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### *C'mon! It's just a Joke!*

## *Discourse, Prejudice, and Superiority as Portrayed in the Jokes Directed towards the People of Mascara*

### هيا ! إنها مجرد نكتة !

## الخطاب والإجحاف والتعالي متشكلة في النكت الموجهة إلى سكان معسكر

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| Article info:   | Abstract   |
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| <b>Article history:</b><br>Received :02-11-2021<br>Revised :09-01-2022<br>Accepted : 19-03-2022 | Humour is usually investigated in similarity to racism or sexism, but not quite as much about superiority. The present work intends to investigate prejudice as enacted in humor. More specifically, it aims to unravel the way one facet of prejudice, namely superiority, plays itself out in the jokes aimed at a given social group in Algeria, in this case, the people of Mascara (a northwestern Algerian city). To this end, twenty jokes were collected from an Algerian blog to carry out the analysis. A meta-discourse analysis and concepts from the superiority theory were adopted. It is argued that the underlying motive behind making those jokes is to establish superiority at the expense of the target community by poking fun at their assumed unintelligence, poor decision-making, and backwardness. The findings confirm that superiority is behind those jokes under the guise of a “just joking” mindset. The jokes, hence, aimed at the people of Mascara, can be categorized as prejudiced and disparaged toward them, aiming to establish superiority over them. |
| <b>Key words:</b>   |  |
| Discourse   |  |
| Prejudice   |  |
| Humour  |  |
| Superiority.  |  |

### الكلمات المفتاحية: ملخص

في العادة ما يكون البحث في الفكاهة متعلقا بالعنصرية أو التحيز الجنسي، و لكن ليس كثيرا بتعلقها بالتعالي. يهدف هذا العمل إلى التحقيق في إظهار الإجحاف في الفكاهة، و بدقة أكثر، لكشف كيف يتجسد أحد أوجه الإجحاف، و هو التعالي، في النكت التي تستهدف مجموعة اجتماعية معينة في الجزائر، ألا و هي، في هذه الحالة، سكان معسكر (مدينة جزائرية شمالية غربية)، و من أجل هاته الغاية تم جمع عشرين نكتة من مدونة جزائرية، كما تم اعتماد تحليل ميتا (ما وراء) خطابي و مفاهيم من نظرية التعالي. اعتمد كفرضية أن الدافع الضمني من هذه النكت هو التعالي على المجتمع المستهدف من خلال الاستهزاء بـ ما يُظن أنه—غيابهم و سوء اتخاذهم للقرارات و تخلفهم. تؤكد نتائج البحث أن التعالي كان—بالفعل—هو الدافع خلف تلك النكت تحت ستار ذهنية «المزاح فقط»، و منه فإنه يمكن تصنيف النكت المستهدفة لسكان معسكر على أنها مجحفة تجاههم و انتقاصية لهم و هدفها التعالي عليهم.

الخطاب  
الإجحاف  
الفكاهة  
التعالي.

## 1. Introduction

Man has invented various ways to communicate with fellow humans; words are the means to this end, and they carry their significance in delivering a message. When words are used, they are accompanied by other non-verbal cues (tone of voice or facial expressions) intended to infect the interlocutors with certain emotions or to inform them about a topic. One of the forms of communication that are certainly effective is humour. Nevertheless, it can be a double-edged sword, i.e. used for good and evil intentions alike. One of the uses of humor is to enjoy the prejudice against certain people and reinforce stereotypes perpetrated at their expense. Disparaged humor resides on the negative spectrum of humor. Through disparaged humor, a joker aims to re-visit a stereotype about racism, sexism, or prejudice. One of the motives of disparaged humour is establishing superiority over an individual, a group, or ethnicity by poking fun at their taste, wisdom, and/or, most importantly, intelligence.

The notion of prejudice in humor discourse is usually examined with racism or sexism, but not with superiority, one facet of the prejudice paradigm. Along with the same idea, and the need for occupying such an important niche, comes this study that attempts to answer the question: how is superiority portrayed through disparaged humor? The points that follow deal with previous research into social and ethnic groups, prejudice, stereotypes, and superiority. The focus is, then, shifted to the analysis of the corpus of jokes under investigation.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Social Groups, Prejudice, and Stereotypes

Prejudice and stereotypes have always been associated with either gender or social/ethnic groups. This is the case, because stereotypes or prejudiced beliefs are social constructs that are imposed by the powerful group(s) within society. When prejudice is mentioned, it includes any form of attitude toward a certain group that is now accepted as a belief. Per the Aspen institute, there are several aspects of similarity between people and communities such as culture, religion, language, region, etc. These differences can be witnessed either among the various speech

communities of the same country or between different countries (Ethnicity, 2017).

