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Sexist Humor and Willingness to Discrimination against Women

Christie M. Fitzgerald
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SEXIST HUMOR AND WILLINGNESS TO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

by

Christie M. Fitzgerald

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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Christie M. Fitzgerald
SEXIST HUMOR AND WILLINGNESS TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST WOMEN

Christie M. Fitzgerald, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 2006

Research has shown that exposure to sexist humor increases tolerance of sexist events, particularly for people high in hostile sexism—antagonism toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The present experiment extends those findings by examining the effects of exposure to sexist humor on anticipated behavior. Two studies were designed to examine the behavioral consequences of exposure to sexist humor. In Study 1, participants were exposed to either sexist jokes, sexist statements, or neutral jokes, and then asked to donate money to either a women's organization or a men’s organization. In Study 2, participants were exposed to either sexist jokes or neutral jokes, and then asked to donate money to either a women’s shelter (group donation target condition) or an individual woman from the shelter (individual donation target condition). Supporting my hypotheses from Study 1, regression analyses revealed a stronger negative relationship between hostile sexism and amount donated to a women’s organization in the sexist joke condition, relative to the neutral joke or sexist statement conditions. The relationship between hostile sexism and amount donated to a men’s organization was not significant. Supporting my hypothesis from Study 2, regression analyses revealed a stronger negative relationship between hostile sexism and amount willing to donate to a women’s shelter, relative to an individual woman. These results suggest that exposure to sexist humor serves as a "releaser" of sexist behavior for those high in hostile sexism.
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INTRODUCTION

Sexist humor has been defined as humor that denigrates, demeans, stereotypes, oppresses or objectifies a person on the basis of his or her gender (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998; Sev'er & Ungar, 1997). Sexist humor is a particularly insidious form of sex discrimination because it trivializes the discriminatory message under the veil of innocuous or benign amusement (MacKinnon, 1979; Montemurro, 2003). Such trivialization makes the sexism communicated in sexist humor implicit, and the intentions of the humorist ambiguous (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998). Thus, sexist humor can denigrate its target without the standard challenges or opposition that non-humorous sexist communications would likely incur (e.g., Bill & Naus, 1992).

In keeping with a growing recognition that sexist humor is, indeed, a subtle form of prejudice (e.g., Frazier, Cochran, & Olson, 1995; LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998), researchers have recently begun to examine the social consequences of exposure to sexist humor (e.g., Ford, 2000; Olson, Hobden, & Maio, 1999; Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998). Ford et al. (2001), for instance, demonstrated that, for men high in hostile sexism—antagonism toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996)—sexist humor creates a social norm of tolerance of prejudice and discrimination.

Recent models of prejudice have emphasized the importance of social norms in facilitating and inhibiting the expression of prejudice (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Wittenbrink & Henly, 1996). Wittenbrink and Henly (1996) found that participants high in racial prejudice expressed more prejudiced racial attitudes in the context of prejudiced norms than in the context of non-prejudiced norms.
In keeping with these findings, I propose that, for men high in hostile sexism, sexist humor creates conditions that encourage the behavioral expression of prejudice. The general purpose of the present research, then, was to directly examine the effect of exposure to sexist humor on the willingness to engage in subtle discrimination against women. Building on preliminary findings by Fitzgerald et al. (2005), Study 1 examined the relationship between the level of men’s hostile sexism and their willingness to discriminate toward women relative to men upon exposure to sexist jokes. Study 1 also examined the relationship between the level of men’s hostile sexism and their willingness to discriminate toward women as a function of exposure to sexist jokes, sexist statements, or neutral jokes. Study 2 tested whether the potential target of discrimination—women as a group versus an individual woman—moderates the effect of exposure to sexist humor on men’s willingness to discriminate against women.

Humor in Social Interactions

To illustrate its paradoxical effects on interpersonal relationships, theorists have referred to humor as a “double-edged sword” (Holmes & Marra, 2002; Malone, 1980; Meyer, 2000). Humor can have both a beneficial and detrimental impact on social interaction. On the one hand, humor fosters cohesive in-group and inter-group relations (Fine & De Soucey, 2005; Kahn, 1989; Martineau, 1972). Brown and Keegan (1999) found that humor bolstered in-group solidarity among a hotel kitchen staff when comparing their group with other kitchens. Likewise, Vinton (1989) observed a small, family-owned business and found that humorous teasing and bantering appeared to create bonds among the employees.
Humor also adds an air of light-heartedness to potentially unpleasant interactions by redefining the situation as non-serious. In that way, humor serves as a “social lubricant” smoothing interactions during times of opposition or tension (Fine & De Soucey, 2005; Pache, 1992; Yedes, 1996). For instance, Vinton (1989) observed upper-level employees using humorous teasing as a way to accomplish work-related tasks without appearing critical or bossy.

On the other hand, however, humor may serve divisive functions. People use humor to “safely” express hostile attitudes toward others (Brunner & Costello, 2002). Kanter (1977), in her study of male and female corporate employees, found that men used sexist humor to isolate female “outsiders” and test their responses to the dominant male culture. Likewise, Kahn (1989) found that male employees used disparaging jokes to express derision toward a female manager without risking reproach. The levity communicated through humor provides a pardon for the expression of hostile attitudes (e.g., Bill & Naus, 1992). When challenged, joke tellers can dissociate themselves from their message by dismissing it as being “only a joke” and not reflective of their true attitudes (Johnson, 1990).

Sexist humor, itself, is a subtle expression of shared stereotypes and hostile sentiments toward women. The men in the organizations studied by Kanter (1977) and by Kahn (1989) had to share knowledge of certain demeaning stereotypes in order to “get” the jokes circulated around their respective offices. The sexist joking in those organizations clarified for group members that sexist stereotypes and attitudes were shared aspects of group culture.
Although sexist humor certainly is a means of transmitting negative stereotypes and hostile sentiments toward women, one may ask whether sexist joking creates negative stereotypes or makes people more prejudiced toward women. Research on the effects of reciting and exposure to a variety of types of disparaging humor addresses these questions.

Consequences of Reciting Disparaging Humor

Reciting disparaging humor and exposure to it affect people differently, through different processes. Reciting disparaging jokes can have a negative impact on the joke teller’s attitudes toward the targeted group. Hobden and Olson (1994) found that participants who freely chose (with the option to decline) to read jokes disparaging lawyers subsequently reported more negative attitudes toward lawyers than did participants who recited the jokes without having the option to decline, or participants who recited neutral jokes.

Hobden and Olson suggested that cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) may explain these findings. According to cognitive dissonance theory, behaviors that are inconsistent with one’s attitude arouse dissonance between their internal attitude and their publicly performed behavior. The tension (dissonance) arising within the person motivates them to change either their attitude or their behavior to achieve consistency. Thus, participants who voluntarily chose to read disparaging jokes that were inconsistent with their attitudes toward lawyers should have experienced cognitive dissonance, and therefore changed their attitudes to be more consistent with their behavior.

A second possible explanation for participants’ attitude change comes from self-perception theory (Bem, 1972). According to self-perception theory, when individuals
have ambiguous attitudes toward something, they infer their attitudes from voluntarily performed actions. It is possible that participants had ambiguous attitudes toward lawyers. Freely choosing to recite disparaging jokes about lawyers, then, could have informed participants of their attitudes toward lawyers, and thus led them to report more negative attitudes.

Reciting disparaging jokes also appears to affect the joke teller’s stereotypes of the targeted group. Maio, Olson, and Bush (1997) found that participants who recited jokes that disparaged Newfoundlanders (a relatively disadvantaged group in Canada) rated Newfoundlanders more negatively on stereotype-relevant traits, but not on stereotype-irrelevant traits. They reported having a more negative stereotypical representation of Newfoundlanders. This effect was not found for participants who did not read the disparaging humor. These findings suggest that reciting disparaging humor makes stereotypes more accessible in memory, thereby leading to more negative evaluations of the targeted group.

Taken together, the findings from Hobden and Olson (1994) and Maio et al. (1997) suggest that reciting disparaging humor can affect one’s attitudes and stereotypes through a variety of potential processes. None of the explanations for the effects of reciting disparaging humor, however, allude to the unique properties of humor, apart from the content of a message, as underlying determinants.

Consequences of Exposure to Disparaging Humor

Unlike reciting disparaging humor, exposure to disparaging humor does not appear to affect one’s attitudes toward or stereotypes of the targeted group. Olson, Maio and Hobden (1999) conducted three experiments to examine the possibility that exposure
to disparaging humor could affect content and accessibility of participants’ stereotypes of the targeted groups. In Experiments 1 and 2, they exposed participants to either humor that disparaged men, neutral humor, or non-humorous disparagement of men. In Experiment 3, they exposed participants to humor that disparaged lawyers, neutral humor, or non-humorous disparagement of lawyers. In each experiment, they measured the content and accessibility of participants’ stereotypes of and attitudes toward the targeted group. Surprisingly, Olson et al. found no effect of exposure to disparaging humor on the accessibility or content of attitudes toward and stereotypes of the targeted groups.

There are two possible explanations that could account for these null effects. First, the effects of exposure to disparaging humor on the recipient’s stereotypes and attitudes may be limited to instances when the targeted group is relatively low in status. Olson et al. used humor targeting men and lawyers, both of which are high-status, relatively advantaged groups. Second, they did not take into account individual levels of prejudice, which could have influenced how the disparaging communication was perceived. It is possible that exposure to disparaging humor affects the stereotypes and attitudes toward an out-group for people who are high in prejudice.

Ford et al. (2001) addressed these two issues and demonstrated that exposure to sexist humor did not affect participants’ stereotypes toward the targeted group (women), relative to exposure to neutral humor or nonhumorous sexist statements. Collectively, the findings from Olson et al. (1999) and Ford et al. (2001) provide no evidence that exposure to disparaging humor uniquely affects stereotypes and attitudes toward the targeted group.
Although exposure to disparaging humor may not affect one's attitudes or stereotypes toward the targeted group, it still has negative social consequences. Ryan and Kanjorski (1998) examined the relationship between exposure to sexist humor and men's self-reported sexual aggression toward women. They found that enjoyment of sexist humor was positively correlated with acceptance of rape myths. Furthermore, men who found the sexist jokes enjoyable reported a greater likelihood of forcing sex upon women (behavioral intentions), relative to participants who did not find the sexist jokes enjoyable.

Similarly, Ford et al. (2001) demonstrated that exposure to sexist humor can expand the bounds of appropriate conduct in a given context, creating a perceived norm of tolerance of sexism among those high in hostile sexism. Furthermore, as a result of this perceived norm, men high in hostile sexism reported greater personal tolerance of a subsequently encountered sexist event upon exposure to sexist jokes than upon exposure to comparable sexist statements or neutral jokes (Ford, 2000; Ford, et al. 2001).

