



Utrecht University

**Discussing Sexism: the Influence of Sexist Humor on Judgement and Adoption of
Sexism**

By

Kyara Schouten

1788876

This manuscript can be made publicly accessible

Master thesis

Social, Health and Organisational Psychology

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

University of Utrecht

Supervised by Madelijn Strick

May 2023

Abstract

Humor is used in various social settings to surprise people and excite them, but could be used in more negative contexts as well. For example, sexist humor can loosen up social norms, which could make sexism more acceptable. This experiment focused on this combination of humor and sexism. Hypothesized was that *humor will cause a less negative view on a sexist commenter* and that *humorous sexism will provoke an increase in state sexism in observers*. One hundred participants between the age of 16 and 26 took part in a questionnaire containing a video. In one condition, the video showed a person making a humorless sexist comment. In the other condition, the person made a sexist joke. An ANCOVA with condition as fixed factor and sexist trait as covariate showed that people who observe humorous sexist behavior are more likely to display sexist attitudes themselves. There was no significant difference between the comment condition and joke condition regarding the attitude or judgement of participants towards the sexist commenter.

Keywords: sexism, humor, acceptance, social norms

Introduction

If you would ask a hundred women: ‘can you remember a sexist comment someone made towards you?’ 99 of them will answer with yes (Holshuijsen, 2022). The comments will vary from blunt and straightforward sexism to less obvious and more disguised sexism. So even though a commonly heard opinion is that sexism is extinct and people do not experience real sexism anymore in current society, those 99 women beg to differ. Sexism in history took on other forms: women were not allowed to have the same jobs as men, men had to provide for the family and be though, and women were expected to cook and clean. Even though these examples can occasionally still be seen in current society, most sexism that occurs nowadays appears to be more subtle and complex. Women receive comments like ‘is it the time of the month?’, ‘I can appreciate a woman with guts’ and ‘very cool for a woman to take on this job!’. These comments are made under the excuse of ‘my intentions where good and I did not mean it that way’ or that it was meant as a joke (Holshuijsen, 2022). But when are these so called “jokes” funny and acceptable, and when is it just a sexist comment? This study will be focussing on this distinction. The main question in this thesis is whether sexist humor is perceived as more acceptable and therefore a stronger driver of other sexist behaviors compared to serious sexist comments.

Sexism

According to the Ambivalence Sexism Theory, sexism consists of two main types: benevolent and hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). Benevolent sexism refers to attitudes that subjectively can be considered as positive towards women in a traditional way. Examples are the idealization of women and paternalism in a protective manner. Hostile sexism can be described as the negative counterpart: derogatory beliefs towards women and paternalism in a dominative manner (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Both types of sexism have different consequences. According to Connelly and Heesacker (2012), benevolent sexism is more adopted and accepted by others in comparison with hostile sexism. When someone observes benevolent sexist behavior, they are more likely to express sexist behavior themselves. This can be due to the fact that benevolent sexism can be seen as an ideology which neglects the negative effects. It is often seen as positive behavior, due to the fact that it appears to be courteous and charming behavior, for example 'my wife should be treated like a princess, and should not have to engage in finances'. That attitude could be seen as compassionate, but could be described as benevolent sexism as well. This mindset on behavioral differences between men and women is often still seen as an important and necessary distinction on how different genders should behave and be treated. The preservation creates a movement where people keep traditional views intact.

