



Edyta Zierkiewicz

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0312-874X>

University of Wrocław, Poland; e-mail: edyta.zierkiewicz@uwr.edu.pl

„Sexy” Lectures? The Influence of Sexist Content on Attractiveness of Academic Lectures for Students. Analysis of Experiment Results in Natural Conditions at One of Public Universities in Poland

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/PBE.2020.023>

Abstract

The article is aimed at answering the research question concerning a correlation between the use of sexist digressions by academic lecturers and the sense of attractiveness of such lectures among students. An experiment was performed in natural conditions to identify the potential connection between these variables. Two groups participated in the study: an experimental and a control ones, consisting of students from a feminized field of social sciences at one of public universities in Poland. The collected data was analysed using cross tables method. The study has confirmed that lectures “coloured” with sexist jokes are more attractive to students than those without them. These surprising results are the source of hypotheses worth further research.

Key words: sexist lectures, university, experiment in natural conditions.

There should be no place for sexism at Polish universities, especially in fields of social sciences and humanities usually dominated by women. For many years female researchers have thoroughly analysed sexism from many angles (Chmura-Rutkowska & Mazurek, 2019), pointing out possibilities of sex discrimina-

tion prevention by introducing gender studies into the mainstream education (Górnikowska-Zwolak, 2006; Pankowska, 2014; Pankowska & Chomczyńska-Rubacha, 2015). Nevertheless, media occasionally report sexist incidents in which university lecturers are involved (Łosiewicz & Czechowska-Derkacz, 2019).

The subject matter of this article seems to be important also in the context of recently celebrated 100th anniversary of granting voting rights to Polish women marked with many conferences devoted to women – from both historical and contemporary perspectives (Górnikowska-Zwolak & Matysiak-Błaszczyk, 2018; Slany et al., 2020). Moreover, Polish women have just mobilized themselves bottom-up and took part in mass protests for their own sake (i.e. against introducing radical restrictions concerning the abortion law; Ostaszewska, 2017). This social mobilization suggests not only that women in Poland are aware of their disadvantageous position, but also that there is no consent to deprive them from, already limited, rights to decide about their reproductive health. An important movement was also the worldwide *#MeToo* protest against sexual harassment of women (Tambe, 2018). In this context it is also essential to be aware of social communication either promoting gender equality (Zadykiewicz, 2012), or, in contrast, contributing to strengthen beliefs that women are worse than men; such beliefs are the foundation of gender discrimination (Górnikowska-Zwolak, 2019).

However, despite various social movements and numerous scientific publications and articles in journalistic media, tackling the issue of social inequality of women, also in educational institutions, including inequalities embedded in language (Górnikowska-Zwolak, 2002; Coady, 2018), sexist content depriving women from dignity is still used in the public sphere in Poland.

Sexism at academy. Theoretical introduction

Sexism as a social issue is addressed to not only in scientific literature of the subject, but also in mass media and on the Internet. Researchers point out specific cultural factors underlying this phenomenon, describe various dimensions, types and aspects thereof, as well as discuss possibilities to limit influence of sexism on social groups potentially threatened by it (or exposed to it). Media and self-proclaimed advocates usually tend to focus on scandals and incidents showing sexist social practice in order to exact their discontinuation. Incidents at the University of Wrocław (2016), University of Silesia (2017) and University of Lublin (2018) have been listed among examples of the violation of the

principle of respect for women’s dignity widely reported by media (verbal harassment, verbal abuse or even sexual harassment).

The scale of the phenomenon of verbal harassment of female students by lecturers is impossible to assess. It is equally difficult to precisely describe sexism at academy. The reason is that many people (i.e. potential subjects of studies) are not familiar with the definition of sexism, understand it inappropriately or are intentionally ironic about “feminists’ sensitivity” of people feeling offended by certain words or behaviours.

Descriptive definition of sexism

“Discovery”, or rather naming sexism was first possible during the so called second-wave feminism (in the 1960s), when women began to intensively reflect on the sources of their worse – in comparison to their male peers – position in the society (Hildago & Royce, 2017). Feminists, similarly to the Afro-Americans emancipating a bit earlier, did not agree to acknowledge the social roles and norms forced on them as universal, natural, perennial. Yet analyses of the unequal situation of women and men had been carried out long before that, an example being the 18th century writer Mary Wollstonecraft (2011; Grabowska, 2015).

