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Liberated jokes: Sexual humor in all-female groups¹

JANET BING

Abstract

Females have formerly been under-represented in jokes. Many scholars have claimed that joke making is primarily a male activity, particularly in the domain of sexual jokes. In this paper, I discuss sexual jokes that women share with each other both in all-female groups and by e-mail. After reviewing some widely held assumptions about women and jokes, I explore liberated women's jokes, including their structure, use of stereotypes, and subversive ideas. Finally, I discuss why humor theory is incomplete without the inclusion of a female perspective and suggest that women should tell more jokes.

Keywords: Feminism; joke telling; sexual humor; stereotypes; women and language; women's sense of humor.

1. Introduction

When Apollo Mission Astronaut Neil Armstrong first walked on the moon, he not only gave his famous “one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind” statement, but followed it with several remarks to the other astronauts and Mission Control, including the remark, “Good luck, Mr. Gorsky.” Over the years many people questioned Armstrong as to what the “Good luck Mr. Gorsky” statement meant, but Armstrong always just smiled. However, in 1995 after Mr. Gorsky had died, Neil Armstrong felt he could answer the question. When he was a kid, he was playing baseball with a friend in the backyard. His friend hit a fly ball, which landed just below his neighbor's bedroom windows. His neighbors were

Mr. and Mrs. Gorsky. As he leaned down to pick up the ball, young Armstrong heard Mrs. Gorsky shouting at Mr. Gorsky, "Oral sex! You want oral sex?! You'll get oral sex when the kid next door walks on the moon!"

This story, reputed to be true, is a fairly standard narrative joke and follows one pattern of sexual humor identified by Raskin (1985) in his discussion of sexual jokes. Like all but two of the many examples of sexual jokes Raskin discusses, the story begins with a non-sexual script and switches to a sexual script. This particular joke works for a number of reasons, and has never failed to get a laugh from both men and women when I have told it.

However, there are many types of sexual jokes that generally are not told in mixed company. Many of these can be found in published collections such as Legman (1968, 1975). Because academic humor theorists have historically been predominately male,² the sexual jokes collected, published and analyzed have generally been those told in all-male groups. Until recently, the assumption has been that all-female groups do not create and share sexual jokes. This is not the case.

I have collected a number of sexual jokes from friends, colleagues, relatives, students and former students, jokes that women share with each other, often by e-mail, but sometimes at social occasions. In this paper, I am going to compare some of these "liberated" jokes to the typical sexual jokes found in mainstream collections. Traditional sexual jokes, such as the Neil Armstrong joke, are funny partly because they violate taboos against talking in public about sex. "Liberated sexual jokes" are funny because they violate taboos against talking about sexism.

After briefly reviewing some traditional assumptions about women and jokes, I discuss some of the differences between mainstream jokes (which tend to be from a male perspective) and liberated women's jokes, in terms of their structure, their use of stereotypes, and the subversive nature of some of the jokes discussed. Finally, I return to the issue of why humor theory is incomplete without the inclusion of a female perspective and I suggest that women should be encouraged to tell more jokes.

2. Who tells jokes?

I belong to several groups of friends who frequently exchange jokes by e-mail and, less frequently, tell each other jokes in social situations.

Much to my surprise, the *New York Times* announced in May, 2005 that “the joke died recently after a long illness, of, oh, 30 years” (St. John 2005). According to St. John and his sources, standup comics no longer tell jokes onstage, and

out in the real world, the joke hung on for a while, lurking in backwaters of male camaraderie like bachelor parties and trading floors and in monthly installments of *Playboy’s* “Party Jokes” page. Then jokes practically vanished. (St. John 2005: 11)

Among the possible reasons the article cites are the atomic bomb, short attention spans, the Internet, political correctness and the feminism of American culture. However, announcements about the death of the joke, like those that periodically report the demise of feminism, may be premature. Garrison Keillor’s *Prairie Home Companion* radio program continues to have an annual joke show. Christie Davies (2004b: 6), a leading humor scholar, does not report the death of the joke, and even claims that rather than being extinct, jokes are increasing: “Indeed the modern technology of the Internet and email and ever-cheapening international phone calls has multiplied the volume of jokes and increased the speed of their circulation.”

3. Women and jokes

In addition to reporting the death of jokes, St. John also suggests in the same *Times* article that women cannot tell jokes. He quotes a former president of the International Society of Humor Studies, John Morreall, who summarizes some standard assumptions about women and jokes and who claims that women have been ahead of the trend because they prefer not to tell traditional jokes:

Telling old-style jokes, he [Morreall] said, was a masculine pursuit because it allowed men to communicate with one another without actually revealing anything about themselves. Historically women’s humor was based on personal experience, and conveyed a sense of the teller’s likes and dislikes, foibles and capacity for self-deprecation. . . . A very common quip was, “Women can’t tell jokes” . . . Mr. Morreall said. “I found that women can’t *remember* jokes. That’s because they don’t give a damn. Their humor is observational humor about the people around that they care about. Women virtually never do that old-style stuff.” (St. John 2005: 2)

Morreall may be basing his opinions partly on existing scholarship. In 1975, Robin Lakoff was apparently serious when she wrote:

It is axiomatic in middle-class American society that first, women can't tell jokes—they are bound to ruin the punchline, they mix up the order of things and so on. Moreover, they don't "get" jokes. In short, women have no sense of humor. (Lakoff 1975: 56)

Hay (2000) also discusses a number of writers, beginning with Freud, who have reported that women do not tell jokes (except self-disparaging ones) and generally do not have a sense of humor. Kotthoff (2000) reports that in informal dinner conversations, women used more self-deprecating humor and men told more standardized jokes, used more disparaging humor, and did more sexual teasing. Both Coates (1996) and Kotthoff (2000) present data that support Morreall's conclusion that women prefer making spontaneous joking comments to telling traditional jokes. As Attardo (1994: 298) notes, for people in general, "canned jokes cannot occur as frequently as conversational jokes." It is quite possible that most women are still more comfortable with conversational humor and personal anecdotes than with joke telling, since, as (Norrick 2003: 1344) observes, "joke telling counts as a performance," but this does not necessarily entail that women do not enjoy "that old-style stuff." Nardini (2000) discusses the performance of jokes in an Italian ladies' club, where both formal and informal jokes are told. She notes (2000: 96) that none of these jokes could have been told in public, that is, in the presence of men. Evidence is growing to refute the opinion that "women have no sense of humor."

