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A conversational analysis of racial humors targeting Chinese characters in “Family Guy”

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Abstract

This research article examines the use of racial humor targeting Chinese characters in the television series "Family Guy" through conversational analysis. Contextualization cues, linguistic features, paralinguistic signals, non-verbal communication, and visual elements are analyzed across five selected clips. The study contextualizes each scene within broader cultural and societal contexts, exploring the portrayal of stereotypes and their implications. Findings reveal how humor is derived from exaggeration, absurdity, and reinforcement of stereotypes, particularly regarding Chinese culture, labor practices, and family dynamics. Through structured analysis, the article highlights the nuanced interplay between humor, stereotype, and cultural representation in the context of comedic television. The conclusion underscores the need for critical examination of media portrayals and the importance of understanding the impact of humor on perpetuating or challenging stereotypes. Overall, this study contributes to discourse on racial humor, cultural representation, and media analysis, offering insights into the complexities of comedic storytelling in popular culture.

Keywords: Racial humor; Family Guy; Conversational analysis; Stereotypes; Cultural representation; Media analysis; Television series; Humor in media.

1. Introduction

In the animated world of 'Family Guy,' humor is everywhere, with jokes popping left and right. But amidst the laughter lies a troubling trend, which is the use of racial humor, especially targeting Chinese characters. These humors may seem harmless, just part of the show's irreverent style, but they actually perpetuate harmful stereotypes and make discrimination seem normal. What's behind these humors? How do they affect the way viewers see Chinese people? Using a method called conversational analysis which studies interactions within specific contexts, considering how these contexts influence the conversations (Remilda, 2015), this study aims to dig deep into the dialogue of 'Family Guy' episodes.

Humor is a central element of 'Family Guy's' charm, blending satire, irony, and pop culture references to craft a distinctive comedic style. The prevalence of discrimination against Chinese people, as evidenced by physical attacks, verbal harassment, and vandalism (Takasaki, 2020), highlights the sensitivity surrounding racial humor, particularly in popular media. Even governmental agencies like the FBI have elevated "hate-fueled violence" to a top national security priority, equating racist violence with threats posed by terrorist groups like ISIS (Bailey, 2023). While 'Family Guy' may

provoke laughter, its use of racial humor, particularly targeting Chinese characters, straddles a precarious line between social commentary and offensive stereotyping (Bicknell, 2007).

This delicate balance underscores the need to critically examine humor through conversational analysis, as humor in media serves as more than just entertainment—it reflects and influences broader societal attitudes towards race and identity. Utilizing the framework proposed by Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974), with an emphasis on Contextualization Cues, allows for a deeper understanding of the stages through which humor operates in conversations. These cues help in identifying how participants signal and interpret the boundaries of humorous discourse, as well as how they navigate shifts between serious and playful modes of communication. As argued by Tsami and Skoura (2021), racial humor is a complex and controversial topic, with differing perspectives on its impact and implications. While some view it as a tool for challenging racism, others caution against its potential to reinforce harmful stereotypes and perpetuate discrimination (Cundall, 2012).

Since its debut in 1999, "Family Guy" has become a cultural phenomenon, firmly establishing itself as a staple of American television (Land, 2024). With its own blend of irreverent humor, sharp sarcasm, and brilliant cultural references, the show has captivated audiences around the world. Created by Seth MacFarlane, a visionary in the field of adult animation, "Family Guy" introduces viewers to the zany antics of the Griffin family. Led by the lovably inept Peter Griffin, the family includes his wife Lois, their eldest daughter Meg, the dim-witted yet good-natured Chris, and the diabolically witty Stewie, a toddler with a penchant for world domination, accompanied by their anthropomorphic dog, Brian. Despite facing initial cancellations on Fox, "Family Guy" experienced a resurgence in popularity through DVD sales and subsequent revivals on different networks, solidifying its status as a cultural touchstone and cult classic. However, "Family Guy" has not been without its controversies, with its bold and often pushing limits humor raising conversations about its cultural impact and occasional criticisms, particularly regarding its treatment of sensitive topics such as race (Rappoport, 2005).

Research into the portrayal of racism in popular media, such as animated series like "Family Guy," has been multifaceted. According to Christina (2019), the investigation delved into this complex terrain, employing qualitative descriptive analysis to dissect the layers of racism depicted within the episodes of "Family Guy." Christina's study highlighted the prevalence of denotations portraying discriminatory behaviors perpetuated by the racial majority against minorities, revealing the normalization of prejudiced actions and the perpetuation of societal norms regarding racial superiority and inferiority. Building upon this foundational research, Additionally, according to Rafi'i (2022) his research focused on humor in sitcoms, including Family Guy, employing Manser's humor theory and Grice's cooperative principle theory. Rafi'i's investigation illuminated the comedic strategies utilized in Family Guy, particularly the prevalence of superiority humor and the role of maxim violations in generating comedic effects. While Rafi'i's study provided a broader understanding of humor within the show, it set a foundational framework for exploring the specific nuances of racial humor and its intersection with societal norms and power structures depicted in Family Guy, as uncovered in Said's (2023) examination. Through linguistic cues and physical interactions, the connotations of racism in "Family Guy" were further elucidated, revealing its intricate portrayal within the broader landscape of humor and social commentary in the series (Martin, 2001).