Prejudice is usually reinforced through stereotypes. In this respect, Williamson (1987) reports an example by Sartre of a young woman that was attacked by Jewish furriers but decided to hate Jews, instead of the furriers. This story illustrates how prejudice against Jews has biased the woman's judgment. If we look deeper, we will notice that it is the stereotypical stories about an ethnic group called "Jews" that led to such a conclusion from the woman. On the other hand, this story could be used to even reinforce the prejudice about Jewish people and how they are perceived.

In the same vein, a stereotype, as described by Blum (2004), does not merely refer to generalizations about a given group. It also includes the widely held images and beliefs about (a) given group(s) in society. This also entails some labels against the target group that come in the form of cultural identities held by people of the same culture and even extended to the people of a different one. What makes stereotypes more complicated to break down is the fact that they are considered as facts, hence are "truth-oriented" (Tapley, 2012, p.7). In addition, stereotypes are not deliberately adopted by people as a set of beliefs. In reality, they spread tacitly and unconsciously in society, making people holding them unaware of their existence, since they color their perception of the target group. That is why Blum (2004, p. 255) states that "[f]or the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see." Another characteristic of stereotypes is that they tend to fit in with other views a person has about other matters.

Prejudice and stereotypes can be enacted verbally, as well as non-verbally. In discourse, as van Dijk (1993) states, prejudice can be traced to text and talk. The message of the latter is shaped by cultural and political forces (the left or the right) and can even reach the government institutions. As to what has been already stated, results in some social/ethnic groups being unfairly the target of biased views and media attacks solely based on the basis of their appearance, dialect, or religious practices, among others. The attacks can vary from serious to humoristic ones.

## 2.2 Discourse and Humor: Bad Faith

It is crucial to bring up discourse into the equation at an early stage since the focus of the work is on verbal humoristic prejudice. In a semiotic, broader sense, discourse encompasses all types of messages, such as drawings, face-work, gestures, etc. (van Dijk, 1993). Here, discourse is referred to in written or spoken form, or language use (van Dijk, 1993). A question might be raised about the motive behind studying discourse structures in relation to humor. The answer is there is a more profound insight to be gained about our psyches and ourselves. That is, the focus on such structures is a window into the cognitive aspect, i.e. it is very telling of people's beliefs and prejudices. For instance, as van Dijk (1993, p. 148) puts it, the euphemistic expression "popular resentment" is a clear mitigation for "racism", which is more expressive. Therefore, the discourse structures that are implied—sometimes even misleadingly—influence people's attitudes and ideologies about themselves and others (van Dijk, 1993).

The nature of humor has to be clarified so that its relationship with prejudice can be disentangled. Bergson explains that establishing humor in its proper environment, namely, society is crucial to understanding it and the motive behind its occurrence. In the same vein, humor has a social function, and that is social signification (cited in Critchley, 2002). In other words, the joker attempts to gain social leverage by cracking jokes, a thing that makes him/her enjoyable to be around. Another angle into the nature of joking can help illustrate its relation to prejudice: There is an unspoken agreement of what the social world ought to be, and that includes what members of society consider as funny. For a joke to evoke laughter, it has to conform to the social structure—either positively or negatively—and if it does not, no laughter will ensue (Critchley, 2002). This is what Billig (2001) confirms by stating that jokes are used to break taboos in society, sometimes instigating laughter.

The following is a basic premise on directing humor toward a group: If the group that is being the butt of

the joke is foreign to the culture of jokers, it can play the perfect target to the jokes (Palmer, 2004). This means that jokers criticize a culture that is different from theirs, an indirect way of signalling superiority. Nevertheless, to highlight an essential detail that relates to the effectiveness of a joke: For the remark made at the expense of certain people, groups, things, etc. to be humorous, it must carry not necessarily realistically some truth in the eyes of the reader/listener (LaFollette & Shanks, 1993). Therefore, if a person, for instance, subconsciously believes that a certain group has a bad taste in food, any joke implying such an assumed reality, and said in a humoristic way, will succeed to invoke laughter.