To put it simply, sexism is regarded as behaviour of discrimination against women on the basis of gender (Buregren, 2007, p. 134). In psychology sexism is often defined by the means of describing three elements connected with each other: cognitive – stereotyping, affective – prejudice, and behavioural – discrimination (Yoder, 2013, p. 154). Unequal treatment of women may manifest itself in a couple of ways: traditional, contemporary, neosexist and ambivalent (Nelson, 2003, pp. 263–306; Kwiatkowska, 2014, p. 501). **Traditional sexism** is manifested in e.g. openly expressed views on traditional gender roles, using sex stereotypes as “arguments” in discussions, negative assessment of women, etc. **Contemporary sexism** is present in more veiled opinions and attitudes questioning women’s claim to equal treatment and is about negation of the existence of gender discrimination (Kwiatkowska, 2014, p. 501). **Neosexism** is defined as purposeful attribution of guilt, ineptitude or weakness to women in situations which are cognitively ambiguous, i.e. when the effect of one’s actions depends on environmental, and not individual, factors. It is associated with negative emotions towards women in society pledging respect to equality. **Ambivalent sexism** can be either **hostile** (justification of maintaining the *status quo*: structural inequalities and male domination in the society) or **mild**

(apparent acknowledgement of women's equality, yet enabling caring control over them and "friendly" limitation of their activities or claims) (Kwiatkowska, 2014, pp. 501–502). One more type of sexism is worth adding to this taxonomy: **subtle (benevolent) sexism**. It is shown in patronising chivalry, supporting discouragement, friendly teasing, radiant devaluation, kind exploitation, etc. (Benokraitis, 1997; Kimmel, 2015, p. 311; Sonit, 2017). Above all, however, the main components of the generally understood sexism are: paternalism, underscoring gender differences, and heterosexuality (Kwiatkowska, 2014, p. 502).

It is impossible to enumerate and catalogue all sexist behaviours, however one more issue in this context seems to be important – **gender microaggression**. It can be defined as subtle, often automatic, verbal or non-verbal prosexist behaviours, resulting in humiliating or offending women, but in such a way that women are seen as hypersensitive and picking on words in the eyes of their environment (Solorzano, 1998, pp. 124–125). Microaggression, as a theoretical construct, allows to shed new light on the issue of detrimental effects of contemporary gender discrimination, which becomes increasingly hidden, implied, and equally painful to its "victims" who – in order to counteract it – must learn to "see the unseen" (Basford et al., 2014, p. 341). Among the incidents of microaggression suffered by women the following phenomena can be mentioned: microvalidations, i.e. challenging their views, emotions and experiences; microinsults, i.e. rude behaviours against gender identity; and microassaults, i.e. the intention to hurt, exert pressure or discredit women (Basford et al., 2014, p. 341).

The key to understand sexism – as well as difficulties in counteracting it – is to realise that gender discrimination is present not only at the structural level, but also at basics; it is rooted in social institutions and in our consciousness (Kimmel, 2015, p. 311).

Individual (and social) effects of sexism seem to be equally important. They will be briefly signalled, but first I would like to explain that the dominant, dichotomous way of perceiving women and men in western societies is the use of apparently logical binary oppositions: warmth *versus* competence, which are deciphered as (typically feminine) non-competition *versus* (typically male) high status/power. In common perception, women should be warm, i.e. caring, devoted, submissive etc., but nowadays they can "choose" to become competent people (here: people in managerial positions etc.) Facing such a "choice", women are confronted with the dilemma whether to be liked (for conformist behaviours) but underappreciated, or rather to be respected (for professional achievements) but, euphemistically speaking, not well-liked (for choosing non-

traditional social roles and identities) (Yoder, 2013, p. 156). Of course, this choice is usually made by women subconsciously (here: unreflectively), even though they suffer incurred mental damage. Trying to minimize the impact of these internal burdens, many women somehow accept the existence of sexism as inevitable and universal. Such attitudes include, for example, ignoring taunts, actively or passively participating in sexist jokes, adopting an attitude of distance/superiority, downplaying certain situations and behaviours, or even denying the existence of sexism. Perhaps the easiest and most common attitude towards women nowadays is benevolent sexism. The acceptance of “knightly” men’s behaviours towards women is acknowledged as an adaptative reaction to negative social atmosphere (i.e. to manifestations of hostile sexism and an immediate sense of danger) (Yoder, 2013, p. 161). A single display of subtle sexism does not hurt women, and may even please them, but it has the real power of raising their awareness concerning “their place” (benevolent sexism may be perceived as the proverbial carrot, and hostile sexism as a stick) (Yoder, 2013, p. 162). The consequences of hostile sexism (and gender discrimination) are obvious – including life-threatening domestic violence, rape (Riger, 2016), femicide (Grzyb, 2014), and overtly lowering women’s quality of life: wage inequalities and lack of access to higher professional positions (Kalinowska-Nawrotek, 2004), the traditional division of domestic work (here: the so-called additional, “free job”, Titkow at al., 2004). The effects of subtle sexism include: low self-esteem, unclear sense of threat, low effectiveness in performing professional tasks (especially when metastereotypes are activated; Nelson, 2003, pp. 204–205), depression and anxiety (Yoder, 2013, pp. 163, 170–171), etc.