Through a critical examination of the racial humor in "Family Guy," this study aims to challenge the notion that racial jokes are harmless and instead highlight the potential harm they can cause. By examining the ways in which racial stereotypes are perpetuated and reinforced through humor, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between humor, identity, and social norms.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the mechanisms by which racial humor can shape audience perceptions and attitudes, ultimately shedding light on the broader cultural

implications of these portrayals. Ultimately, this study hopes to encourage viewers to engage with media more critically and conscientiously, recognizing the potential impact that racial humor can have on our perceptions and attitudes towards different racial and ethnic groups. By promoting a more nuanced understanding of the cultural significance of racial humor, this research aims to contribute to a more inclusive and empathetic cultural landscape.

2. Methods

In this study, conversational analysis is employed as the primary methodological approach to examine the portrayal of racial humor targeting Chinese characters in select episodes of the "Family Guy" TV show. Conversational analysis is a qualitative research method that focuses on the systematic analysis of talk and interaction in naturalistic settings. The analysis primarily centers on the dialogue and interactions involving Chinese characters within the chosen clips. The aim is to understand how jokes about racism in "Family Guy" contribute to larger issues of stereotyping and discrimination.

Sampling for this study involves selecting specific clips from 'Family Guy' episodes that contain notable examples of racial humor targeting Chinese characters. The selection criteria prioritize the presence of clear instances of racial humor and the relevance of these instances to the research objectives, which include analyzing the portrayal of Chinese characters and understanding the impact of racial humor on audience perceptions. The decision to choose only five clips for analysis is based on their severity and frequency in portraying racial stereotypes targeting Chinese characters. These five clips are observed to represent the most egregious instances of racial humor within the show and are among the most frequently shared and discussed on social media platforms such as TikTok.

In this study, we take a conversational analysis approach to examine racial humor within specific episodes of "Family Guy," particularly focusing on its portrayal of Chinese culture. Drawing from the framework proposed by Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974) with an emphasis on the stages utilizing only Contextualization Cues, our analysis aims to uncover the subtleties of humor conveyed through various mediums such as intonation, facial expressions, gestures, and visual elements. By delving into these contextual cues, we seek to illuminate the underlying messages embedded in the humor and their impact on audience perceptions (Kuipers, 2009). This paper will center on five selected clips from "Family Guy" episodes, each containing instances of racially charged jokes targeting Chinese characters. Through this focused examination, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the humor employed in "Family Guy" and its role in perpetuating stereotypes while shaping audience perceptions.

This research began by obtaining these five clips, we searched on TikTok using the keywords "Family guy chinese jokes" and compared them with other clips containing racist jokes, then selected five clips with the clearest racial humor. To get the original clip we used the Disney Hotstar platform and determined the season and episode of the 5 clips, after that we started to screenshot the 5 clips from each season and episode. We watched these clips multiple times for analysis, and if there were jokes that were not fully understood, we referred on Google by searching the topic talked on the video and also referred to TikTok user comments who explained the jokes. The Transcriptions of these clips were obtained directly from the subtitles provided by Disney Hotstar.

By focusing on these five clips, this study aims to provide a concentrated analysis of the most potent examples of racial humor within "Family Guy," shedding light on their implications for broader societal attitudes towards race and ethnicity within the context of contemporary social media discourse.

3. Results

In analyzing various scenes from the TV series 'Family Guy,' it becomes evident that the show frequently incorporates references and jokes about China. These references often rely on stereotypes, clichés, and societal themes associated with Chinese culture, government policies, and social issues specific to China. The series also makes jokes about physical appearances, such as small eyes and short stature, and frequently portrays Chinese characters speaking English in a manner that the show's creators, particularly Seth MacFarlane, depict as 'weird'.

To analyze the contextualization cues in the described "Family Guy" clip using a Conversational Analysis approach, we'll focus on the various elements that help convey the humor and meaning of the scene. Contextualization cues include linguistic features, paralinguistic signals (like tone and intonation), non-verbal communication (like facial expressions and gestures), and visual elements (like the setting and characters' appearances).

3.1. Season 10 Episode 9, Grumpy Old Man



Figure 1. The spirit got car accident and died



Figure 2. The spirit reincarnated as Chinese baby girl



Figure 3. The spirit died again immediately

In this scene, there's a spirit who experiences a car accident and dies again. Then, the Grim Reaper approaches him, saying he's dead. The spirit responds that he already died, so what now? The Grim Reaper replies, "Well, now you're super dead." Confused, the spirit asks what happens next. Will he go to heaven? The Grim Reaper explains that since he became a spirit and died again, he'll be reincarnated. In an instant, he's reincarnated as a Chinese baby. But a moment later, he dies again and becomes a spirit once more, meeting the same Grim Reaper again. Turns out, he's reincarnated as a Chinese baby girl. The excerpt from the clip touches on China's decision regarding the One Child Policy, where the high birth rate in China prompted the government to implement a program to reduce birth rates, namely the One Child Policy.

