

The Rating of Sexist Humor Under Time Pressure as an Indicator of Spontaneous Sexist Attitudes

Friederike Eyssel · Gerd Bohner

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Abstract Spontaneous vs. more controlled indicators of sexist attitudes were assessed in a laboratory experiment with 131 male German undergraduates. Participants rated the funniness of sexist and nonsexist jokes either with or without time pressure, and completed self-report measures of sexism and related constructs. With time pressure, participants showed greater liking for sexist jokes than without. No such effect was found for nonsexist jokes. Both with and without time pressure, sexist joke ratings showed meaningful correlations with standard self-report measures, which attests to the joke measure's high reliability and construct validity. Directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords Gender prejudice · Sexism · Sexist humor · Sexist attitudes · Time pressure

Introduction

How can relatively spontaneous sexist attitudes be measured in a valid and economic manner? In this paper we propose a newly developed method that makes use of a set of sexist and nonsexist jokes, which have to be rated according to their funniness. Similar measures have been used in the past (e.g., Henkin and Fish 1986; Ryan and Kanjorski 1998). However, the current study extends prior research on sexist humor by including an innovative experimental manipulation: Specifically, participants were

asked to indicate their liking for sexist (vs. nonsexist) humor either under time constraints or without time constraints. Rating sexist jokes under time constraints was interpreted as an instance of automatic endorsement of sexist attitudes, whereas rating the jokes without time constraints left participants more time for relatively controlled responses (Fazio and Towles-Schwen 1999; Strack and Deutsch 2004; Wilson et al. 2000). Taken together, the time pressure manipulation implemented in the joke rating task served to measure two distinct types of sexist attitudes: spontaneous vs. more deliberate.

In the following, we will briefly review work in support of the notion that a preference for sexist humor is closely related to the simultaneous endorsement of sexist attitudes. Generally, it is assumed that the extent to which people enjoy humor that disparages a social group, such as women, is influenced by the affective disposition toward this group. Jokes are generally perceived as funnier when they derogate a relevant out-group, especially if the group is disliked (Zillmann and Cantor 1976). Moreover, previous research has indicated that derogatory humor contributes to the development and maintenance of group stereotypes, for instance, of women. In order to catch the gist of a joke, a mutual understanding of the stereotype about the group that is ridiculed is a prerequisite (Ford et al. 2001). This has recently been demonstrated in the domain of research on sexist humor (Ford et al. 2001; Ryan and Kanjorski 1998; Thomas and Esses 2004). Clearly, attitudes and behavior in this domain are closely linked, as Greenwood and Isbell (2002) have shown. Their male research participants perceived “dumb blonde” jokes as more amusing and less offensive the higher their level of hostile sexism. In line with this, Ryan and Kanjorski (1998) proposed the endorsement of sexist humor as an indirect measure of “rape supportive and sexist attitudes” (p. 744). Furthermore,

F. Eyssel (✉) · G. Bohner
Department of Psychology, Universität Bielefeld,
Postfach 100131,
33501 Bielefeld, Germany
e-mail: friederike.eyssel@uni-bielefeld.de

it has been argued that the acceptance of sexist humor that disparages women contributes to the status quo and the structural inequality between the sexes in contemporary society (Sev'er and Ungar 1997). In line with this reasoning, experimental research using a computer harassment paradigm has shown that men use the sending of sexist jokes to a female chat partner as a means of gender harassment; this behavior was shown more frequently by men high in hostile sexism, and was more likely to be directed against feminist (vs. traditional) female targets (Siebler et al. 2007).

Cross-cultural research on ambivalent-sexist attitudes revealed that overall, endorsing sexist attitudes is a universal phenomenon, not merely limited to industrialized countries such as the United States of America (Glick et al. 2000). Regarding the level of sexism, the USA, where most data on sexist humor have been gathered, are comparable to Germany (see also Eckes and Six-Materna 1998, 1999; Glick and Fiske 1996). Thus far, little research has been conducted on sexist humor in the German context (Siebler et al. 2007). However, bearing in mind that Germany and the USA show similar patterns with respect to sexist attitudes (Glick et al. 2000), we might expect analogous findings regarding sexist humor.