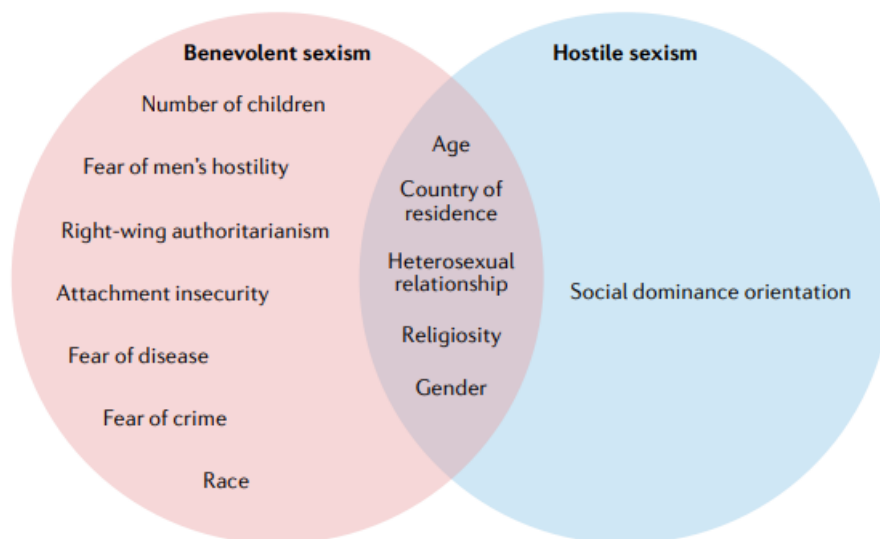
Besides that, benevolent sexism is often not identified as sexist behavior, because making benevolent sexist remarks can be seen as likeable behavior, and is therefore positively judged (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). These beliefs are at odds with scientific findings. According to Dardenne et al. (2007), benevolent sexism is even worse for the cognitive performance of women than hostile sexism, and Calogero & Jost (2011) found that it increases their self-objectification. This relatively positive attitude towards benevolent sexism, and therefore the adoption of this behavior when perceived, is alarming for the well-being of women. Another theory called the "System Justification Theory" (Jost & Banaji, 1994) states that benevolent sexism is being accepted in the population because it justifies the diffused system of group inequality in modern society. People with higher ranks in the hierarchy are afraid to lose their status, therefore they accept the sexism woven through society, so their position in society does not change.

According to Barreto and Doyle (2022), hostile sexism is a lot more obvious. It shows similarity to the traditional perception of discrimination. Even though benevolent sexism and

hostile sexism are entirely different to one another, they are strongly positively related. Therefore, most countries that report a significant number of hostile sexism experiences, report this for benevolent sexism as well. There are different conditions that could predict the use of benevolent and hostile sexism. They are shown in Figure 1. The difference that people perceive between the two types of sexism is in their repulsiveness. While hostile sexism is experienced as crude and obvious, benevolent sexism is experienced as harmless or even romantic. This makes a person who displays signs of benevolent sexism come across as charming. Because of this disguise of benevolent sexism, people are more likely to report the experience of hostile sexism than benevolent sexism, even though the two often go hand in hand. In addition, when hostile sexism is encountered simultaneously with benevolent sexism, benevolent sexism causes hostile sexism to be seen more respectable (Barreto & Doyle, 2022).

Figure 1

Predictors of the Expression of Benevolent and Hostile Sexism (Barreto & Doyle, 2022)



Sexist remarks can originate from various people, such as colleagues, friends, partners, managers or family members. Women are more likely to experience sexism at a younger age

than men, which comes with detrimental consequences. For example, girls experience more negative side effects from sexism than boys in different aspects of life, for example in how they experience social environments and how hard it is for them to find psychological support. Furthermore, the forming of their social identity could be damaged or altered because of the need to develop different coping mechanisms (Rogers et al., 2022). A significant number of countries in the world, for example the USA, value masculinity a lot more than femininity. Accordingly, boys develop different coping mechanisms, and have to deal with other aspects of sexism (Rogers et al., 2021). In addition, there is a variety of consequences that could occur for experiencing sexism for both men and women, for example a reduction in the development of the ego (Cassidy et al., 2004), feelings of losing control of their surroundings, and a decreased trust in the justice system (Kim & Park, 2018). These consequences could then in time cause different psychological issues, for example a decrease in mental health, a lower life satisfaction (Andersson & Harnois, 2020) and problems with forming identity (Perry et al., 2019).

Humor

At this moment, there have been several studies about sexism, its judgement and its consequences. But some questions have not been answered yet, for example: what if there is humor involved in a sexist remark? According to Berry et al. (2001), humor can be used to make harassment and oppression of discriminated groups socially acceptable. Especially certain types of humor are used in these situations, such as sarcasm and 'leg pulling'. These types of humor are more subtle; they provoke counter arguments, but stay between socially acceptable borders (Billig, 2001). Based on this theory from Billig (2001), we can expect that sexist jokes will be seen as acceptable. But does that mean that the person who makes the joke will be judged differently than when they would deliver it as a serious comment? And how does the implementation of sexist humor influence the behavior of people who are observing?