Linguistic Features

The dialogue between characters in the scene is pivotal in conveying humor. For example, the Grim Reaper's remark, "Well, now you're super dead," humorously exaggerates the concept of death with its absurd language, contrasting the seriousness of death with casual expression.

The spirit's confusion and subsequent questions set up the comedic twist about reincarnation. The humor peaks when the Grim Reaper asks, "girl?" upon the spirit's immediate return to death after being reincarnated as a Chinese baby girl. This moment plays on cultural norms surrounding gender preferences. The deliberate word choice, such as "super dead" and "reincarnated," amplifies the fantastical elements of the narrative, contributing to the overall humor of the scene.

Paralinguistic Signals

Paralinguistic signals play a crucial role in enhancing the humor within the scene. The Grim Reaper's likely calm and matter-of-fact tone contrasts with the spirit's confused and anxious tone,

contributing to the comedic effect. This tonal disparity juxtaposes a serious figure like the Grim Reaper with a mundane, almost bureaucratic approach to death.

Emphasis on words like "super" and "reincarnated" highlights the absurdity and comedic timing of the dialogue. Pauses before punchlines build suspense and enhance the humor, adding to the overall comedic effect of the scene.

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication adds depth to the humor in the scene. The Grim Reaper's expression might be deadpan and emotionless, contributing to the dark humor. This contrast between the serious nature of the Grim Reaper and the absurdity of the situation enhances the comedic effect. The spirit's expressions, on the other hand, might show confusion, shock, and frustration, emphasizing his plight and adding to the overall humor of the scene.

The Grim Reaper might use minimal gestures, adding to his enigmatic and ominous presence. His restrained movements further accentuate the seriousness of his character, contrasting with the chaotic events unfolding around him. In contrast, the spirit's frantic or bewildered gestures can visually convey his confusion and distress, serving as a visual complement to the comedic dialogue and enhancing the humorous tone of the scene.

Visual Elements

The setting likely takes place in a highway setting, providing visual cues such as car crashes to support the narrative of death and reincarnation. This setting not only contextualizes the discussion but also adds to the absurdity of the situation.

Character design is instrumental in conveying the roles of the Grim Reaper and the spirit. Both characters may be depicted wearing dark gray robes, with the Grim Reaper typically holding a scythe, instantly signaling his role as the personification of death. However, the absence of the scythe distinguishes the spirit from the Grim Reaper. This similarity in appearance adds to the surreal nature of the scene, enhancing the comedic effect. The reincarnation sequence likely utilizes visual effects to depict the spirit transforming into a Chinese baby and then quickly dying again. These visual transitions can be exaggerated for comedic effect, emphasizing the rapid and absurd nature of the cycle of reincarnation.

Integration into the Scene

The excerpt from the clip touches on China's decision regarding the One Child Policy, a population control measure implemented between 1979 and 2015. This policy aimed to curb population growth by limiting many families to only one child. However, the One Child Policy had far-reaching and complex impacts, one of which was the increased tendency to favor male children as the sole offspring due to cultural preferences for sons in Chinese society. This patriarchal culture led many parents to desire sons as family heirs and guardians of family traditions.

In this clip, we see a tragic reflection of the One Child Policy, where a spirit reincarnates as a baby girl in China only to die again. This portrayal highlights the potential consequences of gender-selective abortions driven by preferences for male offspring, as explained earlier. By incorporating this social commentary into the scene, "Family Guy" uses humor to shed light on serious issues and spark reflection on the complexities of government policies and their societal impacts.

3.2. Season 4 Episode 10, *Breaking Out Is Hard to Do*



Figure 4. Stewie started working at a very young age



Figure 5. She promptly gave a birth at a workplace



Figure 6. The boss immediately put the newborn to work

In this scene, there is a character named Stewie from the Griffin family who has just moved to Chinatown. Despite being a toddler, Stewie started working at a very young age. While working, he accidentally sewed his hands with shoes. Stewie then requested permission to visit the nurse, and he was promptly assisted by two workers. However, what followed was the arrival of the company boss accompanied by two additional workers, who brought along a pregnant Chinese woman. She promptly gave birth at the workplace, and the boss immediately put the newborn to work.

Linguistic Features

The dialogue reflects an exaggerated and absurd situation where a toddler, Stewie, is working in a workplace environment. The juxtaposition of Stewie's childlikeness with the adult-like language and responsibilities contributes to the humor. For example, Stewie's request to visit the nurse highlights the absurdity of a child needing medical attention in a workplace setting. This absurdity is further emphasized by the simplistic and direct language used in the dialogue, which adds to the comedic effect. It emphasizes the incongruity between the serious environment of the workplace and the childlike innocence of Stewie. The contrast between the seriousness of the workplace and the absurdity of Stewie's predicament creates humor.