## 2.3 Shape and Interpretation of Humor

The default mindset of a person is a serious one, and it is in this serious mindset that a person does analytical thinking and other cognitive and communicative activities. The interpretation of any form of communication (e.g. a joke) is different when a person is in a serious mindset rather than a humoristic one (Mulkay, 1988). In other words, the shift from a serious mindset to a humorous one will allow to a different judgment of humour. Per Attardo (1994), hints are provided by the joker that what is to be mentioned is not to be taken seriously as a rule of levity; therefore, the hearer/reader should switch to a humoristic mindset and then laugh at the joke. This means that the receiver of the joke should not process the communication analytically, but just enjoy it and go with it. On the other hand, the teller of the joke is free from any form of scrutinizing judgment, even if the joke is racist or prejudiced.

The interpretation of humor differs from one culture to another. According to Billig (2001), not all groups, sub-cultural groups, or even individuals within them, consider the same thing funny. For instance, Jaret (1999), in a survey report, states that the judgment of white and black Americans differs when it comes to utterances about race. The white Americans, the common line of defence is "just a joke" to something that their black fellow countrymen consider as racist or prejudiced.

## 2.4 Humor and Taboo

The relationship between humor and taboo subjects can be summarized in two theories. The first one argues that humor functions as a “safety valve” for anti-social practices that are rejected by society (Palmer, 2004, p. 60). An example is sexual subjects that cannot be discussed in some settings, such as family gatherings. In this respect, Orwell (1961) states that, in a civilized society, laughing at ‘saucy’ subjects relieves people from the inhibitions of daily life. This results in a refreshing feeling resembling being on vacation.

The second theory, on the other hand, is presented by Emerson (1969) who asserts that humor serves as a means for discussing taboo topics, not in terms of a safety valve, but as a negotiation procedure to introduce a taboo subject without transgressing social codes, then dealing with them in a serious, critical mindset. In this way, the interlocutor would not be challenged about the intention of his/her comments and would not be accused of breaking any racial taboos.

## 2.5 Functions of Humor

The Functions of humour can be either positive or negative. Positively speaking, joking about one’s mishaps and stupidity can help make a person more agreeable. It is a clever way of building rapport with interlocutors. On the negative end, laughter can be used to establish the social status of upmanship. For example, among colleagues, senior members can initiate friendly and harmless humor toward their juniors; the latter, however, are likely to use self-deprecating humor. This example is proof of how hierarchical order is established (Cosser, 1959). According to Cosser (1959), humor serves three functions, one of which is relief from the daily, repetitive routine of life. Gripe can also be considered as one of the functions of humor; jocularity makes it collective.

In this study, the focus is on the negative function of humor. In a general sense, humor is used to preserve the existing social roles and divisions within society. This includes family, work, friendship, even social/ethnic groups, i.e. everywhere there is an in-group

and an out-group. In the case of ethnic groups, jokers direct their jokes toward another group sharing many similarities to highlight the differences between each other, of course, painting themselves as superior (Mulder & Nijholt, 2002). Billig (2001), in accordance with Mulder and Nijholt, maintains that laughter is used to delineate boundaries between social groups, again in the favor of the joking group.

On a cognitive level, humor researchers have considered Freud’s notion of aggressive humor; jokers enter the realm of ethnic taboo through their jokes, enjoying the laugh over a group’s culture and appearance (Billig, 2001). Zillman (1983) reviewed Freud’s suggestion by arguing that, despite deriving pleasure from the expression of aggression, jokers do not admit to themselves that expressing their prejudices through jokes is enjoyable. They hide it under the guise of ‘the joke-work.’ In other words, the wit behind the phrasing of the joke (Billig, 2001). What does this tell us about our human nature? We are aggressive creatures who hide their aggression and prejudice under the veil of ‘joking’ (Critchley, 2002).

