funny.

Finally, this study offered valuable information for understanding humor and its place in the communication process. Using the comedians' routines as a data set allowed examination of the jokes and the rhetorical messages within them. Doing so uncovered the stereotypical implications within the jokes and how those specific messages influence Hispanic/Latino identity formation. Using Burke's perspective by incongruity allowed the messages to be further dissected to uncover what the messages were really intended to argue to audiences and how the comedians used those messages to manipulate their

situated identities. The jokes were specifically constructed by the comedians to be funny, thus supporting their profession, but the messages within the jokes created social arguments pushing them beyond the role of “just a comedian” to being a “social critic” with a message.

In the end what this study uncovered is a strong argument for the use of humor as a rhetorical tool in communication. The rhetorical implications presented by this study challenge the idea of a joke being “just a joke.” Jokes and humor possess the power to carry messages, to argue and even to persuade. George Lopez and Carlos Mencia’s use of humor creates socially relevant messages for audience to hear. This study advanced the knowledge of the rhetorical power of humor and humor in communication. Each of these comedians has jokes to tell, and each joke has a message to potentially persuade the audience, making them and their jokes valuable to the study of rhetoric and the study of communication.

## APPENDIX

Jokes are listed in order with Table 1 on page 61.

## Selected Jokes

1. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2006). *El mas chingon* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglío Records.

## No Blacks Allowed

My grandmother like a lot of Latinos are racist toward different cultures, you know, black people. My grandmother, I had a girlfriend that was 13; she was black, and beautiful. I loved her. So I am walking home with her, my grandma sees me, and all she has to do is honk. "Mira, fucken boogie nights, get your ass in the car. Mira, Peaches and Herb, hey Herb get your ass in the car. Pinche Denzel, get your ass home!" You know the fucked up part, I was darker than her.....And now that she is old, she needs round the clock nurses. So I decided to teach her a lesson before she leaves earth, so all her nurses are black. There are 12, and everyone is blacker than the other. The last 2 are almost purple that's how black they are. And she will call me up, and she don't know their names, and she will be like (MA) "Diana Ross wants to give me a bath." Who? (MA) "Diana Ross, la negra me quere limpiar el culo, I don't need the dream girls to clean my ass." Five minutes later, "What now?" (MA) "Chaka khan stole my sweater. I know you don't believe me, but Chaka khan stole my sweater!" Who? "Chaka khan! Sonofabitch! Talk to them Denzel, they're your people."

2. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2006). *El mas chingon* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglío Records.

## Other Illegal Aliens

You wanna talk about illegal aliens; I think we should look at the Asian people. I went to see Circus Olay in Las Vegas; those chinos can get in a little ass box. I think we start there first. Your gonna go to McDonalds and order a happy meal and 11 chinos are going to pop out. "He got on my toy and he rode away."

3. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2007). *America's Mexican* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglío Records.

## Drop in a Bucket

If immigrations laws pass they say that 1.2 million Mexicans would have to go back to Mexico. 1.2, sabes que, that's 7 quinceaneras, that aint shit, THAT AINT SHIT! 1.2, that's 7 quinceaneras and 2 weddings. That's not going to make a dent vato.



4. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2007). *America's Mexican* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglio Records.

#### Gangbangers and Drywallers

Let me ask you this, who do you think is running this country? Guess (mariachi music plays, Lopez lets out a “grito” Mexican scream). Yeah! “That’s who!” Look at all the white people, (WA) “I am so scared right now, I so scared, I wanted to try and find a guy to do tile, but now I am afraid to ask. I am so scared, the guy next to me looks like he does dry wall, but I am assuming right now that they are all gang related.”

5. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2001). *Right now right now* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglio Records.

#### He’s Been Crying, Hurry!

We are different people; we speak Spanish and people don’t want to hear it. You speak Spanish and people; you ever see them, their asses get all tight. (SA) “La cosa me dijo el hombre.” (WV) “There they go!” It’s like a forty-dollar fine to speak Spanish in some states. You start speaking Spanish and they call 911, (WV) “911 hello, hi, yeah hurry they are here, hurry! How do I know, he just said jellow instead of yellow, HURRY! I don’t know his name I can’t read his neck. But it says something about “Chugo” or “Chago, Challos? It’s in Old English font that I am not familiar with, there is a 13 there, I don’t know maybe his age? Apparently he has been crying, he’s got a teardrop under his eye. Oh he’s coming over here!”

6. Ziegler, J. (Producer), & Steinberg, D. (Director). (2006). *No strings attached* [Motion Picture]. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures.

#### The Work Force

See I like teaching lessons this way, instead of hey you shouldn’t do that, I say the opposite. That’s why white people, please kick all the wetbacks out of this country please because I want to see what happens tomorrow, cause you don’t get it, do you think black people are going to go to the San Joaquin Valley and start picking again? (Shakes head no) When beaners are gone, trust me black people are not going to be like (Black Voice BV) “Man we gonna move to the San Joaquin Valley, HEY HEY!” That ain’t gonna happen. White people are going to find themselves in Fresno picking fruit singing, “swing low sweet.”

7. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2007). *America's Mexican* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglio Records.

#### Find Every Mexican Available

And let me tell you this, people don't want us here; that is insane. That is the most insane thing to not want Latinos in the United State. We do all the jobs that no one in America wants to do. That's what we do! Who do you think is rebuilding New Orleans? Guess! (Mariachi music and grito). You know who? FEMA that's who, Find Every Mexican Available! FEMA! That's right, us, like it or not. At 5:30 in the morning, we are working; we are not at Starbucks playing fucking SUDOKU.

8. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2007). *America's Mexican* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglio Records.