Be it in the USA, be it in Germany—in the course of societal and socio-political developments and changes, it has become a socio-cultural norm to endorse egalitarian, anti-racist and anti-sexist values and beliefs. Or at least, it has become increasingly unacceptable to openly express negative affect or beliefs about other groups. As a consequence, social desirability concerns may affect the way people respond to others in the social world. Another way of dealing with the complexity and demands of the social environment is holding multiple attitudes toward one attitude object. In recent years, dual-process models of attitudes have become increasingly popular. For example, in their model of “dual attitudes”, Wilson et al. (2000) proposed that a person's attitude consists of both automatic and conscious components. In other words, people can have *dual attitudes*, in the sense of relatively independent evaluations, toward the same object. One is the implicit, automatic attitude; the other is the explicit attitude, which requires more cognitive resources and capacity to be retrieved from memory. Similarly, Strack and Deutsch (2004) proposed a dual-process model to explain behavior as a function of both reflective and impulsive processes which operate in parallel. According to these authors, “the reflective system requires a high amount of cognitive capacity” (p. 223), whereas the impulsive system takes over once cognitive resources are depleted.

We hypothesized that such an effect of ample vs. limited mental resources would also be observable in participants'

ratings of sexist humor (see also Gilbert and Hixon 1991). That is, we believe that given ample time at hand to consider one's responses, individuals will attempt to appear non-prejudiced and non-sexist, trying to hide their “true” attitude (see also Fazio and Olson 2003). This tendency is proposed to be present specifically in the case of “sensitive” issues that demand politically correct responses, such as derogatory, sexist humor. Being aware of the fact that endorsing sexist humor is not acceptable nowadays, people thus may want to correct their “true” attitude by responding in a more deliberate manner, which should result in their judging sexist jokes as relatively unfunny. How can researcher prevent such deliberate response tendencies? One possibility might be to subject participants to time pressure when asking them to provide their ratings of sexist and non-sexist jokes. The underlying rationale is that under time pressure, the cognitive resources needed to control for sexist responses are depleted. This renders conscious correction processes for sexist attitudes impossible, resulting in a more pronounced preference for sexist humor (see also Fazio and Towles-Schwen 1999). This is in line with research on ego depletion which showed that ego depletion reduced the ability to control one's behavior (Baumeister et al. 1994). Furthermore, previous research demonstrated that under conditions of low resource depletion, explicit attitude measures were better predictors for candy consumption, whereas under high resource depletion, implicit attitude measures were better predictors for the same behavior (Hofmann et al. 2007; see also Friesen et al. 2007). Future research should thus include implicit measures of sexist attitudes to examine whether these would be a better predictor for joke ratings under time pressure. Presently, the validation of an implicit measure of sexism is still outstanding (see Eyssel and Böhner 2006). Consequently, the present research focuses on the effect of a time pressure manipulation on self-reported endorsement of sexist humor and explicit sexist attitudes. To assess endorsement of sexist humor, participants had to rate sexist and non-sexist jokes, either under conditions of time pressure or without (see *Method* for details). In the following, participants had to provide their ratings on several measures of sexism and related attitudes. These were included to assess convergent and discriminant validity of the joke measure.

The following notions were tested in an experimental study:

First, we predicted an interaction of time pressure and type of joke on the level of endorsement of sexist versus nonsexist humor:

Hypothesis 1 Under conditions of time pressure, participants report greater endorsement of sexist humor than under conditions without time

pressure, and no such effect of time pressure occurs for jokes with nonsexist content.

This was due to the fact that jokes neutral in content would not demand for suppression of sexist attitudes toward women as mirrored in a preference for sexist humor.