The word choice, such as "boss" and the instructions given to the newborn, reinforces stereotypes about harsh labor conditions. These stereotypes are exaggerated for comedic effect, contributing to the overall humor of the scene. The use of such language serves to highlight the absurdity of the situation and reinforces the comedic tone. By exaggerating stereotypes and situational elements, the scene creates a sense of absurdity that resonates with the audience and enhances the comedic effect. Overall, the combination of exaggerated situation, simplistic language, and reinforcement of stereotypes adds layers of humor to the scene, making it an effective comedic moment within the context of the episode.

Paralinguistic Signals

Stewie's tone when requesting to see the nurse might be innocent and childlike, contrasting with the severity of the situation. This tonal disparity adds to the comedic effect by highlighting the incongruity between Stewie's innocence and the seriousness of his predicament. Similarly, the boss's tone is likely authoritative and dismissive, emphasizing the power dynamic within the workplace. This contrast in tone between Stewie and the boss further enhances the humor by highlighting the absurdity of the situation.

Pauses in Stewie's dialogue when he realizes he's sewn his hands to the shoes can add to the comedic timing. These pauses build suspense and anticipation, heightening the comedic effect when the realization dawns on Stewie. In contrast, the boss's commands are likely delivered without hesitation, emphasizing the harshness and lack of empathy within the workplace environment. The

absence of pauses in the boss's dialogue reinforces the oppressive atmosphere, adding to the overall humor of the scene.

Non-Verbal Communication

Stewie's facial expressions may shift from pain to confusion, capturing his predicament humorously. These expressions highlight the absurdity of the situation, adding to the physical comedy of the scene. In contrast, the boss might have a stern, indifferent expression, underscoring the character's callousness. This contrast in facial expressions between Stewie and the boss further emphasizes the humor by highlighting the disparity in their perspectives.

Stewie's gestures, such as looking at his sewn hands or trying to get help, contribute to the physical comedy of the scene. These gestures visually convey Stewie's distress and add to the overall humor of the situation. Similarly, the boss's gestures when ordering the newborn to work demonstrate authority and absurdity, further adding to the comedic tone of the scene. The exaggerated gestures of both Stewie and the boss contribute to the visual comedy and enhance the comedic effect of the scene.

Visual Elements

The setting of "Chinatown" or "China City" is visually stereotypical, likely featuring traditional Chinese architecture or symbols to immediately establish the location. This stereotypical portrayal sets the stage for the comedic exploration of cultural themes. Additionally, the workplace setting further emphasizes the labor theme, highlighting the absurdity of a toddler being involved in such an environment.

Character design also contributes to the humor within the scene. Stewie, as a toddler, highlighting the absurdity of the situation. This contrast serves to emphasize the comedic premise of a child being thrust into an adult world. However, it's important to note that the depiction of Chinese characters with stereotypical features is problematic and can perpetuate harmful stereotypes. The sequence of events within the scene, including Stewie working, the pregnant woman giving birth at the workplace, and the newborn being put to work immediately, is visually exaggerated to amplify the absurdity and satire. These exaggerated actions contribute to the overall humor of the scene by emphasizing the ridiculousness of the situation and adding to the comedic tone of the episode.

Integration into the Scene

The scenario presented is inherently absurd, leveraging exaggerated stereotypes to create humor. The idea of a toddler working and immediately being put to work upon birth defies logic and societal norms, resulting in dark humor that highlights the absurdity of the situation. This absurdity contributes to the comedic tone of the scene and serves as a source of amusement for the audience.

It's essential to consider the cultural context and implications of the humor presented. The portrayal of Chinese culture through the lens of harsh labor practices and rapid workforce induction is a satirical exaggeration aimed at eliciting laughter. While intended for comedic effect, this portrayal can also perpetuate negative stereotypes and contribute to racial insensitivity. The reliance on exaggerated stereotypes about Chinese labor practices and family roles reduces characters to caricatures, potentially reinforcing harmful perceptions and attitudes. As such, while the scene may be humorous on the surface, it's crucial to critically examine its underlying messages and implications.

3.3. Season 5 Episode 3, Hell comes to Quahog



Figure 7. Peter promises to do his job even better than he did SAT



Figure 8. SAT test



Figure 9. Peter asked a Chinese boy to help him doing the math test

In this scene, there is a Peter who promises to do his job even better than he did in the SAT. During the SAT, this guy basically didn't take the test and instead asked a Chinese boy to do the math, because Chinese people are usually smarter at it.

Linguistic Features

The dialogue where Peter delegates his SAT math to a Chinese boy relies on the stereotype that Chinese people are inherently better at math. This reliance on stereotypes adds a layer of humor to the interaction, as it plays into societal assumptions and expectations. The way this request is framed can be key to understanding the humor and underlying assumptions. By specifically singling out the Chinese boy and attributing mathematical prowess to him based on his ethnicity, the scene highlights the absurdity of such stereotypes.