However, until recently, collections of jokes or academic writing on humor have supported the view that women do not create jokes, since the majority of published jokes and humorous stories are by men.³ As part of an attempt to collect and write humorous stories about and for women, I confirmed Kramer's (1981) earlier conclusion that in published collections of jokes, women exist only as the standard stereotypes: dumb blondes, nagging wives, Jewish mothers, angry feminists, mothers-in-law, and sex objects. Jokes, of course, depend on common stereotypes, and most stereotypes about women are negative in the fictional world of jokes. Compared to the numerous male-dominated collections of wit and humor there are very few on women's humor, such as Stillman and Beatts (1976), Kaufman and Blakely (1980), Savanna (1991), and Barreca

(1996). When I examined web-based joke pages and the joke books available in my local library and bookstores, I found far more humorous anecdotes by, for, and about men than women.⁴

4. Women and dirty jokes

Although the idea that women do not tell jokes and do not have a sense of humor has sometimes been challenged, most humor scholars still contend that “respectable” women generally do not tell dirty jokes. Mulkey (1988) quotes Legman (1968: 217) who asserts:

One fact strikingly evident in any collection of modern sexual folklore, whether jokes, limericks, ballads, printed ‘novelties,’ or whatnot, is that this material has all been created by men, and that there is no place in it for women except as the butt.

Legman is correct in noting that most dirty jokes are “grossly anti-woman.” He also claims (1975: 35) that a woman who tells dirty jokes is “effectively denying her own sex as a woman.” In 1976, Gary Fine wrote that although society is changing, “In Anglo-American culture . . . sexual humor has been primarily a male prerogative, usually found at such times when females are not present.” More recently, in response to an article about lesbian jokes (Bing and Heller 2003), Christie Davies (2004a) is surprised that lesbians invent sexual jokes. Referring to lesbian jokes he says (317), “It is then all the more interesting that in the absence of male interest, some lesbians should have taken to what was traditionally an all-male pastime, namely the inventing of jokes about sexual behavior.”

A few researchers have questioned the prevailing assumptions about women and jokes, including sexual jokes. A study by Wilson (1979) found that women subjects gave slightly higher ratings for sexual jokes than men did and notes (125) that “there is little previous evidence of sex differences in the appreciation of sexual humour.” He suggests “The studies showing less amusement of sexual humour among women employed chauvinist, professional wit—produced mainly by men for masculine amusement.” Using jokes that were not hostile to women, Lundell (1993: 308), too, found “that women do like sexual jokes even more than men depending on the type and content of the joke as well as who tells it.” Mulkey (1988) noted that some humor has been influenced by the

women's movement. Feminists "have sought to address and make fun of the basic assumptions of men's views of women, which are linked to the basic assumptions of men's sexual humor."

Until quite recently, few researchers have published information about jokes told in all-female groups by young women (Preston 1994), lesbians (Bing and Heller 2003) older women (Mitchell 1978), women of Italian descent (Nardini 2000), women of ill repute (Johnson 1973), or feminists (Green 1977; Barreca 1991; Crawford 1995; Bing 2004). Yet, humor theorists continue to base their analyses primarily on jokes written by men because they find plentiful evidence in well-established sources.

Naturally, male scholars have had limited access to women's sexual humor or the jokes told in all-female groups. The sexual jokes that women share with each other are not necessarily those used publicly by the relatively small numbers of female joke writers and comediennees. In addition to factors that have discouraged women from other types of public discourse, one reason for the apparent public absence of female-initiated jokes is the role that jokes, particularly sexual jokes, have traditionally played in identifying women as sexually available or promiscuous. Quoting Freud, Peter Farb (1974) notes that a woman who laughs at a dirty joke is signaling a willingness to accept a man's sexual approach.

A woman who agrees to listen to such a joke (or even sometimes tells one of her own) indicates that she is ready to accept such an approach. And once she has shown her willingness, it is very difficult for her later to revert to a pose in which she is shocked by the man's physical behavior. (Farb 1974: 96)

Legman (1975: 25) notes the "aphrodisiacal" effects of dirty jokes and claims that the telling of dirty jokes in mixed company often ends "by accompanying one of the ladies home at the end of the session and attempting to have sexual intercourse with her." (34) Walle's (1976) study of the role of humor, including sexual humor, as a preliminary step to a sexual pick-up provides further empirical evidence for this claim. As Freud, Legman, Farb and Walle suggest, women who wish to reject a male's advances, may do so by pretending to not understand a sexual joke or finding some excuse not to respond. Barreca (1991: 50) discusses the belief that only "Bad Girls" initiate humor of any kind, and she quotes the conclusion of anthropologist Matadev Apte that throughout the world, women who tell any type of jokes are regarded as sexually promiscuous. If they initiate sexual humor they appear even more promiscuous, since it takes a certain "fallen knowledge" to make, or even understand, such

jokes. As in many other situations, women are in a double bind. If they don't tell or laugh at sexual jokes, even those directed against them, they have no sense of humor. If they do, they are available. Most males do not operate under such restrictions.

I questioned several undergraduate students and younger instructors by e-mail about whether young women perceive the situation to have changed. Jennifer, a witty student in her early twenties, responded by e-mail:

When I pretend not to understand the joke (and I'm really good at playing dumb), the joke becomes centered around my sexual inexperience — when I don't laugh, I get laughed at. But when the boys would say something dirty and I would laugh, the "severity" of the jokes would escalate— either that or they would become more directed towards me. I definitely believe that a female with a sense of humor (and by that I mean laughing at sexual jokes) is judged as more sexual—sexually "open" at the very least, and most likely sexually available. A woman who tells dirty jokes, in the company of men, is seen as sexually assertive or even easy—I would definitely agree that once this type of "reputation" is established it is very difficult to be seen in any other way (i.e. shocked by a man's behavior.) . . . I think that men telling sexual jokes in the presence of women has become a way of testing the waters—probing them for some insight into their sexual availability.

Jennifer is aware of the double bind for women in situations where sexual jokes are being told. An outspoken young instructor whom I queried agreed with Jennifer and concluded, "I've told jokes for years, as you know. But it's cost me." Crawford (2003: 1414) observes that jokes are one means of social interaction, and males and females use humor in gendered ways "thereby performing gender and reproducing the gender system." For example, when women pretend not to understand sexual jokes or laugh politely at sexist jokes, they are following the social expectations of the dominant culture and are "performing gender" in the socially expected way (Butler 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987). However, when they hear or tell jokes that do not meet conventional expectations, they are acting out of role, and dismissed as less than respectable, or even worse, "liberated women."