#### Onions and E.Coli

Let me say this, the country is not what you thought it was. Everything that you touch, Latinos touch first. We're there every day early, everything you touch. Let me give you some examples. Taco Bell had some tainted green onions. (WA) "Oh God, I got E. coli from them." Some tainted green onions showed up at Taco Bell, white people get E. coli and the whole world stops. Who picks the onions? Latinos! You talk shit about us; it gets down to the fields. (SA) "I didn't hear you, what did they say about us? They don't want us here, we're lazy, and we're depleting the system? Mira, quieren onions, mira! (Rubs microphone on crotch and butt pretending to be an onion) Asta me culo buey! Here take that shit to Taco Bell. There's you chalupa right there. Think outside the bun. We don't fucking eat there, what do I care?" Everything you touch, we touch first. That's why we're here. Chevy could not be more confused. Their slogan right now is This is Our Country. Oh, I don't think it's your country anymore. You wanna know whose country it is, guess (mariachi music and grito). (SA) "Not no mores." Mariachi music is the heart and blood of the Mexican people, that music right there.

9. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (1996,2005). *Alien nation* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglio Records.

#### The Double Standard

You don't agree that there is a double standard? Let me explain it to you this way, you get 6 Caucasian people and put them in a car that's called car-pooling! You put us in a car, (siren sound) (WA) "All right gang bangers, get out!" (MA) "What, come on Tia gangbanger, get out."

10. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2007). *America's Mexican* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglío Records.

#### Aint Going Nowheres

Let me tell you this about immigration so you finally hear it from a Latino....we ain't going nowhere eh! NOWHERES!! The stupidest thing to do is to assume we are all from Mexico. (White Voice, WV) "Well what part of Mexico are your ancestors from??" Los Angeles bitch! I got a breathtaking view of the king taco, it's lovely.

11. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2007). *America's Mexican* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglío Records.

#### You Don't Sound Mexican

If you listen and you watch Mexicans on television you think that we all have accents, we're all you know. I called a restaurant to make a reservation and I said my name is Lopez and the woman said, (WA) "Well you don't sound Mexican." What are we supposed to sound like? Cheech? (MA) "I'd like to make a dinner reservation for two tanananana tan tan tan.

12. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2007). *America's Mexican* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglío Records.

#### Credit Card Holders Only

It's ignorance that's the enemy more so than anyone of any particular color, ignorance! I was in line to get tickets for a concert, it was like 90 people and I was in the back and the lady says, (WA) "Excuse me Senior?" I was like "senior," wow, I better start using more Oil of Olay to cover up these crow's feet. She said to me, (WA) "this line is for credit card holders only!" I was like (MA) "Oh, I'm sorry, come on donkey (makes a donkey noise)! Forgive me, come on donkey.

13. Rickenbaugh, K. (Producer), & Miller, P. (Director). (2005). *Why you crying* [Motion Picture]. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Home Entertainment.

#### The First Alien

Illegal aliens come from all over the world, not just the hole in the fence in San Diego. This is a nation of aliens, going back to the first one, Christopher Columbus. They don't know what to do with the border. They want to put glow-in-the-dark powder? Oh yeah, that's good, so that way if you get it on yourself, when you come across at night, you glow. (WA) "Identify yourself!" (MA) "Casper the friendly Mexican." (WA) "Thank you very much, float on, thank

you.” You think that Mexicans come to the United States and take the good jobs away from the Americans? Oh yeah, you can see it, (WA) “Well I am only working in computers until something in produce opens up!” I take my hat off the people working in the fields ‘cause I don’t think anyone else could do that shit. How long would a Caucasian migrant farm worker last? They would not last one row, they’d be out there I the sun, (WA) “Fuck it’s hot, I could use some Country Time lemonade! Hmm, my Birkenstocks are all muddy, there’s no shrooms out here you liars, its lettuce!”

14. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (1996,2005). *Alien nation* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglio Records.

#### Backs to the Camera

It’s nice to be a Latino performer, there are very few of us, we are like Condors, because there’s like three of us, me, Paul Rodriguez, and the guy that sells insurance on Telemundo in the bumble bee suit. Now if I can get those two guys to fight to the death, I’ll be in the mix. You don’t see us! You don’t see us on television; television is not friendly to Latinos. There are actually statistically more Mexicans with their backs to the camera, then facing it! How are you gonna be a household name like that (MA) “All pora!” (WA) “Spread em bastard, spread em bandito!” How can you get fame off that? When you watch salsa commercials, we are not even in salsa commercials!

15. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2007). *America’s Mexican* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglio Records.

#### Shoes and Belts

They don’t know what to do about illegal immigration. President Bush is like, oh my God, can we try the wall, now they want to dig a ditch, and put alligators in the ditch, I’m like you know what motherfucker, put alligators in there, in an hour they’ll be shoes and belts. GO FOR IT VATO! There will be souvenirs in an hour and a half. (MA) “Seniora, quieres comprar un cinturon, crocodrilo, crocodrilo. Tocarlo, what you want my friend, its belt, tusch it.

16. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (2003). *Team leader* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglio Records.

#### They’re Gonna Understand

I give it up to all the ladies who are working as housekeepers, you know and they are raising these kids that the mother goes back to work, the nannies, nombre, now they’re not maids anymore. And where I live I see them, they walk the kids with the strollers and they think that my wife and I are husband and wife nannies. We’re pushing our kids and their like “oh, look, they work together.” You know

that, so all the white kids now that are being raised are being raised by Latinos. That's an important thing to remember because in 15 years, 20 years, 30 years, these are kids that are gonna understand Latinos, understand the food, and understand the rhythm in the music.

17. Lopez, George (Writer/Vocalist). (1996,2005). *Alien nation* [Compact Disc Recording]. Redondo Beach, CA: Oglia Records.