Our second hypothesis concerns the correlations between attitude measures and the endorsement of sexist humor, with Hypothesis 2a addressing aspects of convergent validity, Hypothesis 2b addressing the magnitude of correlations across experimental conditions, and Hypothesis 2c addressing issues of discriminant validity.

Hypothesis 2a Endorsement of sexist humor is positively correlated with a traditional gender-role orientation, modern sexism, hostile sexism, and rape myth acceptance.

The predicted result pattern would demonstrate the convergent validity of the sexist joke measure as an indicator of sexist attitudes.

Hypothesis 2b The correlations between the endorsement of sexist humor and explicit measures of sexism and anti-victim attitudes are *higher* when the jokes are rated *without* time constraints than when the jokes are rated under time pressure.

This prediction is based on the assumption that without time pressure, participants have ample time to think about both the sexist jokes and their related attitudes, resulting in a greater statistical relation of endorsement of sexist jokes and participants' self-reports.

Hypothesis 2c We predicted a lack of significant correlations between the preference for sexist humor and measures of social desirability concerns and the motivation to control for prejudiced responses.

This finding would speak to the discriminant validity of the jokes rating task.

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a computer-based experiment.

Method

Participants and Design

Participants in the study were 131 male volunteers, recruited on the campus of the University of Bielefeld, Germany,

ranging in age from 18 to 35 years ($M=23.95$ $SD=3.51$). Ninety percent of the sample were Germans. Except for 3 participants, all were university students majoring in a variety of fields (e.g., literary studies, history, mathematics, law; only 6 participants were psychology majors). On average, they were in their 5th semester of study ($SD=4.13$). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (*time constraints*: high or low). They took about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the study and received 2 Euros (approx. 2.70 US Dollars) or course credit plus a candy bar for compensation.

Procedure

The study was conducted in the laboratory using personal computers. Participants were tested individually. During the study, instructions were displayed and responses recorded by an experimental program written in Visual Basic. Initially, participants were told that they would take part in a series of pilot tests conducted to pretest materials for future studies. Participants were presented with a set of sexist and nonsexist short jokes, which they were asked to rate according to their degree of funniness. Depending on experimental condition, participants either had no time constraints when making their judgments, or were instructed to respond quickly while a progress bar indicated how much time they had left for their funniness ratings (see [Materials](#) section for details).

Subsequently, participants were presented with self-report items to assess their attitudes toward a range of gender-related and other issues. This was followed by an open-ended suspicion probe, where participants were given the opportunity to express their assumptions concerning the research question to be tested in the study. Participants were further asked to report their age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, first language, field of study, and level of education. Finally, participants were handed debriefing sheets, and were informed about the purpose of the research by the male experimenter. After receiving payment, they were thanked and dismissed.

Materials

Joke Measures

As a means of assessing spontaneous vs. more controlled indicators of sexist attitudes in the laboratory setting, participants were presented with a set of 23 jokes. The first three jokes were neutral and served as fillers, whereas the remaining set consisted of 10 sexist and 10 nonsexist jokes. A sexist joke was always followed by a nonsexist joke; otherwise, the presentation order was randomized before the experiment and then held constant across participants. Pretesting indicated that the two sets of jokes

clearly differed in sexist content as intended but did not differ in terms of overall funniness (see Sabelus 2004). Examples for sexist joke materials are: “When does a woman lose 99% of her intelligence? When her husband dies”, or “Why can’t women be both good-looking and intelligent at the same time? Because then they would be men”. Typical examples for jokes with nonsexist content are: “How do you recognize a friendly motorbike rider? Flies are stuck in his teeth”, or “Why don’t bees go to church? Because they are InSects”. The complete set of sexist and nonsexist jokes in German language can be obtained from the first author. Participants were asked to rate the funniness of each joke on a seven-point rating scale ranging from 1, *not at all funny*, to 7, *very funny*, that was presented underneath each joke.