5. Whose experience counts?

Because I am a feminist, I often do not share the experience, the presuppositions, or the assumptions of my male academic colleagues.⁵ Unlike most

male scholars, my “communities of practice” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) include many all-female groups and this has made it possible for me to collect jokes from a liberated woman’s perspective. Thus, I bring a different value system and different personal experience to the issue of women and jokes than that of many male researchers. Although I have read repeatedly that women do not tell jokes, particularly sexual jokes, I continue to observe women of different ages telling jokes in a variety of settings: birthday parties, dinner parties, class reunions, restaurants, homes, and even the supermarket. In addition, friends, relatives, colleagues, students and former students continue to send me jokes by e-mail. As Davies (2004) notes, the Internet and e-mail have increased the volume of jokes being circulated. Many of my female friends are feminists and some are senior citizens, so age and the fact that some of these people know that I collect jokes may make my experience atypical, but I doubt that because I rarely initiate the joke-telling at parties and am seldom the sole recipient of the joke e-mails.

Feminist scholarship is often labeled political, and it is. However, feminist, critical and postmodern scholars such as Foucault (1972), Harding (1991), and Crawford (2000) argue that scholarship is *never* value-free and they agree with Banks (1993: 5) that *all* scholarship is political and “contains important human interests and normative assumptions that should be identified, discussed, and examined.” Banks proposes that it is useful for all scholars and writers to recognize the positions and frames from which they present their data, interpretations, and analyses, whatever their biases, for these biases are usually consistent with their training and personal experience.

It might surprise some men to learn that many of the jokes I have collected are about sex. Barreca (1991) also reports that women she knows share jokes about sex:

Sharing sexual stories and jokes has long been an underground activity for women, a private set of experiences monitored as fiercely as our weight and kept just about as secret. These stories could never make it to the light of day. (Barreca 1991: 151)

Is there any academic value in exploring the perspectives of putative minorities such as women? I believe there is. One goal of feminist scholars is to change the status quo in all academic fields by recognizing and including the perspectives and contributions of females.

6. Sexual humor

In his chapter on sexual humor, Raskin (1985: Ch. 5) identifies several types of sexual humor, all of which involve a standard opposition of a non-sex-related script with a sex-related script. All involve sexual/non-sexual oppositions, either specified or unspecified. Except for two of Raskin's examples, all the sexual jokes he quotes begin with a non-sexual script and end with a sexual script, as in the following joke.

- (1) Early morning in a Russian forest. The door of a small hut opens and two men crawl out followed by a bear. The loud female voice sounds from inside: "You two, get out! And you, in a fur coat, you stay!"

(Raskin 1985: 159)

If Raskin's examples are representative, the majority of sexual jokes follow a standard pattern in which the script opposition involves a switch from a non-sexual to a sexual script. Why is this joke funny? As Raskin notes, one of the reasons is the switch to a topic of forbidden sex, in this case, the introduction of bestiality in the punch line.

In addition to jokes where a non-sexual script is replaced by a sexual script, Raskin lists another type of opposition illustrated by the following example:

- (2) A man objects to the price a prostitute has charged him, and attempts to have intercourse with her violently in and around her navel, shouting, "At these prices, I am going to make my own goddamn hole!"

(Raskin 1985: 55)

In this joke, as Raskin explains (161), there is a possible/impossible contrast and "the hearer is reminded of the non-sexual world while being immersed in the sexual world." In fact, the non-sexual world is not really evoked in this joke, and the "impossible" contrast is not clear to me, since the joke suggests a traditional pornographic fantasy of sex and pain being inflicted on a subservient woman. Interestingly enough, although Raskin notes the possibility of beginning with a sexual script and switching to a non-sexual one, the following joke is the only one of his many examples that does so:

- (3) The parents of the bride put up their daughter and her bridegroom in their living room for their wedding night. After midnight, dying of

curiosity, they creep up to the door and stand there listening. They hear tense, hoarse whispers: “Just a little to the right! Now! No, it won’t get in. To the left. No. Wait. Stop. Could you raise the right leg just a little bit? Good. That’s better. Now that’s a different matter . . .” Completely satisfied that everything is going as it was supposed to, the parents retire to their bedroom. In the morning, however, they discover the living room window open and the piano missing.

(Raskin 1985: 163)

In every other sexual joke discussed by Raskin, including ethnic and political jokes that are also sexual, the sexual frame is not abandoned, even when a non-sexual element is introduced.

Although switching from a sexual to non-sexual script seems to be rare in sexual jokes that men tell, such a switch occurs in many of the jokes my women friends tell and share with each other. For example, I have received the following joke, “MAKE ME FEEL LIKE A WOMAN” from various female friends through e-mail.

- (4) On a recent transatlantic flight, a plane passes through a severe storm. The turbulence is awful, and things go from bad to worse when one wing is struck by lightning. One woman in particular loses it. Screaming, she stands up in the front of the plane. “I’m too young to die,” she wails. Then she yells, “Well, if I’m going to die, I want my last minutes on Earth to be memorable! Is there ANYONE on this plane who can make me feel like a WOMAN?”

For a moment there is silence. Everyone has forgotten their own peril. They all stare, riveted, at the desperate woman in the front of the plane. Then a man stands up in the rear of the plane. He is gorgeous, tall, and very well built. He starts to walk slowly up the aisle, unbuttoning his shirt

. . . one button at a time.
 . . . No one moves.
 . . . He removes his shirt.
 . . . Muscles ripple across his chest.
 . . . he whispers:
 . . . “*Here, iron this.*”

The tense situation, the plea, “Make me feel like a woman,”⁶ the “gorgeous, tall, and very well built” man unbuttoning his shirt, and the

muscles rippling across the man's chest all build up the tension of the sexual script. The incongruity of the switch from a sexual script to a typical domestic script in the punch line is the basis for the humor.⁷ For a male listener or reader the humor of the joke may simply result from the buildup of tension in a sexual script and the release when the non-sexual script is introduced in the punch line, very much as in the newlyweds and the piano joke in (3). However, for some women, the introduction of a domestic script is almost as taboo a subject as certain sexual topics. For many heterosexual women, raising the topic of the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities can be difficult, unless, of course, done in the context of a joke.

