Women and Hostile Sexism: Effect of Identification with the Humor Target on Women's Responses to Sexist Jokes

Jessica R. Edel

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WOMEN AND HOSTILE SEXISM: EFFECT OF IDENTIFICATION WITH THE HUMOR TARGET ON WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO SEXIST JOKES

by

Jessica R. Edel

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts Department of Sociology

Western Michigan University
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Finally, I offer my sincerest gratitude to my parents, for obvious reasons, my Aunt Sandy, who originally ignited my interest in gender studies, and to my husband Erik, who put up with a year of emotional abandonment, all for this stack of paper before you.

Jessica R. Edel
WOMEN AND HOSTILE SEXISM: EFFECT OF IDENTIFICATION WITH THE HUMOR TARGET ON WOMEN’S RESPONSES TO SEXIST JOKES

Jessica R. Edel, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 2007

This study was designed to contribute to the literature on sexist humor by attempting to establish identification with the humor target as a critical variable mediating the relationship between hostile sexism and women’s amusement with sexist humor. Past research has shown a positive relationship between hostile sexism – antagonism towards women (Glick and Fiske, 1996) - and amusement with sexist humor (Ford, 2000; Greenwood & Isbell, 2002). It is possible, however, that this relationship is more complicated for women, who are both the recipient and target of the sexist joke. This study attempted to provide an explanation for why this relationship is more complicated for women by examining the potential mediating effect of dis-identification with the humor target. The findings suggest that hostile sexism is negatively related to the degree of identification with women in non-traditional gender roles (e.g., feminists), and the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement is greater for jokes targeting feminists and women as a group than for jokes targeting housewives. Dis-identification with the humor target, however, was not established as a mediating variable in the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist jokes.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"We laugh at the misfortune, stupidity, clumsiness, moral or cultural defect suddenly revealed in someone else, to whom we instantly and momentarily feel ‘superior’ since we are not, at that moment, unfortunate, stupid, morally or culturally defective" (Gruner, 1997:6).

Type the words “sexist joke” into any web browser and one has a library of female denigration at their fingertips. Why do so many people find disparaging humor amusing, and what social consequences emerge from repeating these jokes in social or professional situations? It seems no trivial question to ask, considering that an informal observation of any form of media, one’s workplace, or a simple social interaction alludes to the popularity of disparaging humor in contemporary society. So why do some individuals thrive on such humor, while others are repulsed by it? This research addresses this question by examining the effect of individual variables, such as sexist attitude and dis-identification with the humor target, on women’s amusement with sexist jokes.

Social psychologists suggest that disparaging humor refers to remarks “intended to elicit amusement through the denigration, derogation, or belittlement of a target” (Ford & Ferguson, p.3). It can be distinguished from other types of humor because it creates amusement by first diminishing and then reinterpreting the subject or target of the joke (Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Greenwood & Isbell, 2002). Sexist humor, for instance, trivializes the derogation and objectification of women (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998).
A central issue that has directed research is the identification of variables that moderate amusement with disparaging humor (Linsk & Fine, 1981; Middleton, 1959; Terrion & Ashforth, 2002 and Wolff, Smith & Murray, 1934). Research guided by La Fave's vicarious superiority theory (La Fave, 1972; La Fave, Haddad, & Maesen, 1976) and Zillmann and Cantor's (1972; 1976) disposition theory has shown that the degree to which one dislikes the disparaged target is positively related to amusement (e.g., Cantor & Zillmann, 1973; La Fave, McCarthy, & Haddad, 1973; McGhee & Duffey, 1983; Wicker, Barron, & Willis, 1980). For example, research on sexist humor has revealed that both men and women enjoy sexist jokes to the extent that they hold sexist attitudes (Henkin & Fish, 1986; Greenwood & Isbell, 2002; LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998; Moore, Griffiths & Payne, 1987; and Thomas & Esses, 2002). Greenwood and Isbell (2002) reported that participants found sexist jokes amusing to the extent that they were high in hostile sexism — antagonism and enmity toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

The relationship between sexist attitudes and amusement with sexist humor appears to differ, however, for men and women. For men, the relationship is rather straightforward: the higher men are in hostile sexism, the more they are amused by sexist jokes. The relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist humor for women, though, appears to be a bit more complicated. The research described above suggests that women enjoy sexist humor insofar as they are high in hostile sexism. Contrary to these findings, other research has failed to show a relationship between hostile sexism and women's amusement with sexist jokes. In new analyses of data collected by Ford (2000), Edel and Ford (2007) found that,
across three studies, there were no significant differences between women high and low in hostile sexism and their amusement with sexist jokes.

The purpose of the present research, then, is to further investigate the relationship between hostile sexism and sexist humor appreciation for women by examining the potential mediating role of "dis-identification" (dissociation) with the specific humor target that corresponds to a subcategory of women. Unlike men, women have the dual status of both the subject and the object of a sexist joke (Greenwood & Isbell, 2002). Thus, according to models of amusement with disparaging humor (e.g., Cantor & Zillmann, 1973; La Fave, 1972), women would have to dissociate or dis-identify with the specific humor target in order to enjoy the joke. For women, the relationship between hostile sexism and sexist humor appreciation may therefore depend on the degree to which they dis-identify with the specific humor target.

Women's conflicting responses to sexist humor may be influenced by the tendency to categorize women into subgroups, which are then differentially rated in terms of both value and emotional response. Three distinct subcategories of women that have been empirically identified by Clifton, McGrath and Wick (1976) include the "housewife," the "bunny," and a category for women who challenge traditional gender roles and activities (i.e., feminists). Haddock and Zanna (1994), for instance, found that high authoritarian men derogated women that were construed as feminists (compared to women construed as housewives). Furthermore, Haddock & Zanna (1994) also found that, regardless of gender, housewives were generally evaluated more favorably than feminists. They reported that the most frequently listed
emotional responses to feminists were anger, annoyance, and disgust (Haddock & Zanna, 1994). Much like hostile sexists (Glick & Fiske, 1996), right wing authoritarians maintain a strong preference for traditional social roles and norms (Altemeyer 1988). It is possible that women high in hostile sexism, then, are also more likely to negatively evaluate and dis-identify with certain subgroups of women (e.g., those who challenge traditional gender roles such as feminists) and therefore particularly enjoy sexist humor targeting that subgroup.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Amusement with Disparaging Humor: The Importance of Dis-Identification

Research on amusement with disparaging humor has been largely guided by a set of theories collectively known as “superiority theories” (e.g., Gruner, 1997, Keith-Spiegel, 1972 and Morreall, 1983). In general, superiority theories suggest that individuals enjoy disparaging humor because it allows them to feel superior to the disparaged target. As quoted in the introduction, Gruner (1997) suggested that, “we laugh at the misfortune, stupidity, clumsiness, moral or cultural defect suddenly revealed in someone else, to whom we instantly and momentarily feel ‘superior’ since we are not, at that moment, unfortunate, stupid, morally or culturally defective” (p. 6). According to this view, then, amusement is the result of self-esteem enhancement derived from a “downward social comparison” (Wills, 1981). Individuals suddenly feel good about their own abilities, attributes or virtues compared to the target of the humor that is presented as inferior (Heyd, 1982). Once this comparison has been made and disparaged targets have been identified as inferior, individuals attempt to dissociate themselves from the inferior target, achieving a separation that can then facilitate amusement in response to a disparaging joke. Dis-identification with the humor target, therefore, may affect the degree to which a person is amused with a particular joke. Weak identification with a humor target will presumably lead to a greater amusement response because of the enhanced self esteem experienced through the downward comparison to an unaffiliated, and thus “dis-identified,” disparaged target.
Wolff, Smith, and Murray (1934) further hypothesized that a person's self esteem should be enhanced in response to humor that disparages a social out-group with whom one is not affiliated. Conversely, a person's self esteem should be threatened when the target of disparaging humor is a psychological extension of oneself (Wolff et al., 1934), that is, a group or individual with whom one identifies.