Prejudiced Norm Theory

Ford and Ferguson (2004) proposed their prejudiced norm theory to explain these social psychological consequences of exposure to disparaging humor. According to their theory, humor induces a conversational rule of levity. That is, humor communicates an implicit message to the receiver that the usual rules of logic and expectations of common sense do not apply. When presented with a joke, people do not evaluate the underlying message with the usual critical mindset. Rather, they abandon the usual serious modes of information processing necessary for interpreting most other communications (Attardo,
Berlyne, 1972; Gruner, 1997; Johnson, 1990; McGhee, 1972; Mulkay, 1983; Ziv & Gadish, 1990). Berlyne (1972), for instance, stated that:

Humor is accompanied by discriminative cues, which indicate that what is happening, or is going to happen, should be taken as a joke. The ways in which I might react to the same events in the absence of these cues become inappropriate and must be withheld (p. 56).

By making light of the ridicule of social groups, disparaging humor communicates an implicit norm that it is acceptable to relax the usual "critical sensitivities" (Husband, 1977) and treat such discrimination in a more light-hearted, non-critical manner. If the receiver accepts the disparagement as "only a joke"—that is, switches to a non-critical mindset—he or she tacitly assents to the normative standard that, in this context, it is acceptable to make light of the expression of prejudice (Bill & Naus, 1992; Emerson, 1969; Fine, 1983; Francis, 1988; Khoury, 1985). Bill and Naus (1992), for instance, found that men rated sexist events as "acceptable" and "harmless" when they perceived the incidents as humorous.

The receiver may, however, reject the implication to switch to a non-critical mindset to interpret disparaging humor, and thus challenge the implied normative standard of trivialization (Apte 1987; Attardo, 1993; Barker 1994; Francis, 1988; Mannell, 1977; Sev'er and Ungar 1997). The receiver's rejection of the disparaging humor, then, prevents the emergence of a shared norm of tolerance of discrimination. As a result, the receiver should react to other instances of discrimination according to the usual non-prejudiced norms of conduct. Ford (2000, Exps. 2 & 3) tested this hypothesis and found that the activation of a non-critical mindset was, indeed, necessary for sexist
humor to increase tolerance of a separate sexist event. When participants high in hostile sexism interpreted sexist jokes in a serious manner the effect of exposure to sexist humor on tolerance of a sexist event was nullified.

*The Role of Prejudice*

Individual levels of prejudice influence how disparaging humor is interpreted. People high in prejudice tend to have more weakly internalized non-prejudiced convictions compared to people low in prejudice (e.g., Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, and Elliot 1991; Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, and Vance 2002; Monteith, Devine, and Zuwerink 1993). Consistent with this research, Ford and Lorion (2000) found that hostile sexism is negatively related to the degree to which one's standard of appropriate conduct toward women is derived internally (from personally internalized convictions) and positively related to the degree to which it is derived externally (from prevailing social norms). Consequently, people high in prejudice (e.g., hostile sexism) should be less likely to challenge or reject the disparaging humor's implied norm that discrimination (e.g., sexism) need not be taken seriously. Indeed, research shows that people approve of sexist humor— that is, switch to a non-serious, humor mindset to interpret it—to the extent that they have sexist attitudes (e.g., Butland & Ivy 1990; Greenwood & Isbell, 2002; Henkin & Fish 1986; LaFrance & Woodzicka 1998).

Due to their greater approval of disparaging humor, people high in prejudice should be more likely to perceive a shared norm that discrimination against the target need not be taken seriously (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). In keeping with this hypothesis, Ford et al. (2001) found that men high in hostile sexism were more likely than those low in hostile sexism to perceive a norm of tolerance of sexism in the immediate context upon
exposure to sexist humor but not upon exposure to neutral humor or serious sexist statements. Upon exposure to sexist humor, they were more likely to define the context as one in which it was socially appropriate to consider instances of sexism in a non-critical manner.

Finally, people high in prejudice are not only more likely to perceive a norm of tolerance of discrimination upon exposure to disparaging humor, they are more likely to use that norm as a guide for regulating social judgment. Ford et al. (2001) found that for men high in hostile sexism, a perceived norm of tolerance of sexism mediated the effect of exposure to sexist humor on tolerance of a sexist event. Men high in hostile sexism perceived a norm of tolerance of sexism upon exposure to sexist humor, and they used that norm as a guide for evaluating a separate sexist event.

Justification-Suppression Model of the Expression of Prejudice

Crandall and Eshleman's (2003) justification-suppression model (JSM) of the expression of prejudice contends that people actively suppress the expression of prejudice because of internal forces (e.g., personal standards, religious beliefs) and/or external forces (non-prejudiced norms). That is, people may suppress prejudice in order to maintain a non-prejudiced self-concept or to avoid the appearance of prejudice to others (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003, p. 420). People can be motivated to suppress prejudice by both internal and external sources of behavior regulation.

JSM further contends that people are likely to "release" or express prejudice only when there is sufficient justification for doing so. Justifications or "releasers of prejudice" allow people to express prejudice while protecting them from the implication that they may be prejudiced. As Crandall and Eshleman state, "Justifiers both allow for
the expression of prejudice and cover the roots of discrimination" (p. 425). For instance, in helping situations, people are likely to actively suppress genuine prejudice and help members of a disliked group (e.g., women, minorities) when withholding help carries with it the implication that one might be prejudiced (Saucier et al., 2005). However, when the situation precludes the implication of withholding help as prejudiced, people may release their prejudice and fail to help. Thus, individuals high in prejudice (e.g., hostile sexism) should be more likely to discriminate against a disliked group (e.g., women) in helping situations by withholding help (i.e., donations of time or money) when it can be easily rationalized as socially acceptable or justified on non-prejudiced grounds.

STUDY 1

I propose that disparaging humor serves as a releaser of prejudice. For people high in prejudice, disparaging humor diminishes the suppression of prejudice toward the targeted group by replacing the usual non-prejudiced norms in a situation with a norm of tolerance of discrimination toward the group (Ford, et al., 2001). Disparaging humor essentially justifies a wider range of negative responses toward members of the targeted group. In this climate of tolerance of derision, discriminatory behavior can be more easily justified as falling within the bounds of social acceptability. Consequently, people high in prejudice may be more likely to engage in subtle forms of discrimination (e.g., withholding help) toward the disparaged group relative to other groups upon exposure to disparagement humor.

I tested this possibility in the context of sexist humor. Specifically, I exposed male participants either to sexist jokes, comparable non-humorous sexist statements, or
neutral (non-sexist) jokes. I then gave participants the opportunity to report how much of their own money they would be willing to donate to help a woman's organization. I included a fourth condition in which I exposed men to sexist jokes and then gave them the opportunity to report how much of their own money they would be willing to donate to help a men's organization.

I hypothesized that upon exposure to sexist jokes, hostile sexism would negatively correlate to the amount of money men were willing to donate to a woman’s organization but not to a men’s organization. Second, I expected to find a stronger negative relationship between hostile sexism and amount of money men were willing to donate to the woman’s organization upon exposure to sexist jokes than upon exposure to sexist statements or neutral jokes. In other words, to the extent that men were high in hostile sexism, they should be willing to donate less money to the woman's organization upon exposure to sexist jokes than upon exposure to sexist statements or neutral jokes.

Method

Participants and Design

Ninety male undergraduate students in enrolled in communication and sociology courses participated in exchange for extra course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of 4 experimental conditions (sexist jokes/female donation target, sexist statements/female donation target, neutral jokes/female donation target, and finally sexist jokes/male donation target).

Procedure

I collected individual differences in hostile sexism using Glick and Fiske’s (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, which was administered to participants' in their
classrooms. The experimenter introduced the questionnaire as the "Social Attitudes Survey", allegedly designed to assess attitudes and beliefs about a variety of social issues.

Two to 4 weeks later, the experimenter returned to the participant's classrooms to conduct a supposedly unrelated study on perceptions of social interactions that involve communication behavior. Participants were given a booklet containing four vignettes describing interactions among a group of staff members in the distribution department of a local newspaper. Participants were asked to "role-play"—that is, to imagine themselves in each situation watching the interactions as they occurred.

Participants were then instructed to complete their booklet individually. The first and third vignettes described nonsexist "filler" interactions to reduce suspicion of the true purpose of the study. The second vignette contained the communication manipulation (sexist jokes, sexist statements, neutral jokes). In each of the humorous communication conditions (sexist jokes, neutral jokes), the second vignette began with the statement “After Cindy's story (from the first vignette), the group discussion gave way to a giddy exchange of the staff members' favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.”

Participants in the sexist joke conditions (female donation target and male donation target) then read one neutral joke followed by four sexist jokes (e.g. “How can you tell if a blonde's been using the computer? There's white-out on the screen!”). Participants in the neutral joke condition read five neutral jokes (e.g. “Why was the leper stopped for speeding? He couldn't take his foot off the accelerator!”).

The vignette for the sexist statement condition vignette began with the statement “After Cindy’s story, the group discussion gave way to an exchange of some rather serious social commentaries. The following statements are excerpts from that
discussion." The sexist statement condition also included an additional note stressing that though some of the statements may have been taken out of context, they reflect each person's actual belief or attitude. Participants then read one neutral statement and four sexist statements. Each statement conveyed the same message content as the corresponding sexist jokes, but in a serious manner. For example, "...I know blonde women are often the subject of jokes. But I think it's well deserved. They, women that is, really are less intelligent!" Pretest ratings indicated that participants perceived the sexist jokes as more sexist but equally funny as the neutral jokes. See Ford (2000) for a description of the pretest ratings.

After reading this vignette, participants answered the following questions: "How humorous is this situation?" and "How offensive are the jokes/statements in this situation?" Responses were made on scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very).

The fourth vignette in each of the female donation target conditions contained the following description:

The National Council of Women is an organization committed to serving and promoting the political and social advancement of women and women's issues. It has just released "The ABC's of Women's Issues." The Council is soliciting donations from you and your coworkers in the distribution department. Participants were again asked to imagine themselves in the context of this newspaper group and report how much money they would be willing to donate to the National Council of Women. Participants were constrained to donating between $0.00 and $20.00.

In order to compare the effect of exposure to sexist humor on willingness to donate to a women's organization to willingness to donate to a men's organization, I
included a sexist humor/male donation target condition, in which participants read the same sexist jokes (detailed above) as the sexist humor/female donation target condition, but were asked to donate money to a men’s organization. Participants in the male donation target condition read the following description:

The National Council of Men is an organization committed to serving and promoting the political and social advancement of men and men’s issues. It has just released “The ABC’s of Men’s Issues.” The Council is soliciting donations from you and your coworkers in the distribution department.