The following story (received from Anita Fellman, Jan. 2004) follows a similar pattern:

- (5) A woman was sitting at a bar enjoying an after-work cocktail with her girlfriends when an exceptionally tall, handsome, extremely sexy middle-aged man entered. He was so striking that the woman could not take her eyes off him. The young-at-heart man noticed her overly attentive stare and walked directly toward her. (As all men will.)

Before she could offer her apologies for so rudely staring, he leaned over and whispered to her, "I'll do anything, absolutely anything, that you want me to do, no matter how kinky, for \$20.00 on one condition." (There are always conditions) Flabbergasted, the woman asked what the condition was.

The man replied, "You have to tell me what you want me to do in just three words." (Controlling huh?) The woman considered his proposition for a moment, then selected a \$20 bill from her purse, which she pressed into the man's hand along with her address.

She looked deeply into his eyes, and slowly, and meaningfully said. . . .

"Clean my house."

Unlike the airplane story in (4), which evokes a typical domestic script in which a woman does the housework, the joke in (5) evokes an atypical domestic script where housework might be done by a male rather than a female. In liberated jokes, it is the inferior status of women rather than the sex that is the focus of the punch line, as in comedian Pam Stone's comment (Barreca 1996: 1):

- (6) I had a girlfriend who told me she was in the hospital for female problems. I said, "Get real! What does that mean?"

She says, “You know female problems.”

I said, “What? You can’t parallel park? You can’t get credit?”

In Stone’s joke, the phrase “female problems” evokes the standard stereotypes and raises mildly taboo sex-related topics such as menstruation, PMS, and menopause. It is then followed by the self-deprecating line “you can’t parallel park” quickly followed by the punch line, which is somewhat dated, since only older women in the U.S. now remember the time when they could get credit only if their husbands or fathers would sign for them. A more up-to-date punch line for this joke might be a current female problem such as “You can’t get elected to Congress?”

Women’s sexual jokes often reflect concerns other than sex, as in the following joke from Crawford (1995):

- (7) Joe used to spend many evenings at this neighborhood bar with his friends, having a beer and socializing. Then, inexplicably, he was absent for over a year. One evening, a beautiful woman came into the bar, sat down, and said, ‘Hello everybody. Do you remember me? I used to be Joe, but I had a sex change operation, and now I’m Debbie.’ His/her friends were astounded. They gathered around to hear the story.

‘What was it like? Did you have to take hormones?’

‘Did you have to learn how to dress and walk like a woman? And wear high heels?’

‘Yes, but that’s okay, I liked it actually.’

‘But . . . the operation! You know . . . Wasn’t it horrible? I mean, when they cut . . .’

‘Yes, I know what you mean. No, that part wasn’t too bad, it was all done by medical experts.’

‘Well, then, what was the *worst part* about becoming a woman?’

Joe/Debbie replied slowly and thoughtfully, ‘I guess it was when I woke up from the operation and found out that they’d cut my paycheck by forty percent.’

(Crawford 1995: 157)

This joke is also somewhat dated, since women’s earnings are currently around seventy-five percent of men’s in the United States. Not everyone finds liberated women’s sexual jokes funny because many people, including many women, are unfamiliar with the scripts that jokes like this presuppose. Despite the efforts of feminists to make people aware of social inequities, many people in the U.S. are not bothered by the fact that

women earn less than men for identical or comparable jobs, do a disproportionate share of housework, child and elder care, are not well-represented in the government, and do not have equal rights under the U.S. Constitution. Although men's jokes (and much e-mail spam) often refer to the size of sexual organs, many women today are more interested in the privileges that go along with a penis rather than the penis itself. As Hollander and Barreca (2003) note:

Penis-envy we don't have, although we wouldn't mind some of the benefits awarded to those members: full access to the power structure, political influence, a decent credit line, and the ability to walk into a garage without the mechanic grinning and thinking "Oh, good, now I can put that wing on my house" because we have a question about the transmission. (Hollander and Barreca 2003: 23)

Liberated women's jokes provide more than a laugh. They remind other women that although the situation of women has improved, there still remain some serious inequities. As Emerson (1973) and Attardo (1994: 328) note, a non-bona fide text can be used to introduce or convey a serious meaning.

7. The stupid and the canny

Until quite recently it was not wise for a woman to display her intelligence or compete too successfully with a potential mate. This may be changing. In addition to switching from sexual to non-sexual frames, liberated women's jokes now switch the underlying assumption about the relative intelligence of males and females. In mainstream jokes, women, particularly blondes, are dumb. As Davies (1998) has shown, many ethnic jokes deal with what he calls "the stupid and the canny." Davies makes a convincing case that dominant groups do not project their anxieties on other ethnic groups that are completely foreign to them, but rather on groups that are similar and familiar to the dominant group, but are also somewhat marginalized. For example, Canadians make stupidity jokes about the Newfoundlanders, Mexicans about the Yucatecos, British about the Irish, Russians about the Ukrainians, etc. This might help explain the popularity of blond(e) jokes among males. Since women are still marginalized and treated as inferior in many societies, it is natural for them to be stereotyped in jokes as stupid rather than canny.

However, increasingly, women are sharing jokes in which it is the women rather than the men who are the canny ones. As Lundell (1993: 313) notes, finding humor in jokes “is a function of getting one’s stereotypes confirmed.” In a study of how college men and women responded to different jokes, Lundell (1993: 311) reports that females found the following joke funnier than males did.

- (8) Some people had heard that their neighbor’s daughter was going to drive around Europe with her boyfriend during the summer, so they asked the father:

“Aren’t you worried about your daughter driving around in Europe with her boyfriend?”

“Not at all,” said the father. “They have safety belts.”

Note that in this joke, as in the jokes discussed above, the implied sexual script is replaced with a non-sexual script. For some people the putative naïveté of the father might be the source of some humor, but it is also possible that the lack of the traditional double standard might be what makes females like the joke more than males.

I have received via e-mail another example of what I would call a liberated woman’s joke:

- (9) A couple goes on vacation to a fishing resort in northern Minnesota. The husband likes to fish at the crack of dawn. The wife likes to read. One morning the husband returns after several hours of fishing and decides to take a nap. Although not familiar with the lake, the wife decides to take the boat out. She motors out a short distance, anchors, and continues to read her book. Along comes a game warden in his boat. He pulls up alongside the woman and says, “Good morning, Ma’am. What are you doing?”