Consistent with this hypothesis, Wolff et al. (1934) found that Gentiles were more amused than Jews by anti-Semitic jokes. When anti-Semitic jokes were converted into anti-Scot jokes (simply by replacing Jewish names with Scottish names), Jewish participants reported slightly higher mirth ratings to these jokes than to the original anti-Semitic version, but their ratings were still markedly lower than those of Gentiles. According to superiority theory, mirth ratings from Jewish and Gentile participants should have been relatively equal, as Scots were an out-group of both. Wolff et al. (1934) concluded that Jews felt an "affiliation by similarity" that inhibited amusement ratings to anti-Scot jokes. Jewish participants had psychologically affiliated themselves with the Scots, as they recognized the traits portrayed in the jokes were similar to negative stereotypical traits commonly associated with Jews. This suggestion highlights the possibility that it is not necessary for one's actual group membership to correspond with his or her psychological or attitudinal affiliation (La Fave, Haddad, and Maesen, 1976/1996). Moreover, it suggests that one's attitudinal affiliation with a specific social group is important in determining the extent to which he or she will be amused by disparaging humor targeting that group. Middleton (1959), for example, found that middle class Black-Americans rated anti-Black jokes equally as funny as White participants rated
them, whereas lower class Black-Americans did not. The middle class Black participants did not identify with the lower class Black humor target and therefore found the jokes amusing. They had psychologically dissociated themselves from the humor target.

Similarly, Zillmann and Cantor (1972) presented participants with a series of cartoons depicting dyads with recognized status differences. Each dyad included a protagonist and antagonist that were either socially subordinate or superior, such as parent-child, teacher-student, and employer-employee. The manipulation of cartoons involved reversing the drawings so that the antagonist was represented by the superior role in one illustration, and by the subordinate role in its reverse. They found that participants in socially superior roles rated cartoons in which the subordinate was the victim as more amusing than cartoons in which the superior was the victim.

These findings are also consistent with vicarious superiority theory (La Fave, 1973; 1976/1996) and disposition theory (Cantor, 1976; Zillmann & Cantor, 1972; 1973; 1976/1996). A central hypothesis to both theories is that people will be amused by disparaging humor to the extent that they hold negative attitudes toward the humor target. Zillmann and Cantor (1972), for instance, found that participants’ “affective disposition” toward a humor target determined the extent to which the participant rated the humor as amusing. Similarly, La Fave and colleagues (1973) found that American participants with pro-American attitudes rated anti-Canadian jokes as more amusing than jokes disparaging Americans. Likewise, pro-Canadians rated jokes disparaging Americans as more amusing than jokes disparaging Canadians.
As with disparaging humor in general, people respond with amusement to sexist humor, presumably because of the enhanced self-concept experienced through the downward comparison to an unaffiliated or dis-identified female target. LaFrance and Woodzicka (1998) found that women’s amusement with sexist jokes selected from the “Party Jokes” section of Playboy magazine was related to the degree to which they identified with women in general. As the level of identification with women increased, amusement with sexist jokes decreased. Furthermore, women high in hostile sexism who identified less with the female humor target also displayed enhanced positive affect, measured by varying degrees of Duchenne smiling, an involuntary response to genuine emotion. For women high in hostile sexism, then, amusement with the disparaging humor enhanced their positive affect through a downward social comparison to the dis-identified humor target.

Dis-Identification with the Humor Target: A Question of Social Identity

The social comparisons that foster amusement with disparaging humor can be explained by social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981). Social identity theory suggests that the categorization of people into in-groups and out-groups leads to greater feelings of attachment and liking for one’s in-group, compared to the relevant out-groups. This can result in in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

Social identity theory suggests that individuals categorize themselves based on the distinctiveness of the attributes of one’s in-group, compared to the attributes of relevant out-groups. Amusement with disparaging humor, then, relies on the recipient’s ability to cognitively distance him-or her-self from the target of the joke
by maintaining positive distinctiveness from the perceived out-group disparaged by the humor. For example, women’s amusement with a dumb blonde joke may be based on a positive distinction such as not actually being as dumb as the dumb blonde portrayed in the joke (Greenwood & Isbell, 2002), thus allowing her to laugh at the disparagement of this humor target.

Distinction from the target may prevent the disparaging humor from threatening the respondent’s social identity by offering the recipient an opportunity to laugh that does not threaten his or her social identity (Tajfel, 1981). Similarly, Greenwood and Isbell (2002) suggested that men may validate their amusement with a sexist joke using the rationale that some women (e.g., their wives or daughters) deserve to be put on a pedestal, while others do not (e.g., the dumb blonde). This allows them to enjoy the disparagement of certain “types” of women, while not enjoying humor in which they possess positive attitudes towards the target. This distinction from, or dis-identification with an out-group target may afford women the same positive distinctiveness and downward social comparison to a female humor target, thus allowing them to also enjoy sexist humor (See also Henkin & Fish, 1986 and Linsk & Fine, 1981). Women may therefore find amusement with humor that disparages certain “types” of women, those with whom they do not identify as members of a common in-group.

Hostile Sexism and Dis-Identification with Feminists

Women’s dis-identification with certain subgroups of women, such as feminists, may be due in part by media demonization (Rhode, 1995). The media have socially constructed and propagated negative stereotypes through the selective
attention paid to a feminist backlash. The term “Feminism” has thus become a politically charged word that is loaded with negative stereotypes. Contemporary feminism has been popularly referred to as a form of “No, But...” feminism (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003; Zucker, 2004), where women refuse to identify as feminists, yet endorse feminist goals and ideology. In a study by Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, and Crawford (2001), a mere 15.8% of female participants considered themselves to be feminists. One woman, for instance, reported that she privately considered herself to be a feminist, but refused to call herself a feminist around others.

Indeed, feminism has even been deemed “the other F-word” (Twenge & Zucker, 1999), no doubt a consequence of the media’s unrelenting negative portrayal of contemporary feminists in terms of “woman’s lib, man hater, bra burner, unfeminine, lesbian and /or sexually deviant, feminazi (ugly, unable to catch a man, dyke), and whining victims” (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003). Popular comedians and joke tellers have thus caught on to these media-driven stereotypes. With anti-feminist jokes becoming ever more popular within our social landscape, women identifying as feminists have been forced to ride the gauntlet.