The word choice plays a significant role in reinforcing the stereotype. The specific mention of "Chinese boy" and "math" directly ties into the stereotype and sets the stage for the humor to unfold. Phrases like "smarter at math" further reinforce the stereotype and reveal how it's casually accepted within the narrative. By using language that aligns with common stereotypes, the scene not only generates humor but also sheds light on broader societal perceptions and biases.

Paralinguistic Signals

Peter's tone might be casual or nonchalant, indicating he sees nothing wrong with asking someone else to do his math for him. This casual tone adds to the humor by highlighting Peter's lack of concern or awareness regarding the ethical implications of his request. In contrast, the Chinese boy's response, if any, could vary from compliant to surprised, further adding to the comedic effect. The contrast between Peter's casual demeanor and the potential reactions of the Chinese boy adds depth to the humor within the interaction.

Any pauses or emphatic delivery of the request might heighten the absurdity or highlight the stereotype further. For instance, emphasizing "Chinese" when Peter asks for help might underscore the reliance on stereotypes for comedic effect. By drawing attention to the ethnicity of the person being asked for help, these paralinguistic cues serve to reinforce the stereotype and amplify the humor within the scene. The use of pauses and emphasis enhances the comedic timing and adds nuance to the portrayal of the interaction, making it more impactful for the audience.

Non-Verbal Communication

Peter's facial expression might convey ease or confidence as he passes off the task of SAT math, reflecting his nonchalant attitude towards academic integrity. This expression adds to the humor by

highlighting Peter's lack of concern for the consequences of his actions. In contrast, the Chinese boy's expression might range from confusion to compliance, reflecting the absurdity of the situation. This contrast in facial expressions further emphasizes the humor by highlighting the disparity in perspectives between the two characters.

Gestures contribute to the portrayal of the characters and the humor within the scene. Peter's gesture of poking the Chinese boy with a pencil and saying "c'mon, do math" reinforces his lack of effort and reliance on the stereotype. This action visually conveys Peter's dismissive attitude towards academic responsibilities, adding depth to his character portrayal and enhancing the comedic effect. The contrast between Peter's casual demeanor and the Chinese boy's subdued reaction adds to the humor by highlighting the disparity in perspectives between the characters and the absurdity of the situation.

Visual Elements

The setting of the SAT exam room is typically portrayed as a high-pressure environment, contrasting with Peter's laid-back attitude. The visual depiction of the exam room may emphasize the seriousness of the test, with rows of students diligently working, while Peter stands out with his casual demeanor. This visual contrast between the seriousness of the setting and Peter's flippant approach adds to the humor by highlighting the absurdity of the situation.

Character design also contributes to the humor within the scene. The Chinese boy might be depicted with stereotypical features or attire, reinforcing the racial stereotype visually. However, it's important to note that this portrayal can be problematic as it reduces the character to a stereotype rather than presenting them as an individual with depth and complexity. The actions depicted within the scene can be exaggerated for comedic effect. The act of Peter handing over his test to the Chinese boy and the latter completing it can be visually exaggerated, emphasizing the stereotype that Chinese people are naturally better at math. This exaggeration adds to the humor by highlighting the absurdity of the stereotype and the ridiculousness of the situation. However, it's crucial to approach this portrayal with sensitivity and awareness of the potential implications of perpetuating racial stereotypes through visual representation.

Integration into the Scene

The humor in this scene relies heavily on the stereotype that Chinese people are inherently better at math. Peter's casual request for the Chinese boy to complete his SAT math plays into this stereotype, emphasizing Peter's laziness and the exaggerated intelligence attributed to the Chinese boy. The reliance on such a racial stereotype is intended to be absurd, highlighting the ridiculousness of Peter's behavior and societal assumptions about academic prowess based on ethnicity.

However, it's crucial to consider the broader cultural context surrounding this stereotype. The perception of Chinese people excelling in mathematics is deeply rooted in cultural, social, and historical contexts. Chinese culture places a strong emphasis on education and hard work, which has contributed to the stereotype. Nevertheless, this scene oversimplifies and perpetuates the stereotype without acknowledging the broader context, reducing the Chinese boy to a caricature and reinforcing a simplistic view of a complex cultural trait. The stereotypical representation of the Chinese boy as inherently better at math contributes to the dehumanization and marginalization of Asian individuals. By reducing him to a stereotype, the scene fails to recognize the individuality and diversity within the Asian community, perpetuating harmful biases and reinforcing harmful perceptions. As such, while the scene may elicit laughter, it's essential to critically examine its underlying messages and implications within the broader societal context.

3.4. Season 8 Episode 14, Peter-Assment



Figure 10. Peter states that flirting with girls is easier than Americans finding his brothers in China



Figure 11. An American man looking for his brother in a crowd in China



Figure 12. His brother immediately discovered because he was the tallest

In this scene there is a man who uses a metaphor to explain how easy something he does is with the sentence "This is easier than an American finding his brother in China" then there is a scene that represents an American man who is looking for his brother in a crowd. Chinese people are generally shorter than Americans.