“Reading a book,” she replies, thinking “*Isn’t it obvious?*”

“You’re in a restricted fishing area,” he informs her.

“I’m sorry officer, but I’m not fishing, I’m reading.”

“Yes, but you have all the equipment. For all I know you could start at any moment. I’ll have to take you in and write you up.”

“If you do that, I’ll have to charge you with sexual assault,” says the woman.

“But I haven’t even touched you,” says the game warden.

“That’s true, but you have all the equipment. For all I know you could start at any moment.”

In this joke, which is a variation of an older, all-male joke found in Humes (1975), the wife is in a relatively powerless situation. Not only is the officious game warden male, but he also is a representative of a governing system controlled by and favoring males. By being canny, the wife has bested not only this individual man, but by implication, a social system that feminists argue has traditionally kept women at a disadvantage. There are many e-mail jokes in which women are assumed to be more intelligent than men, including a number of genie jokes in which men who wish to become twice as intelligent find themselves turned into women or the one in which the man says, "I wish that no matter where I go, beautiful women will want and need me" and finds himself turned into a tampon.⁸ As women tell and hear more liberated jokes, perhaps they will also become less fearful of public displays of their own competence and intelligence.

8. Role reversal

Although women have long been underrepresented in mainstream jokes, there is a long tradition of women who create jokes, cartoons, and humorous stories by switching the sex of characters in different situations. In 1915 Alice Duer Miller (quoted in Kaufman and Blakely 1980: 90) wrote the following:

(10) **Why We Oppose Votes for Men**

1. Because men's place is in the army.
2. Because no really manly man wants to settle any question otherwise than by fighting about it.
3. Because if men should adopt peaceable methods women will no longer look up to them.
4. Because men will lose their charm if they step out of their natural sphere and interest themselves in other matters than feats of arms, uniforms and drums.
5. Because men are too emotional to vote. Their conduct at baseball games and political conventions shows this, while their innate tendency to appeal to force renders them particularly unfit for the task of government.

Gloria Steinem (1983) uses role reversal in her humorous piece, "If Men Could Menstruate" where she notes "Clearly menstruation would become an enviable, boastworthy, masculine event. Men would brag about how long and how much." Judith Stone (1990: 82) used role reversal in

“If Santa were a woman,” observing that if Santa were a woman “She and her husband would be in couples therapy, because she’d empathize with his discomfort at being the dependent clause.”

In a cartoon by Marian Henley (*Hysteria*, Summer 1993) a male robbery victim is filing a complaint to two policewomen. The text is:

- (11) *Man: I've been ROBBED! Some &#* took my WALLET!*
Cop 1: Well, what did you EXPECT?
Cop 2: You're dressed so EXPENSIVELY!
Cop 1: I'm afraid you wouldn't have much of a case . . .
Cop 2: It'd be YOUR word against THEIRS!
Man: WHAT?!
Cop 2: How could you prove that you weren't willing?
Man: WILLING?!
Cop 1: Nice men keep their wallet covered in public. They spend money MODESTLY . . .
Cop 2: . . . and don't call attention to their FINANCIAL CHARMS!
Cop 1: Otherwise, people get the wrong idea!
Cop 2: If someone takes your money, it's YOUR fault, not THEIRS!
Man: This . . .
THIS IS CRAZY!
Cop 1: No, this is role- reversal!
Cop 2: I mean, if you arouse somebody financially, you've GOT to follow through . . .

Rape has always been a taboo subject, one that makes rape victims afraid to speak out for fear that someone will blame them, and one reason that this joke is funny is that this taboo subject is introduced. Mary Crawford (1995, 2000: 230–232) discusses this “much-repeated feminist classic,” that “applies the blame-the-victim logic often used about rape victims to robbery victims.” As she notes, this joke “acknowledges men’s ability to define reality in ways that meet their needs,” and subverts that ability by exposing its social construction. This is a particularly good example of liberated women’s humor that effectively challenges the status quo, but can still be appreciated by both females and males.

9. Stereotypes

When I examined a number of joke collections, I was struck not only by the misogyny of many of the jokes, but also by the fact that almost all the

characters in the jokes were male. The situation is analogous to the prior use of the generic male pronouns such as *he*, *his*, and *him*. Feminist scholars, including Bem and Bem (1973), Martyna (1983), and Cameron (1995) have shown that rather than including females, so-called generic pronouns simply make women invisible. The absence of women in jokes also suggests that only males count. Feminists have often used role reversal to create humor, but such reversals can be difficult because most stereotypes of women are predominately negative, as discussed in *Bitches, Bimbos, and Ballbreakers: The Guerrilla Girls' Illustrated Guide to Female Stereotypes* (Guerrilla Girls 2003). Because so many jokes rely on negative stereotypes, switching the sex of a joke's characters can be difficult and often involves changing a number of other things as well.

Sometimes, switching the sex of the characters ruins the joke. For example, consider the well-known joke from Raskin (1985: 100):

- (12) "Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper.
 "No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply.
 "Come right in."

Raskin chose this joke for a ten-page analysis (1985: 117–127) because of its "typicality and averageness" (117). However, the humor in this joke depends on several factors that Raskin does not specify. Stereotypically, doctors are male, which is why the well-known feminist riddle about the doctor works so well.⁹ In addition, the doctor's pretty young wife must be stereotyped as sexually available for any male, even a sick one, when her husband is away. This is like the male fantasy propagated on MTV, where unattractive male performers are surrounded by adoring beautiful young women eager for sex. Needless to say, if the sexes of the characters are switched, it is also necessary to change stereotypes. Raskin's joke in (12) could be written as (13).

- (13) Although the FEDEX delivery woman was suffering from a bad cold, she made one last delivery for the day. "Is your wife at home?" she asked in her bronchial whisper of the man who answered the door. "No," the traveling salesman whispered in reply.
 "Come right in."

In one sense, the wife in Raskin's original joke is not completely typical, since it is the wife and not the male visitor who is active and looking for sex. More typically, females in jokes are passive. As Mulkey (1988: 136) notes, "In the world of the dirty joke, women often become no more than

objects designed to cater for the needs of men.” as in the following example taken from Legman (1968: 239):

(14) WIFE: a gadget you screw on the bed to get the housework done.