First, it is important to focus on what humor is and why it exists in the first place. According to Beeman (1999), the basis of humor is found in creating a surprise for the spectators, and by doing so causing incongruity. Following this idea, it is possible to explain humor using the basic incongruity theory. This theory states that if someone presents something in a certain manner, i.e., by telling a story or showing something, this sets in a certain cognitive frame. If this person then does something that does not fit with this first cognitive frame, but something that belongs to another cognitive frame, incongruity arises in the minds of the audience. The friction between the original cognitive frame and the second frame generates a reaction. According to the basic incongruity theory the friction between the cognitive frames is the basis of humor.

There is a certain ambiguity when it comes to humorous comments about a serious topic. The intention, meaning and effect of a contemptuous joke are not coherent with each other. When these aspects are contradictory to one another, it causes confusion or disorientation in the listener, which subsequently generates humor. This disorientation leads people to venture into unfamiliar territory, thereby broadening the scope of what they find acceptable, which makes the message of the joke more acceptable (Bill & Naus, 1992; Johnson, 1990). This could be linked to the basic incongruity theory. There is a gap between different cognitive aspects, which causes incongruency. Humor consists of so many different meanings and depends on the context it is used in, which causes friction, hence the incongruity theory. When it comes to sexism, Montemurro (2003) even argued that sexist jokes can promote a social system where women are trivialized and therefore a system that promotes sexism. Ford and Olah (2021) tried to explain how this principle works. First, contemptuous humor, for example a sexist joke, loosens social norms, which causes prejudice to be seen as acceptable. Secondly, it makes the group that is targeted with the joke, for example women, seem to be more deserving of the prejudice. To elaborate, humor makes people wanting to respond in a humorous way, and does

not urge people to think about the underlying meaning. It gives people a so-called humorous mindset, instead of a serious mindset (Ziv & Gadish, 1990). By accepting this humorous mindset and by turning of the critical thinking about the underlying message, the joker and receiver create an environment where it is okay to express your prejudice (Emerson, 1969).

Given that sexism is more socially accepted when it is carried out in a humorous manner, does that mean that the person making the joke is also more accepted? And could it be that people unconsciously copy their sexist behavior as it increases their level of state sexism? This study will focus on these topics, with the research question: *what is the influence of humor in sexist comments on perceived sexism and judgments of the humorous commenter and sexism in general?* People between the age of 16 and 26 will be targeted. This is an age where people are starting to realise what it is like to experience different types of sexism, and are therefore starting to form an opinion about this topic (Leaper & Brown, 2008). On top of that, at this age, people are still creating their identities by composing their norms and values, which makes it essential to study attitudes towards sexist behavior within this age group. Eventually, this may create awareness and improve the education of young people on sexist behavior, which could be beneficial for their self-development. Lastly, studying this target group was feasible within this limited timeframe of this thesis project.

Hypothesis

There are two hypotheses formulated with the research question: *Hypothesis 1: humor will cause a less negative view on the sexist commenter. Therefore, a sexist joke will cause a less negative attitude from observers towards the commenter than a sexist serious comment. Hypothesis 2: humorous sexism will provoke an increase in state sexism in observers. Therefore, a sexist joke will cause a larger increase of sexist approval from observers, in comparison with a sexist comment. This is due to people not recognising sexism, and*

subconsciously copying the sexist attitude. This will especially be the case with people who already held a sexist attitude in the first place (trait sexism).

Method

In this study, the research question is addressed by a quantitative experiment embedded in a Qualtrics questionnaire (language: English).

Participants

Participants were targeted through their personal network, and in turn shared the research with their direct environment. The target group consisted of people between the age of 16 and 26, containing English, but mostly Dutch speaking people with a university level of English. Ultimately, one-hundred participants started the questionnaire. Four participants were excluded from the analysis due to abnormal data, for example only giving one and the same answer on the questionnaire questions. Another 38 were excluded because they did not complete the entire questionnaire. Participating in this study was completely voluntary and participants were free to stop whenever they wanted. The mean age was 22.3 with the youngest participant being 16, and the oldest 26. Twenty participants reporting being male (34.5%), and thirty-eight reported being female (65.5%).