Finally, participants were asked to write at least one sentence indicating their reactions to the study. Based on these responses, no participants expressed suspicion of the true purpose of the study, and therefore no participants were excluded from analyses.

Results

Overall Ratings of the Jokes/Statements

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary that the sexist and neutral jokes be equally funny in order to rule out the possible alternative explanation that one humor condition was perceived as “funnier” than the other. Humor, in and of itself, should not be sufficient to alter the normative climate to be tolerant of discrimination (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Also, to examine the unique effect of humor as a medium for communicating disparagement, it is important that the non-humorous sexist statements be perceived as less humorous than the sexist jokes.

I conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANVOA) on the funniness ratings and on the offensiveness ratings of the jokes/statements presented in the second vignette to determine whether the sexist jokes, sexist statements and neutral jokes differed in
perceived funniness and offensiveness. Because the sexist jokes/female donation target and the sexist jokes/male donation target conditions each contained the same sexist jokes, I combined the ratings for those 2 conditions. The mean funniness and offensiveness ratings for the sexist jokes, sexist statements and neutral jokes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Study 1 mean funniness and offensiveness ratings of sexist jokes, sexist statements, and neutral jokes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Communication</th>
<th>Sexist Jokes</th>
<th>Sexist Statements</th>
<th>Neutral Jokes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funniness</td>
<td>M 5.41</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.34</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 46</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offensiveness</td>
<td>M 3.22</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.59</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 46</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The one-way ANOVA on the funniness ratings revealed a significant effect, $F (2, 87) = 14.27, p < .01$. As expected, the sexist jokes were rated as funnier ($M = 5.41, SD = 1.34$) than the sexist statements ($M = 3.14, SD = 2.21$), $t (87) = 5.34, p < .01$, but not than the neutral jokes ($M = 4.77, SD = 1.57$), $t (87) = 1.50, p = .14$. Finally, the neutral jokes were rated as funnier than the sexist statements, $t (87) = -3.30, p < .01$.

The one-way ANOVA on the offensiveness ratings failed to reach conventional levels of significance, $F (2, 87) = 2.47, p = .09$. However, planned-comparisons indicated that the sexist statements were rated as more offensive ($M = 4.05, SD = 1.25$).
than the comparable sexist jokes \( (M = 3.22, SD = 1.59), t(87) = 2.03, p < .05 \).

Regardless of individual differences in hostile sexism, participants interpreted the sexist jokes with less criticism and greater levity than they did comparable, non-humorous sexist statements.

*Relationship between Hostile Sexism and Ratings of the Jokes/Statements*

As can be seen by the correlations between hostile sexism and the funniness ratings and the offensiveness ratings, hostile sexism was not related to the perceived funniness of the sexist jokes \( (r = -.15, ns) \). This null result was surprising in light of previous research showing that people higher in hostile sexism rate sexist joke as funnier than people higher lower hostile sexism (e.g., Ford, 2000; LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998; Thomas & Esses, 2004). As expected, however, hostile sexism significantly predicted offensiveness ratings of the sexist jokes \( (r = -.33, p < .05) \) but not the offensiveness ratings of the sexist statements \( (r = -.14, ns) \) or the neutral jokes \( (r = .17, ns) \). These findings are consistent with Ford and Ferguson’s (2004) prejudiced norm theory which suggests that insofar as people are high in hostile sexism they should be more likely to switch to a non-critical mindset to interpret sexist humor but not non-humorous sexist material or neutral humor.

*Amount of Money Willing to Donate*

Previous research on the relationship between hostile sexism and responses to sexist humor has treated hostile sexism as a categorical variable in an analysis of variance based on a median split on the hostile sexism scale (e.g., Ford 2000; Ford et al. 2001; Greenwood & Isbell 2002). In the present study, however, I followed the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991) and MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher, and
Rucker (2002) and treated (standardized) scores on the hostile sexism scale as a continuous variable in hierarchical regression analyses (see also Thomas & Esses 2004).

I performed a hierarchical regression analysis on the amount of money participants reported they would donate to either the National Council of Women (sexist joke/female donation target, sexist statements, neutral joke conditions) or the National Council of Men (sexist joke/male donation target condition). Following the procedures described by Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990), I created 3 dummy variables to represent the 4 experimental conditions. For the first dummy variable I coded the sexist joke/female donation target condition as "1" and the other 3 conditions as "0." For the second dummy variable I coded the sexist statement condition as "1" and the other 3 conditions as "0." For the third dummy variable, I coded the neutral joke condition as “1” and the others as “0.” The sexist joke/male donation target condition was assigned "0" across all 3 dummy variables. Next I computed the communication by hostile sexism interaction by multiplying the standardized hostile sexism scores by each dummy variable.

In step 1 of the analyses, I regressed the amount willing to donate on the standardized hostile sexism scores and the 3 dummy variables representing the 4 communication conditions. Table 2 presents the model summary for this hierarchical regression analysis. The main-effects-only model was not significant, \( R^2 = .05 \), \( F(4, 85) = 1.09, \text{ ns.} \) In step 2, I included the 3 interaction terms. The interaction effect model was significant, \( R^2_{\text{ch}} = .12 \), \( F(3, 82) = 4.02, p < .01 \). To illustrate the interaction effect, Figure 1 displays regression lines for amount willing to donate as predicted by standardized hostile sexism scores in each of the 4 experimental conditions.
Table 2: Model summary of hierarchical regression analysis for amount of money willing to donate on hostile sexism as moderated by type of communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>$R^2_{ch}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Hostile Sexism</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexist Jokes</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexist Statements</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Jokes</td>
<td>-1.32</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Hostile Sexism x Sexist Jokes</td>
<td>-2.95</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>-.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Hostile Sexism x Sexist Statements</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Hostile Sexism x Neutral Jokes</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Regression coefficients are reported from the step each variable was first entered.

*p < .05
In keeping with my first hypothesis, sexist jokes affected the relationship between hostile sexism and the amount of money men were willing to donate to a women's versus a men's organization differently. Upon exposure to sexist jokes, hostile sexism scores were negatively related to the amount of money men were willing to donate to a women's organization ($\beta = -0.71$, $t = -4.67$, $p < .01$) but not to a men's organization ($\beta = 0.04$, $t = .17$, $ns$).

The difference between the slopes was significant, $t(82) = -2.38$, $p < .05$.
In the sexist joke condition, participants’ level of hostile sexism predicted donations to a women’s organization but not to a men’s organization. Simple slope analyses also revealed support for my second hypothesis showing that exposure to sexist humor uniquely moderated the relationship between hostile sexism the amount men were willing to donate to a women’s organization. As stated above, there was a significant negative relationship between hostile sexism scores and amount of money men were willing to donate to a woman’s organization in the sexist joke condition \( (\beta = -.71, t = -4.67, p < .01) \), but not in the neutral joke condition, \( (\beta = -.13, t = -.57, ns) \), or in the sexist statement condition \( (\beta = .23, t = 1.06, ns) \). The slope in the sexist joke condition was significantly different than those in the neutral joke condition, \( t (82) = -2.91, p < .05 \), and sexist statement condition, \( t (82) = 3.52, p < .01 \). Men reported a willingness to donate less money to a women’s organization to the extent that they were high in hostile sexism upon exposure to sexist jokes but not upon exposure to sexist statements or neutral jokes.

Discussion

Consistent with my first hypothesis, in the sexist joke conditions there was a significant negative correlation between hostile sexism and amount willing to donate to a women’s organization, but not to a men’s organization. These findings suggest that upon exposure to sexist humor, participants high in hostile sexism were willing to donate less money to a women’s organization than were those low in hostile sexism. In contrast, hostile sexism did not predict willingness to donate money to a men’s organization. Upon exposure to sexist humor, participants high in hostile sexism did not report a willingness to donate less money to a men’s organization then participants low in hostile sexism.
Consistent with my second hypothesis, I found a stronger negative relationship between hostile sexism and amount of money men were willing to donate to the woman’s organization upon exposure to sexist jokes than upon exposure to sexist statements or neutral jokes. Hostile sexism, then, predicted the amount participants were willing to donate to a women’s organization upon exposure to sexist jokes, but not sexist statements or neutral jokes. Conversely, donations to a women’s organization in both the sexist statement and neutral joke condition were not significantly related to participants’ hostile sexism scores.

Sexist humor uniquely functioned as a releaser of prejudice toward women. In other words, for men high in hostile sexism, it diminished the suppression of prejudice toward women (Crandall & Eschleman, 2003). From the framework of prejudiced norm theory, the sexist humor may have released prejudice by replacing the usual non-sexist norms with a norm of tolerance of sexism (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). In this context of tolerance of derision, it might have seemed socially acceptable to withhold donations to a women’s organization for those high in prejudice toward women.

Interestingly, in the sexist statement condition, there was actually a positive (albeit non-significant) relationship between hostile sexism and amount willing to donate. Upon exposure to non-humorous sexist statements, men tended to donate more money to the woman’s organization to the extent that they were high in hostile sexism. This finding is consistent with previous research (Ford, 2000; Ford et al., 2001) suggesting that non-humorous disparagement does not trivialize derision—it does not activate a conversational rule of levity. As a result, upon exposure to non-humorous disparagement of women, men high in hostile sexism may not abandon the standard serious mode of
information processing. Rather, they may bring to bear the usual critical reactions to expressions of sexism that would be appropriate according to more general nonsexist norms of conduct. Indeed, the positive relationship between hostile sexism and amount willing to donate suggests that non-humorous disparagement may actually make broader nonsexist norms more salient as a source of behavior regulation.

To this point, research derived from the prejudiced norm theory has focused on the effects of exposure to disparagement humor on perceptions of instances of discrimination. Study 1 provides the first evidence that exposure to disparaging humor can actually foster anticipated discriminatory behavior among those high in prejudice. Specifically, when men were exposed to sexist jokes, they were willing to donate less money to a woman's organization insofar as they were high in hostile sexism. This pattern of results was ameliorated in the male target condition and the neutral humor condition. Unlike sexist humor, neutral humor does not trivialize derision of women and imply a normative standard that it need not be taken seriously in the immediate context.