Mulkay suggests that males could also be represented as objects, as in his proposed alternative:

(15) HUSBAND: a gadget you screw on the bed to obtain a fur coat/to feed the kids/to stop getting hit/ to protect your friends.

In my opinion, neither joke is funny, but there are a number of jokes with exclusively male characters that I do find funny. I sometimes attempt to rewrite the jokes to include women, and switching female characters to male can reveal attitudes about sexuality that are not originally obvious. For example, I received the following joke by e-mail from a friend.

(16) There was a boy who worked in the produce section of the market. A man came in and asked to buy half a head of lettuce. The boy told him that they only sold whole heads of lettuce, but the man replied that he did not need a whole head, but only a half head. The boy said he would go ask his manager about the matter. The boy walked into the back room and said,

“There’s some asshole out there who wants to buy only a half a head of lettuce.” As he was finishing saying this he turned around to find the man standing right behind him, so he added, “. . . and this gentleman wants to buy the other half.”

The manager okayed the deal and the man went on his way. Later the manager called on the boy and said, “You almost got yourself in a lot of trouble earlier, but I must say I was impressed with the way you got yourself out of it. You think on your feet and we like that around here. Where are you from son?”

The boy replied, “Minnesota sir.”

“Oh really? Why did you leave Minnesota?” asked the manager.

The boy replied, “They’re all just whores and hockey players up there.”

“Is that right?” said the manager, “My wife is from Minnesota!”

The boy replied, “No kidding . . . what team did she play for?”

Changing all of the characters to females in this joke requires quite a few other changes, including changes to the final punch line.

(17) Female manager: “Where are you from, Hon?”

The girl replied, “San Francisco, Ma’am.”

“Oh really? Why did you leave San Francisco” asked the manager. The girl replied, “All the men there are either hairdressers or hung like hamsters.”

“Is that right?” said the manager, “My husband is from San Francisco!”

The girl replied, “No kidding . . . What does he charge for highlights?”¹⁰

Merely changing the quick-witted produce boy to a quick-witted girl and changing the manager and customer into females, the joke, as originally written, would no longer be funny since calling a woman’s husband a “stud” is not an insult. In order to inadvertently insult the manager, the produce clerk in (16) needs to evoke the stereotypes of an under-endowed male or a homosexual.

It is relatively easy to switch the sex of characters in jokes when the subject is not about sex, or when the joke is about old people. For example, it was easy to switch the roles in the following joke, sent to me by a niece. In the original version the driver was male.

(18) As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, her car phone rang.

Answering, she heard her husband’s voice urgently warning her, “Bertha, I just heard on the news that there’s a car going the wrong way on Interstate 77. Please be careful!”

“You don’t know the half of it,” replied Bertha. “It’s not just one car. It’s hundreds of them!”

Because this joke evokes stereotypes of bad women drivers and clueless old people, it was easy to make the protagonist a woman. All that was necessary was to replace the “Hell,” with the milder “You don’t know the half of it.”

Although stereotypes about women in jokes are often negative, women can still use them to create jokes from a feminist perspective. The Guerilla Girls make fun of female stereotypes by exaggerating them in their own ethnic doll collection, which includes, among others, Latisha, the Welfare Queen, Sallie Mae, White Trailer Trash, and Lauren, a Jewish American Princess. Similarly, the humor of Jill Connor Browne’s *Sweet Potato Queens* is aimed at female and ethnic stereotypes such as the thin girls who compete in beauty contests. Unlike other beauty queens, the *Sweet Potato Queens* proudly ride their floats in green sequined gowns,

stuffed at the top and the butt “with enough batting to make fifteen good-sized teddy bears” (Browne 1999: 10). These architectural wonders are based on the secret philosophy that:

[for] white males it is impossible to have tits that are too big, and for black males, you cannot get the butt big enough. At the same time, if your tits are big enough, white guys don’t care how big your butt is: and if your butt’s big enough, black guys don’t care what’s happening around front. (Browne 1999: 10–11)

Even jokes with negative stereotypes can carry a feminist message. Two friends who are Jewish feminists sent me the following joke:

- (19) The first Jewish woman President is elected and calls her mother:
“Ma, I’ve won the election, you’ve got to come to the Inauguration!”
“I don’t know, what would I wear?”
“Don’t worry. Christian Dior is designing a dress just for you.”
“But I only eat kosher food.”
“Ma, the Rabbinical Assembly is sending a kosher caterer for the entire White House.”
“But how will I get there?”
“I’ll send Air Force One to pick you up.”
“But where will I sleep?”
“You will sleep in the Lincoln Room and I’m having a mikvah (ritual bath) built just for you.”
“OK, OK, if it makes you happy, I’ll come.”
The great day comes and Mama is seated between Trent Lott and John Warner on the West Front of the Capitol. Mama nudges Senator Lott and says: “See that girl up there with her hand on the Bible?”
Senator Lott says, “Yes.”
“Well, her brother is a doctor.”

Like the joke comparing rape to robbery, this joke contains a covert message. It suggests that women as well as men perpetuate a system that celebrates the achievements of male children, but discourages the aspirations of females. Like many of the jokes discussed above, this liberated joke is about sexism rather than sex.

10. The effects of including a female perspective

Feminist scholars continue to speculate about why so many men insist that women don't tell jokes or funny stories. Crawford (1995) notes the interesting paradox in the widely accepted stereotype of women as humorless:

If we accept the argument that humor is a subordinate mode of discourse that rarely disrupts social hierarchies, there seems to be no reason for the culture to represent women as lacking a sense of humor . . . Racist stereotypes of African-American people traditionally portrayed them as smiling and laughing, joking, and telling tales—as exaggeratedly comic. Why then, the cultural representation of women as humorless? (Crawford 1995: 153)

There are a number of possible explanations for the belief that women don't create and tell jokes. One explanation is that most people, including men, prefer not to be laughed at. As Molly Ivins (in Barreca 1996) has observed:

A surprising number of men are alarmed by the thought of a witty woman. They think of women's wit as sarcastic, cutting, "ball busting." Margaret Atwood, the Canadian novelist, once asked a group of women at a university why they felt threatened by men. The women said they were afraid of being beaten, raped or killed by men. She then asked a group of men why they felt threatened by women. They said they were afraid women would laugh at them. (Barreca 1996: 18)

Crawford (1995: 153) suggests that "women's humor poses more of a threat than the humor of other subordinated groups because of the social proximity of women and men." Jokes allow women to introduce and develop topics that would otherwise be taboo or difficult to introduce in a more serious mode either at home or in public. Even though both women and men now work in full-time jobs, some women still find it difficult to discuss issues of sharing childcare and domestic responsibilities with their partners, and jokes make it possible to do so in a less threatening way. Many people, including young women, assume that Western women now have the same rights, opportunities and privileges as men. When feminists publicly raise issues of pay inequities and the lack of protection for women under the U.S. Constitution, they are often dismissed as "angry feminists" and ignored. However, jokes such as the one about the male robbery victim (11) and the one about the Jewish woman president (18) can raise such issues in a non-threatening way, and as Emerson (1973)

notes, a joking reference sometimes can open the possibility for a more serious discussion.