Design

In this study a between-participants design was used with two conditions: joke (humorous) and comment (serious). There was a continuous covariate *trait sexism*, which was taken into account to regulate the effect on the dependent variables *attitude towards joker/commenter* and *state sexism*.

Procedure

The first page of the questionnaire contained information about the content of this study. Besides that, information was given on the privacy of their answers, and people were asked for their consent to use their data. If they answered this question with 'yes' and stated that they are between the age of 16 and 26, they could continue to the questionnaire.

Firstly, demographic data was collected, for example their age and gender. Secondly, a video was shown. The video contained a man and a woman who have a conversation about a new project their company is launching (script and link are in Appendix A). There were two conditions: the humorous sexist condition and the serious sexist condition. Both versions of the video lasted approximately one minute. The time that participants took to watch the video was recorded, to make sure people were actively watching and not distracted by other videos recommended by YouTube. The scripts were played out by two actors from the drama academy of Maastricht.

The questionnaire contained three different types of questions. First, participants completed 11 questions regarding the attitude of the participants towards the commenter/joker in the video. Furthermore, three questions were asked to examine the level of sexist attitude of the participants in that moment, called *state sexism*. Lastly, they completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, providing an overall measurement of sexism in participants, called *trait sexism*.

Materials

As aforementioned, participants were asked to watch a video. Shown in the video were a man and a woman that discussed potential candidates that could lead this new project, where in the end the man made a general sexist comment or a sexist joke towards the woman. Two versions of the video were made. In the serious condition, the man made a sexist comment reading 'Yes, maybe but I do worry that it will make the meetings less efficient since they will

probably spend more time gossiping and talking about their kids.’ In the humor condition, the man made a sexist joke: ‘With all the time women take for small-talk we wouldn’t be done with the project in a year ha ha!’

Afterwards, different constructs were measured. An example question of the 11 questions that focused on the attitude of the participants towards the man in the video read: ‘Do you think the man in the video is admirable?’ Secondly, three questions were asked regarding participants’ state sexism, i.e. ‘Do you think the man in the video respects women?’ To measure the level of trait sexism in participants the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory was used, consisting of 22 questions. This inventory assesses both benevolent sexism and hostile sexism. The questionnaire measures the three main constructs of benevolent and hostile sexism: paternalism, gender differentiation and heterosexuality (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

At the end of the questionnaire, the contact information for this study was presented in case the participants had any questions or wanted to know more about the subject.

Measures

Attitude towards commenter/joker

Attitude towards the commenter or joker was one of the dependent variables in this research. As described, the *attitude towards the commenter/joker* was measured by 11 questions concerning the judgement of the man in the video. The Likert scale with a 5-point response scale was used for the first ten questions, whereby 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*. Due to the small amount of questions associated with this variable, all questions were formulated in a positive manner to avoid confusion. The last question in this category read: ‘If you have to rate the man’s personality/attitude, how would you rate him between 1 (*he has an extremely unpleasant personality*) and 10 (*he is extremely pleasant to be around*)?’

State sexism

State sexism is the other dependent variable. This was measured with three questions: ‘Do you think the man in the video respects women?’, ‘Do you think the man in the video believes that men and women deserve the same rights?’ and ‘Do you think the man in the video was being sexist?’. Participants were asked again to answer on a 5-point Likert scale going from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Trait sexism

Trait sexism was the covariate in this study. In the ASI participants were asked to rate specific statements on sexist attitudes on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), for example: ‘Women should be cherished and protected by men.’ See Appendix B for an extensive version of the questionnaires used.

Data analysis

A power analysis was conducted to figure out how many participants were needed. This analysis was completed using G*Power and an effect size of $f = .334$ (Ford, 2001). The analysis showed a sample size of 119 was needed for this study.

After collecting the data in Qualtrics, they were exported to the computer program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to perform the analyses. For this study an ANCOVA was conducted to find an answer to the research question, after the assumptions for this model were tested and confirmed.

Results

After collecting the data, the assumptions for an ANCOVA were tested and outliers were checked. There was a linear correlation between the dependent variables (Attitude towards commenter/joker and State sexism) and the covariate (Trait sexism). This test also indicated

homogeneity of regression slopes. Furthermore, a Levene's test showed insignificance, which implies homogeneity of variance.