Relevant to the present research, then, it is proposed that women high in hostile sexism particularly dis-identify with feminist women because they challenge traditional gender norms and because the word itself has come to elicit such negative evaluative responses. Furthermore, Glick and Fiske (1996) suggest that hostile sexism can indeed be understood within a context of this backlash against feminism, as it is rooted within a cultural patriarchy that supports male social dominance and a justification for unequal structural power. Men and women high in hostile sexism
would particularly dislike groups that threaten or challenge these cultural structures (e.g., feminists), and favor groups that protect these structures and fulfill their paternalistic roles, such as the traditional “homemaker” (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Classifying women into such subgroups allows individuals high in hostile sexism to feel more antagonism and enmity toward certain types of women, with whom they dis-identify. If women high in hostile sexism dis-identify with feminists more than other sub-groups of women that do not challenge traditional gender norms, then they should find more amusement in sexist jokes that target feminists than sexist jokes that target women in general or other “non-norm challenging” sub-groups of women (e.g., housewives).

Overview and Hypotheses

Female participants completed the study in two phases. In phase one, I collected measures of hostile sexism, identification with one’s gender group, and identification with “feminists”. In phase two, I exposed participants to sexist jokes disparaging a) women as a group, b) feminists, or, c) women in traditional gender roles (e.g., the stereotypical “housewife”). Participants were then given the opportunity to report how amusing, offensive, cruel, and sexist they found each joke, as well as how likely they would be to repeat the joke to a friend.

In keeping with research described above, the following hypotheses were derived. First, women’s hostile sexism scores will correlate more strongly to their degree of dis-identification with feminists than to their disidentification with women in general or to housewives. Second, the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement will be greater for jokes targeting feminists than jokes targeting
housewives or women in general. That is, insofar as women are high in hostile sexism, they will be more amused by jokes targeting feminists than by jokes targeting housewives or women in general. Finally, I predicted that the degree of dis-identification will mediate the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist jokes that target feminists. To the extent that women are high in hostile sexism they should be more amused by jokes that disparage feminists because they dis-identify more strongly with them.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants and Design

The sample consisted of 67 female students recruited from undergraduate sociology classes at Western Michigan University. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (joke target: “Women” and a general group, “Feminists”, and “Housewives”) in a between-subjects experimental design.

Procedure

Phase One. In phase one, I administered Glick and Fiske’s (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI), comprised of twenty-two statements, eleven of which specifically measure hostile sexism. For each item, participants were asked to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree to each statement on a six-point scale (ranging from 0= “Strongly Disagree” to 5= “Strongly Agree”). The hostile sexism scale includes statements such as, “women seek to gain power by getting control over men,” and, “many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for equality.” The complete ASI is presented in Appendix A.

After all of the participants had completed the ASI, I disseminated a second survey called the Social Identification Survey. This survey was designed to measure the degree to which participants identified with their gender group, with feminists, with their ethnic group, and with their role as a college student (college scale adapted from Crandal, Eshleman, & O’Brian, 2002). The purpose of this survey was to determine which participants identified with women in general and with feminists in
particular. (The remaining statements consisted of filler material that was not analyzed.) This survey included statements such as, “I often think of myself as a person who is proud to be a feminist,” and, “I am proud to be a member of my gender group,” “I think of myself as a person who considers my ethnicity to be a central aspect of my identity,” and finally, “I often think of myself in terms of being a student at Western Michigan University.” Participants were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a six-point scale (ranging from 0= “Strongly Disagree” to 5= “Strongly Agree”). The complete Social Identification Survey is presented in Appendix B.

**Phase Two.** For phase two, I returned to the classroom two weeks later to purportedly enlist students to participate in designing a study on the use of humor in the workplace that would be conducted in the fall of 2007. Participants in each experimental condition were given a booklet containing two sections. After reading each joke in the first section of the booklet, participants were asked, “How much do you like this joke for whatever reason” (Herzog, Harris, Kropscott & Fuller, 2006), and also asked to rate how humorous the joke was on a scale from 1= “Not at all humorous” to 7= “Very humorous.” After reading the same jokes in the second section of the booklet, participants were asked to respond to the following questions measuring amusement and offensiveness: “how funny is this joke?” and, “how offensive is this joke.” The following questions were designed to measure sexist content: “to what extent is this joke degrading or demeaning to women,” “to what extent does this joke depict women negatively,” and “how sexist is this joke.” The following question measured joke cruelty, “how vicious or cruel is this joke”
Finally, participants were asked, “how likely will you be to repeat this joke to a friend” (Thomas & Esses, 2004). All of these questions were measured on a seven-point scale ranging from 1= “Not at all” to 7= “Very.”

Participants in the “feminist joke condition” read alternating jokes that were either non-sexist or that disparaged feminists (e.g., “How do you know when a feminist is going to say something intelligent? – When her first words are, ‘A man once told me....’”). Participants in the “housewife joke condition” read non-sexist jokes and jokes targeting women in traditional gender roles (e.g., “How do you fix your wife’s watch? – You don’t, there’s a clock on the oven.”). Finally, participants in the “group joke condition” read jokes targeting women in general (e.g., “Why are hurricanes usually named after women? – Because when they arrive, they’re wet and wild, but when they go, they take your house and car.”).

In an effort to eliminate answers from any participants that had become aware of the true purpose of the study, they were also asked to write one sentence describing their overall impressions of the study. Data from two participants were ultimately discarded. The first was discarded because the participant only completed the first three questions, leaving the rest of the survey blank. The second was discarded because the participant marked a rating of 7 for every answer on the survey, indicating that she did not take the survey seriously and therefore her answers could not be considered valid. The complete joke booklets are presented in Appendix C. Finally, participants were given the researcher’s contact information and offered full debriefing. The debriefing script is presented in Appendix D.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Analyses

Hostile Sexism. Following Glick and Fiske (1996), an aggregate hostile sexism score was computed by averaging responses to the eleven statements on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory designed to assess hostile sexism (after reverse coding appropriate items). Simple descriptive analyses indicate that the average hostile sexism score was 2.00 (M=2.00, SD=.95), with only 13.4% of the sample considered to be high in hostile sexism (above a rating of 3.00 on a 7-point scale).

Identification with Women and Feminists. Similarly, aggregate measures of identification with women and identification with feminists were computed by averaging responses to the items designed to measure each construct on the Social Identification Survey. The average identification with feminists score was 1.96 (M=1.96, SD=1.51), with 29.9% of the sample identifying as feminist. This average is consistent with previous research on feminist identification (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003; Liss et al., 2001; Zucker, 2004). The average identification with women score was 3.30, which means that 65.7% of the sample identified with their gender group.