In her cartoons, Nicole Hollander's humor often takes advantage of the different world views of males and females. One of her cartoons available on T-shirts and calendars described in Crawford (1995: 155) has two panels. The first panel, titled "What men hope women are saying when they go to the washroom together," shows two women bragging about the skill of their lovers. The second panel, "What they're really saying," shows this conversation: "Do you think cake is better than sex?" The other woman responds: "What kind of cake?" (Hollander quoted in Crawford (1995: 155). Hollander (quoted in Barreca 1991: 198) agrees that "men are frightened by women's humor . . . because they think that when women are alone they're making fun of men." Hollander adds, "but they think we're making fun of their equipment when in fact there are so many more interesting things to make fun of—such as their value systems. Or the way they act when they're sick."

Women humorists are providing alternatives to traditional assumptions about appropriate gender roles. Some are even revising fairy tales, as in this rather mean-spirited version:

- (20) Once upon a time, a beautiful, independent, self-assured princess happened upon a frog in a pond. The frog said to the princess, "I was once a handsome prince until an evil witch put a spell on me. One kiss from you and I will turn back into a prince and then we can marry, move into the castle with my mom and you can prepare my meals, clean my clothes, bear my children and forever feel happy doing so." That night, while the princess dined on frog legs, she kept laughing and saying, "I don't think so."

Whether or not they do so in mixed company, women create and share jokes among themselves. Women are speaking up in a number of previously male-dominated fields, including the field of humor, and are even beginning to go public with jokes about sex. As Regina Barreca ("Who's laughing now?" [n.d.]) notes:

To see the way wit functions for all of us—men and women alike—is to see a map of our culture: to focus on things we've seen but not necessarily processed or analyzed; explaining what we've sensed but not yet bothered to define. Humor may have been ignored or challenged, but it has always been a secretly potent, delightfully dangerous, wonderfully seductive and, most importantly, powerful

way to make a statement, to tell our stories, to make sure *everyone's* voice is heard.

When both men and women accept the myth that women have no sense of humor, everyone loses. Scholars of humor who propose various theories about jokes might find it useful to learn about jokes that women tell each other, rather than assuming that such jokes do not exist. The sexual jokes told by liberated women are different from traditional sexual jokes. The social functions of liberated sexual jokes share some of the functions of mainstream jokes as discussed in Attardo (1994: 323–324). Certainly these jokes create group cohesiveness and establish common ground between feminists. In some cases, they may provide an outlet for disgruntled subordinates (Cosser 1960). They may sometimes achieve what Attardo (1994: 325) calls decommitment, which can include either “probing,” that is, checking the value system of someone else or “salvaging,” saving an uncomfortable situation by noting, “It was only a joke.”

Because liberated sexual jokes are more about sexism than about sex, they do not function to control the sexual behavior of other women, and they challenge rather than reinforce social norms. Like teasing (Mulkey 1988: 79) these subversive jokes introduce disagreement in situations where overt criticism might be difficult. Just as jokes allow patients in hospitals to introduce uncomfortable and taboo subjects about death, staff competence, and indignities to patients (Emerson 1973: 269), liberated women's jokes allow feminists to introduce uncomfortable subjects about societies that systematically keep females at a disadvantage. As Mulkey (1988: 220–221) notes, serious discourse “generates a language of domination and opposition rather than, let us say, a language of collaboration and accepted diversity,” and in serious discourse alternative versions of events are continually denied. By contrast, liberated jokes suggest that existing social norms can be challenged and undermined. To date, humor theorists have paid relatively little attention to subversive humor and to how possible covert messages can be transmitted through jokes.

Clearly, women have the most to gain if they dispel the myth of the humorless female. Girls and women used to be told that it was unladylike to speak in public and that females have no aptitude for mathematics. Currently, experts inform women that they cannot tell or remember jokes, and some women apparently accept this. Like other skills, creating and telling jokes requires a bit of effort and practice, but women can learn a

lot from creating jokes. Using jokes, women can refer to uncomfortable issues without being stereotyped as angry feminists and subsequently dismissed or ignored as extremists.

With jokes women can exploit new stereotypes, such as the stereotype that men will not ask directions. (Why did the children of Israel wander around the desert for 40 years? Even in Biblical times men wouldn't ask for directions.) Women can use existing stereotypes in creative new ways and undermine old stereotypes. They can become visible in jokes by re-writing old jokes to include girls and women. Although this is not always easy, it is usually revealing.

As the jokes discussed in this paper show, witty women are already using humor to remind others about financial and domestic inequities. In the future women may use their wit to note other concerns, such as inadequate maternity leave, childcare, healthcare, and transportation. Jokes exist in a fictional universe where anything is possible, and this allows people to introduce alternatives to current ways of thinking. Jokes can suggest both problems and possibilities, as in the cartoon where a newscaster reads: "Our stories tonight: world peace and universal equality for women have been achieved! But first, our top story: Hell has frozen over."