STUDY 2

The results of Study 1 demonstrated that, for men high in hostile sexism, exposure to sexist humor serves to “release” prejudice toward women, as a group, relative to men, in the form of anticipated discriminatory behavior. The question remains as to whether the same pattern of results will occur when the target of potential discrimination is varied from a group to an individual from that group. Study 2 was designed to examine whether exposure to sexist humor fosters discrimination when the target is an individual woman, relative to a women’s organization.
Personalizing the Target of Discrimination

In 1963, Stanley Milgram conducted a series of experiments examining obedience to authority and willingness to inflict harm to others. Upon arrival to the lab, participants watched as a confederate was connected to electrodes that would deliver electric shocks from the next room. Under the guise of studying learning and memory, Milgram (1963) asked participants (referred to as “teacher”) to administer shocks of increasing intensity to a confederate (referred to as “learner”) when an incorrect answer was given. The participants were made to believe the confederate was in pain from the shocks; however, the confederate did not actually receive any of them. Because the victim, in this case the “learner,” was removed from the participant, the immediacy of the victim was greatly reduced, and very little personalization occurred. Indeed, nearly sixty-five percent of the participants shocked the “learner” up to the maximum voltage (450 volts).

Variations of Milgram’s (1974) studies found that participants administered fewer shocks to the victim when they were in close proximity. In one condition, participants were seated next to the victim. In another, participants had to place the victim’s hand upon a pad in order to administer the shock. Compliance with the researcher’s requests to harm the victim was greatly diminished in each of these studies. The close proximity personalized the victim which reduced the participants’ willingness to inflict harm. When the participant and the victim are in close proximity, the participant is likely to empathize with the victim, more so than if the proximity is distant. The victim becomes a “real” person to the participant, rather than a nameless, faceless entity far removed from them.
Personalization of an individual target, or "victim," may lead to differential treatment of that individual relative to a group. In his classic study, for instance, LaPiere (1934) found that people were more willing to express prejudice toward Chinese people as a group than toward two Chinese individuals. Recently, Gill (2003) provided a more systematic test of the hypothesis that people treat groups and individuals differently. The results of two experiments conducted by Gill (2003) found evidence of an "individual-group dissociation" effect. Individual-group dissociation refers to using stereotypes to guide judgments toward a group but not toward an individual from that group. In study 1, Gill (2003) found that participants' stereotypes about African Americans predicted their attitudes toward social policies that directly affect African Americans (i.e. affirmative action), but did not predict their personality trait ratings of an individual Black male. The results of study 2 indicate stereotypes about African Americans were more predictive of hireability judgments concerning Black males as a group than an individual Black male. That is, in both studies, participants' stereotypes about African Americans were consistent with their judgments about African Americans as a group, but inconsistent with their judgments about an individual from that group.

Collectively, one explanation for LaPiere's (1934) and Gill's (2003) findings is that personalization occurs when the target (victim) of stereotypes and prejudice is an individual, but not when the target is a group. Consequently, people were more willing to discriminate against a group than an individual member of the group.

Personalization of the target of discrimination, then, may suppress the expression of prejudice. Thus, one might expect that the prejudice-releasing effect of disparaging humor may be weakened when the target of discrimination is an individual rather than a
group. So, the question remains as to whether the releasing effects of disparaging humor will overcome the suppressing effects of personalization of the target of discrimination. I hypothesized that when the target of discrimination is an individual, the prejudice-releasing effects of disparaging humor will be less than when the target is a group. Upon exposure to disparaging humor, people high in prejudice should be less likely to discriminate against an individual member of the disparaged group, relative to the group as a whole.

To test this hypothesis, I exposed male participants either to sexist jokes or neutral (non-sexist) jokes. I then gave the participants the opportunity to report how much of their own money they would be willing to donate to a women’s shelter (group donation target condition) or to an individual woman from the shelter (individual donation target condition). I predicted that, upon exposure to sexist humor, men high in hostile sexism should be less willing to donate to a women’s shelter (group condition) than to an individual woman from the shelter (individual condition).

Method

Participants and Design

I solicited 87 undergraduate students for voluntary participation while seated in their classrooms at Western Michigan University. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions in a 2 (type of humor: sexist humor, neutral humor) x 2 (donation target: individual woman or women as a group) between-subjects design.
Procedure

I collected individual measures of hostile sexism using Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, which was administered to participants in their classrooms. This questionnaire was introduced as the “Social Attitudes Survey”, allegedly designed to assess attitudes and beliefs about a variety of social issues. Two to four weeks later, I returned to the participants’ classrooms to conduct a supposedly unrelated study of perceptions of social interactions that involve communication behavior. Participants were given a booklet containing four vignettes describing interactions among a group of staff members in the distribution department of a local newspaper. They were asked to “role-play” – that is, to imagine themselves as a member of this newspaper group observing the interactions as they occurred. Participants were instructed to complete their booklets individually.

The first and third vignettes contained nonsexist “filler” interactions to reduce suspicion of the true purpose of the study. The second vignette in each condition contained the communication manipulation (sexist jokes or neutral jokes). In the sexist joke condition, participants read one neutral joke and four sexist jokes (e.g. “Why did the woman cross the road? Who cares? What the hell was she doing out of the kitchen?”). Participants in the neutral joke condition read five neutral jokes (e.g. “Why was the leper stopped for speeding? He couldn’t take his foot off the accelerator!”).

The fourth vignette in each of the four conditions contained the donation target manipulation. Participants in the group target conditions read the following vignette:

Safe Haven is a local women’s shelter committed to furthering assistance and advocacy programs for women. The shelter is asking you and your coworkers in
the distribution department for donations of time and money in order to provide
services to women in your area. The distribution department is recommending a
*one-time* donation from all employees of 10 hours *and* $10 to help women at the
shelter. However, employees are free to donate as much or as little time and
money as they wish.

Participants were then asked to report the exact number of dollars ($0-$20) they would be
willing to donate to the women’s shelter.

Participants in the individual donation target condition read a similar paragraph
soliciting donations for the women’s shelter, but the recipient of the donations was Lisa
Roberts², an individual woman at the shelter. Participants were then asked to indicate the
exact amount of money ($0-$20) they would be willing to give to help Lisa Roberts.

Results

*Overall Joke Ratings*

Participants were asked to rate how funny and how offensive they perceived the
sexist jokes and neutral jokes. As in Study 1, it was important that sexist and neutral
jokes be perceived as equally funny. The mean funniness and offensiveness ratings for
the sexist jokes and neutral jokes are presented in Table 3.
Table 3: Study 2 mean funniness and offensiveness ratings of sexist and neutral jokes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Communication</th>
<th>Sexist Jokes</th>
<th>Neutral Jokes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funniness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offensiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I conducted a one-way analysis of variance on the funniness ratings of the sexist and neutral jokes by collapsing across the donation target variable (women as a group, individual woman) to determine if the jokes differed in perceived funniness. The one-way ANOVA revealed no significant effect of type of joke on perceived funniness, $F(1, 84) = .92, p = .34$. Participants perceived the sexist jokes ($M = 5.00, SD = 1.50$) as equally funny as the neutral jokes ($M = 5.28, SD = 1.14$).

I conducted a second one-way ANOVA on the offensiveness ratings of the sexist and neutral jokes, which revealed a significant effect of type of joke on perceived offensiveness, $F(1, 84) = 7.56, p < .01$. Participants perceived the sexist jokes as more offensive ($M = 3.81, SD = 1.66$) than the neutral jokes ($M = 2.81, SD = 1.78$).
Relationship between Hostile Sexism and Joke Ratings

Correlation analyses indicated a weak, positive relationship between hostile sexism and perceived funniness of the sexist jokes ($r = .23$), however, as in Study 1, this relationship did not reach significance ($p = .14$). Additionally, a weak, negative relationship emerged between hostile sexism and perceived offensiveness of the sexist jokes ($r = -.19$), but, this relationship was also not significant ($p = .22$). This null finding is particularly surprising given the significant negative relationship between hostile sexism and perceived offensiveness of sexist jokes found in Study 1. Also, prejudice norm theory predicts that, to the extent men are high in hostile sexism, they should be more likely to switch to a non-critical mindset to interpret the sexist jokes and therefore find them less offensive.

Finally, as expected, there was no relationship between hostile sexism and perceived funniness of the neutral jokes ($r = .00$). Likewise, there was not a significant relationship between hostile sexism and perceived offensiveness ($r = -.11, ns$).

Amount of Money Willing to Donate

I performed a hierarchical regression analysis on the amount of money participants are willing to donate. I created two dummy variables to represent my four experimental conditions. For the type of humor variable, I coded the sexist humor condition as “1” and the neutral humor condition as a “0”. Likewise, for the donation target variable, I coded the group condition as “1” and the individual condition as “0”. To compute interaction effects, I multiplied the type of humor dummy variable by the donation target dummy variable. I then multiplied standardized hostile
sexism scores by the humor dummy variable and the target dummy variable to compute a three-way interaction term.

Next, I performed a regression analysis on the amount of money participants were willing to donate. Table 4 presents the model summary of this analysis. In step 1, I entered standardized hostile sexism scores and the 2 dummy variables representing the experimental conditions. This main effects only model was not significant ($R^2 = .01$), $F(3, 81) < 1$. In step 2, I included the two-way interaction terms. The two-way interaction effects model also did not reach significance ($R^2_{ch} = .03$), $F(3, 78) < 1$. Finally, in step 3, I entered the three-way interaction term. The predicted three-way interaction model was significant ($R^2_{ch} = .07$), $F(1, 77) = 5.71, p < .05$. To illustrate the three-way interaction, Figures 2 displays the regression lines separately for the amount of money willing to donate as predicted by standardized hostile sexism scores for the group donation target and the individual donation target conditions.
Table 4: Model summary of hierarchical regression analysis for amount willing to donate on standardized hostile sexism, type of humor, and donation target.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>$R^2_{ch}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standardized Hostile Sexism</td>
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<td>.61</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Humor</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donation Target</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Hostile Sexism x Type of Humor</td>
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<td>1.25</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Hostile Sexism x Donation Target</td>
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<td>1.28</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Humor x Donation Target</td>
<td>-3.53</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Hostile Sexism x Type of Humor x Donation Target</td>
<td>-5.93</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>-.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Regression coefficients are reported from the step each variable was first entered.  
*p < .05
Figure 2: Regression lines predicting the amount of money participants were willing to donate as a function of standardized hostile sexism scores, donation target condition, and type of humor.
In the group donation target condition, the type of humor x by hostile sexism interaction effect approached significance ($R^2_{ch} = .07), F (1, 41) = 3.31, p = .076. Hostile sexism predicted the amount participants were willing to donate in the sexist humor condition ($\beta = -.42, p < .05), but not in the neutral humor condition ($\beta = .08, p = .72). In other words, the effect of type of humor (sexist, neutral) on amount willing to donate was affected by the participants' level of hostile sexism.