## 2.6 Theories of Humor

According to Critchley (2002), three theories of humor can be distilled: The first one, and the one investigated in this study, is the superiority theory. It is discussed by Plato, Aristotle, and more recently, Hobbes. The gist of it is that it is feelings of superiority over other people that cause people to laugh at or tell certain jokes (more on this in the “superiority via humor” section). The second theory is the relief theory. It can best explained by what Freud described as an energy discharge of repressed psychic activity providing pleasure for the laugher. The incongruity theory refers to the experience of a sensed incongruity between what one knows or expects from the joke/joker and what actually takes place in the joke. It is important to note that each comes with a specific underlying representation. For instance, superiority and relief theories “seem more concerned with the concomitants or mechanisms of the humorous reaction than with its conceptual core” (Levinson, 1998, p. 564). On a different note, the focus of the incongruity theory is on the cognitive aspect, the superiority the emotive,

whereas, the relief, the physical of comic amusement (Lintott, 2016).

### 2.7 Superiority via Humor

Humor is one of several ways to establish and reinforce superiority of status among people. As for the theory of superiority, two versions can be traced: the first one, the old, is some form of attack against a rather powerless person or group. Another way to view it is by considering the competition among people that leads many to searching for the flaws of others in an attempt to feel superior. The representation of this can be via laughter, an expression of ‘sudden glory’ (Barnes, 1992). On the other hand, the new theory can be divided into three parts: a winner and a loser, incongruity, and an element of surprise (Gruner, 1997). The focus here is on the first part, the winner and loser. In other words, if one succeeds in poking fun at another person/group, he/she will experience a feeling of superiority in comparison to the target.

The two theories are seconded by many researchers (e.g. Monro, 1988; Bicknell, 2007) who believe that there is some sort of disdain and malice on the part of the laughter that make him/her direct or enjoy disparaged humor. According to Dadlez (2011, p. 2), “superiority theories ally humor principally with ridicule and the enjoyment of one’s own superiority in pinpointing the foibles or weaknesses of another.” On a par with this, there is a certain frame through which the superiority theory should be viewed. It is the notion that this theory does not represent the only way of the interpretation of humor. That is, not all humor is intended for superiority purposes. But, there is a given kind of humor that results in “a comic amusement”, which might lead to the questioning of the ethical code of some individuals or groups (Lintott, 2016, p. 348).

The relationship between prejudice and superiority through humor is not a novel remark. Sartre (1948) found that there are tacit internal attachments between one’s stereotypical, ethnic beliefs and humor. To that end, he suggested that bigoted individuals/groups enjoy hatred toward another ethnic group. More to the point, per Adorno and Horkheimer (1997, p. 184), anti-semitic chants during political meetings

were deliberate “organized laughter.” Perhaps more important, even mirth can be related to superiority. According to Meyer (2000), the root cause of mirth is superiority, which is, then, converted into laughter, subtly signaling superiority.

### 3. Method

The present work is a meta-discourse analysis that aims to investigate whether the jokes directed toward the people of Mascara, a northwestern Algerian city, are intended to establish superiority over them through disparaged verbal humor. Therefore, what is precisely intended is an understanding of the motive behind such jokes. It is important to point out that an essentialist approach has not been taken, i.e. claiming that the jokes under investigation should necessarily convey superiority.

As stated before, a meta-discourse analysis is to be carried out on twenty jokes. And, based on any communicative cues from the jokes, it will be determined whether the motive is superiority, relief, or incongruity. The website the jokes were retrieved from a blog named “[speed-times](#).” It is an Algerian blog where subscribed members can share different genres of educational material, jokes, cartoons, etc. The post containing the jokes dates back to 2011. Concerning the blog’s policy, it cannot be found, apart from a reporting section, where 13 cases of infringement are stated. The contradiction between the stated conditions and the retrieved jokes—regardless of their motive, at this stage—can be seen in conditions: one, three, and four. The first condition of reporting, per the blog, is concerned with the sharing of pornographic, erotic, or inappropriate content. The third condition is about the sharing of any hateful content. The fourth condition focuses on any abusive, exposing, or derisive content toward a person or group of people. The reporting conditions obviously do not comply with the content of the jokes directed toward the people of Mascara. This might be due to two reasons: the members might not view the jokes as derisive and prejudiced, hence, have not reported them. Or, the blog administrator might have not seen or might not view them as derisive and immoral, but funny. As for the latter, it might be because the administrator is not from Mascara, but

from Ghazaouete, another northwestern Algerian city, neighboring Mascara.