Amusement Ratings of Sexist Jokes. There was a high correlation between the two items assessing how much participants “liked each joke for whatever reason” and how funny they perceived each joke (β=.94, p < .001). Therefore, the responses to those two items were averaged to create an aggregate measure of amusement. Next, the five sexist jokes in each of the three joke target conditions were subjected to separate reliability analyses. In the feminist target condition, the Cronbach’s alpha
was .91; thus, the amusement ratings for all five jokes were averaged to represent an overall amusement rating for jokes targeting feminists. In the women target condition, the Cronbach’s Alpha was also .91, so those amusement ratings to all five jokes were also averaged. Finally, the Cronbach’s Alpha for jokes in the housewife target condition was .82. However, deletion of one joke, “How do you tell if your wife is happy? – Who cares?” raised the alpha to .90; consequently, I computed an overall amusement rating of jokes targeting housewives by averaging the remaining four.

**Overall Amusement Ratings of Sexist and Neutral Jokes.** A paired-samples t-test was conducted on the amusement ratings of all jokes presented in the phase two booklet to determine whether the sexist jokes and neutral (non-sexist) jokes differed in perceived funniness. The paired samples t-test on the amusement ratings revealed a significant difference between neutral and sexist jokes ($t= 5.47$, $p< .001$). It appeared that, overall, participants found neutral jokes ($M=3.28$, $SD=1.11$) more amusing than sexist jokes ($M=2.53$, $SD=.17$).

**Hypothesis 1: Hostile Sexism and Identification with Feminists**

I hypothesized that women who are high in hostile sexism would dis-identify more with feminists than with women in general. Supporting this hypothesis, there was a strong negative correlation between hostile sexism scores and the measure of identification with feminists ($\beta = -.44$, $p < .01$). In contrast, the correlation between hostile sexism and identification with women in general failed to reach significance ($\beta = -.07$, ns).
I then followed a procedure described by Blalock (1972) to test the difference in the correlation between hostile sexism and identification with feminists versus women in general. I used the following equation for a dependent samples t-test: 
\[ t = (r_{xy} - r_{zy}) \times \text{SQRT} \left[ \frac{(n-3)(1+r_{xz})}{1 - r_{xy}^2 - r_{xz}^2 + 2r_{xy}r_{xz}r_{zy}} \right], \]
where

- \( r_{xy} \) = identification with feminists,
- \( r_{zy} \) = identification with women,
- \( r_{xz} \) = the correlation between identification with women and with feminists.

Finally, I consulted the normal table to test the significance of \( t \). In keeping with the hypothesis, the negative correlation between hostile sexism and identification with feminists was greater than the correlation between hostile sexism and women in general, \( t = -2.35, p< .05 \). Thus, there appears to be a meaningful relationship between identification with feminists and hostile sexism. However, this relationship is attenuated with women in general.

Hypothesis 2: Humor Target and Amusement with Sexist Jokes

Previous research on the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist jokes has treated hostile sexism as a categorical variable (e.g., Ford, 2000; Ford et al., 2001; Glick, P., Diebold, J, Bailey-Werner, B & Zhu, L., 1997; Greenwood & Isbell, 2002). Accordingly, participants were placed in high or low hostile sexism conditions based on a median split on the distribution of scores from the hostile sexism scale (Md = 2.00, range = 4.09).

I predicted that participants high in hostile sexism would find the most amusement in sexist jokes targeting women who challenge traditional gender norms (feminists) and the least amusement in jokes that target women who conform to those norms (housewives). Similarly, these differences should be attenuated among participants who are low in hostile sexism. Accordingly, I conducted a 3 (joke target:
feminists, women, housewives) x 2 (hostile sexism: high, low) one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on amusement ratings for each type of joke. This revealed only a significant main effect of hostile sexism, \( F(1, 61) = 11.18, p< .01 \). Overall, women high in hostile sexism rated sexist jokes more amusing (\( M = 3.04, SD =1.42 \)) than women low in hostile sexism (\( M = 2.01, SD = 1.06 \)). The mean amusement ratings for the jokes in each condition are presented in Table 1.

To my surprise, there was little difference in mean amusement for the women in general and the feminist joke condition, yet both were relatively higher than the housewife joke condition. Based on the work of Wolff et al. (1934), it is possible that participants high in hostile sexism psychologically affiliated both with feminists and with women in general, perhaps because both groups have the potential to threaten social constructions of gender. This combined group’s unique distinctiveness from the traditional housewife suggests that what inhibited amusement in the housewife joke condition was the general lack of threat to traditional gender structures. Thus, this upholding of gender structure is what makes the housewife group a “liked” target among women high in hostile sexism. Conversely, a potential challenge to these same structures is presumably what makes feminists and women in general a disliked target among hostile sexists. The feminist and women in general joke targets were therefore combined because they may have been psychologically experienced in a similar manner by women high in hostile sexism, even though the actual targets differed.

Accordingly, I then conducted a 2 (joke target: feminists/women, housewives) by 2 (hostile sexism: low, high) one-way ANOVA on amusement. The main effects
Table 1. Mean Amusement Ratings for Sexist Jokes as a Function of Joke Target

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target of joke</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Feminists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low hostile sexism</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td><strong>M</strong> 2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong> 0.90</td>
<td><strong>SD</strong> 1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>n</strong> 11</td>
<td><strong>n</strong> 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High hostile sexism</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td><strong>M</strong> 3.61**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong> 1.62</td>
<td><strong>SD</strong> 1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>n</strong> 11</td>
<td><strong>n</strong> 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at p < .05
** significant at p < .01

model was significant $F (1, 63) = 6.52, p = .05$. Women high in hostile sexism found sexist jokes more amusing than women low in hostile sexism. Furthermore, the interaction effect between joke target and hostile sexism was marginally significant $F (1, 63) = 3.15, p = .08$. Amusement ratings for the combined joke target condition and the housewife joke condition are presented in Table 2.

To further test the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist jokes, I ran a one-way ANOVA on amusement ratings for each condition for women high in hostile sexism only using pooled error variance. The first analysis yielded a significant relationship $F (1, 20) = 7.71, p < .05$, indicating that women high in hostile sexism rated jokes targeting women ($M = 3.61, SD = 1.62$) as more amusing than women low in hostile sexism ($M = 2.06, SD = .90$). The second analysis was also significant $F (1, 21) = 4.18, p = .05$). Women high in hostile sexism ($M = 3.14, SD = 1.36$) also rated sexist jokes targeting feminists as more amusing than women low in
Table 2. Mean Amusement Ratings for Sexist Jokes in Combined Women/Feminist Joke Target and Housewife Joke Target

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target of joke</th>
<th>Women/Feminists</th>
<th>Housewives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low hostile sexism</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High hostile sexism</td>
<td>3.36**</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** significant at p < .01

hostile sexism (M= 1.93, SD= 1.31). Once again there was no difference between women high and low in hostile sexism in the housewife joke condition. I then collapsed across the feminist and women joke target conditions and ran one last ANOVA on amusement ratings for participants high and low in hostile sexism using this combined condition. This relationship was also significant F (1, 43) = 11.91, p< .01, indicating that women high in hostile sexism (M= 3.36, SD= 1.47) enjoyed sexist jokes targeting feminists and women as a target more so than women low in hostile sexism (M= 2.00, SD= 1.10).