The first hypothesis read that humor would cause a less negative view on the sexist commenter. This hypothesis was tested by performing an ANCOVA with condition as independent variable, attitude towards commenter/joker as dependent variable, and trait sexism as covariate. The results from this test did not show a significant difference between the humor ($M = 2.31, SD = .76$) and the serious ($M = 2.18, SD = .66$) condition, $F(1, 55) = 2.92, p = .062, \eta_p^2 = .003$. Removing the covariate from the analysis did not change the significance of this effect, $p = .32$. To conclude, this hypothesis was rejected.

The second hypothesis read that humor would cause people to show a higher level of state sexism than after seeing a serious comment. An ANCOVA was performed with condition as independent variable, state sexism as dependent variable and trait sexism as covariate. There was a significant difference between the average level of state sexism in the joke condition ($M = 2.27, SD = .76$) compared to the comment condition ($M = 1.73, SD = .73$) for level of state sexism towards the joker/commenter $F(1, 55) = 8.02; p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .100$. Removing the covariate from the analysis did not change the significance of this effect, $p = .004$. In conclusion, the second hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to see if there is a relation between humor and sexism. The research question corresponding with that read: *what is the influence of humor in sexist comments on perceived sexism and judgments of the humorous commenter and sexism in general?* The role of *trait sexism* was included in the research as well. To investigate this, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire about their takes and views on a perceived video where either a sexist

joke or a sexist comment was made. Their judgement of the joker or commenter was measured, besides their level of *state sexism*. *Trait sexism* was taken into account as covariate.

No significant result was found for the first hypothesis. This means that we cannot draw final conclusions about the way people evaluate someone who makes a sexist joke in comparison to someone who makes a sexist comment. Expected was that results would show that participants who watched the video with the sexist comment would review the man more negatively than participants who watched the video with the sexist joke. Instead, no difference was found between the conditions, with or without taking the covariate *trait sexism* into account.

There are different possible explanations for the outcome related to the first hypothesis. One explanation could be that the participants in the video did not find the man in the video humorous, which would mean that humor did not play a role in influencing the evaluation of the man. Another explanation could be that the participants in the study were influenced by the sexism in the humorous video to such an extent, that this overruled their judgement about the man in general.

Nevertheless, a significant result was found for the second hypothesis about the change in state sexism of the participants. The results showed an increase in state sexism in participants who were shown the sexist joke condition in comparison to participants who were shown the sexist comment condition. An explanation for these findings could be related to the Basic Incongruity Theory of Humor from Beeman (1999), mentioned earlier in the introduction. This Incongruity Theory states that to create something humorous, a cognitive base needs to be created first within spectators. Secondly, something contradictory to this cognitive base is presented. This contradiction creates a humorous episode. If this theory is true and sexism is

implemented here, it could be the case that people are put in a sexist cognitive base, which causes their change in level of state sexism.

Another explanation could be based on the theory of Ford and Olah (2021). Contemptuous humor, for example a sexist joke, loosens the social norms, which causes prejudice to be perceived as acceptable. Secondly, it makes a certain group that is targeted with the joke, for example 'women', seem to be more deserving of the prejudice. This theory could lead to spectators copying this prejudiced idea, creating a higher level of state sexism, as was found in the current study.

Lastly, an explanation could be that people do not recognize the sexism when it is brought in a humorous way, and unconsciously copy the beliefs of the joker because they enjoy his or her humor.

There are several implications for these findings. First of all, sexism is a rising subject for people to talk about in current society, especially in corporations and other workplaces (Mastari et al., 2019). Sexism could be dangerous, for it could make people discriminate others, or increase polarisation in certain situations. Therefore, it is important to get an understanding on what sexism contains precisely and what different aspects come with it. 'What causes sexism?', 'what are the consequences of sexism?' and 'in which settings is sexism a problem?' are important questions to attempt to solve when trying to understand and tackle sexist issues. That is why this study contributes to existing research by expanding to the knowledge on this increasingly relevant subject. Related to this, it is important to draw attention to the relevance of sexism in current society because of its effects on people in a variety of environments. This way workplaces, relationships and/or people themselves could benefit from the knowledge on sexism.