Finally, these three disclaimers are necessary to mention. First, whenever the terms “joke” and “humor” are used, it is not implied that the subject material is funny. Second, it is by the claims of the joker, not the preferences of the researcher that they are described as jokes. Third, it is only by using the terms “joke” and “humor” that a possible inquiry between humor, prejudice, and superiority can be undertaken.

#### 4. Results and discussion

It is crucial to assert that, following the norm in qualitative research of the same orientation, tables were not used although they can be helpful in clarifying the findings, especially in quantitative research. Moreover, the researcher attempted, to the best of his abilities, to ensure that the analysis does not become redundant and overreach the intended aim.

Before delving into the analysis of the jokes at hand, an important metric against which to weigh in disparagement humor and how it might stem from an intricate superiority motive and stereotype needs to be stated. Such a premise will enable the reader to clearly gauge clearly the effect of disparagement humour on individuals and/or groups.

There are two features to the personality of a fully functioning human, and modern industrial society is built upon them, despite being seemingly contradictory to each other. The first one is the “rational pursuit of advantage”; the second is “to enjoy the fruits of such success” (Palmer, 2004, p. 62). Normally, any modern society abides by these two. It might not be clear, at first, what the gist of these two features has in common with disparagement humor and superiority. So conceived, any joke about stupidity stresses the opposite idea that “rational intelligence”, and the ability to act flexibly when facing a new set of situations is crucial for success and survival in the modern world (Palmer, 2004, p. 62). To that end, any person or group that fails to meet this standard is inferior to another person or group—this makes the group that meets the standard superior. Now, if verbal

humor is brought into the equation that means that it is permissible to poke fun at such individuals or groups. On the other end of the spectrum, if someone jokes about an individual’s or group’s stinginess or lack of wit in managing his/her/their money, he/she is implying that that person or group does not know how to enjoy the fruits of his/her/their labor. This, again, puts such people in a one-down position.

Three themes were highlighted throughout the analysis of the twenty jokes directed toward the people of Mascara. They all share the same function, a clear display of superiority prejudice toward the target group. In the current section, the highlighted themes are discussed in more detail.

The first theme that was identified is labelled “backwardness.” The joke revolves around the idea that a man from Mascara who went to a grocery store in Ain Timouchent, a nearby city to Mascara, and confused a cooking product with the chewing gum, as both have a similar size and color. In the joke, the man from Mascara asked about the price of what he supposed was the chewing gum. However, the cashier refused to sell him and told him that he was from Mascara. The implied message in the cashier’s response is that people of that city are known for not being up to date with what is modern in the world, even when it comes to trivial daily life necessities. And since a person/group is behind another one in awareness of the developments in the world, it will remain inferior to it. This effect becomes maximized when this backwardness is displayed in simple things.

The same can be said concerning the joke about a group of men who visited the beach in Oran, a northwestern coastal city and one of the major cities in Algeria. A native man told them that it is only when the flag is red that it is their turn to swim. For clarification, when the flag is red, it is forbidden for anyone to swim due to the danger the high waves pose for the swimmers. What is important to highlight here is that, in this joke, it is not an individual, but rather a group that were tricked. In addition, they are all unaware of what the red flag signifies, even though that is common knowledge for most people of the world. The use of the plural here denotes that people of Mascara are not up to date with the latest in the

world, even the simplest of information that Algerians possess. Again, it is obvious, here, that the motive is to paint other cities as superior to Mascara.

The second theme that stood out is that of “lack of intelligence.” In other words, some of the jokes painted the target group as stupid. One corresponding joke comes in two sentences. A singer whose nickname is “Houari Dauphin” was supposed to visit the city for a concert. The people of Mascara waited for him in the port, instead of the airport. The word “dauphin” is in French, and it means “dolphin.” Hence, those people were stupid to think that he was an actual dolphin and not a human being. Notice in the joke that it is the people of Mascara that went to meet him in the port. The joke does not say “some of them” or even “half of them.” This implies, again, that these people are characterized by a lack of intelligence, or, rather, outright stupidity. Correspondingly, if someone displays higher levels of intelligence than another one/group, he/she will feel superior to him/her/them, even if it is in a single domain.