The rating procedure varied according to experimental condition: In the *high time constraints condition*, participants were instructed to respond quickly; this instruction was emphasized by means of a progress bar that became visible once each joke was presented on the computer screen. Participants were asked to complete their ratings before the progress bar reached the right margin (see Fig. 1 for an original screenshot). The time that the progress bar took to complete its movement was 5 seconds.

In the *low time constraints condition*, participants were simply instructed to rate the funniness of each joke that would be presented on the screen. No time restriction was given, so that participants could take as much time as needed to complete their ratings (see Fig. 2 for an original screenshot). Response times were unobtrusively recorded in

both experimental conditions to provide a manipulation check of the time constraint induction.

To investigate the factor structure underlying the 10 sexist and the 10 nonsexist jokes, a factor analysis with maximum likelihood extraction and promax rotation was performed. This analysis revealed an almost perfect two-factor solution. All pretested sexist jokes clearly loaded on one factor (“sexist content”), whereas all preselected nonsexist jokes loaded on the second factor (“nonsexist content”)—the variables were thus well defined by this two-factor solution. (One of the sexist jokes also had an additional loading on a third factor; however, this factor explained only 5.51% of the total variance.) These results support the validity of our selected joke items, which can be distinguished according to their clearly sexist or nonsexist content. Cronbach’s α was calculated for the funniness indices pertaining to sexist and nonsexist jokes.

The joke measures showed good internal consistencies, with $\alpha=.93$ for the sexist jokes and $\alpha=.83$ for the nonsexist jokes. Therefore, the mean across the 10 funniness ratings of the sexist jokes was defined as each participant’s *sexist jokes score*. Likewise, the mean across the 10 funniness ratings pertaining to the nonsexist jokes was defined as a participant’s *nonsexist jokes score*.

Self-Report Measures

Attitudes related to gender and socio-political issues were assessed with a variety of self-report scales. Each item was

Fig. 1 Original screenshot: experimental condition with *high* time constraints.

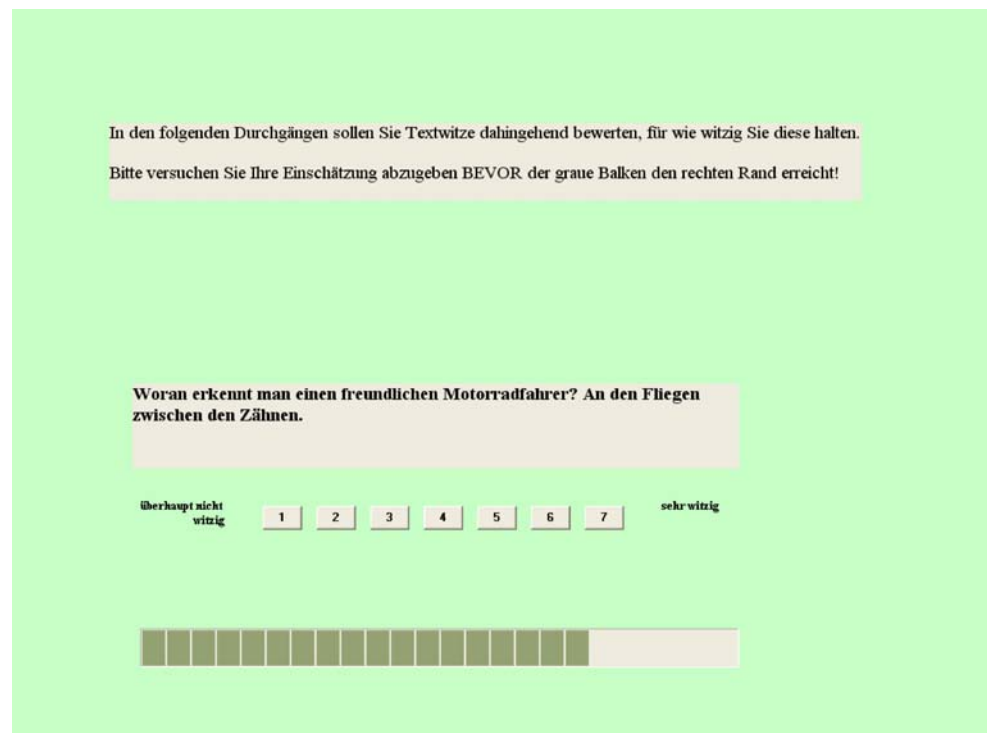


Fig. 2 Original screenshot: experimental condition with *low* time constraints.