In addition, this study helps to identify what is covered by the term 'sexism'. For example it raises the question if it even is harmful, keeping in mind that people are not always consciously experiencing it. And could humor perhaps disguise the noxiousness of sexism? At this moment there is a gap in science when it comes to sexism in combination with other variables, for example with humor. Sexism itself has been researched more extensively, but different aspects that could be linked to it, are not yet illuminated. More research on these different aspects could be helpful, considering these aspects could be the cause, side effect or consequence of sexism. Lastly, this research could be an opened gateway for studying humor in the context of other social constructs, for instance racism and other types of discrimination.

Secondly, different limitations should be brought to light when discussing this study. Firstly, it could be the case that the participants did not think the man was funny in the humor condition. Therefore, the difference between a humorous and humorless incident was not being studied. In future studies, this limitation could be tackled by testing if the participants find the humorous section of the experiment actually humorous, and to exclude the participants who do not.

Another limitation is the language that was used. The study was in English, which could have caused people who are not native speakers in English to not completely understand the video or the questions that were being asked. If they did not understand all the information that was given, this could have influenced the outcome of the research. In follow up research, it would be advised to inform if the participants understood all questions and if they had difficulties with the language.

Age could be another limitation. The study was carried out by people between the age of 16 and 26. People of this generation are more aware of sexist interactions and its effects in current society (Risman, 2018). They are more often confronted with this subject at a younger

age than other generations. Therefore, it might be the case that they notice sexism in the two conditions of this study more easily than people of older age. It would be beneficial to perform this study again with another age group to see if there are differences between the studies. This way, the received information is more precise and could be even more effectively used in daily adjustments.

It is recommended to follow-up with research on this subject to gain more knowledge on the still little researched link between humor and sexism. As said before in this discussion, it would be beneficial to study another age group to see if the results remain the same. That said, another type of exposure to humor could be used, since the humor condition in this research was quite specific. Different gradations of humor could be used in addition, to see if the reaction of the participants on the sexism is indeed linked to humor. Lastly, meaningful follow up research could focus on the different environments where sexism, or sexism in combination with humor, takes place. Sexism could be targeted more precisely and therefore more effectively when this information is taken into account.

References

- Andersson, M. A., & Harnois, C. E. (2020). Higher exposure, lower vulnerability? The curious case of education, gender discrimination, and Women's health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 246, 112780. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112780>
- Barreto, M., & Doyle, D. M. (2022). Benevolent and hostile sexism in a shifting global context. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 2(2), 98–111. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-022-00136-x>
- Barreto, M., & Ellemers, N. (2005). The burden of benevolent sexism: how it contributes to the maintenance of gender inequalities. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35(5), 633–642. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.270>
- Beeman, W. O. (1999). Humor. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 9(1/2), 103–106. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43102438>
- Berry, C., & Olah, A. (2021). Disparagement humor and prejudice. In *Routledge eBooks* (pp. 151–169). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003042440-9-13>
- Berry, C., Wentzel, E. R., & Lorion, J. (2001). Effects of exposure to sexist humor on perceptions of normative tolerance of sexism. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 31(6), 677–691. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.56>
- Bill, B. & Naus, P. (1992). The role of humor in the interpretation of sexist incidents. *Sex Roles*, 27, 645-664.
- Billig, M. (2001). Humor and Embarrassment. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18(5), 23–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760122051959>
- Calogero, R. M., & Jost, J. T. (2011). Self-subjugation among women: Exposure to sexist ideology, self-objectification, and the protective function of the need to avoid closure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(2), 211–228. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021864>