Linguistic Features

The metaphor "easier than an American finding his brother in China" relies on stereotypes about the average height of Chinese people. By comparing the challenge of finding one's brother in a crowd to the presumed height difference between Americans and Chinese people, the metaphor sets up the subsequent scene and establishes the comedic premise. This reliance on stereotypes adds a layer of absurdity to the situation, highlighting the exaggerated nature of the humor.

The dialogue within the scene may further reinforce stereotypes, depending on how characters react to the situation. For example, if the American characters express frustration or disbelief at being unable to find each other due to the height disparity, it reinforces the stereotype of Americans being taller than average. Alternatively, if the Chinese characters react with bemusement or amusement at the Americans' predicament, it may perpetuate stereotypes about Chinese people's attitudes towards Westerners. In either case, the dialogue serves to amplify the comedic effect by playing into established stereotypes and societal perceptions.

Paralinguistic Signals

The tone used to deliver the metaphor and subsequent dialogue can indicate whether it's meant to be taken seriously or humorously. A lighthearted tone suggests the scene is intended for comedic effect, allowing the audience to recognize the absurdity of the situation. By adopting a playful or exaggerated tone, the delivery of the lines enhances the comedic premise and sets the stage for humorous interactions between characters.

Pauses and emphasis play a crucial role in highlighting the absurdity of the situation and reinforcing stereotypes. Emphasizing certain words or phrases, such as "China" in the metaphor, draws attention to the unfamiliarity of the setting for the American character. This emphasis serves to underscore the cultural contrast and heighten the comedic effect by exaggerating the perceived difference between Americans and Chinese people. Additionally, strategic pauses can add to the timing and rhythm of the dialogue, allowing for comedic beats that enhance the overall humor of the scene. Through these paralinguistic signals, the scene effectively engages the audience and delivers its humor in a manner that is both entertaining and memorable.

Non-Verbal Communication

Characters' facial expressions can convey their emotions and reactions to the situation. If the American character appears confused or lost while searching for his brother in China, it reinforces the stereotype of Americans being unfamiliar with foreign cultures. This expression of confusion adds to the humor by highlighting the absurdity of the situation and amplifying the contrast between the American character and the unfamiliar environment of China.

The gestures used by the American character while searching for his brother can further emphasize his confusion or frustration, contributing to the comedic effect. These gestures may include exaggerated movements or expressions of bewilderment, emphasizing the character's struggle to navigate the unfamiliar surroundings. By visually depicting the character's struggle through gestures, the scene effectively communicates the absurdity of the situation and enhances the humor for the audience.

Visual Elements

The setting is likely a crowded area in China, such as a marketplace or street, to further highlight the difficulty of finding someone in a foreign and unfamiliar environment. The bustling atmosphere and crowded surroundings add to the chaos and confusion experienced by the American character, enhancing the comedic effect. By placing the characters in a visually dynamic and chaotic setting, the scene effectively communicates the challenges of navigating unfamiliar territory.

The character design contributes to the portrayal of stereotypes within the scene. The American character may be depicted as tall and conspicuous compared to the shorter Chinese characters, reinforcing the stereotype of Americans being taller than Chinese people. This visual contrast accentuates the cultural differences between the characters and adds to the humor by exaggerating their physical characteristics. Through character design, the scene visually reinforces the stereotypes being depicted and enhances the comedic premise for the audience.

Integration into the Scene

The humor in this scene relies on stereotypes about Americans' unfamiliarity with China and Chinese people's presumed short stature. By juxtaposing these stereotypes, the scene creates a comedic premise based on cultural misunderstandings. The absurdity of the situation arises from the exaggerated cultural differences between the American character and the environment of China, leading to comedic moments driven by these stereotypes.

It's important to consider the broader cultural context surrounding these stereotypes. The scene oversimplifies complex cultural dynamics and reduces them to simplistic stereotypes for comedic effect. This lack of nuance can perpetuate harmful biases and reinforce negative perceptions of different cultures. By presenting Americans as uniformly unfamiliar with China and Chinese people as uniformly short, the scene fails to acknowledge the diversity within both cultures and contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes.

The stereotypical representation of Americans and Chinese people within the scene reinforces stereotypes without acknowledging the complexity and nuance of cultural identities. By portraying cultural differences in such a simplistic manner, the scene misses an opportunity to explore and celebrate the diversity within each culture. As such, while the scene may elicit laughter, it's important to critically examine its underlying messages and implications within the broader societal context.