By contrast, in the individual donation target condition the type of humor x hostile sexism interaction effect did not approach significance ($R^2_{ch} = .06) F (1, 36) = 2.56, p = .12. This indicates hostile sexism did not significantly predict the amount participants were willing to donate in the sexist humor condition ($\beta = .24, p = .32) or in the neutral humor condition ($\beta = -.27, p = .24).

To test the hypothesis that sexist humor differentially affects the relationship between the amount of money men were willing to donate to women as a group versus an individual woman, I compared the slopes for the sexist humor group donation target and sexist humor individual donation target conditions. The difference between these slopes was significant, $t (42) = -2.16, p < .05. Upon exposure to sexist humor, men high in hostile sexism donated less money to the women's shelter ($\beta = -.42, p < .05), relative to an individual woman ($\beta = .24, p = .32).

Discussion

The results of Study 2 are consistent with those of Study 1 suggesting that exposure to sexist humor releases prejudice toward women in the form of anticipated discriminatory behavior for men high in hostile sexism, relative to exposure to neutral humor. Study 2, like Study 1, extends Ford and Ferguson's (2004) prejudice norm theory
by providing evidence that, to the extent men are high in hostile sexism, exposure to sexist humor can foster discriminatory behavior toward women.

In addition to replicating the findings from Study 1, this study supports my hypothesis that, for men high in hostile sexism, donations to women as a group would be less than donations made to an individual woman. These results are also consistent with Gill’s (2003) findings that stereotypes about a group influence group-directed judgments to a greater extent than individual-directed judgments. The results of Study 2 demonstrate similar differential thinking about a group versus an individual in the context of anticipated discriminatory behavior. I simply assigned the individual woman a name, Lisa Roberts, and stated that the participants’ donations would directly benefit Lisa. No additional personalizing information about Lisa was given. This manipulation of the donation target shifts the target from a nameless, faceless group of women more generally, to an individual representative of that group with a name, and presumably, a face. Participants may have felt more compelled to help Lisa Roberts because her individuation made her more personal than if she was included as part of a larger group. My results suggest that merely making the distinction between a group and an individual affects participants’ willingness to engage in discriminatory behavior upon exposure to sexist humor.

The finding that, upon exposure to disparaging humor, people high in prejudice were less likely to discriminate against an individual woman, relative to women as a group provides evidence that personalization of the target of discrimination may suppress the expression of prejudice. As expected the prejudice-releasing effect of sexist humor
was weakened when the target of discrimination was an individual woman, as opposed to women as a group.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Previous research has demonstrated the effect of sexist humor on tolerance of sexism (Ford, 2000; Ford et al, 2001) and acceptance of rape myths (Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998) among men high in hostile sexism. The present research makes a significant contribution to this literature by demonstrating the behavioral consequences of exposure to sexist humor. The results of Study 1 suggest that exposure to sexist humor “releases” the expression of sexist behavior. After reading sexist jokes, men high in hostile sexism were willing to donate less money to a women’s organization than were men low in hostile sexism. Hostile sexism, however, was not related to willingness to donate money to a men’s organization among men exposed to sexist jokes.

The findings from Study 2 identify the nature of the target of potential discrimination (the group targeted by disparaging humor versus an individual member of the disparate group) as an important moderating variable for the effects found in Study 1. Upon exposure to sexist humor, participants high in hostile sexism were less willing to donate to a women’s shelter than were men low in hostile sexism. This effect was nullified when men were asked to donate to an individual woman from the shelter. One explanation for this finding is that the personalization of an individual (relative to a group) functions as a “suppressor” of prejudice (Crandall & Eshlemann, 2004) and thus dilutes the prejudice-releasing effect of disparaging humor.

These findings also contribute to literature on prejudice and discrimination more generally. Specifically, they demonstrate the role of disparaging humor as a releaser of
prejudice. In both studies, men high in hostile sexism engaged in discrimination against women as a group by donating less money upon exposure to sexist humor. These findings are consistent with the argument that, for people high in prejudice, disparaging humor creates social conditions that allow the release of prejudice—a normative climate of tolerance of discrimination (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Disparaging humor justifies a wider range of negative responses toward members of the targeted group, thereby creating a situation that fosters discriminatory behavior. In the context of disparaging humor, then, discriminatory behavior can be easily rationalized as socially acceptable, and thus not likely to elicit social reprisals. In such a context, one can release prejudice and be spared the recognition that he or she had behaved in appropriately (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986, p. 66).

Limitations and Future Research

I have suggested that exposure to sexist humor differentially effects anticipated discriminatory behavior toward women relative to men, and toward women as a group relative to an individual woman. The measures of discrimination in the present studies, however, were limited to the imagined or intended behavior of the participants (amount willing to donate). Future research should examine whether these effects are replicated when the dependent measure capture actual behavior. One such measure could include actual donation amounts in the form of a pledge sheet in which participants would be asked to commit actual amounts of money to “sponsor” a group in some event (i.e. Relay for Life walk).

Other areas for future research could focus on altering the mechanisms for communicating the disparaging humor. The present studies both presented sexist humor
in the form of vignettes, whereas future studies could vary this operationalization to include cartoons or video clips. This would reduce the risk of a mono-operation bias, a potential threat to construct validity that arises from the use of a single operationalization to represent the theoretical independent variable (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Also, the target of disparaging humor in the present research focused on women (i.e. sexist humor), however, the relationship between racism and discriminatory behavior toward particular racial groups (i.e. African Americans) has yet to be examined.

Future research should also establish the generality of the effects of exposure to disparaging humor. Glick and Fiske (1996) found scores on the Hostile Sexism Scale to be positively correlated with scores on the Modern Racism Scale, meaning those who are prejudiced against women are likely to be prejudiced toward other groups as well. Research has yet to determine whether exposure to disparaging humor allows for the expression of prejudice toward the targeted group only, or whether it creates a norm of tolerance of discrimination more generally. In other words, future studies should examine the relationship between exposure to sexist humor and prejudice released toward other groups not targeted by the humor (i.e. African Americans).

Conclusion

The present research expands Ford and Ferguson’s (2004) prejudice norm theory by demonstrating the negative social consequences of exposure to disparaging humor. Specifically, for men high in sexism, exposure to sexist humor released discriminatory behavior toward women, but not toward men. Sexist humor alters the normative climate to be tolerant of sexism, thus allowing participants high in hostile sexism to express prejudice toward women while avoiding the social sanctions that usually accompany such
expressions of prejudice. The prejudice-releasing effects of disparaging humor were diminished when combined with the suppressing effects of personalization of the target of discrimination. When participants were able to distinguish an individual target from the nameless, faceless group target, they personalized the target and therefore suppressed their expression of prejudice toward the individual. Taken together, these results further demonstrate the negative social consequences of exposure to disparaging humor.
ENDNOTES

1. All slope comparisons followed the formula suggested by Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan, 1990:

\[ t = \frac{(b_{\text{for group 1}}) - (b_{\text{for group 2}})}{\sqrt{s(b_{\text{for group 1}})^2 + s(b_{\text{for group 2}})^2}} \]

2. The name of the shelter, “Safe Haven” that appears in both the group donation target and individual donation target conditions, along with the individual woman, Lisa Roberts, are fictitious and were created by the researcher solely for the purposes of this study.
REFERENCES


to sexist humor. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 7, 89-100.


Appendix A

Study 1

Stimulus Materials and Measures
Western Michigan University
Department of Sociology

Title of Project: Social Attitude Survey
Principal Investigator: Thomas Ford

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Social Attitude Survey” designed to assess attitudes and beliefs about a variety of social issues. This project is being conducted by Christie Fitzgerald from the department of sociology at Western Michigan University for her masters thesis project.

This survey is comprised of 22 statements concerning your attitudes and beliefs toward a variety of social issues in contemporary society. You will be asked to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your replies will be completely anonymous, so do not put your name anywhere on the form.

You may choose to not answer any question and simply leave it blank. If you choose to not participate in this survey, you may either return the blank survey or discard it in the box provided. Returning the survey indicates your consent for use of the responses you supply. Your instructor may decide to offer extra credit for participating and there will be no penalty for choosing not to participate. Also, there are no immediate benefits to you for participating in this survey.

If you have any questions, you may contact Professor Ford at 387-5280, the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298). Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

Date: _______________
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:

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

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

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

13. Men are complete without women.

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 to men 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 available 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.
Western Michigan University
Department of Sociology

Title of Project: Communication Behavior
Principal Investigator: Christie Fitzgerald

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Communication Behavior” designed to examine perceptions of social interactions that involve communication behavior. This project is being conducted by Christie Fitzgerald from the department of sociology at WMU.

This survey is comprised of 4 short vignettes describing interactions among a group of staff members in distribution department of a newspaper. The project will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You may choose to not answer any question and simply leave it blank. If you choose to not participate in this survey, you may either return the blank survey or discard it in the box provided. Returning the survey indicates your consent for use of the responses you supply. Your instructor may choose to offer extra credit for participating and no penalty for choosing not to participate. Also, there are no immediate benefits to you for participating in this survey. If you have any questions, you may contact Professor Ford at 387-5280, the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298). Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

You will notice the index card containing your name and project id number obtained at the administration of the previous survey is attached to your survey booklet. **If you did not participate in the previous survey we will assign you an unused project id number.**

Once you have received your survey with the index card containing your name, please remove and keep the index card. This will leave only the project id number as an identifier.

Date: _______________
Sexist Joke/Female Donation Target Condition
I. The Context

The following interactions occurred among a group of staff members in the distribution department for the local newspaper. At lunch time the staff members typically get together to socialize while they eat their lunches. The four passages describe interactions that occurred during lunch one day.

Imagine that you are a member of this newspaper group and a part of each of these interactions.

II. The Interactions

1. Cindy describes a humorous event from her “wild” weekend. “I was on my way to pick up my boyfriend from the bus station on Friday night in a car I had borrowed from one of my friends. I did not notice that my friend and three others were following me in another car. When my boyfriend and I returned to where I had parked, the car was missing. We both panicked and rushed to the bar across the street to call my friend. There the four were sitting, grinning at the prank they had executed, and at the anxiety they had aroused.”

1. How humorous is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all humorous Very humorous

2. How entertaining is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all entertaining Very entertaining
2. After Cindy’s story, the group discussion gave way to a giddy exchange of the staff members’ favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

**David:** ... I have a joke for you.
Q: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Lorena Bobbit?
A: “Are you going to eat that?”

**Paula:** ... laughter... That’s disgusting! Okay, I got one.
Q: What did the right breast say to the left breast?
A: If we get any lower, people are gonna think we’re nuts!