#### That Image is Tired

You go to the movies, we're always dealers. Always drug dealers and maids and pimps, that's tired. That's why when you see movies that have us, like that movie *My Family* that came out. The title had a subtitle. How ignorant do you think that we are that we can't figure out *My Family = Mi Familia*. (MA) "Oh! I'm going in!" (Donkey noise). That title had a subtitle; they don't do that to any other movies. You don't see *Water World = Mundo de Agua*. *Forrest Gump = El Pendejo*.

18. Ziegler, J. (Producer), & Steinberg, D. (Director). (2006). *No strings attached* [Motion Picture]. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures.

#### Gotta Break An Egg

Look at where we are right now, scared. (White Voice, WV) "Why did he say that? Why did he do that?" White people telling jokes behind our backs cause you are afraid that I am not going to get it. No, you tell it to my face. I don't like this new age white man. That's because you don't have the balls to say what you feel you want me not to say what I feel. I don't like it; I like the old white man. He had a plan, he had something in mind. He had this in mind. He knew, but he understood, he used to say things like "you gotta break an egg to make an omelet." Yeah! Today it's like "you gotta break an egg to make an omelet, unless you use egg beaters." I like the old white man. He landed on Plymouth Rock and there were already people here. A pilgrim went up to the Captain and said (English Accent, EA) "Me Lord, there are people already here, we cannot create a society upon which one already exist. We must return back home to England." And he said (hit hand with microphone) "Shut up we'll kill them, take their shit and call it Thanksgiving." That's what you did people. White people you killed all the Indians and then when they died you went "Oh my God, there goes the help. What are we going to do now?" The white man never flinched, he said, "Build some boats and go get some niggers." See look at you people (WV) "no, that's not what happen, that's not what happen. We invited black people on a cruise and it didn't work out, yeah that's what happen." Meanwhile black people on the boat are going (Black Voice, BV) "How you gonna make a brotha row his own cruise? Dis is wrong man!" You know why I like the old white man? Cause he wasn't racist. He was racial. White people have killed white people in this country. Once when we fought against England, and twice when

we fought against ourselves. That's how I loved that white man, he was awesome, he knew when we gotta change things. North went to the south and said (WV) "Hey man, all men are created equal. It's a fundamental building block of what this country is all about. Just because he is black does not mean he is not a man. You must let him free, you must allow that man to be free." (Redneck Voice, RV) "What bitch, you wanna take that from me? Hell no, you want my nigger to go free, your gonna have to shoot me." Not now, now I do joke about Native Americans and people go (WA) "don't do jokes about those people Carlos." Cause everybody pretends they care about Indians, everybody does. (WV) "We care Carlos." Nobody does, there is not a person in this room, or watching the show at home that is buying a house because you want to give it to an Indian because you feel sorry for them cause you took their land. None of you! But you'll pretend "I don't want to laugh at that joke because the Indians." I don't care! I am sure there are some Indians in here right now. Don't come up to me later crying talking about "they took our land!" Yeah, well you should have fought smarter. You gotta know when to hold them and know when to fold them baby. You know who fought a smart war? Mexico fought a smart war. The Mexican/American war is that long. Why? Cause Indians, they just fought for to long. White people went (WV) "hey bitch, (machine gun sound) prrrrr. Indians were like "We can take em, (slowly motions pulling and shooting arrows). Mexican thought they could kick white ass too, talking smack. (Spanish Accent, SA) "Listen Senior White Man ju will go down. Ju will go down at the fron of my bullets. Ju will know what it is to be killed by a Mexican." And then white people went (WV) "What you little brown bitch, prrrrr." (SA) "Okay, wait, time out, time out, time out, no, no ellos tienen el prrrr, and we we're like pow pow pow, NO. Okay white man its over, ju can keep it, we're leaving, ju can keep it, keep it, keep it." And then a little Mexican kid said (SA) "Pappy where are we going?" And he said (SA) "Shhh, we're coming back, shh. They are going to build a Home Depot and we'll be back, and the one in Burbank is going to have an office!!" And that's what they did, they left the country. And they went and stood by the border. And one of them said (SA) "okay, we are going to have to stay here until I see the sign, when I see the sign then I go like this (waves hand in circle above head) and everybody goes." See some of you are laughing and going, "whatever dude, there's no sign." But yeah there was, and the white man knew there would be a sign, and he was prepared for it. It was in the mid 60's. Check, the Mexican migration into the United States began largely in the mid 60's, what happen in the mid 60's? I'll tell you what happen. The black people looked at the white man and said (BV) "Listen man I am tired of you treaten me the way you do man. You make a brotha run fast and bring back gold metals for this country. Then you treat me like a second-class citizen. Well it aint happenin no more and the advantage is over. We aint going to the back of the bus, we aint drinking out of no other fountain, you understand me? I will be going to school with your daughter. And my black people will never ever go out into those fields and pick for your white ass no mo." And the white man never even flinched. "You don't have to. Julio!" (SA) "Que paso mi jefe! THE SIGN (with hand circling over head)."

19. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003c). *Unmerciful* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, I

#### Can't Hold in Laughter

We gotta start fucking letting it go, let it go white people cause you know what, you can't hold in laughter. When something is funny, it's funny! And you hold it in white people, it's like a fart inside your body, it wants to get out, if you don't let it out, some negative shit is gonna happen! White people, do you think it's a coincidence that white people do all the crazy sports in America? Do you think it's a coincidence white people? Why do you think you fuckers go skiing all the time? Cause you couldn't laugh at the black or beaner joke, you have to go out on the moguls to let it out.

20. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003b). *Not for the easily offended* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### The Scary Neighborhood

And I hate to get racial this early in the show. But we all know what race is doing the crazy shit. Do I need to point to the white people? You crazy fucking white people. You will play with any fucking animal out there. You will actually go in the water and spread blood so the fucking sharks get closer. Most people go "shark get the fuck out of the water." White people go, (WV) "here they come let's get in!" You white people astonish me. I turn on the discovery channel. You will go to any goddamn place on the earth to fuck with crazy animals. You will go to the fucking Congo, you will go to goddamn Peru, and you will go to fucking Brazil and the Amazon. You will go anywhere to find a fucking animal and play with it. But won't go to Oakland cause a nigger might shoot you.

21. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2004). *Down to the nitty gritty* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### A Real Tattoo

Look, if you are going to get a tattoo, get something good, something that says, you! Something real, don't be white and have a tribal tattoo! What is that? (White Voice, WV) "Dude this is from the Navajo Tribe." Really and what tribe are you from Chad? What fucking tribe are you from? If you are white, you don't put tribal tattoos on all right! You put a tattoo of you killing Indians, that's a real fucking tattoo! A little tattoo of you going like that (poses, then hits microphone) that's a real fucking tattoo! And then next to that another tattoo of you taking their fucking money now that you're trying to tax them! Yeah, your just bending an Indian over and he's all "Hey ya ya ya, hey yaa!" (WV) "That's right bitch, I am taking your land and your money mother fucker!" Look at some

of the white people, (WV) “man, he fucked us up quick!” Well, don’t have a goddamn stupid ass tattoo! That would be like a Mexican having a tattoo of a KKK.

22. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2000). *Take a joke America* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Arroz y Frijoles on the Side

I’m not going to call a black man an African American. What kind of bullshit is that? That’s so disrespectful. First of all, you’re the only non-immigrant in this fucking country. Yeah, what do you have for dinner at thanksgiving bro? Straight out American food. Macaroni and cheese, Kool-Aid, ham hocks, black-eyed peas with ham...straight up. Grandma doesn’t come out of the kitchen saying, (BV) “Baby, I made you some jumdum-bobolee (some indecipherable African sounding dish).” What do you have for thanksgiving dinner? And then you have fucking arroz y frijoles on the side motherfucker don’t you? Don’t you have rice and beans on the side to let you know you live here now, but you’re a beaner motherfucker. You’re goddamn right you do. And white people, it’s the same fucker. You go to white homes and there’s some purple cabbage shit on the side you’ve never seen before. What the fuck is that? (RV) “Oh that’s my great-great grandma’s. She brought that shit over from over there.” Black people don’t have that shit bro. All the rest of us chose to be here. Except for you brother man, we all know the boat story. Look at you; some of you don’t want to laugh...what the fuck? Bro, I feel sorry for you in a way but in another way you fucking fell for that boat shit a little too easy. What the fuck, someone said Carnival Cruises and y’all didn’t even ask where’s this shit going? (BV) “Come on, Carnival Cruises, Rufus let’s go!” Like in two weeks later... (BV) “Come on this fucking cruise sucks man! How you going to make a motherfucker row in his own goddamn cruise?” You’re an American brother man, more so than anybody here. “No we don’t get it...what do you mean?” You don’t know jack shit about Africa bro. That’s the reality of it. I speak Spanish. I go to Mexico and they go “oye cabron como estas?” and I answer them “pues yo estoy bien y tu?” If I bought your ass a ticket to Rwanda and the plane landed and the door opened up they saw your black ass, got happy, and went “jumdum-bobolee.” What are you going to do get a flashback? (BV) “I’m home! Jumdum-bum(goes on in indecipherable African type language).” No...you are going to be like (BV) “Jumdum-bobolee Denver mother fucker! America in da house.”

23. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2004). *Down to the nitty gritty* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### The Dashiki

You gotta call people on their shit. I saw a black man wearing a dashiki the other day. For those of you who don’t know, a dashiki is you know that African wear,



you know the one where you go, “oh that African shit.” That’s a dashiki. So I said, “yo man why you wearing that dog?” (Black Voice, BV) “Because when people see me in this shit, I want people to know where the fuck I really come from!” You’re black, DUH!! I doesn’t matter what you fucking wear stupid!

24. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003a). *America rules* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### You Can’t Take the Ghetto Out

And I am glad that we got a fucking black guy in charge right now of the Army, fucking Colin Powell. See everybody sees Colin’s light skin, and they listen to him speak articulately. But you can’t get rid of the fucking ghetto in a man. That motherfucker knew what it was like to be slaved, to be put down, to be fucked. Nobody could be more America than him. See you white people, you don’t understand cause you have been free for a long time. You don’t have the perspective that the brother and I do.... We got Colin Powell in charge and that’s fucking great cause I know that mother turns ghetto as soon the cameras go off. I know that he finishes his speeches and says, “Last question, yes? Ah, no that is information we cannot pass on, we will divulge that as soon as we can if it is not conflicting with National Security, but as far as I know I could not even answer that question. Thank you very much, we’ll talk to you next time.” You know that they close the doors and he goes in there where are the generals of all the fucking military and he goes (BV) “Listen up mothafuckas!”

25. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2000). *Take a joke America* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Misunderstood Asians

Laugh at everybody...no, but we can laugh when people come into our community and bring some bullshit rules. How the fuck can you be from the Orient and get angry with me when I call you an oriental? Fucker, that’s where you’re from—The Orient. I just added the ‘a’ and the ‘l’ fucker, that’s all I did! You’re oriental! (AV) “No!” Well, the fucking rugs you make are oriental! The food you cook is fucking oriental! (AV) “I know what the fuck is oriental, but I am not oriental. I am an Asian Pacific Islander or Polynesian.” Yeah, well, I never got the fucking memo. Right? Fax me with your bullshit next time Quam-Lee. You can’t even make an honest mistake today and go, “Hey, um, are you Chinese?” (Japanese Accent, JA) “Oh no fucker! I am Japanese!! ”Holy shit Quasimoto! Fuck don’t get mad, I was close! What the fuck! You’re acting like a called you a black midget or some shit, you know? (JA) “Chinese people don’t look like Japanese people!” I’m like, yes, you fucking do! What are we supposed to carry eye charts now so we never screw up anymore? Oh my god, you have a 2 centimeter epicanthic fold...you’re from Narsaki!

26. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003b). *Not for the easily offended* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Smart Asians

“No you’re wrong Carlos. The school system sucks Carlos.” No, if the school system sucks why is it that Asians kick our ass in that same school system. Want me to tell you why? Honestly? No bullshit! Parents! The rest of America, “Charley, this is your first day of class Charley; you go out there and do your best Charley. The best you can and that’s all we expect from you Charley.” Asians? (AV) “This is the first day of school. The most important day of your life. If you come home with report card with one B I kill you. Now go be happy today.” Cause they’re on a whole other level. And you gotta give props to Asians. We really gotta get props to you. You achieve scholastically like no other in this country. You are unparalleled when it comes to academic achievement. What the fuck happens to you behind the wheel of a car?

27. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2004). *Down to the nitty gritty* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### The Green Beaner

Stupid people mess it up for everybody else. Stupid people like Mexicans who wear green on St. Patrick’s Day. “What are you doing?” (MV) “I don’t want nobody to pinch me and shit!” “Well it’s not your holiday cabron, your name is Raul, not McMierda, take off the fucking green! It’s an Irish holiday you dumb ass! What do you think you go to Ireland one day and they wake up going (Irish Accent, IA) “Hey there laddy, guess what we’re celebrating this morning? That’s right, it’s Cinco de Mayo! I painted the cow on the side of the door and everything! We’re all driving to London, just to cross a border, all 14 of us in one car. Even me 16 year old daughter is going to try and get pregnant today.”

28. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003c). *Unmerciful* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### You’re All Mexicans

We look alike I know my mom is from Mexico and my dad is from Central America. I personally was born in Central America but I grew up in East Los Angeles and you know Mexican traditions but I wasn’t actually born in Mexico I was born in Central America all right white people, Nebraska. Look at you, some of you are looking at me like (Redneck Voice, RV) “what part, you better be kidding boy.” Fucking relax. I was actually born in Honduras, Honduras. But not like it really fucking matters in L.A. or anything you know, so many fucking Mexicans, you’re just fucking Mexicans is all you are, it doesn’t matter what you fucking say. (White Voice, WV) “Hey man you’re fucking funny bro where you

from?” I can say anything, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and they will look right at me right in the fucking face and say (WV) “so what part of Mexico is that?” You don’t know how lucky you are white people. You’re fucking white wherever you go man here you’re white, L.A. you’re white, San Francisco you’re white Houston you’re white, you go to Miami fuckers you’re still white. I go to Miami I’m fucking Cuban. What the fuck is this shit? Brother man don’t laugh you’re a brother man wherever you go to. (Black Voice) “What’s up nigga what’s up wit you dog?” You’re a brother wherever you go the only shit that changes is Westside / Eastside. That’s the only shit that changes Midwest, Midwest. Here you’re black, L.A. you’re black, Chicago you’re black, and New York you’re fucking black. Fucking watch this I go to New York what am I in New York. Puerto Rican! You see how everybody knew! Fuck you; you mother fuckers you said that shit you racist pieces of shit fuck you. You didn’t have to be so quick and answer and shit.

29. Ziegler, J. (Producer), & Steinberg, D. (Director). (2006). *No strings attached* [Motion Picture]. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures.

#### Mexicans Do It Too

I saw something the other day I thought was unbelievable. I don’t know if you know this but they opened up, in Burbank California, a little center for the wetbacks to hang out at in front of Home Depot across the street, YES! So they don’t have to stand in the rain, it’s got a little kitchen and an office, the wetbacks are spoiled right there. “Hey why don’t you go outside?” (SA) “I don’t have to I’m inside the office.” They got a little drive through, you show up and it’s like (SA) “hey what do you need?” (White Voice WV) “Um, I need three people to do my roofing.” (SA) “No problem, three Mexicans, let’s go, get in the car.” (SA) “Welcome to Juan in the Box can I take ju order please.” (WV) “I need two guys to do tile.” (SA) “Two Mexicans, get in the car, let’s go.” (SA) “Welcome to McRaul’s can I take ju order please.” (WV) “Uh, I need someone to clean my Port-a-Potty.” (SA) “Oh, uh, send the guy from El Salvador, let’s go.” Look at the white people there like (WV) “what, oh my God!” The Mexicans are like (SA) “YEAH!! We no gonna do that, El Salvador, Nicaragua, go go go!” ‘Cause there are hierarchies, we’re not just beaners, there’s levels, like you white people, there’s you white people then there’s (hits head with microphone and hums country song), it’s a different white person. Asians, you know. This is a big Asian city and nobody knows more than you ‘cause if you are Chinese you’re on top, if you’re Vietnamese, you’re pretty much the niggers of that community. See you guys are going “ahhh” the Chinese people are going (Chinese Voice CV) “how does he know dis?” If you’re Japanese and you bring home a Vietnamese lover your family is like (Japanese Accent JA) “How could you do this to us?” And if you’re a Philippino, you’re the beaner of the Asian community! Cause you’re just like us, your indigenous people that got banged by some Spaniards.

30. Ziegler, J. (Producer), & Steinberg, D. (Director). (2006). *No strings attached* [Motion Picture]. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures.

#### Who Builds the Fence?

You know what they said in California? I saw it on C-SPAN, people we vote for, (WV) “Um, I propose we kick all the illegal aliens out of the country, and then we build a super fence so they can’t get back in.” And I went, um, who’s gonna build it? If the wetbacks are gone, there goes the work force.

31. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2004). *Down to the nitty gritty* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### The Crab Effect

But everybody wants to make you feel guilty about something or another. It’s like when you move out of the ghetto. Are you one of those beaners that did good by yourself, did good by your family, now you’ve moved out of the ghetto? What do you get? The people that live in the ghetto all mad at you! (SA) “Hey homes how come you left the ghetto homes?” “Cause I was tired of you shooting at me! Is that a good fucking reason to leave!” (SA) “You act like I hate you homes. I don’t hate you I hate white people.” “Really, I find it very interesting that you hate white people, but you only kill Mexicans! Why is that? Are you dyslexic or some shit?”...What retardedness is that? And because I grew up in the ghetto I am suppose to understand gangbangers. If you are here, I don’t get you and I never will. And right now you might even be hating me, that’s what I don’t understand, I get the, “We’re protecting the neighborhood!” Really, from who? I want to meet all the white people goddammit that are going to rise up and say (RV) “We’re taking East L.A. back! These goddamn beaners with their King Tacos all over the place, what kind of bullshit is this? We’re taking it back, but be careful; it’s being protected by Casper and Little Puppet!” (SA) “Hey homes, if we don’t protect our shit, then who will protect our shit?” “You’re shit! Pendejo you rent!”

32. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003a). *America rules* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### No Looking for Me

Let’s talk about fucken shit that’s going on, like all my fucken relatives that were left in Mexico and Honduras, you know the fucken wetback ones. They are all fucken showing up at my door all of a fucken sudden. They’re like, (Spanish Accent) “Aloha Carlos, I got here!” “Who the fuck, how the did you get here? What the fuck are you doing here? I thought they fucken clamped down and made the border tighter?” (SA) “Oh no, they no looking for me!” Ain’t this a bitch, goddammit white people keep them away too! You’re so fucken worried

about the goddamn beaner, you forgot “Huuuh Huuhh” was getting in here! See that’s the problem, fucken too centered! (Redneck Voice, RV) “Goddamn we gotta stop them illegal aliens from coming in and takin’ our jobs!” While “Huuuh Huuhh” was fucken building bombs right next to you and shit! (SA) “Pendejo no look at me, LOOK AT HIM! Why do you give me that much chit man? I not going to blow anything up! How can you get mad at me, I pick strawberries? I cut ju grass motherfucker; I am the one in front of Home Depot at 5 o’clock in the morning. Ahmed is not in front of Home Depot, he is at Radio Chack!”

33. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003a). *America rules* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### A Chopping Cart and Oranges

(RV) “Shit we should have closed all the fucking boarders and never had this goddamn problem in the first place!” First of all, America is built on the blood of immigrants. Immigrants will show us how fucked up we are and how complacent we are at the opportunities we have. That’s why we need immigrants. Look, white people, you never thought of selling oranges on the freeway. You never got off the 405 and Jamboree and thought (RV) “hey man I could do some shit here!” Its took fucking Julio who got dropped off here from Nicaragua to get dropped off there and look at the fucking freeway and go (SA) “Chit, I see opportunity! I see the future. A chopping cart and oranges, maybe some peanuts.” Don’t laugh too hard black guy, you guys sell roses fucker! Come on white people don’t sell shit on the freeways. You just have signs (SA) “can I have some change?” You lazy motherfucker! How about you sell some shit their Jonathan! You know what I mean? Nobody gets it now. We need these immigrants. These immigrants are what make us fucking strong!

34. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003b). *Not for the easily offended* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Across the Board

(WV) “But we all need to all get checked at the airport for security purposes.” No we all need to get checked at the airport ‘cause white people don’t have the balls to racially profile Ahmed as you did and still do us. You see for every 2 blacks or 2 Hispanics in jail for a drug related crime there is only 1 white person in jail for a drug related crime, yet outside of jail for every black or Hispanic that are involved in illegal narcotics there are 5 white people that are involved in the same illegal narcotics. Why is it that we are in jail with the more propensity? And do you know why? Because there are more cops in San Jose and Watsonville and Salinas and Oakland than there are in Sunnyvale, because we racially profile niggers and spics. Now don’t get me wrong, I don’t mind if you racially profile white people, I’m just asking you to do it across the board.

35. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003c). *Unmerciful* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### You're Bi-Lingual

But you gotta know who you are in America! Hell in America I am a nigga and a nigger too, that's right, you see white people, look at the white people going (WV) "Fuck he knows!" Hell yeah I fucking know, if me and this black guy are in a car later on tonight and we get pulled over by a redneck cop, that fucker comes out and goes (RV) "Niggers, get out of the car now!" Well I am going to be the first nigger out of that fucking car. You think I am stupid? You think I am going to be in the car "well fuckers, you hear him! Hey don't look at me like that he said 'niggers' not 'niggas.' You know what I mean. The cop is going to come up and go (RV) "You too nigger" (Hits microphone) "AHH, you said nigger, I even told them to get out fucker! You did not say spic or beaner, fucking asshole get your nomenclatures correct dickhead, I speak Spanish motherfucker!" (RV) "Well hell then you're a bi-lingual nigger get the fuck out of that car asshole!"

36. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2004). *Down to the nitty gritty* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Getting the Athletes

We don't make American citizens play on our team; this is the problem. White people are wining gold medals for us in swimming? Why, white people should not have to swim for this country. Thank you for doing it white people, but we have Cubans in this goddamn country, and they're better swimmers than you, so Julio, get in the pool if you win, you stay, if you lose, (SA) "A la verga!" I want to see Cubans in the water and have people with bullhorns going, "Coast Guard, Coast Guard!" (SA) "No, ju never going to catch me!" We have the right to bear arms in this country. What we don't have, any medals in any shooting events. Why? Because nobody knows, I know, let me be the man in charge of getting our athletes. I know people in this country that are unbelievable shooters. They can shoot a moving target while in a moving vehicle with fucking hydraulics. That's how good these people are! Casper, Little Puppet hell I know gang-bangers named Sniper! But what do we have, we have other people toting the line. We don't have any high jumpers in this country any more, why? Cause the fence is electric. That's what we need ladies and gentlemen, to make the fence electric so they can't touch it. Now they are gonna jump. I know a lot of you white people are like, (WV) "Carlos, you guys don't jump the fence?" No, we climb it, that's why we have pointy boots, they fit in the fence! What's the world record in the high jump, 8 feet? So we lower it to 8 ½ feet, now we got beaners jumping 8 ½ feet, that's the record, boom now we got the gold medal. But we only do that in California, in Texas we raise the fence to 25 feet now we got Pole Vaulters. See where I am going with this? I want to see a little Mexican going, (SA) "I'm gonna make it!" "How in the fuck did you clear 25 feet?" (SA) "Because the

pointy boots are arrow dynamic! The little tassels on the side show me which way the wind is blowing.”

37. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003b). *Not for the easily offended* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### What We Don't Do

My name is Carlos Mencia I am a beaner a wetback and a spic. I swam here or I jumped the border. I vend tacos, I cut grass, I wash dishes, I hang out in front of fucking Home Depot, I put a lot of people in one fucking car, my daughter gets pregnant earlier than any goddamn race, we do all that shit, but you know what we don't do? We don't blow up fucking planes dick head! Why are you checking my shit! Are the plane's tires missing hubcaps or some shit? Cause if they are then I understand?”

38. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003a). *America rules* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### It's Simply Ignorance

See my friend, the liberal guy again goes (WV) “Dude man, its not right to racial profile, it's like we have been doing for years.” Well actually no, its not. If you don't like black people, and you're white, it's simply ignorance. Right? Black people aren't taking your shit. Black people are not taking your jobs. You're just afraid for no fucking reason. Same shit for a beaner, you know what I mean? If you have a fucking job working in a building at Taco Bell making decisions, you're not worried about fucking Julio coming and taking your fucking job, you're just a dick!

39. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2000). *Take a joke America* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### 40 Million Dollars a Year

Shit, 40 million a year...I'd have a white Gardener. Let's see, Ramón, take the week off fucker, Jonathan cut my shit. (SA) “Oh Carlos has money, look he's the only guy with a white gardener!” And every time he would want to quit because they take too many pictures, I'd give him a raise and shit, you know? (RV) “What the hell is this bull shit, Carlos? What the fuck I'm here to cut grass not be your little goddamn white fucker take a goddamn picture boy. What the fuck is this bull shit? I quit” I'll give you \$500 bucks more a week. (RV) “Hell, it ain't that fucking bad!” He'd be posing for pictures...(RV) ”go ahead, Julio, take a picture of this! Tell your friend to act like he's telling me what to do, come on Mexican boy, tell me what to do and I'll look mad and shit!”

40. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2000). *Take a joke America* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Call Me a Beaner

You know, when I get mad if people call me a beaner? If like the next day I woke up in the morning and I had to cut my fucking neighbor's grass, then I'd be pissed, you know what I mean? If it like affected me—wetback—“what the fuck! Oh shit! I can't stop cutting the grass!” Is it true; is it true?

41. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2004). *Down to the nitty gritty* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### A Group Called 'Other'

Sometimes I'm embarrassed to be a Latino, especially when I read statistics that say that we are on the bottom of the list for scholastic achievement. We! Do you know how embarrassing that is to know? That we're of Aztec or Mayan descent, that you're people invented the zero, the perfect calendar that does not have a leap year, thereby no six hours, thereby no 29<sup>th</sup> of February. A zero ladies and gentleman, do you know what that meant to mathematics? All complicated forms of mathematics and negative numbers came from the value of nothingness. That is what beaners invented, yet when you look at scholastic achievement in the United States of America, number 1 Asian American, number 2 Caucasian American, number 3 African American. And I know you guys are saying, “Well at least we're number 4, right?” No, number 4, and here's the sad part, number 4 is a fucking group called 'other'! Other is kicking our ass in school! Do you know who other is? They go to school in the little yellow bus and they wear helmets, that's other! Retarded kids are kicking our ass! “You're retarded.” (MDV) “Not as retarded as beaners! I'm number 4 your number 5, number 5!”

42. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2004). *Down to the nitty gritty* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Keeping It Real

And this Aztec Warrior is hanging out in front of Home Depot! Now everybody at this point knows that he's not only a beaner, he's a wetback. Everybody knows, but no, he has to accessorize. He's gotta wear the fucking pointy boots, the shit, those tight ass jeans that actually split the nuts! That is disgusting, you should never have camel toe if your name is Raul, that is wrong goddammit, I don't care where you come from. Then they have the Stetson hat and I don't know why wetbacks have to add an 'e' in front of words like Stetson? “What kind of hat is that?” (MV) “Pues es un Estetson!” “What kind of drink do you want?” (MV) “Un Esprite.” One of these days white people, try it. Go to Home Depot and a get a wetback in your car. Then go run a stop sign, you'll hear them



in back, (MV) “Estop, Estop, Estop!” Like this is not enough, he’s got a belt that starts off with Mexico right on the belt buckle! Then it chronicles his whole trip here, Guanajuato, Necaxa, Mexicali, Chiapas and where he lives now, Ebakersfield, with the ‘E’ in front. As if that is not enough for everybody to realize that he is a wetback beaner, he gets into a fucking pickup truck to go home with a fucking cow painted on the side! Then they spell their last name in Old English letters on the back! When did Old English become authentic Mexican? Then they honk the horn (La Cucaracha Theme plays). What the fuck are you doing? (MV) “Because a long time ago our people used to work for the ranches. This reminds me of where we started and helps me to keep it real.” If I was white and from Berkley I would probably be shedding a tear and writing about your ass, but I am not, I’m a beaner and this whole fucking thing is embarrassing!

43. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2004). *Down to the nitty gritty* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### The Pointy Boots

Have you ever noticed that only wetbacks dress like wetbacks! Is there a law that says you can’t take off the pointy boots until you get a green card? Is that a fucking law? When they finally get their green cards they’re like, (MV) “Chinga su madre, finally! My God these boots have been killing me for years! Up and down goddamn Home Depot, cling cling.” And it’s always the darkest most Mexican-looking wetback, and I know some of you white people are like, (WV) “what do you mean darkest looking wetback?” Cause there are different beaners. See beaners are not a race, we are an ethnicity. That’s why there are white beaners but people don’t think about that.

44. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2000). *Take a joke America* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### But I’m From Here

We want to fucking label...Oh Carlos, you’re a Mexican American. No. Don’t ever fucking call me that. Call me a Mexican but know that I’m from here, like some guy from Brooklyn is Italian. Like when the *Godfather* came out, they called it an American story, not a fucking Italian story, an American story. That’s all I ask. Treat me the same as other immigrants and I’m fucking cool with that and I’m down. That’s all I ask. Nothing special. But don’t fucking Mexican American. Fuck that. Why am I a Mexican first when I live here? What is this bullshit?

45. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2000). *Take a joke America* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Pochos

Yeah, they don't like us in Mexico. They have a negative word for us, white people. A negative word for us in Mexico. They call us pochos. It's negative nomenclature toward people of Mexican decent who live in America. Translation—pocho to English means literally—wetback. Think about that white people. How the fuck can we be wetbacks here, and there? How the fuck is that possible? What is this bullshit? We come over here, (RV) “Go back where you come from, wetback!” We go over there, “(MV) “Vete a la chingada pinche pocho!” What is this? I'm not legal anywhere! Fuck you! What do we have to buy a house on the fucking river now?

46. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2000). *Take a joke America* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Watch It On CNN

You white people think (WV) “Yo man, you guys are all Mexican!” Fuck no, you break it down to the simplest thing, that's when you know who you are! If Mexico were to go to war tomorrow white people, fuck you, we are staying! Do you understand that shit? (RV) “What you gonna do Carlos?” “I'm gonna watch it on CNN like you motherfucker! Fuck you think I'm gonna do? Bosnia is at war, they're white, go help them!” (RV) “Well I aint that kind of white boy!” “And I'm that not kind of beaner!” Yeah, I know what it's like to be looked at differently. First of all, white people; let's get it straight. When I say Mexican, I mean Mexican from here, okay you understand that? A Mexican from here. There's a fucking difference. There's two kinds of Mexicans, white people, that means two—there's two. White people you think there is only one kind of Mexican—oh contraire. No, there's fucking two. There's us, English speaking, articulate, and a very intricate part of the fabric of American society—that is who you see here tonight. You seem to confuse us with that fucker in front of Home Depot. (yells indecipherable Spanish) Hold the fuck up Bubba, that's not me fucker. No, no no...that fucker who cuts your grass, he cuts our grass too! And he does a better job at our house because we tell him in Spanish! All right...and sometimes he's family. Like some people are like, “we don't...well what do you mean Carlos? We don't get it...you mean there's two kinds of Mexicans?” Oh yeah, like there's two kinds of white people. Don't act ignorant fuckers. You know, there is you white people and then there is redneck trailer trash. You know exactly what the fuck I'm talking about. Oh now you know, don't you? (CHV) “You've seen them?” Oh, I've been to K-Mart. You know that skinny ass trailer trash that has no ass that looks just like some legs coming out of daisy duke shorts? You know, you think she is wearing shoes and you get close...Oh my god that's her foot! Jesus Christ! How do you get a callous that big on your foot!

Well white people; I know the feeling that you get in the pit of your stomach when you see that. That's exactly how we Mexicans feel when we see a dude in a pinto with flames on the side, Virgin Guadeloupe painted on the hood of the car, big ass tires in the back with hydraulics, a giant antenna with no stereo, the last name of their entire family spelled on the back. That's when we're going, "where's a drunk driver when you need one?"

47. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2000). *Take a joke America* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### Give Me an M16

I want to tell you straight up, white people. You don't need to build no fucking concentration camp for me if we go to war. "Because you're from there." No, look at me, and I'm fucking telling you right now, if tomorrow, America goes to war against those fucking federation states or whatever of Mexico, you don't put me in a concentration camp, you give me an M-16 and you give me orders. I'll fucking shoot Julio in the ass in a heartbeat, you understand me? As a matter of fact people, I'll help the charge. I already crossed the border this way; I know the way back, fuckers!

48. Mencia, Carlos (Writer/Vocalist). (2003c). *Unmerciful* [Compact Disc Recording]. Hollywood, CA: Nedlos, Inc.

#### All Groups

We listen more to the NAACP then we actually listen to black people, how fucking pathetic is that shit? You want to ask me something then ask me. We all got our groups. They are full of shit, all of those groups, they represent themselves, they don't represent us. Do you think they have our shit in mind? Fuck no, they're asking us to give them money. What the fuck, why the fuck don't they hook me up, motherfuckers. This is supposed to represent me! "Well you want us to represent you, you gotta hook a motherfucker up!" Fuck that shit. And we all got our group, Mexicans we got LULAC and MALDEF, black people you've got the NAACP, white people you've got the KKK! You see how white people went OH! See how you are fuckers! Oh, you don't want the KKK to represent you, but when the NAACP says some shit, you listen don't you! But you expect us to be different, when the KKK says that white people hate me, you expect me to understand that as an American that that's not true, that most white people are cool, right! Well I expect the same shit from you white people.

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