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Notes

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2. For example, the editorial board of the journal, *Humor*, is currently mostly male, with three significant exceptions, and of the 23 consulting editors, only 4 are female. In 2000 only one member of the editorial board was female, and two of the consulting editors were female. Such an imbalance might give the impression that women have little interest in humor.
3. In light of the traditional absence of women in other domains, it is not surprising that women should be poorly represented in any form of public discourse. Before feminists began actively searching for works by women in history, literature, music, art, and the sciences, it was generally assumed that women had contributed little in a number of male-dominated fields. Because of the work of feminist scholars, the omission of women in many traditionally male areas continues to be challenged. As Kesselman et al. (2003: 10) discuss in their introduction to "What is Women's Studies?" women scholars "initially endeavored to address the absence of women in the literature of

varied academic areas by uncovering women's achievements . . . It quickly became apparent, however that the central concepts of many academic disciplines excluded women or assumed women's inferiority to men. Even the language used to describe these concepts and ideas is often laden with assumptions about female inferiority." The following (admittedly dated) quotation from Legman (1975) is an example. In the context of telling dirty jokes, Legman states:

Aside from the obvious advantage in turning off a would-be 'wolf' or seducer, it seems clear that a woman's telling a man repulsive sex-jokes of this kind, whether privately or publicly, is intended further as a sort of turnabout rape, in which it is she who outrages and humiliates the man—her own secret assessment of what sexual intercourse amounts to, from the woman's position. She is also effectively denying her own sex as a woman. For in telling such stories, the woman openly telegraphs her demand to be accepted as a 'liberated woman' or imitation man and not as a woman at all . . . women who are anxious to compete with men and to achieve male status (pants, wage-slavery, sterilization, and all the glorious rest of it) cannot afford to, and never do take into account the real and natural differences between the sexes . . . That is why they invariably lose, unless they have chosen obviously inferior, crippled or 'castrated' males to compete with and dominate, as they generally do. (Legman 1975: 35–36)

4. Of the 80 books in the Norfolk Public Library listed under the subject, "wit and humor," two-thirds of the authors (53) are male, one-fifth (17) female, and 10 (such as "Children's Press Choice") cannot be determined. Of the 17 books authored by females, 11 of those are written for children and juveniles. Even in books written or edited by women, men predominate. The book by Sylvia Simmons, *How to be the Life of the Podium*, contains an index of 303 people who can be quoted in speeches. Of these, 294 are male and 24 are female. Women are seriously under-represented in a book of stories by James Humes, *Podium Humor: A Raconteur's Treasury of Witty and Humorous Stories*, which was published in 1975. Following Humes' introduction about the use of humor in public speaking, he lists 644 humorous stories, and with the exception of a six-page section called "Tea Party," the vast majority of stories are about males and the characters in the jokes are almost always male. In the first 200 jokes, women are simply missing; the few stories where they are included almost always involve sex or marriage or disparaging "humorous" quotations about women such as:

You remember what Sam Johnson said—a woman speaking is like a dog walking on his hind legs. You don't expect her to do it well; you're just lucky if she can do it at all. (Humes 1975: 265)

5. In their discussion of culturally-based academic styles, Stewart and Bennett (1991: 41–44) note that Americans tend to value inductive analytical styles of thinking and devalue the relational styles of thinking characteristic of many women and of some non-Western societies such as China. As Stewart and Bennett say (42), relational thinking "involves a high degree of sensitivity to context, relationships, and status and exists in cultures where the social order approaches a *gemeinschaft* pattern. These two patterns of thinking value subjectivity differently:

One of the major differences between analytical and relational styles is how subjectivity is treated. The analytical style separates subjective experience from the inductive process that leads to an objective reality. The relational style of thinking rests heavily on experience and fails to separate the experiencing person from objective facts, figures, or concepts. (Stewart and Bennett 1991: 43)

As Stewart and Bennett note, Western objectivity is not a universal value.

6. In an unpublished paper, the philosopher, Judith Andre (n.d.), argues that in many contexts the words *man* and *woman* are not parallel. The word *woman* has sexual connotations that neither the word *man* nor the word *lady* share, as illustrated by the following sentences:

You became a man today.
 You became a woman today.
 You became a lady today.

7. Following Raskin (1975), the following are formal statements of the implied scripts. The symbol “+” means that an attribute is present, the symbol “>” stands for “in the past” and “=” for “in the present.”

(i) FEMALE FANTASY LOVER SCRIPT

Subject: [+Human] [+Adult] [+Female]
 Object [+Human] [+Male] [+Adult] [+Attractive]
 Activity: Have intercourse
 =Responds to requests for sex positively
 = Has no other restraints or interests except sex
 Place: =Any place
 Time: = Any time female desires

(ii) TYPICAL HOUSEWORK SCRIPT

Subject: [+Human] [+Female]
 Activity: do a variety of household chores
 =iron clothes
 =clean house
 =cook
 =raise children, etc.
 Place: in the home
 Time: whenever male requests

8. Here is another type of sexual joke in which women rather than men are canny.

- (i) A man is driving down a deserted stretch of highway, when he notices a sign out of the corner of his eye. It reads SISTERS OF MERCY HOUSE OF PROSTITUTION — 10 MILES. He thinks it was just a figment of his imagination and drives on without a second thought. Soon, he sees another sign which says SISTERS OF MERCY HOUSE OF PROSTITUTION — 5 MILES and realizes that these signs are for real. When he drives past a third sign saying SISTERS OF MERCY HOUSE OF PROSTITUTION NEXT RIGHT, his curiosity gets the best of him and he pulls into the drive.

On the far side of the parking lot is a somber stone building with a small sign next to the door reading SISTERS OF MERCY. He climbs the steps and rings the bell. The door is answered by a nun in a long black habit who asks, “What may we do for you, my son?”

He answers, “I saw your signs along the highway, and was interested in possibly doing business.”

“Very well, my son. Please follow me.”

He is led through many winding passages and is soon quite disoriented. The nun stops at a closed door, and tells the man, “Please knock on this door.” He does as he is told and this door is answered by another nun in a long habit and holding a tin cup. This nun instructs, “Please place \$50 in the cup, then go through the large

wooden door at the end of this hallway.” He gets \$50 out of his wallet and places it in the second nun’s cup. He trots eagerly down the hall and slips through the door, pulling it shut behind him. As the door locks behind him, he finds himself back in the parking lot, facing another small sign:

GO IN PEACE, YOU HAVE JUST BEEN SCREWED BY THE SISTERS OF MERCY.

This joke merits analysis for many reasons, most of them beyond the scope of this paper. However, it does show women as canny. It is also another example that begins with a sexual script and switches to a non-sexual script, as do jokes (3) through (7).

9. A father and son are involved in a serious traffic accident and both are sent by ambulance to the nearest hospital. The father is taken to one operating room and the son to another. One surgeon gets right to work on the father, but when the son is wheeled into the other operating room, the surgeon there takes one look at the patient and says, with strong feeling, “I cannot operate on this patient; someone else will have to do it.” Why did the surgeon refuse?
10. I would like to thank a former student, Michael Joyner, for this version.

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