**Michael:** ... laughter... Okay, have you heard this one?
Q: How can you tell if a blonde’s been using the computer?
A: There’s white-out on the screen!

**Donna:** ... laughter... all right, have you heard this one?
A man rushes into his house and yells to his wife, “Martha, pack up your things! I just won the California lottery!”
Martha replies, “Shall I pack for warm weather or cold?”
The man responds, “I don’t care. Just as long as you’re out of the house by noon!”

**Cindy:** ... laughter... Okay, here’s one.
A man and a woman were stranded in an elevator and they knew they were gonna die. So, the woman turns to the man and says, “Make me feel like a woman before I die.” So he takes off his clothes and says, “Fold these!”

1. How humorous is this situation?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Not at all humorous  Very humorous

2. How offensive are the jokes in this situation?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Not at all offensive  Very offensive

3. To what extent do you interpret the jokes in this situation in a light-hearted or playful manner versus a serious or critical manner?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Very serious/critical manner  Very light-hearted/playful manner
3. Martin describes a time when he and Larry (two intermediate skiers) went skiing. “We take the thunder chair to the top of Vail Peak. There we find this run called "Devil’s Revenge" (marked as Expert) and another called "WimpOut" marked as a beginner slope. I take a long look down Devil’s Revenge. "That sucker looks straight down. Let's blow this one off" I said. Larry, as you might imagine, disagrees, "I'm tired of beginner slopes.” He says. “I'm going to go for it." I tried to convince him to go down the beginner slope. I tell him that its late in the day, we're both tired. This is the time of day that people make mistakes and get hurt and this run is a killer. Look 20 yards to the right by that broken ski. What do you see?” Larry pulls down his goggles and says, "It is just some red snow, dude. Let's live dangerously." I told him to “go ahead and I'll meet you at the bottom.”

1. How humorous is this situation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Not at all humorous

   Very humorous

2. How entertaining is this situation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Not at all entertaining

   Very entertaining

3. To what extent do you think the behavior described in this situation should be interpreted seriously (as opposed to a light-hearted, playful manner)?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Not at all seriously

   Very seriously
4. The National Council of Women is an organization committed to serving and promoting the political and social advancement of women and women's issues. It has just released "The ABCs of Women's Issues." The Council is soliciting donations from you and your coworkers in the distribution department.

1. Again, imagining yourself in the context of this newspaper group, how much of your own money would you be willing to donate to the National Council of Women? Please confine your donations to an amount between $0.00 and $20.00.

Amount you are willing to donate: __________________________

2. How much money do you think other people who were asked to imagine themselves as part of this newspaper group would be willing to donate, on the average? Please confine your donations to be between $0.00 and $20.00.

Estimated amount others are willing to donate: __________________________

Post-survey Questions

1. Circle the number on the following scale which best indicates your mood at this time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very negative Very positive

2. As you read the interactions in this booklet, to what extent did you perceive the social context to be one in which people can react to sexist behavior in a less critical manner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not At all Very much

3. As you read the interactions in this booklet, to what extent did you perceive the social context to "relax" the usual obligation to be critical of sexist behavior?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not At all Very much

4. In the space below, please write one sentence (or more if you want) regarding your reactions to this study. Please feel free to write anything you wish. Thank you.
Sexist Statements/Female Donation Target Condition
I. The Context

The following interactions occurred among a group of staff members in the distribution department for the local newspaper. At lunch time the staff members typically get together to socialize while they eat their lunches. The four passages describe interactions that occurred during lunch one day.

Imagine that you are a member of this newspaper group and a part of each of these interactions.

II. The Interactions

1. Cindy describes a humorous event from her “wild” weekend. “I was on my way to pick up my boyfriend from the bus station on Friday night in a car I had borrowed from one of my friends. I did not notice that my friend and three others were following me in another car. When my boyfriend and I returned to where I had parked, the car was missing. We both panicked and rushed to the bar across the street to call my friend. There the four were sitting, grinning at the prank they had executed, and at the anxiety they had aroused.”

1. How humorous is this situation?

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

2. How entertaining is this situation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not at all entertaining                          Very entertaining
2. After Cindy's story, the group discussion gave way to an exchange of some rather serious social commentaries. The following statements are excerpts from that discussion.

(Note: The statements were taken out of context so some of them may seem weird or even bizarre. They do, however, communicate each person's actual beliefs or attitudes.)

David: ... Our society has deteriorated over the past several decades. Grotesque crimes involving disfigurement, like those committed by Jeffrey Dahmer, Lorena Bobbit, and others seem to be in the news these days than ever before.

Paula: ... Regarding men and women, I don’t think women age as well as men— their bodies change more as they get older than men’s do.

Michael: ... Yeah, that’s true. Also, I know Blonde women are often the subject of jokes. But I think its well deserved. They, women that is, really are less intelligent!

Donna: ... Have you noticed how marriage changes people? Women, for instance often become less attractive and more nagging because they not longer have to “get” a man.

Cindy: ... I agree, and I still say that a woman’s place is in the home and its a woman’s role to do domestic duties such as laundry for her man.

1. How humorous is this situation?

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2. How offensive are the statements this situation?

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3. To what extent do you interpret the statements in this situation in a light-hearted or playful manner versus a serious or critical manner?

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3. Martin describes a time when he and Larry (two intermediate skiers) went skiing. "We take the thunder chair to the top of Vail Peak. There we find this run called "Devil's Revenge" (marked as Expert) and another called "WimpOut" marked as a beginner slope. I take a long look down Devil's Revenge. "That sucker looks straight down. Let's blow this one off" I said. Larry, as you might imagine, disagrees, "I'm tired of beginner slopes." He says, "I'm going to go for it." I tried to convince him to go down the beginner slope. I tell him that its late in the day, we're both tired. This is the time of day that people make mistakes and get hurt and this run is a killer. Look 20 yards to the right by that broken ski. What do you see?" Larry pulls down his goggles and says, "It is just some red snow, dude. Let's live dangerously." I told him to "go ahead and I'll meet you at the bottom."

1. How humorous is this situation?

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
   ---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
   Not at all humorous | Very humorous |

2. How entertaining is this situation?

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
   ---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
   Not at all entertaining | Very entertaining |

3. To what extent do you think the behavior described in this situation should be interpreted seriously (as opposed to a light-hearted, playful manner)?

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
   ---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
   Not at all seriously | Very seriously |
4. The National Council of Women is an organization committed to serving and promoting the political and social advancement of women and women's issues. It has just released "The ABCs of Women's Issues." The Council is soliciting donations from you and your coworkers in the distribution department.

1. Again, imagining yourself in the context of this newspaper group, how much of your own money would you be willing to donate to the National Council of Women? Please confine your donations to an amount between $0.00 and $20.00.

   Amount you are willing to donate: ____________________________

2. How much money do you think other people who were asked to imagine themselves as part of this newspaper group would be willing to donate, on the average? Please confine your donations to be between $0.00 and $20.00.

   Estimated amount others are willing to donate: ________________

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Post-survey Questions

1. Circle the number on the following scale which best indicates your mood at this time.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very negative

       Very positive

2. As you read the interactions in this booklet, to what extent did you perceive the social context to be one in which people can react to sexist behavior in a less critical manner?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not At all

       Very much

3. As you read the interactions in this booklet, to what extent did you perceive the social context to "relax" the usual obligation to be critical of sexist behavior?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not At all

       Very much

4. In the space below, please write one sentence (or more if you want) regarding your reactions to this study. Please feel free to write anything you wish. Thank you.
Neutral Jokes/Female Donation Target Condition
Communication Behavior

I. The Context

The following interactions occurred among a group of staff members in the distribution department for the local newspaper. At lunch time the staff members typically get together to socialize while they eat their lunches. The four passages describe interactions that occurred during lunch one day.

Imagine that you are a member of this newspaper group and a part of each of these interactions.

II. The Interactions

1. Cindy describes a humorous event from her “wild” weekend. “I was on my way to pick up my boyfriend from the bus station on Friday night in a car I had borrowed from one of my friends. I did not notice that my friend and three others were following me in another car. When my boyfriend and I returned to where I had parked, the car was missing. We both panicked and rushed to the bar across the street to call my friend. There the four were sitting, grinning at the prank they had executed, and at the anxiety they had aroused.”

1. How humorous is this situation?

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2. How entertaining is this situation?

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2. After Cindy’s story, the group discussion gave way to a giddy exchange of the staff members’ favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

**David:** … I have a joke for you.
Q: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Lorena Bobbit?
A: “Are you going to eat that?”

**Donna:** … laughter… That’s disgusting! Okay, I got one.
Q: What’s the difference between an oral and a rectal thermometer?
A: The taste!

**Michael:** … laughter… Okay, have you heard this one?
Q: How do you know when elephants have had sex in your house?
A: The trash can liners are missing!

**Paula:** … laughter… Alright, have you heard this one?
Q: Why was the leper stopped for speeding?
A: He couldn’t take his foot off the accelerator.

**Cindy:** … laughter… Okay, here’s one.
Q: What’s the difference between a golfer and a skydiver?

1. How humorous is this situation?


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2. How offensive are the jokes in this situation?


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3. To what extent do you interpret the jokes in this situation in a light-hearted or playful manner versus a serious or critical manner?


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3. Martin describes a time when he and Larry (two intermediate skiers) went skiing. “We take the thunder chair to the top of Vail Peak. There we find this run called "Devil's Revenge" (marked as Expert) and another called "WimpOut" marked as a beginner slope. I take a long look down Devil's Revenge. "That sucker looks straight down. Let's blow this one off" I said. Larry, as you might imagine, disagrees, "I'm tired of beginner slopes.” He says. “I'm going to go for it.” I tried to convince him to go down the beginner slope. I tell him that its late in the day, we're both tired. This is the time of day that people make mistakes and get hurt and this run is a killer. Look 20 yards to the right by that broken ski. What do you see?" Larry pulls down his goggles and says, "It is just some red snow, dude. Let's live dangerously." I told him to “go ahead and I'll meet you at the bottom."

1. How humorous is this situation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Not at all humorous

   Very humorous

2. How entertaining is this situation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Not at all entertaining

   Very entertaining

3. To what extent do you think the behavior described in this situation should be interpreted seriously (as opposed to a light-hearted, playful manner)?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Not at all seriously

   Very seriously
4. The National Council of Women is an organization committed to serving and promoting the political and social advancement of women and women's issues. It has just released "The ABCs of Women's Issues." The Council is soliciting donations from you and your coworkers in the distribution department.

1. Again, imagining yourself in the context of this newspaper group, how much of your own money would you be willing to donate to the National Council of Women? Please confine your donations to an amount between $0.00 and $20.00.