Finally, I subjected the data to one last test of the hypothesis. I treated hostile sexism as a continuous variable and conducted a regression analysis on amusement ratings. In keeping with Hypothesis 2, hostile sexism was positively related to amusement with jokes targeting feminists and women (β= .50, p < .01). However, the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with jokes targeting housewives was not significant (β= .34, ns).
Overall, there is no difference between participants high and low in hostile sexism and amusement ratings with jokes in the housewife joke condition. Women high in hostile sexism simply do not enjoy humor that disparages women who uphold traditional gender structures. They do, however, find jokes targeting women who may potentially threaten or challenge these structures highly amusing.

Hypothesis 3: Mediation Analysis

I hypothesized that the degree of dis-identification would mediate the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist jokes that target feminists. To test this hypothesis, a path analysis was performed following the procedures described by Baron and Kenny (1986). As shown in figure 1, I first regressed amusement ratings onto hostile sexism ratings. This direct effect was significant $F (1, 65) = 17.73, p< .01$. I then regressed identification with feminists onto hostile sexism scores. This too was significant $F (1, 65) = 15.46, p< .01$. When amusement ratings were regressed simultaneously on hostile sexism scores and identification with feminists scores, however, the direct path remained significant, but the indirect path from amusement to identification failed to reach significance. This analysis does not support the hypothesis that identification with the humor target is the critical variable that mediates the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist jokes. This null result is surprising, considering the fact that the other analyses indicated that indeed women high in hostile sexism dis-identify more with feminists than women low in hostile sexism, and also find jokes targeting this group more amusing than jokes targeting non-norm challenging women. Path analysis for participants high in hostile sexism is presented in Figure 1.
Supplemental Analyses

Additional analyses were conducted to better understand the relationship between hostile sexism and responses to sexist jokes. First, I regressed joke cruelty on hostile sexism, which yielded a significant negative relationship ($\beta = -.32, p > .01$). I then qualified this analysis by regressing joke cruelty on hostile sexism for each of the three conditions. Of these analyses, for jokes targeting feminists and women in general, women high in hostile sexism rated sexist jokes as less cruel than women low in hostile sexism ($\beta = -.36, p < .05$). Consistent with other analyses, this relationship was not significant for jokes targeting housewives ($\beta = -.22, ns$).

Second, the likelihood to repeat a sexist joke was regressed on hostile sexism. This too yielded a significant positive relationship $F(1, 43) = 4.67, p < .05$, indicating...
that to the extent that women were high in hostile sexism there was an increased likelihood for repeating sexist jokes to friends that target feminists and women in general ($\beta = .31, p < .05$). Again, this relationship was not significant for jokes targeting women in traditional gender roles ($\beta = .17, \text{ns}$).

Finally, there was a high correlation between the two items assessing the extent to which the participants thought each joke was degrading toward women and the extent to which it depicted women negatively ($\beta = .94, p < .01$). Therefore, the responses to those two items were averaged to create an aggregate measure of sexist content. I then regressed this aggregate measure of sexist content on hostile sexism for the feminist/women condition and the housewife condition. As expected, women high in hostile sexism rated sexist jokes as less sexist for feminist/women joke targets ($\beta = -.37, p < .05$). Consistent with the overall pattern of the data, the relationship between sexist content and hostile sexism was not significant in the housewife joke target condition ($\beta = -.14, \text{ns}$).
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Overall the data suggest support for the first hypothesis. There is a strong negative relationship between hostile sexism and identification with feminists. That is, women high in hostile sexism identify less with feminists than women low in hostile sexism, and they also identify less with feminists than with women who do not challenge the traditional gender structure (e.g., the stereotype of the traditional housewife).

Support for the second hypothesis was also found, although not exactly as predicted. It was originally predicted that women high in hostile sexism would find jokes targeting feminists more amusing than jokes targeting both women in general and jokes targeting housewives. Instead, women high in hostile sexism only found jokes targeting feminists more amusing than jokes targeting housewives. Women high in hostile sexism apparently categorized feminists and women in general as members of a common out-group (perhaps defined by their distinctiveness from the traditional gender role), while cognitively placing housewives into a separate in-group. This idea is consistent with social identity theory. Much like Jewish participants that had psychologically affiliated themselves with the Scots that had been negatively portrayed in jokes, and thus failed to find amusement in those jokes (Wolff et al., 1934), women high in hostile sexism affiliated feminists with women as a general target and found jokes targeting both groups more amusing than jokes targeting housewives. The findings of Wolff et al. (1934) highlight the possibility that one's attitudinal affiliation with a social group is important in determining the
extent to which he/she will find jokes targeting that group amusing. This may provide an explanation for why the largest discrepancy in amusement ratings was between the feminists/women group and the housewife group, instead of three separate and distinct groups as originally predicted. Partial support for the hypothesis was found, however, because amusement was nonetheless qualified by the joke target. Women high in hostile sexism rated jokes targeting this combined group as significantly more amusing than jokes targeting housewives.

The third hypothesis attempted to establish women’s dis-identification with the humor target as the critical variable mediating the relationship between hostile sexism and sexist jokes targeting feminists. In light of previous research that has found a negative relationship between identification with women and amusement with sexist jokes (see LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998), it is surprising that this mediation analysis failed to reach significance. There are two potential reasons for this result. First, only 29.9% of the sample identified with the feminist label. There may be various socio-political reasons why so few women identified themselves as feminist. This finding is somewhat consistent, however, with other research that has examined feminist identity among college-aged women (see Hall & Rodriquez, 2003; Kamen, 1991; Liss et al., 2001; Twenge & Zucker, 1999; Zucker, 2004).

A second possible explanation for the non-significant mediation is the relatively overall low levels of hostile sexism scores. It is theoretically possible that one must reach a certain threshold, or level of hostile sexism, before dis-identification with the humor target can act as a mediator. That is, perhaps only women who are relatively high in hostile sexism rate sexist jokes amusing because they dis-identify
with the humor target. Based on these findings and the findings of LaFrance & Woodzicka (1998), there is still reason to believe that dis-identification plays an important role in the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist jokes. Follow-up is therefore needed to identify if a threshold exists and to develop the threshold of hostile sexism as well as a more sensitive measure of feminist identity.

Lastly, each of the additional supplemental analyses performed were consistent with the overall pattern of the data. Taken together, they suggest that women high in hostile sexism respond to sexist jokes in a relatively consistent manner as a function of the joke target. Much like amusement in general, women high in hostile sexism found sexist jokes targeting women who uphold social gender norms less amusing and crueler, and were also less likely to repeat these jokes to a friend. Moreover, identification does indeed play a role in these relationships, as increased levels of hostile sexism were related to a decreased identification with feminists.