accompanied by a seven-point response scale ranging from 1, *completely disagree*, to 7, *completely agree*. Participants were instructed to read each statement carefully and then tick the number that best represented their personal opinion. Items were presented in a randomized order that was the same for all participants.

Ambivalent Sexism

A German version (Eckes and Six-Materna 1999) of the 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick and Fiske 1996) was used to measure ambivalent sexism and its subcomponents, hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). Example items are: “No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman” (BS) or “Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for equality” (HS).

Modern Sexism

To assess modern sexist beliefs, a 10-item German version (Eckes and Six-Materna 1998) of the Modern Sexism Scale (MSS; Swim et al. 1995) was used. A sample item reads “Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in Germany”.

Normative Gender Role Attitudes

To measure normative gender role attitudes, we used 10 items with the highest item-to-total correlation taken

from the normative gender roles questionnaire by Athenstaedt (2002) (Normative Gender Role Attitudes [NGRO]). This instrument was used to measure traditional vs. egalitarian gender role attitudes (e.g., “Ironing shirts is not men’s business”, “Boys and girls should be responsible for the same chores in the household”).

Rape Myth Acceptance

Participants’ rape myth acceptance (RMA) was assessed using 10 items taken from the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) scale (Gerger et al. 2007). This scale (item example: “Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence”) was designed to assess contemporary myths regarding sexual violence in a more subtle manner than do “traditional” RMA measures (e.g., Burt 1980; Payne et al. 1999). Its reliability and validity are well established (Bohner et al. 2005; Eyssel et al. 2006; Gerger et al. 2007). The 10 items used here were selected based on their high item-to-total correlations.

Social Desirability

To measure the tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner, participants were asked to complete 10 items taken from (a) the impression management subscale of a German version (Musch et al. 2002) of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus 1998), and (b) the Social Desirability Scale-17 (SDS-17; Stöber 1999), a modified version of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirabil-

ity Scale (Crowne and Marlowe 1960). Once more, items with the highest item-to-total correlations were selected, e.g., “There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone”, “I sometimes lie if I have to”.

Motivation to Control for Prejudice

To assess participants’ motivation to control for prejudice, the 10 items with the highest item-to-total correlation were taken from the German version (Banse and Gawronski 2003) of the Motivation to Control for Prejudiced Responses scale (Dunton and Fazio 1997). This scale was developed to measure the motivation to act without prejudices toward minorities. One sample item reads: “When in company of others, one should not say something negative about minorities”.

Internal consistencies (Cronbach’s α) of the self-report scales are displayed in Table 1.

After reverse-scoring items where necessary, composite scores were computed by averaging the responses to items of each scale, thus forming an index of the endorsement of the attitudes assessed by the various scales.

Results

Manipulation Check of Time Constraint Induction

To check the effectiveness of the time constraints manipulation, we analyzed the response times in milliseconds needed to make the joke ratings. Reaction times (RT) were corrected for joke length (number of words), as the nonsexist jokes appeared to be slightly longer ($M=15$ words) than the sexist ones ($M=13$ words). These RTs (item-wise RT divided by number of words) were subjected to a 2×2 analysis of variance with *time constraints* (high vs. low) as a between-subjects factor and *type of joke* (sexist vs. nonsexist) as a repeated measures factor. This analysis revealed a main effect of *type of joke*, $F(1,129)=$