- Cassidy, C., O'Connor, R. C., Howe, C., & Warden, D. (2004). Perceived Discrimination and Psychological Distress: The Role of Personal and Ethnic Self-Esteem. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 51*(3), 329–339. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.51.3.329>
- Clark, A. (2018). 'I found that joking back actually made me not on edge, and I didn't feel threatened': Women's embodied experiences of sexist humor (banter) in a UK gym. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies, 6*(1).
<https://doi.org/10.15640/ijgws.v6n1a2>
- Connelly, K., & Heesacker, M. (2012). Why Is Benevolent Sexism Appealing? *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 36*(4), 432–443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684312456369>
- Dardenne, B., Dumont, M., & Bollier, T. (2007). Insidious dangers of benevolent sexism: Consequences for women's performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 93*(5), 764–779. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.93.5.764>
- Emerson, J. P. (1969). Negotiating the serious import of humor. *Sociometry, 32*, 169-181.
- Ford, T. E., Olah, A. R. (2021). Disparagement humor and prejudice: Advances in theory and research. *Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group*, 151–169.
<http://dx.doi.org.tilburguniversity.idm.oclc.org/10.4324/9781003042440-9-13>
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*(3), 491–512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491>
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1997). Hostile and Benevolent Sexism. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21*(1), 119–135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00104.x>
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (2001). An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality. *American Psychologist, 56*(2), 109–118. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.56.2.109>

- Holshuijsen, M. (2022, 6 maart). Vrouwen spreken zich uit: elke dag een voorbeeld van alledaags seksisme. *de Volkskrant*. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur-media/vrouwen-spreken-zich-uit-elke-dag-een-voorbeeld-van-alledaags-seksisme~b0f12fed/>
- Johnson, A. M. (1990). The “only joking” defense: Attribution bias or impression management? *Psychological Reports*, *67*, 1051-1056.
- Jost, J. T., & Banaji, M. R. (1994). The role of stereotyping in system-justification and the production of false consciousness. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *33*(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1994.tb01008.x>
- Kim, E., & Park, H. (2018). Perceived gender discrimination, belief in a just world, self-esteem, and depression in Korean working women: A moderated mediation model. *Womens Studies International Forum*, *69*, 143–150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2018.06.006>
- Leaper, C., & Brown, C. S. (2008). Perceived Experiences With Sexism Among Adolescent Girls. *Child Development*, *79*(3), 685–704. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01151.x>
- Mastari, L. N., Spruyt, B., & Siongers, J. (2019b). Benevolent and Hostile Sexism in Social Spheres: The Impact of Parents, School and Romance on Belgian Adolescents’ Sexist Attitudes. *Frontiers in Sociology*, *4*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2019.00047>
- Montemurro, B. (2003). Not a laughing matter Sexual harassment as “material” on workplace-based situation comedies. *Sex Roles*, *48*(9-10), 443-445.
- Olsson, H., Backe, H., Sorensen, S., & Kock, M. (2002). The essence of humor and its effects and functions: a qualitative study. *Journal of Nursing Management*, *10*(1), 21–26. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.0966-0429.2001.00272.x>

- Perry, D. S., Pauletti, R. E., & Cooper, P. J. (2019). Gender identity in childhood: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 43(4), 289–304.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025418811129>
- Risman, B. J. (2018). Where the Millennials Will Take Us: A New Generation Wrestles with the Gender Structure.
https://openlibrary.org/books/OL27369389M/Where_the_Millennials_Will_Take_Us
- Rogers, A. H., Cook, R. L., & Guerrero, K. (2022). Is My Femininity a Liability? Longitudinal Associations between Girls' Experiences of Gender Discrimination, Internalizing Symptoms, and Gender Identity. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 51(2), 335–347. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01571-y>
- Rogers, A. H., Nielson, M. G., & Santos, C. F. D. (2021). Manning up while growing up: A developmental-contextual perspective on masculine gender-role socialization in adolescence. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 22(2), 354–364.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000296>
- Ziv, A., & Gadish, O. (1990). The disinhibiting effects of humor: Aggressive and affective responses. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 3(3), 247–257.

Appendix A

Script comment condition

The woman is making coffee at work. The man walks in.

Man: hi

Woman: hi

Man: how are you doing?

Woman: I'm fine, just trying to get through my emails, my inbox exploded over the weekend...
What about you?

Man: For a Monday I'm doing not so bad. I just spoke with one of our clients and they were okay with moving a big deadline to next week, so I'm relieved about that.

Woman: That's nice. If you need any help with it, just let me know.

Man: Thanks. Oh and hey, I heard something about the new project they are launching. It's pretty exciting, isn't it?

Woman: yeah I heard about it too. I'm curious what our role is going to be in it. Do you know when we get more information about when it's going to start?

Man: No not really. I think they are still looking for a project leader. I heard they're considering Mark and Peter. I think Peter will be a good fit, I wouldn't mind having him as a boss.