Amount you are willing to donate: ________________________

2. How much money do you think other people who were asked to imagine themselves as part of this newspaper group would be willing to donate, on the average? Please confine your donations to be between $0.00 and $20.00.

Estimated amount others are willing to donate: ________________________

Post-survey Questions

1. Circle the number on the following scale which best indicates your mood at this time.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Very negative

   7

   Very positive

2. As you read the interactions in this booklet, to what extent did you perceive the social context to be one in which people can react to sexist behavior in a less critical manner?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Not at all

   7

   Very much

3. As you read the interactions in this booklet, to what extent did you perceive the social context to "relax" the usual obligation to be critical of sexist behavior?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Not at all

   7

   Very much

4. In the space below, please write one sentence (or more if you want) regarding your reactions to this study. Please feel free to write anything you wish. Thank you.
Sexist Jokes/Male Donation Target Condition
I. The Context

The following interactions occurred among a group of staff members in the distribution department for the local newspaper. At lunch time the staff members typically get together to socialize while they eat their lunches. The four passages describe interactions that occurred during lunch one day.

Imagine that you are a member of this newspaper group and a part of each of these interactions.

II. The Interactions

1. Cindy describes a humorous event from her “wild” weekend. “I was on my way to pick up my boyfriend from the bus station on Friday night in a car I had borrowed from one of my friends. I did not notice that my friend and three others were following me in another car. When my boyfriend and I returned to where I had parked, the car was missing. We both panicked and rushed to the bar across the street to call my friend. There the four were sitting, grinning at the prank they had executed, and at the anxiety they had aroused.”

1. How humorous is this situation?

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<td>Not at all humorous</td>
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<td>Very humorous</td>
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2. How entertaining is this situation?

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2. After Cindy’s story, the group discussion gave way to a giddy exchange of the staff members’ favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

**David:** ... I have a joke for you.
Q: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Lorena Bobbit?
A: “Are you going to eat that?”

**Paula:** ... laughter... That’s disgusting! Okay, I got one.
Q: What did the right breast say to the left breast?
A: If we get any lower, people are gonna think we’re nuts!

**Michael:** ... laughter... Okay, have you heard this one?
Q: How can you tell if a blonde’s been using the computer?
A: There’s white-out on the screen!

**Donna:** ... laughter... all right, have you heard this one?
A man rushes into his house and yells to his wife, “Martha, pack up your things! I just won the California lottery!”
Martha replies, “Shall I pack for warm weather or cold?”
The man responds, “I don’t care. Just as long as you’re out of the house by noon!”

**Cindy:** ... laughter... Okay, here’s one.
A man and a woman were stranded in an elevator and they knew they were gonna die. So, the woman turns to the man and says, “Make me feel like a woman before I die.” So he takes off his clothes and says, “Fold these!”

1. How humorous is this situation?

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

2. How offensive are the jokes in this situation?

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

3. To what extent do you interpret the jokes in this situation in a light-hearted or playful manner versus a serious or critical manner?

Very serious/critical manner 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very light-hearted/playful manner
3. Martin describes a time when he and Larry (two intermediate skiers) went skiing. "We take the thunder chair to the top of Vail Peak. There we find this run called "Devil's Revenge" (marked as Expert) and another called "WimpOut" marked as a beginner slope. I take a long look down Devil's Revenge. "That sucker looks straight down. Let's blow this one off" I said. Larry, as you might imagine, disagrees, "I'm tired of beginner slopes." He says, "I'm going to go for it." I tried to convince him to go down the beginner slope. I tell him that it's late in the day, we're both tired. This is the time of day that people make mistakes and get hurt and this run is a killer. Look 20 yards to the right by that broken ski. What do you see?" Larry pulls down his goggles and says, "It is just some red snow, dude. Let's live dangerously." I told him to "go ahead and I'll meet you at the bottom."

1. How humorous is this situation?

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

2. How entertaining is this situation?

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

3. To what extent do you think the behavior described in this situation should be interpreted seriously (as opposed to a light-hearted, playful manner)?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all seriously
   Very seriously
4. The National Council of Men is an organization committed to serving and promoting the political and social advancement of men and men’s issues. It has just released "The ABCs of Men’s Issues." The Council is soliciting donations from you and your coworkers in the distribution department.

1. Again, imagining yourself in the context of this newspaper group, how much of your own money would you be willing to donate to the National Council of Men? Please confine your donations to an amount between $0.00 and $20.00.

Amount you are willing to donate: ____________________________

2. How much money do you think other people who were asked to imagine themselves as part of this newspaper group would be willing to donate, on the average? Please confine your donations to be between $0.00 and $20.00.

Estimated amount others are willing to donate: ____________________________

Post-survey Questions

1. Circle the number on the following scale which best indicates your mood at this time.

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Very negative                      Very positive

2. As you read the interactions in this booklet, to what extent did you perceive the social context to be one in which people can react to sexist behavior in a less critical manner?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not At all                            Very much

3. As you read the interactions in this booklet, to what extent did you perceive the social context to "relax" the usual obligation to be critical of sexist behavior?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   Not At all                            Very much

4. In the space below, please write one sentence (or more if you want) regarding your reactions to this study. Please feel free to write anything you wish. Thank you.
Appendix B

Study 2

Stimulus Materials and Measures
Western Michigan University
Department of Sociology

Title of Project: Social Attitude Survey
Principal Investigator: Thomas Ford

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Social Attitude Survey” designed to assess attitudes and beliefs about a variety of social issues. This project is being conducted by Christie Fitzgerald from the department of sociology at Western Michigan University for her masters thesis project.

This survey is comprised of 22 statements concerning your attitudes and beliefs toward a variety of social issues in contemporary society. You will be asked to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your replies will be completely anonymous, so do not put your name anywhere on the form.

You may choose to not answer any question and simply leave it blank. If you choose to not participate in this survey, you may either return the blank survey or discard it in the box provided. Returning the survey indicates your consent for use of the responses you supply. Your instructor may decide to offer extra credit for participating and there will be no penalty for choosing not to participate. Also, there are no immediate benefits to you for participating in this survey.

If you have any questions, you may contact Professor Ford at 387-5280, the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298). Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

Date: ______________
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>0 disagree strongly</th>
<th>1 disagree somewhat</th>
<th>2 disagree slightly</th>
<th>3 agree slightly</th>
<th>4 agree somewhat</th>
<th>5 agree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</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. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.  
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.  
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. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.  
13. Men are complete without women.  
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 to men 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 available 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: __________________________
Western Michigan University  
Department of Sociology

Title of Project: Communication Behavior  
Principal Investigator: Christie Fitzgerald

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Communication Behavior” designed to examine perceptions of social interactions that involve communication behavior. This project is being conducted by Christie Fitzgerald from the department of sociology at WMU.

This survey is comprised of 4 short vignettes describing interactions among a group of staff members in distribution department of a newspaper. The project will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You may choose to not answer any question and simply leave it blank. If you choose to not participate in this survey, you may either return the blank survey or discard it in the box provided. Returning the survey indicates your consent for use of the responses you supply. Your instructor may choose to offer extra credit for participating and no penalty for choosing not to participate. Also, there are no immediate benefits to you for participating in this survey. If you have any questions, you may contact Professor Ford at 387-5280, the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298). Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

You will notice the index card containing your name and project id number obtained at the administration of the previous survey is attached to your survey booklet. If you did not participate in the previous survey we will assign you an unused project id number.

Once you have received your survey with the index card containing your name, please remove and keep the index card. This will leave only the project id number as an identifier.

Date: ________________
Sexist Humor/Group Donation Target Condition
I. The Context

The following interactions occurred among a group of staff members in the distribution department for the local newspaper. At lunch time the staff members typically get together to socialize while they eat their lunches. The four following passages describe interactions that occurred during lunch one day.

Imagine that you are a member of this newspaper group and participating in these interactions as you read and evaluate each one.

II. The Interactions

1. Cindy describes a humorous event from her “wild” weekend.
   “I was on my way to pick up my boyfriend from the bus station on Friday night in a car I had borrowed from one of my friends. I did not notice that my friend and three others were following me in another car. When my boyfriend and I returned where I had parked, the car was missing! We both panicked and rushed to the bar across the street to call my friend. There the four were sitting, grinning at the prank they just pulled.”

   How humorous is this situation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Not at all humorous  Very humorous

   How entertaining is this situation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7

   Not at all entertaining  Very entertaining
2. After Cindy’s story, the group discussion gave way to a giddy exchange of the staff members’ favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

David: ...I have a joke for you.
Q: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Lorena Bobbit?
A: “Are you gonna eat that?”

Paula: ...laughter...That’s disgusting! Okay, I got one.
Q: What did the right breast say to the left breast?
A: If we get any lower, people are gonna think we’re nuts!

Michael: ...laughter...All right, have you heard this one?
Q: How can you tell if a blonde’s been using the computer?
A: There’s white-out on the screen!

Donna: ...laughter...Okay, here’s another one.
Q: Why did the woman cross the road?
A: Who cares? What the hell is she doing out of the kitchen?

Cindy: ...laughter...How about this one.
A man and a woman were stranded in an elevator and they knew they were gonna die. So, the woman turns to the man 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 situation?

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How offensive is this situation?

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<tr>
<td>Not at all offensive</td>
<td>Very offensive</td>
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3. Martin describes a time when he and Larry (two intermediate skiers) went skiing.

“We take the thunder chair to the top of Vail Peak. There we find this run called ‘Devil’s Revenge’ marked as expert and another called ‘Wimp Out’ marked as a beginner slope. I take a long look down Devil’s Revenge. ‘That sucker looks straight down...let’s blow this one off’, I said. Larry, as you might imagine, disagrees. ‘I’m tired of beginner slopes’, he says, ‘I’m gonna go for it’. I tried to convince him to go down the beginner slope by telling him that it’s late in the day, we’re both tired. Time is the time of day that people make mistakes and get hurt and this run is a killer. ‘Look down there 20 yards to the right by that broken ski...What do you see?’ I ask Larry. Larry pulls down his goggles and says, ‘It’s just some red snow, dude. Let’s live dangerously!’ I told him to go ahead and I’d meet him at the bottom.

How humorous is this situation?

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

How entertaining is this situation?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all entertaining  Very entertaining
4. Safe Haven is a local women’s shelter committed to furthering assistance and advocacy programs for women. The shelter is asking you and your coworkers in the distribution department for donations of time and money in order to provide services to women in your area. The distribution department is recommending a one-time donation from all employees of 10 hours and $10 to help women at the shelter. However, employees are free to donate as much or as little time and money as they wish.