56.54, $p<.001$, indicating that overall, participants responded faster to sexist jokes ($M=384$ ms, $SD=150$ ms) than nonsexist jokes ($M=433$ ms, $SD=187$ ms). More importantly, however, we found the predicted significant main effect of time constraints, $F(1,129)=36.89$, $p<.001$, which attests to the effectiveness of the time pressure manipulation. Overall, participants responded faster to the jokes when under time pressure ($M=335$ ms) than when they had unlimited time to complete the joke ratings ($M=489$ ms). Furthermore, we found a significant interaction between *type of joke* and *time constraints*, $F(1,129)=24.00$, $p<.001$. However, simple effects analyses showed that for both sexist jokes ($M=326$ ms, $SD=109$ ms, vs. $M=448$ ms, $SD=162$ ms; $F(1,129)=26.06$, $p<.001$) and nonsexist jokes ($M=343$ ms, $SD=136$ ms, vs. $M=530$ ms, $SD=187$ ms; $F(1,129)=43.25$, $p<.001$), participants responded more quickly when under time pressure than without.

Effects of Time Constraints on Joke Ratings

Hypothesis 1 predicted an interaction of type of joke and time constraints. That is, sexist jokes would be perceived as funnier under time pressure, whereas no such effect was predicted for neutral jokes. To test the effects of time constraints on the endorsement of sexist and nonsexist jokes, we conducted a mixed 2×2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) with *time constraints* (high vs. low) as a between-subjects factor and *type of joke* (sexist vs. nonsexist) as a repeated measures factor. This analysis revealed a main effect of *type of joke*, $F(1,129)=5.97$, $p=.02$, indicating that overall, nonsexist jokes ($M=3.45$, $SD=1.16$) were perceived as funnier than sexist jokes ($M=3.19$, $SD=1.51$). Secondly, we found a main effect of *time constraints*, $F(1,129)=6.51$, $p=.01$. Overall, jokes were perceived as funnier under high time constraints ($M=3.56$) than under low time constraints ($M=3.05$). Most importantly, the interaction between *type of joke* and *time constraints* was significant as predicted, $F(1, 129)=7.58$, $p=.01$. To clarify the meaning of this interactive pattern, simple effects contrasts were calculated. Results showed that, in line with our Hypothesis 1, ratings for sexist jokes were significantly higher under time constraints ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.57$) than without time constraints ($M=2.76$, $SD=1.32$), $F(1,129)=10.42$, $p<.001$, whereas this was not the case for nonsexist jokes ($M=3.34$, $SD=1.09$, vs. $M=3.55$, $SD=1.22$), $F(1,129)=1.04$, $p=.31$.

Correlation Analyses

Partial correlation analyses were performed to examine the correlational pattern between the *preference for sexist humor* and the various self-report measures, with preference for neutral humor being controlled for. Table 2 shows these

Table 1 Internal consistencies (Cronbach’s α) of self-report measures.

Measure	α
Ambivalent sexism	.88
Benevolent sexism	.84
Hostile sexism	.88
Modern sexism	.80
Normative gender role orientation	.85
Rape myth acceptance	.85
Social desirability	.59
Motivation to control for prejudice	.78

correlations, along with the means and standard deviations for the self-report measures:

Hypothesis 2a concerned convergent validity, predicting positive correlations between the endorsement of sexist humor and sexist and rape-related attitudes. Furthermore, Hypothesis 2b predicted that these correlations would be more pronounced under conditions without relative to conditions with time pressure: Finally, Hypothesis 2c concerned aspects of discriminant validity, stating that preference for sexist humor would be unrelated to self-reported social desirability and motivation to control for prejudice.

The overall correlational pattern supported Hypothesis 2a, as liking for sexist humor turned out to be significantly and positively related to measures of sexism (ASS, HS, BS, NGRO, and MSS) as well as RMA. These findings support the convergent validity of the joke measure.

Hypothesis 2c concerned aspects of discriminant validity: We predicted that preference for sexist humor would be uncorrelated with measures of social desirability and motivation to control for prejudiced responding. Hypothesis 2c was supported by the lack of correlation between the sexist joke measure and the motivation to control for prejudice and a low and marginal correlation with the tendency for desirable responding. Finally, partial correlation analyses were conducted to examine the statistical relation between the liking for sexist jokes and the self-report measures, separately for each level of the time constraints factor (high vs. low). Table 3 depicts these correlations.