Interestingly, the main objective of this study had originated in the idea that the strongest relationships would exist in the feminist joke condition. What I found more prominent, however, is what the data suggest about the nature of hostile sexism in terms of women who uphold traditional gender norms. The political implications of this study are also important in terms of what it may suggest about the nature of hostile sexism and the feminist label itself. All of the statistically significant relationships existed between the housewife joke condition and this combined condition that targets both feminists and women as a general group. This may
suggest that the label “feminist” is not as salient to individuals high in hostile sexism as had been previously suggested. Because there were no statistical differences between the feminist and women joke targets for individuals high in hostile sexism, this may imply that feminists pose no more of a threat to the larger patriarchal structure than do women in general.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The importance of this research lies in its contribution to the extant literature on amusement with disparaging humor by identifying variables that facilitate women’s amusement with sexist jokes. It is the first research in the field of disparaging humor that specifically addresses women’s responses to sexist humor in terms of the processes that moderate the relationship between hostile sexism and amusement with sexist jokes, for example, joke target and identification. It also makes an important contribution because it shows how amusement to sexist jokes targeting women who uphold traditional gender norms is attenuated for women high in hostile sexism.

Disparaging humor in general is an important genre of humor to study because it is used in many different social situations, from popular media to the workplace. It is a pervasive and accepted part of everyday interactions that also functions to release prejudice by changing the norms that allow for the release of certain discriminatory impulses (Fitzgerald & Ford, 2005; Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Ford, Wentzel & Lorion, 2001). Ford and Ferguson (2004) for instance, found that among those high in prejudice, exposure to disparaging humor increased tolerance for discriminatory events. This exposure altered the social context such that norms governing appropriate responses were expanded, creating a tolerance for the discrimination (Ford & Ferguson, 2004).

The exchange of disparaging jokes also provides a medium for the expression of prejudice within a safe context, because its humorous delivery allows the joke
teller to disassociate from the prejudice behind the joke. The joke teller, for instance, can always recant the prejudice with the acceptable excuse that that he or she was "only joking" (Johnson, 1990). The specific type of disparagement humor addressed in this study, sexist humor, is a form of prejudice toward women in particular (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998). Because of the humorous delivery of sexist jokes, the prejudice lying beneath is often overlooked or trivialized (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998). This is significant because women are frequently the object of disparaging humor in our culture, as evidenced by the countless number of jokes depicting "dumb blondes, scatter-brained redheads, myopic wives, mothers, mothers-in-law, lady drivers, and college co-eds" (Bergmann, 1986:63).

Like other forms of disparaging humor, sexist jokes create negative social consequences for the groups targeted by the joke. For example, Fitzgerald and Ford (2005) found that men high in hostile sexism were less willing to donate money to a women's organization, but not to a men's organization, after exposure to sexist jokes. Future research could examine whether or not women high in hostile sexism would actively discriminate against women identifying as feminists, or other commonly "disliked" groups of women. On the basis of Fitzgerald and Ford's (2005) findings, it is reasonable to assume that women's amusement with sexist jokes targeting this particular group may have behavioral consequences in the form of actual discriminatory practices. Within the framework of the present study, future research could investigate whether or not women high in hostile sexism are willing to discriminate against women who pose a challenge to social gender structures, or
organizations supporting this challenge, after exposure to sexist jokes targeting this group.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory
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 using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disagree strongly</td>
<td>disagree somewhat</td>
<td>disagree slightly</td>
<td>agree slightly</td>
<td>agree somewhat</td>
<td>agree strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.

2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for “equality.”

3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily be rescued before men.

4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts being sexist.

5. Women are too easily offended.

6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the opposite sex.

7. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.

8. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.

9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.

10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.

11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.

12. Men are complete without women.

13. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.

14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.

15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.

16. When women lose in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.

17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually unavailable and then refusing male advances.

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

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

21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.

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

Sex: M F Project ID Number ________________

Race (please write): ________________
Appendix B

Social Identification Survey
Below is a series of statements measuring varying aspects of a college student’s social identity. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>disagree strongly</td>
<td>disagree somewhat</td>
<td>disagree slightly</td>
<td>agree slightly</td>
<td>agree somewhat</td>
<td>agree strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I think of myself as a person that is proud to be a member of my ethnic group.

2. I think of myself as a person who doesn’t have much in common with my gender group.

3. I think of myself as a person who is proud to be a student at WMU.

4. I think of myself as a person that doesn’t have much in common with feminists.

5. I think of myself as a person that values being a member of my gender group.

6. I think of myself as a person that doesn’t have much in common with other students at WMU.

7. I often think being a feminist is a central aspect of my identity.

8. I think of myself as a person who is often discriminated against based on my ethnicity.

9. I think of myself as a person that values being a student at WMU.

10. I think of myself as person who is proud to be a feminist.

11. I think of myself in terms of being a member of my gender group.

12. I think of myself as a person who considers my ethnicity to be a central aspect of my identity.

13. I think of myself as a college student at WMU.

14. I think of myself in terms of being a feminist.

15. I think of myself as a person who considers my gender to be a central aspect of my identity.
16. I think of myself as a person who has a lot in common with my ethnic group.

17. I think of myself as a person who considers being a student at WMU to be a central aspect of my identity.

18. I think of myself as a person that is proud to be a member of my gender group.

19. I think of myself as a person who values being a member of my ethnic group.

20. I think of myself rarely in terms of being a feminist.

Sex: M F Project ID Number ________________

Race (please write): __________________________
Appendix C

Stimulus Material: Joke Booklets
Section 1: The following jokes have been randomly selected for possible inclusion in a study examining the use of humor in the workplace. Please read each joke and rate how humorous it is on a scale of 1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “very.” This is a pre-testing phase, as it is expected that this project will be carried out next fall, in 2007. Thank you.

1. Q: Why do WMU students hang their diplomas in their rearview mirrors?
   A: So they can park in the handicapped spot.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

2. Q: Where do you find a no legged dog?
   A: Right where you left him.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

3. Q: Why were hurricanes usually named after women?
   A: Because when they arrive, they're wet and wild, but when they go, they take your house and car.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very
4. **Q:** How do you know when elephants have had sex in your house?  
   **A:** The trash can liners are missing!  

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very  

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very  

5. **Q:** How do you get a WMU student off your porch?  
   **A:** Pay him for the pizza.  

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very  

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very  

6. **Q:** Why are women like carpets?  
   **A:** If you lay them properly the first time, you can walk all over them for years.  

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very  

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very  

7. **Q:** What do you get when you drive by the WMU campus real slow?  
   **A:** A degree.  

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very  

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very
8. Yesterday scientists in Canada revealed that beer contains small traces of female hormones. To prove their theory they fed 100 men 12 pints of beer and observed that 100% of them started talking nonsense and couldn't drive.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all Very

9. Q. What do you call a man with no arms or legs that can swim across a pool?  
   A. Clever Dick

   How humorous is this joke?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all Very

10. Q. Did you hear about the blind man who went bungee jumping?  
    A. He loved it, but it scared the hell out of his dog.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all Very

11. Q: What do you get when a bunch of women stand ear to ear?  
    A: A wind tunnel.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all Very
12. Q. Did you hear about the guy who's a dyslexic-bulimic?
   A. He eats, and then he sticks his finger up his ass

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

13. Q: How do you know when a woman is going to say something intelligent?
    A: When her first words are, “A man once told me.....”