Please report your willingness to donate the recommended time amount (10 hours) to the women’s shelter.

-5  -4  -3  -2  -1  0  1  2  3  4  5  
Not at all Willing

Please circle the number of hours you are willing to donate to the women's shelter.

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20

Please report your willingness to donate the recommended dollar amount ($10) to the women’s shelter.

-5  -4  -3  -2  -1  0  1  2  3  4  5  
Not at all Willing

Please circle the number of dollars you are willing to donate to the women's shelter.

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20
Neutral Humor/Group Donation Target Condition
I. The Context
The following interactions occurred among a group of staff members in the distribution department for the local newspaper. At lunch time the staff members typically get together to socialize while they eat their lunches. The four following passages describe interactions that occurred during lunch one day.

*Imagine that you are a member of this newspaper group and participating in these interactions as you read and evaluate each one.*

II. The Interactions

1. Cindy describes a humorous event from her “wild” weekend.
   “I was on my way to pick up my boyfriend from the bus station on Friday night in a car I had borrowed from one of my friends. I did not notice that my friend and three others were following me in another car. When my boyfriend and I returned where I had parked, the car was missing! We both panicked and rushed to the bar across the street to call my friend. There the four were sitting, grinning at the prank they just pulled.”

   How humorous is this situation?

   
   ![Scale](https://example.com/scale)

   Very humorous

   Not at all humorous

   How entertaining is this situation?

   
   ![Scale](https://example.com/scale)

   Very entertaining

   Not at all entertaining
2. After Cindy’s story, the group discussion gave way to a giddy exchange of the staff members’ favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

David: ...I have a joke for you.
Q: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Lorena Bobbit?
A: “Are you gonna eat that?”

Paula: ...laughter...That’s disgusting! Okay, I got one.
Q: What’s the difference between an oral and a rectal thermometer?
A: The taste!

Michael: ...laughter...All right, have you heard this one?
Q: How do you know when elephants have had sex in your house?
A: The trash can liners are missing!

Donna: ...laughter...Okay, here’s another one.
Q: Why was the leper stopped for speeding?
A: He couldn’t take his foot off the accelerator!

Cindy: ...laughter...How about this one.
Q: What’s the difference between a golfer and a skydiver?
A: A golfer goes whack... “Damn!” , while a skydiver goes “Damn!” ...whack!

How humorous is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all humorous

How offensive is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all offensive
Very offensive
3. Martin describes a time when he and Larry (two intermediate skiers) went skiing.

“We take the thunder chair to the top of Vail Peak. There we find this run called ‘Devil’s Revenge’ marked as expert and another called ‘Wimp Out’ marked as a beginner slope. I take a long look down Devil’s Revenge. ‘That sucker looks straight down... let’s blow this one off’, I said. Larry, as you might imagine, disagrees. ‘I’m tired of beginner slopes’, he says, ‘I’m gonna go for it’. I tried to convince him to go down the beginner slope by telling him that it’s late in the day, we’re both tired. Time is the time of day that people make mistakes and get hurt and this run is a killer. ‘Look down there 20 yards to the right by that broken ski... What do you see?’ I ask Larry. Larry pulls down his goggles and says, ‘It’s just some red snow, dude. Let’s live dangerously!’ I told him to go ahead and I’d meet him at the bottom.

How humorous is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all humorous

Very humorous

How entertaining is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all entertaining

Very entertaining
4. Safe Haven is a local women’s shelter committed to furthering assistance and advocacy programs for women. The shelter is asking you and your coworkers in the distribution department for donations of time and money in order to provide services to women in your area. The distribution department is recommending a one-time donation from all employees of 10 hours and $10 to help women at the shelter. However, employees are free to donate as much or as little time and money as they wish.

Please report your willingness to donate the recommended time amount (10 hours) to the women’s shelter.

-5  -4  -3  -2  -1  0  1  2  3  4  5
Not at all  Very Willing
Willing

Please circle the number of hours you are willing to donate to the women’s shelter.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Please report your willingness to donate the recommended dollar amount ($10) to the women’s shelter.

-5  -4  -3  -2  -1  0  1  2  3  4  5
Not at all  Very Willing
Willing

Please circle the number of dollars you are willing to donate to the women’s shelter.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
Sexist Humor/Individual Donation Target Condition
I. The Context

The following interactions occurred among a group of staff members in the distribution department for the local newspaper. At lunch time the staff members typically get together to socialize while they eat their lunches. The four following passages describe interactions that occurred during lunch one day.

Imagine that you are a member of this newspaper group and participating in these interactions as you read and evaluate each one.

II. The Interactions

1. Cindy describes a humorous event from her “wild” weekend.

   “I was on my way to pick up my boyfriend from the bus station on Friday night in a car I had borrowed from one of my friends. I did not notice that my friend and three others were following me in another car. When my boyfriend and I returned where I had parked, the car was missing! We both panicked and rushed to the bar across the street to call my friend. There the four were sitting, grinning at the prank they just pulled.”

How humorous is this situation?

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

How entertaining is this situation?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
       Not at all entertaining   Very entertaining
SH Individual Condition Cont.

2. After Cindy’s story, the group discussion gave way to a giddy exchange of the staff members’ favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

David: ...I have a joke for you.
Q: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Lorena Bobbit?
A: “Are you gonna eat that?”

Paula: ...laughter...That’s disgusting! Okay, I got one.
Q: What did the right breast say to the left breast?
A: If we get any lower, people are gonna think we’re nuts!

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A: There’s white-out on the screen!

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Q: Why did the woman cross the road?
A: Who cares? What the hell is she doing out of the kitchen?

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A man and a woman were stranded in an elevator and they knew they were gonna die. So, the woman turns to the man 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 situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all humorous

Very humorous

How offensive is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all offensive

Very offensive
3. Martin describes a time when he and Larry (two intermediate skiers) went skiing.

“We take the thunder chair to the top of Vail Peak. There we find this run called ‘Devil’s Revenge’ marked as expert and another called ‘Wimp Out’ marked as a beginner slope. I take a long look down Devil’s Revenge. ‘That sucker looks straight down...let’s blow this one off’, I said. Larry, as you might imagine, disagrees. ‘I’m tired of beginner slopes’, he says, ‘I’m gonna go for it’. I tried to convince him to go down the beginner slope by telling him that it’s late in the day, we’re both tired. Time is the time of day that people make mistakes and get hurt and this run is a killer. ‘Look down there 20 yards to the right by that broken ski...What do you see?’ I ask Larry. Larry pulls down his goggles and says, ‘It’s just some red snow, dude. Let’s live dangerously!’ I told him to go ahead and I’d meet him at the bottom.

How humorous is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all humorous

How entertaining is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all entertaining

Very entertaining
4. Safe Haven is a local women’s shelter committed to furthering assistance and advocacy programs for women. The shelter is asking you and your coworkers in the distribution department for donations of time and money in order to provide services for an individual woman, Lisa Roberts, who recently arrived at the shelter. The distribution department is recommending a \textit{one-time} donation from all employees of 10 hours \textit{and} $10 to help Lisa. However, employees are free to donate as much or as little time and money as they wish.

Please report your willingness to donate the recommended \textit{time amount} (10 hours) to Lisa Roberts.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{cccccccc}
-5 & -4 & -3 & -2 & -1 & 0 & 1 & 2 \\
Not at all & & & & & & & Very Willing \\
Willing & & & & & & &
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Please circle the number of hours you \textit{are} willing to donate to Lisa Roberts.

\begin{center}
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
\end{center}

Please report your willingness to donate the recommended \textit{dollar amount} ($10) to Lisa Roberts.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{cccccccc}
-5 & -4 & -3 & -2 & -1 & 0 & 1 & 2 \\
Not at all & & & & & & & Very Willing \\
Willing & & & & & & &
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Please circle the number of dollars you \textit{are} willing to donate to Lisa Roberts.

\begin{center}
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
\end{center}
Neutral Humor/Individual Donation Target Condition
I. The Context

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How humorous is this situation?

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

How entertaining is this situation?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all entertaining  Very entertaining
2. After Cindy’s story, the group discussion gave way to a giddy exchange of the staff members’ favorite jokes. Here are a few of those jokes.

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Q: What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Lorena Bobbit?
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A: A golfer goes whack... “Damn!” , while a skydiver goes “Damn!” ...whack!

How humorous is this situation?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all humorous

How offensive is this situation?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Not at all offensive

Very humorous

Very offensive
3. Martin describes a time when he and Larry (two intermediate skiers) went skiing.

“We take the thunder chair to the top of Vail Peak. There we find this run called ‘Devil’s Revenge’ marked as expert and another called ‘Wimp Out’ marked as a beginner slope. I take a long look down Devil’s Revenge. ‘That sucker looks straight down...let’s blow this one off’, I said. Larry, as you might imagine, disagrees. ‘I’m tired of beginner slopes’, he says, ‘I’m gonna go for it’. I tried to convince him to go down the beginner slope by telling him that it’s late in the day, we’re both tired. Time is the time of day that people make mistakes and get hurt and this run is a killer. ‘Look down there 20 yards to the right by that broken ski...What do you see?’ I ask Larry. Larry pulls down his goggles and says, ‘It’s just some red snow, dude. Let’s live dangerously!’ I told him to go ahead and I’d meet him at the bottom.

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Not at all humorous

Very humorous

How entertaining is this situation?

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Not at all entertaining

Very entertaining
4. Safe Haven is a local women’s shelter committed to furthering assistance and advocacy programs for women. The shelter is asking you and your coworkers in the distribution department for donations of time and money in order to provide services for an individual woman, Lisa Roberts, who recently arrived at the shelter. The distribution department is recommending a one-time donation from all employees of 10 hours and $10 to help Lisa. However, employees are free to donate as much or as little time and money as they wish.

Please report your willingness to donate the recommended time amount (10 hours) to Lisa Roberts.

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
Not at all Willing

Please circle the number of hours you are willing to donate to Lisa Roberts.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Please report your willingness to donate the recommended dollar amount ($10) to Lisa Roberts.

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
Not at all Willing

Please circle the number of dollars you are willing to donate to Lisa Roberts.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
Appendix C

HSIRB Protocol Approval Letters
Date: June 3, 2004

To: Thomas Ford, Principal Investigator
   Christie Fitzgerald, Student Investigator

From: Mary Lagerwey, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 04-05-22

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Communication Behavior" 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: June 3, 2005
Date: August 2, 2005

To: Thomas Ford, Principal Investigator
  Christie Fitzgerald, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Mary Lagerwey, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 05-07-02

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Social Interactions" 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: August 2, 2006