In line with Hypothesis 2b, under high time constraints, the partial correlations between the preference for sexist jokes and standard self-report measures were generally smaller than under low time constraints, with the exception of the relation between the endorsement of sexist humor and NGRO, where the partial correlation was higher under time constraints. Importantly, however, the partial correlations mostly remained statistically significant, whether

Table 3 Partial correlations of preference for sexist humor and self-report measures as a function of time constraints (high, low) with preference for neutral humor being controlled for.

Time constraints	Low	High
Measure	Preference for sexist humor	Preference for sexist humor
Ambivalent sexism	.52**	.38**
Hostile sexism	.54**	.34**
Benevolent sexism	.32*	.28*
Modern sexism	.44**	.34**
Normative gender role orientation	.35**	.48**
Rape myth acceptance	.60**	.32**
Social desirability	.26*	.08
Motivation to control for prejudice	.13	-.19

* $p < .05$, two-tailed; ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

participants judged under time pressure or not. We statistically compared the magnitude of correlations of preference for sexist humor under time pressure vs. none. Despite the obvious tendency for correlations to be higher without time pressure than with time pressure, this difference was only significant for RMA ($z = 1.97$, $p = .02$, one-sided) and motivation to control for prejudice ($z = 1.76$, $p = .04$, one-sided; for the remaining comparisons, all p 's $> .09$, one-sided). These results indicate that the self-report measures predict the preference for sexist humor in very different contexts—not only when participants have ample time to think about their joke ratings, but also under conditions where participants have limited cognitive resources left to do so. As predicted in Hypothesis 2c, under time constraints, the preference for sexist humor was unrelated to the motivation to control for prejudiced responses and to social desirability. However, unexpectedly, the correlation between the preference for sexist humor and social desirability was significant and positive when participants had enough time to think about their responses, $r = .26$, $p = .04$. We will get back to this latter finding in the Discussion. In any case, the fact that the preference for sexist humor was unrelated to social desirability in the high time constraint condition, whereas it did correlate with social desirability in the time constraint condition, further attests to the usefulness of assessing joke ratings under time pressure.

Discussion

In this research we introduced an innovative, economic, and easily applicable method for assessing spontaneous sexist attitudes. The newly developed attitude measure consists of a set of sexist and nonsexist jokes which proved highly

Table 2 Means (M), standard deviations (SD), and partial correlations of the preference for sexist humor with self-report measures, with preference for neutral humor being controlled for.

Measure	M	SD	r
Ambivalent sexism	4.16	.95	.47**
Benevolent sexism	4.22	1.16	.32**
Hostile sexism	4.09	1.11	.45**
Modern sexism	3.92	.94	.41**
Normative gender role orientation	2.50	1.10	.46**
Rape myth acceptance	3.48	1.06	.36**
Social desirability	4.02	.88	.18*
Motivation to control for prejudice	4.89	.89	-.06

* $p < .05$, two-tailed; ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

reliable. Results of a factor analysis showed a clear two-factor structure distinguishing sexist and nonsexist text jokes, thereby providing support for the validity of the joke measure. The innovative aspect of the joke measure consists of the fact that participants are asked to rate the jokes according to their funniness under conditions of time pressure vs. no time pressure.