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very
Section Two: Below is a list of the same jokes you have just read. In this section, please evaluate these jokes on a number of different dimensions. After reading each joke, please respond to each question using the following scale.

To what do extent do you find this joke...........

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all Very

1. Q: Why do WMU students hang their diplomas in their rearview mirrors?
   A: So they can park in the handicapped spot.

   ___ Offensive _____ Degrading to women _____ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively _____ Funny _____ Sextist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

2. Q. Where do you find a no legged dog?
   A. Right where you left him.

   ___ Offensive _____ Degrading to women _____ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively _____ Funny _____ Sextist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

3. Q: Why were hurricanes usually named after women?
   A: Because when they arrive, they're wet and wild, but when they go, they take your house and car.

   ___ Offensive _____ Degrading to women _____ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively _____ Funny _____ Sextist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

4. Q: How do you know when elephants have had sex in your house?
   A: The trash can liners are missing!

   ___ Offensive _____ Degrading to women _____ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively _____ Funny _____ Sextist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

5. Q: How do you get a WMU student off your porch?
   A: Pay him for the pizza.

   ___ Offensive _____ Degrading to women _____ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively _____ Funny _____ Sextist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?
6. Q: Why are women like carpets?
   A: If you lay them properly the first time, you can walk all over them for years.

   _ Offensive _ Degraded to women _ Cruel or vicious
   _ Depict women negatively _ Funny _ Sexist
   _ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

7. Q: What do you get when you drive by the WMU campus real slow?
   A: A degree.

   _ Offensive _ Degraded to women _ Cruel or vicious
   _ Depict women negatively _ Funny _ Sexist
   _ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

8. Yesterday scientists in Canada revealed that beer contains small traces of female hormones. To prove their theory they fed 100 men 12 pints of beer and observed that 100% of them started talking nonsense and couldn't drive.

   _ Offensive _ Degraded to women _ Cruel or vicious
   _ Depict women negatively _ Funny _ Sexist
   _ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

9. Q: What do you call a man with no arms or legs that can swim across a pool?
   A: Clever Dick

   _ Offensive _ Degraded to women _ Cruel or vicious
   _ Depict women negatively _ Funny _ Sexist
   _ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

10. Q: Did you hear about the blind man who went bungee jumping?
    A: He loved it, but it scared the hell out of his dog.

    _ Offensive _ Degraded to women _ Cruel or vicious
    _ Depict women negatively _ Funny _ Sexist
    _ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?
To what extent do you find this joke...........

<table>
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<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

11. **Q:** What do you get when a bunch of women stand ear to ear?
   **A:** A wind tunnel.

   ___ Offensive   ___ Degrading to women   ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively   ___ Funny   ___ Sexist

   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

12. **Q:** Did you hear about the guy who's a dyslexic-bulimic?
   **A:** He eats, and then he sticks his finger up his ass

   ___ Offensive   ___ Degrading to women   ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively   ___ Funny   ___ Sexist

   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

13. **Q:** How do you know when a woman is going to say something intelligent?
   **A:** When her first words are, "A man once told me....."

   ___ Offensive   ___ Degrading to women   ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively   ___ Funny   ___ Sexist

   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

Sex: M  F  Race (please write): ________________

Please write one sentence describing you overall impression of this study.
Section 1: The following jokes have been randomly selected for possible inclusion in a study examining the use of humor in the workplace. Please read each joke and rate how humorous it is on a scale of 1 = "Not at all" to 7 = "very." This is a pre-testing phase, as it is expected that this project will be carried out next fall, in 2007. Thank you.

1. Q: Why do WMU students hang their diplomas in their rearview mirrors?  
   A: So they can park in the handicapped spot.

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very

2. Q: Where do you find a no legged dog?  
   A: Right where you left him.

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very

3. Three feminists were granted one wish each by a genie. The first feminist said, "I wish I was the smartest woman in the world." And POOF, it came to be. The second feminist said, "I wish I was ten times smarter than the smartest woman in the world."... And POOF, this too came to be. The third feminist said, "I wish I was twenty times smarter than the smartest woman in the world."... and POOF, she was a man.

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all Very
4. Q: How do you know when elephants have had sex in your house?
   A: The trash can liners are missing!

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

5. Q: How do you get a WMU student off your porch?
   A: Pay him for the pizza.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

6. Q: How do you know when a feminist is going to say something intelligent?
   A: When her first words are, "A man once told me.....

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

7. Q: What do you get when you drive by the WMU campus real slow?
   A: A degree.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very
8. *Q:* How many feminists does it take to change a light bulb?  
   *A:* Trick question...feminists can’t change anything

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

9. *Q:* What do you call a man with no arms or legs that can swim across a pool?  
   *A:* Clever Dick

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

10. *Q:* Did you hear about the blind man who went bungee jumping?  
    *A:* He loved it, but it scared the hell out of his dog.

    How humorous is this joke?
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Not at all Very

    How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Not at all Very

11. *Q:* What’s the difference between a litter of puppies and a group of feminists?  
    *A:* Eventually puppies grow up and stop whining.

    How humorous is this joke?
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Not at all Very

    How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Not at all Very
12. Q: Did you hear about the guy who's a dyslexic-bulimic?  
   A. He eats, and then he sticks his finger up his ass

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all  Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all  Very

13. Q: How is a feminist like a laxative?  
   A: They both irritate the crap out of you

   How humorous is this joke?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all  Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
   Not at all  Very
Section Two: Below is a list of the same jokes you have just read. In this section, please evaluate these jokes on a number of different dimensions. After reading each joke, please respond to each question using the following scale.

**To what do extent do you find this joke..........**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
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1. *Q:* Why do WMU students hang their diplomas in their rearview mirrors?
   *A:* So they can park in the handicapped spot.

   ___ Offensive ___ Degrading to women ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively ___ Funny ___ Sexist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

2. *Q:* Where do you find a no legged dog?
   *A:* Right where you left him.

   ___ Offensive ___ Degrading to women ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively ___ Funny ___ Sexist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

3. Three feminists were granted one wish each by a genie. The first feminist said, “I wish I was the smartest woman in the world.” And POOF, it came to be. The second feminist said, “I wish I was ten times smarter than the smartest woman in the world.” And POOF, this too came to be. The third feminist said, “I wish I was twenty times smarter than the smartest woman in the world.” And POOF, she was a man.

   ___ Offensive ___ Degrading to women ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively ___ Funny ___ Sexist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

4. *Q:* How do you know when elephants have had sex in your house?
   *A:* The trash can liners are missing!

   ___ Offensive ___ Degrading to women ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively ___ Funny ___ Sexist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?
To what do extent do you find this joke...........

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all Very

5. **Q:** How do you get a WMU student off your porch?
   **A:** Pay him for the pizza.

   ___ Offensive    ___ Degrading to women    ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively    ___ Funny    ___ Sexist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

6. **Q:** How do you know when a feminist is going to say something intelligent?
   **A:** When her first words are, "A man once told me.....

   ___ Offensive    ___ Degrading to women    ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively    ___ Funny    ___ Sexist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

7. **Q:** What do you get when you drive by the WMU campus real slow?
   **A:** A degree.