Woman: Yeah I agree. But considering that most of the team will be men, I think it would be nice if Susan or Laura would fill the position, I heard they applied for the job as well.

Man: Yes, maybe but I do worry that it will make the meetings less efficient since they will probably spend more time gossiping and talking about their kids.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/sXvt9ul52Ic>

Script joke condition

The woman is making coffee at work. The man walks in.

Man: hi

Woman: hi

Man: how are you doing?

Woman: I'm fine, just trying to get through my emails, my inbox exploded over the weekend...
What about you?

Man: For a Monday I'm doing not so bad. I just spoke with one of our clients and they were okay with moving a big deadline to next week, so I'm relieved about that.

Woman: That's nice. If you need any help with it, just let me know.

Man: Thanks. Oh and hey, I heard something about the new project they are launching. It's pretty exciting, isn't it?

Woman: yeah I heard about it too. I'm curious what our role is going to be in it. Do you know when we get more information about when it's going to start?

Man: No not really. I think they are still looking for a project leader. I heard they're considering Mark and Peter. I think Peter will be a good fit, I wouldn't mind having him as a boss.

Woman: Yeah I agree. But considering that most of the team will be men, I think it would be nice if Susan or Laura would fill the position, I heard they applied for the job as well.

Man: With all the time women take for small-talk we wouldn't be done with the project in a year ha ha!

Video link: <https://youtu.be/3hFjBhDC-bg>

Appendix B

Dear participant, thank you for participating in this study on social behavior in different contexts. This Master thesis research is conducted at the faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University by Kyara Schouten.

In this questionnaire you will be answering different multiple choice questions about a short video. Filling in this questionnaire will take up to approximately 5/10 minutes. You must be between the age of 16 and 26 to participate.

The data that is collected is anonymous and will be saved for 10 years. This is in accordance with the guidelines provided by the VSNU Association of Universities in the Netherlands. Participation in this study is voluntary. You can end your participation in the study at any time, without any explanation and without any negative consequences. If you end your participation, we will use the data collected up to that point, unless you explicitly inform us otherwise.

If you have any questions or comments about the study, please contact k.l.c.schouten@students.uu.nl. If you have an official complaint about the study, you can send an email to the complaints officer at klachtenfunctionaris-fetcsocwet@uu.nl.

This survey contains a completion code for SurveySwap.io

I am between the ages 16 and 26, I am informed sufficiently and give permission to use my answers for this research:

No (1)

Yes (2)

Q8 What is your age?

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Non-binary / third gender (3)
- Prefer not to say (4)

First, you will be shown a video about two employees in their workplace. Please watch and listen carefully to the conversation.



Links to video:

<https://youtu.be/3hFjBhDC-bg> (joke)

<https://youtu.be/sXvt9uI52lc> (comment)

The following 10 questions are about your view of the man in the video you just saw. Please indicate on what level you agree or disagree with the question given.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
--	-----------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------	--------------------

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Do you think the man in the video is funny? (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Do you think the man in the video is admirable? (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Do you think the man in the video is competent? (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Do you think the man in the video is intelligent? (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Do you think the man in the video is kind? (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Do you think the man in the video is pleasant? (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Do you think the man in the video is attractive? (7) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Do you think you would feel comfortable with the man in the video? (8) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Do you see yourself being friends with the man in the video? (9) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Do you think the man in the video is respectful? (10) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
-

The following three questions are about your view of the man in the video you just saw. Please indicate on what level you agree or disagree with the question given.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Do you think the man in the video respects women? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you think the man in the video believes that men and women deserve the same rights? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you think the man in the video was being sexist? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality." (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Women are too easily offended. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

more power than men. (7)					
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men. (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores. (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Men are complete without women. (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work. (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash. (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against. (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man. (17)

18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances. (18)

19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility. (19)

20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives. (20)

21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men. (21)

22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste. (22)

Thank you for your time! Besides different social behavior, this study focusses on the differences in judgement of perceiving sexism, and how humor can influence this judgement. If you have any questions or want to know more about this subject, please contact me: k.l.c.schouten@student.uu.nl

Please click the 'next' button to complete the questionnaire.