The third theme, which is very closely related to the previous one, highlights a dangerous stereotype against the children from Mascara. In a joke that is intended to be funny, it is claimed that whilst some children were playing, a helicopter was flying over them. When they saw it, they started throwing stones at it, until they brought it down, crashing on the ground. When the crew moved out of it, the children commented that they did the right choice, because it had swallowed those men. This is the most extreme and the highest in prejudice among all the jokes. It implies that people of Mascara are inherently stupid, and that could be noticed in the reaction of their children to the passing helicopter. Furthermore, backwardness can also be highlighted, here, because, according to the meta-discourse of the joke, the children did not know what a helicopter was and thought that it had swallowed the crew before they brought it down.

After the main themes of the jokes were laid out, one has to discuss why such jokes might be perceived as funny and harmless by revisiting the serious and humoristic mindsets. In principle, a rational person reacts negatively or, at least, does not comply with

any prejudiced and stereotypical remarks aimed at a person/group. However, in humor, it is completely different. In daily life, we operate on two mindsets: the serious mindset and the humoristic one, and the former is the default. And, on the contrary, the humoristic view of the world is not serious and does not adopt critical thinking of the input and output to and from the environment. Hence, and more to the point of disparaged humor, when one is in a humoristic mindset, he/she is tolerant to abusive and offensive jokes. And, this is the backchannel prejudiced jokers use to infiltrate the moral code of a society to spread or reinforce stereotypes as facts under the guise of ‘just joking.’

At this stage, one might argue that a joke should be taken lightheartedly and that one cannot remain in a serious mindset all the time. The answer to that is that if the same stereotype were offered a rational (non-prejudiced) person in the form of a statement and not a joke, he/she would have a different reaction to it—mostly negative—because, when one switches to a humoristic mindset, the “cognitive schemas” (Ford & Ferguson, 2004, p. 82) cease to process unexpected and incongruent judgments, and the moral compass is not in function anymore. In principle, when one shifts from a serious mindset to a non-serious one, he/she tacitly consents with the disparaged meta-message of the joke and joker. This does not mean that the discriminatory message is regarded as normal. It is rather the means (the joke) via which the stereotype passes (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). This is the reason the jokes against the people of Mascara are perceived as funny to many Algerians.

Finally, due to the purely qualitative nature of the study, the researcher has refrained from having a recommendations section, which is usually to be found in quantitative research.

## 5. Conclusion

Prejudice and stereotypes far exceed a person’s ethnicity or gender. They even encompass any social group that shares the same skin color, and gender, yet, differs in being an out-group. Prejudice is reinforced through stories that are reiterated enough times to become almost factual in society. Such enactment

is verbal, but it can also be non-verbal through gestures and reactions toward a target social group or any representative of it. Humor, as much as it is considered therapeutic by many, can also be harmful. However, it is not easy to label humor as good or evil unless it is viewed in its appropriate context, because a statement or a gesture may have different connotations depending on the place and time. In other words, what is totally acceptable in one place might be disrespectful in another.

The difficulty to hold disparaged humor accountable is due to fact that it plays on the chord of the humor mindset. Hence, what is said jokingly shall not be scrutinized analytically. This allows disparaged humor to discuss racist, sexist, or tabooed subjects without being held accountable.

The aim of this work was to investigate whether disparaged verbal humor feeds and reinforces the stereotype of superiority at the expense of the people of Mascara. It can be confirmed, now, that the motive of such jokes was to establish and display superiority over the target group by painting them as inferior in intelligence, advancement, openness to the world, and in decision making. The stereotype reached a depth of portraying them as inherently stupid by making jokes about their children. The meta-discourse analysis, via the highlighted communicative cues, confirmed the hypothesis. Sometimes, the jokes referred to an individual who could be identified to be from Mascara, even after he changed his clothes the other day (per the joke). Other times, it was a group of them, giving the impression that those people represented the city and its people. The dynamic of the jokes played itself out on the idea that they lack one of the key features of personality in the modern industrial world, namely, intelligence. Thus, they are inferior to people in other Algerian cities. One justification that might be correct is that Mascara is not a major city in Algeria, both economically and politically, and this might have subjected it to such stereotypes, especially from its neighboring Oran, the second major city in Algeria after the capital Algiers. Finally, what proves those jokes to be disparaged toward establishing superiority over the target group is that if they were to be analyzed under the light of a serious mindset, they

would obviously be regarded as discriminatory.

### Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that he has no conflict of interest

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