3.5. Season 7 Episode 8, Family Gay



Figure 13. Lois and her family appear saddened because Peter is no longer spending time with them



Figure 14. A Chinese boy is studying and his father comes to ask if he is a doctor yet



Figure 15. The father will only talk to him when he becomes a doctor

In this scene, Lois and her family appear saddened because Peter is no longer spending time with them, as he has become involved in inappropriate relationships. Lois expresses that she misses Peter and doesn't mind if he is now gay, as long as they can still be together as a family. Responding to his mother, Meg also says that they can get through this because they are still a family. Then, Chris adds that at least the bond of their family is stronger than a Chinese family's fence. The scene then shifts to show a Chinese boy studying when his father suddenly enters his room and asks, "You doctor, yet?" even though the boy is only 12 years old, which is impossible. The father then says he'll only talk to him when he becomes a doctor.

Linguistic Features

The exchange between the Chinese father and his son serves as the focal point for illustrating the stereotype. The father's inquiry, "You doctor yet?" followed by his declaration that he will only engage in conversation once his son achieves this status, directly mirrors the stereotype of Chinese parents placing paramount importance on academic and career achievements. This dialogue encapsulates the pressure exerted on children to excel academically and pursue prestigious professions, reflecting entrenched cultural norms and societal expectations within Chinese communities.

The deliberate choice of words amplifies the portrayal of the stereotype. The father's unwavering emphasis on his son becoming a doctor reinforces the prevailing perception of the Chinese obsession with high-status careers. This fixation on achieving success in fields such as medicine underscores cultural values associated with social status and accomplishment. By accentuating this fixation on career attainment, the scene humorously magnifies the societal pressure individuals face to conform to established norms, offering a satirical commentary on cultural expectations and the pursuit of success within Chinese society. Through skillful manipulation of dialogue and word choice, the scene adeptly captures and exaggerates the stereotype, imparting a humorous insight into the complexities of cultural identity and societal pressures.

Paralinguistic Signals

The father's tone is likely to be stern and serious, reflecting the gravity he attaches to his son's future career. This serious tone adds to the absurdity of the situation, highlighting the exaggerated nature of the stereotype being depicted. By delivering his lines with a tone of utmost importance, the father's seriousness amplifies the comedic effect of his unrealistic expectations.

The strategic pauses and emphasis play a crucial role in emphasizing the father's fixation on his son's career aspirations. By placing emphasis on words like "doctor" or "talk to him," the scene accentuates the father's singular focus on his son's professional trajectory and the extreme nature of his expectations. These pauses and emphasis serve to heighten the absurdity of the situation, further underscoring the exaggeration inherent in the stereotype being portrayed. Through the strategic use of tone, intonation, pauses, and emphasis, the scene effectively communicates the humor and reinforces the stereotype of parental pressure for academic and career success within Chinese culture.

Non-Verbal Communication

The father's facial expression is likely to be stern or unyielding, mirroring his seriousness regarding his son's future career. This expression of seriousness adds depth to the portrayal of the stereotype, emphasizing the father's unwavering commitment to his son's professional success. Conversely, the son's facial expression may convey a sense of resignation or pressure, reflecting the weight of his father's expectations and the daunting prospect of meeting them.

In addition to facial expressions, gestures further reinforce the dynamics of the scene. The father's gestures, such as pointing or gesturing towards his son, may serve to underscore his authority and the significance he attributes to the conversation. These gestures emphasize the paternal role in shaping the son's future and accentuate the theme of parental pressure within the cultural context. By incorporating nuanced facial expressions and gestures, the scene effectively communicates the complexities of familial relationships and societal expectations, contributing to the humorous portrayal of the stereotype.

Visual Elements

The setting of the scene, likely depicting a Chinese boy's bedroom, serves to reinforce the cultural context of the stereotype being portrayed. The familiar surroundings of a Chinese household add authenticity to the scene and enhance the audience's understanding of the familial dynamics at play. Furthermore, the father's entrance into his son's room adds to the immediacy and intensity of the interaction, highlighting the significance of the conversation about the son's future.

Character design also contributes to the portrayal of the stereotype. The characters may be visually depicted in a stereotypical manner, with the father possibly portrayed as authoritative and stern, reflecting his role as the enforcer of familial expectations. Conversely, the son may be depicted as obedient or overwhelmed, visually conveying the pressure he faces under his father's scrutiny. These visual cues help to reinforce the dynamics of the relationship between parent and child within the cultural context, adding depth to the portrayal of the stereotype and enhancing the comedic effect of the scene. Through strategic use of setting and character design, the scene effectively immerses viewers in the cultural milieu while reinforcing the humorous depiction of parental pressure and academic expectations within Chinese society.

Integration into the Scene

The scene seamlessly blends humor with the portrayal of a common stereotype deeply ingrained within Chinese culture. The comedic premise derives its foundation from the exaggerated stereotype of Chinese parents exerting excessive pressure on their children to excel academically and pursue prestigious careers. Through the absurdity of the father's singular focus on his son's career aspirations, the scene generates laughter, highlighting the stark contrast between societal expectations and individual experiences.