The main goal of our research was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the time pressure manipulation. We predicted that a lack of cognitive capacity to control for prejudiced responses would lead to a greater reported liking for derogatory sexist humor. On the other hand, we predicted that once participants have ample time to ponder their response, becoming increasingly aware that endorsing sexist humor is socially sanctioned, self-reported funniness of sexist jokes should decrease. In fact, results showed that the time pressure manipulation was effective: Participants had shorter reaction times when rating the jokes under time pressure than without time pressure. Additionally, our study provides initial evidence for the fact that the relative lack of cognitive resources under time pressure conditions leads to a higher self-reported liking for disparaging humor. In line with our hypotheses, the findings of the present study showed that under time pressure, when resources were limited, male participants reported greater enjoyment of sexist humor than when resources were unconstrained. By contrast, time pressure did not have an effect on the endorsement of nonsexist humor, where there was no need for controlling socially undesirable responses. As predicted, participants were equally fond of nonsexist jokes, independent of the time pressure manipulation. Thus, at a group level, we find the predicted effect of time pressure vs. none on self-reported endorsement of sexist jokes, with sexist attitudes becoming more evident under time pressure than without. At the individual, correlational level, however, time pressure did not result in a greater predictive validity. Thus, it might be possible that implicit, rather than explicit measures of sexist attitudes would be a more suitable predictor for the endorsement of sexist humor.

Furthermore, with respect to correlational findings, it becomes evident that the joke measure constitutes a valid measure of sexist attitudes. Whereas greater liking for sexist humor (controlling for liking for nonsexist humor) was positively correlated with standard self-report measures of sexist and anti-victim attitudes, it was unrelated overall to the motivation to control for prejudice or social desirability concerns. When analyzing the partial correlation patterns separately for experimental conditions, we found that under time pressure, liking for sexist humor was still positively correlated with measures of sexism and anti-victim attitudes, although this correlation appeared somewhat lower

compared to the no time pressure condition. Furthermore, under time pressure, liking for sexist humor was unrelated to measures tapping social desirability concerns and the motivation to control for prejudice, whereas without time pressure, a significant positive correlation with social desirability was observed.

The latter result is in line with findings by Ford et al. (2001), and Ford and Ferguson (2004). These authors argued that “sexist humor expands the bounds of appropriate conduct in the immediate context creating a social norm of tolerance of discrimination against women” (p. 678). Perhaps the context of our study might have established a norm of tolerance for derogatory, sexist humor. That is, the context of the study might have led participants to believe that it is acceptable to be sexist. Possibly, however, the significant correlation may as well be simply due to chance. No correlation between liking for sexist humor and social desirability was found when participants were put under time pressure while rating the jokes. Our research also supports findings by Ryan and Kanjorski (1998), who found that hostile sexist humor was positively related to rape myth acceptance (RMA) and related measures of sexual aggression. In our study, RMA and the relative preference for sexist humor were also positively correlated; especially when participants were given unlimited time to respond to the jokes. Overall, the correlational findings support the convergent and discriminant validity of the joke measure. However, one critical aspect of the current study is related to the fact that participants always responded to the self-reports after reporting their liking for sexist and nonsexist humor. It might thus be possible that the responses to the joke measure influenced the self-reported sexist attitudes. To solve this problem, the order of joke ratings and attitude assessment should be counterbalanced in prospective studies.

In addition, future research should investigate further the reliability and validity of the joke measure. In a follow-up study, participants could, for instance, be asked to complete the funniness ratings of the sexist and nonsexist jokes as part of a repeated-measures design. Specifically, participants would complete joke ratings first with time pressure instructions and then without or vice versa, with joke content counterbalanced. This would allow researchers to assess a difference score between controlled and spontaneous preferences *for each participant*. The higher this score, the more a participant shows evidence of controlling for sexist responses. This might then be studied in relation to scores on a recent self-report measure of the *motivation to control for sexist responses* (Klonis et al. 2005).

We are currently validating an implicit measure of ambivalent sexist attitudes, which could be used in future research to demonstrate that implicit measures would be a better predictor for relatively spontaneous joke ratings

under time pressure, whereas explicit measures would be a better predictor for rather deliberate joke ratings without time pressure (Eyssel and Böhner 2006).

Summing up, while further evidence in support of the validity of the joke measure is still outstanding, we conclude that, for the time being, a first step toward the examination of the conditions under which sexist attitudes may be more likely to be expressed has been taken.

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