   ___ Offensive    ___ Degrading to women    ___ Cruel or vicious
   ___ Depict women negatively    ___ Funny    ___ Sexist
   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

8. **Q:** How many feminists does it take to change a light bulb?
   **A:** Trick question...feminists can't change anything

   ___ Offensive    ___ Degrading to women    ___ Cruel or vicious
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9. **Q:** What do you call a man with no arms or legs that can swim across a pool?
   **A:** Clever Dick

   ___ Offensive    ___ Degrading to women    ___ Cruel or vicious
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   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

10. **Q:** Did you hear about the blind man who went bungee jumping?
    **A:** He loved it, but it scared the hell out of his dog.

    ___ Offensive    ___ Degrading to women    ___ Cruel or vicious
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11. **Q:** What's the difference between a litter of puppies and a group of feminists?
   **A:** Eventually puppies grow up and stop whining.

   ____ Offensive  ____ Degrading to women  ____ Cruel or vicious
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12. **Q:** Did you hear about the guy who's a dyslexic-bulimic?
   **A:** He eats, and then he sticks his finger up his ass

   ____ Offensive  ____ Degrading to women  ____ Cruel or vicious
   ____ Depict women negatively  ____ Funny  ____ Sexist
   ____ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

13. **Q:** How is a feminist like a laxative?
   **A:** They both irritate the crap out of you

   ____ Offensive  ____ Degrading to women  ____ Cruel or vicious
   ____ Depict women negatively  ____ Funny  ____ Sexist
   ____ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

**Sex:**  M  F  
Race (please write): __________________

Please write one sentence describing your overall impression of this study.
Section 1: The following jokes have been randomly selected for possible inclusion in a study examining the use of humor in the workplace. Please read each joke and rate how humorous it is on a scale of 1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “very.” This is a pre-testing phase, as it is expected that this project will be carried out next fall, in 2007. Thank you.

1. Q: Why do WMU students hang their diplomas in their rearview mirrors?
   A: So they can park in the handicapped spot.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

2. Q. Where do you find a no legged dog?
   A. Right where you left him.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

3. Q. How can you tell if your wife is happy?
   A. Who cares?

   How humorous is this joke?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very

   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all Very
4. **Q:** How do you know when elephants have had sex in your house?
   **A:** The trash can liners are missing!

   How humorous is this joke?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
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   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
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5. **Q:** How do you get a WMU student off your porch?
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   How humorous is this joke?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
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   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all  Very

6. **Q:** How many men does it take to open a bottle of beer?
   **A:** None. It should be open when his wife brings it to him.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
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7. **Q:** What do you get when you drive by the WMU campus real slow?
   **A:** A degree.

   How humorous is this joke?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
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   How much do you like this joke, for whatever reason?
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
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8. Q: How do you fix your wife’s watch?
   A: You don’t, there’s a clock on the oven

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9. Q. What do you call a man with no arms or legs that can swim across a pool?
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   How humorous is this joke?
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11. If your dog is barking at the back door and your wife is yelling at the front door, who do you let in first? The Dog of course...at least he’ll shut up after you let him in!

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7
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13. A husband and wife were stranded in an elevator and they knew they were gonna die. So, the wife turns to the husband and says, “Make me feel like a woman before I die!” So he takes off his clothes and says, “Fold these!!”

How humorous is this joke?
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Section Two: Below is a list of the same jokes you have just read. In this section, please evaluate these jokes on a number of different dimensions. After reading each joke, please respond to each question using the following scale.

To what do extent do you find this joke............

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all  Very

1. Q: Why do WMU students hang their diplomas in their rearview mirrors?  
   A: So they can park in the handicapped spot.
   ___ Offensive   ___ Degrading to women   ___ Cruel or vicious
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   ___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?
To what do extent do you find this joke.......... 

Not at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very

6. Q: How many men does it take to open a bottle of beer?  
   A: None. It should be open when his wife brings it to him.

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    ____ Offensive   ____ Degraded to women   ____ Cruel or vicious
    ____ Depict women negatively   ____ Funny   ____ Sexist
    ____ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?
To what do extent do you find this joke............

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all Not at all Not at all Not at all Not at all Not at all Very

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12. Q. Did you hear about the guy who's a dyslexic-bulimic?
   A. He eats, and then he sticks his finger up his ass

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13. A husband and wife were stranded in an elevator and they knew they were gonna
die. So, the wife turns to the husband and says, “Make me feel like a woman before I
die!” So he takes off his clothes and says, “Fold these!!”

___ Offensive  ___ Degrading to women  ___ Cruel or vicious
___ Depict women negatively  ___ Funny  ___ Sexist
___ How likely are you to repeat this joke to a friend?

---

Sex:   M   F
Race (please write):_____________________

Please write one sentence describing you overall impression of this study.
Appendix D

Debriefing Script
Debriefing Script

There is more to this study than I told you from the beginning, and I’m going to explain what that is. But first, I want to explain why I didn’t tell you everything about the study from the beginning. Social psychology studies are designed to examine how people spontaneously react to certain situations or events. But sometimes, if participants know what we’re studying from the beginning or know the hypotheses from the beginning it can affect the way they respond. For instance, often people give us responses they think we want them to. If that happens our results could be misleading. We wouldn’t get an idea of how people spontaneously respond in a given situation. So, do you see why I didn’t tell you everything about the study from the very beginning?

Now, let me explain the details of the study you just completed. Some social psychologists study the conditions under which people find sexist jokes amusing, and when they find them offensive.

We propose that among people who score high in a certain type of sexism measured by a scale that you completed in class, identifying with the target of a joke can impact the degree to which that person finds the joke amusing, as well as the specific types of jokes they find amusing.

This study was designed to follow up on previous research by looking at three primary issues. First, we are interested to see if women who score high in hostile sexism find jokes disparaging certain types of women (for example, feminists) more funny than jokes disparaging other types of women (for example, housewives). Second, we are interested in whether or not this type of sexism is related to the extent to which women identify with their gender group, and with women in traditional (housewives) and nontraditional (feminists) gender roles. Finally, we are interested to see if identifying with the disparaged target of the joke is related to the amount of amusement with the joke. So, in this study we first measured women’s level of sexism, identification with their gender group, and identification with women in traditional and nontraditional gender roles. These were the first two surveys that you participated in two weeks ago. We then gave some of you jokes that targeted women in general, some that targeted women in nontraditional gender roles, and some that targeted women in traditional gender roles and then asked you to evaluate the jokes on a number of dimensions. Do you recognize which of those conditions you were in?

So, the surveys you completed two weeks ago, the Social Attitude Survey and the Social Identification Survey were actually part of the survey you just completed. Does this make sense to you?

Do you have any questions about the study—about any of the activities you completed or anything I said during the study? If you have any questions later on or feel uncomfortable asking questions about the study in front of the class, feel free to email me at jessica.r.edel@wmich.edu
Appendix E

Approval Letter From the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Date: March 7, 2007

To: Thomas Ford, Principal Investigator
    Jessica Edel, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 07-02-08

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “Humor Ratings of Sexist Jokes” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: March 7, 2008