Embedded within the humor lies a reflection of broader cultural perceptions regarding Chinese parents' emphasis on academic and career success for their children. While presented in a lighthearted

manner, the stereotype depicted resonates with real cultural norms and expectations prevalent within Chinese society. By drawing on these cultural nuances, the scene prompts viewers to contemplate the intricate dynamics of familial relationships and societal pressures, offering insights into the complexities of navigating academic achievement within the context of familial expectations.

4. Discussion

The results from the analysis of the "Family Guy" clips underscore the pervasive use of racial stereotypes for comedic effect in popular media (Caron, 2016). Through conversational analysis, the contextualization cues within each scene revealed how linguistic features, paralinguistic signals, non-verbal communication, and visual elements contribute to the construction and reinforcement of racial stereotypes about Chinese culture and people.

These results align with previous studies on racial humor in media, which have highlighted the prevalence of stereotypes and their impact on shaping societal perceptions and attitudes by Christina (2019). The portrayal of Chinese characters as academically successful yet overly strict in parenting reflects broader cultural narratives about the "model minority" stereotype, which often places unrealistic expectations on individuals of Asian descent.

The reliance on exaggerated stereotypes in comedic media like "Family Guy" perpetuates harmful biases and contributes to the marginalization and misrepresentation of Asian communities (Stoffels, 2023). While humor can serve as a vehicle for social commentary, the uncritical reinforcement of stereotypes can reinforce discriminatory attitudes and hinder efforts toward cultural understanding and inclusivity. Stereotypes can be harmful as they often contain negative connotations, leading to discrimination and prejudice against targeted groups. Ethnic humor perpetuates these stereotypes and reinforces negative attitudes towards certain groups, often leading to further marginalization and stereotyping (Taufiq, 2023).

The broader implications of racial humor in media are significant because it not only perpetuates bias and misunderstanding but also reflects broader power dynamics and societal inequalities. Racial humor in media can contribute to the normalization of racial stereotyping, which can lead to the marginalization and misrepresentation of certain groups. This perpetuation of harmful stereotypes can reinforce existing biases and hinder efforts towards cultural understanding and inclusivity (Matamoros-Fernández, A., Rodriguez, A., & Wikström, P., 2022). The normalization of stereotypes about Chinese culture and people in popular media not only perpetuates bias and misunderstanding but also reflects broader power dynamics and societal inequalities. By portraying Chinese characters through a narrow lens of stereotype, media creators reinforce hegemonic narratives that prioritize certain cultural identities while marginalizing others.

Furthermore, the use of racial humor in media like "Family Guy" reflects a broader cultural trend of commodifying and sensationalizing differences for entertainment purposes. While creators may argue that such portrayals are meant to be satirical or tongue-in-cheek, the impact on perpetuating harmful stereotypes cannot be ignored. As audiences consume and internalize these representations, they may unwittingly reinforce existing biases and contribute to the perpetuation of systemic discrimination.

Moving forward, future research in this area could explore the efficacy of interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of racial humor in media. By engaging with creators, producers, and audiences, researchers can develop strategies for promoting cultural sensitivity and critical media literacy. Additionally, Longitudinal studies could investigate the long-term effects of exposure to racial humor on attitudes and behaviors, particularly among younger audiences who are more susceptible to media influence. If ethnic jokes create or support existing stereotypes and cultivate perceptions among their audience, this can lead to future longitudinal studies on the effects of ethnic humor (Smith, 2023).

Moreover, future research could examine alternative forms of comedic representation that challenge stereotypes and promote cultural diversity and inclusion. By amplifying marginalized voices and narratives, media creators can foster a more nuanced understanding of cultural identity and dismantle harmful stereotypes.

5. Conclusions

In this study, an analysis of racial humor targeting Chinese characters in the TV series "Family Guy" was conducted using conversational analysis techniques. The results revealed the pervasive use of stereotypes about Chinese culture and people for comedic effect, evident in the linguistic features, paralinguistic signals, non-verbal communication, and visual elements within the selected clips.

Through the lens of conversational analysis, it became evident that the portrayal of Chinese characters in "Family Guy" relies heavily on exaggerated stereotypes, such as the emphasis on academic achievement, strict parenting, and perceived cultural norms. While humor can serve as a tool for social commentary, the uncritical reinforcement of stereotypes in media perpetuates harmful biases and contributes to the marginalization and misrepresentation of Asian communities.

This study contributes to the broader conversation on media representation and cultural sensitivity by highlighting the impact of racial humor on shaping societal perceptions and attitudes. By critically engaging with media representations and advocating for cultural inclusivity, we can work towards creating a more equitable and understanding society.

Moving forward, it is imperative for creators, producers, and audiences to recognize the implications of racial humor in media and strive for greater cultural sensitivity in storytelling. Future research in this area could explore interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of racial humor, as well as alternative forms of comedic representation that challenge stereotypes and promote cultural diversity and inclusion.

Ultimately, by fostering dialogue and promoting critical media literacy, we can cultivate a media landscape that celebrates diversity, fosters understanding, and dismantles harmful stereotypes.

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