Description of the experimental procedure

Each scientific study begins with the formulation of a research problem for which, during the course of the project, an answer justified by empirical data is sought. The question that inspired this study had been concerning me (as a participant of academic teaching activities) for a couple of years: what are the reasons for using sexist utterances by lecturers during academic activities addressed to students of feminized fields of study? My doubts regarding this practice stemmed from the belief that the didactic discourse should serve educational, emancipatory and critical purposes, as well as involve transfer of reliable knowledge, explain theoretical issues and/or describe phenomena found in practice, etc. At the same time, in the academic environment, it is obvious that the scientific-didactic discourse should not be axiologically biased or based

on common beliefs. The use of sexist anecdotes (or, for example, “humorous” memes, drawings, and photos objectifying women in multimedia presentations) can be considered against this rule and against a sense of dignity of the participants/lecturers. The substantive and instrumental value of such additions (i.e. allowing to emphasize the most important issues in the lecture) is of little value, if any. It seems that such anecdotes and photos distract, rather than catch, the attention of students from the merits, and maybe also irritate or embarrass them, etc. Therefore, it is important to find out the purposes of such additions during academic lectures (because it is clear they do not serve educational purposes). The search for an answer to the research problem outlined in this way could be carried out in at least two ways: either by collecting lecturers’ explanations about their motivation related to, for example, telling sexist jokes during classes, or by examining the reception of students with regard to the anecdotes they heard at lectures. In the second option, it could be checked how such “extras” affect the effectiveness of students’ substantive memorization of the lecture content or – more generally – **whether sexist statements of lecturers affect the sense of attractiveness of lectures for students?** In my research I decided to seek the answer to the latter question.

Considering the possibilities related to the nature of collected data, I decided that the most interesting empirical material would be an experiment in which the behaviour of educators observed and noted by me would be imitated. The cognitive aim of the research was to verify the hypothesis regarding the influence of sexist digressions added to the course lectures on the beliefs about the attractiveness of the lectures for students participating in them¹. The subject of the research was therefore the assessment of the subjective attractiveness of the lectures provided by the participants, expressed by them in the form of written opinions about the subsequent lectures on the selected subject at the end of each academic meeting. The dependent variable in this study was the student’s assessment of the lecture (its attractiveness), the independent variable being sexist anecdotes, slides, and jokes.

The research was carried out in natural conditions in the plan of independent groups. Two groups attending lectures on the same subject (at the level of undergraduate studies) were selected for the research, although the lectures were

¹ The characteristics of the adopted research goal can also be described as ethical and moral. The decision about the initiation of my own research was triggered by the dissonance I experienced, related to the misunderstanding of the use of sexist verbal and visual “extras” by lecturers, during academic lectures as well as to the disagreement to such behaviours resulting from the feeling of being humiliated.

carried out in different modes: full-time and part-time. Only full-time students were subjected to the experimental procedure, whereas part-time students formed a control group. None of the groups had previously received information about the conducted research and no one was aware of their participation in the empirical project (it was checked twice in the semester with a probing question, masking the considered issue). The groups were not equal – the experimental group consisted of 47 people, the control group of 30 participants. The groups differed slightly in terms of age; the average age of the group of full-time students was $M=21.9$, whereas for part-time students $M=24.7$. There was also a slight difference regarding the “gender composition”: female students dominated in both groups with the ratio in the experimental group 46:1, in the control group 28:2.

The experiment was carried out during one (winter) semester in the academic year 2018/2019. At the end of each lecture, I asked students to evaluate the classes in writing. For this purpose, two open-ended questions were answered: (1) “What was important to you in the lecture?”, (2) “What did you like about the lecture and what did you not like?” Only the second question was coded, as it concerned the subjective feeling of attractiveness of the didactic classes. The first, apparently more important question, was asked to conceal the real intention of the researcher. At this point, it should be mentioned that in order to justify the unusual request addressed to each participant of the classes to formulate an opinion on the “impressions” of the lecture, I explained that it is a form of checking attendance. Thus, the opinions expressed were not anonymous, which could result in a lack of honesty, but on the other hand, it was possible to trace changes in the attitude towards lectures in each individual case.

In contrast to the measurements in most experimental studies, the so-called drop out of the respondents did not happen, however the groups “fluctuated”, as some students were not present at all lectures. Therefore, there were system gaps in data in each measurement.

As already mentioned, only answers to the questions: “[A] what did you like in the lecture, [B] what did you not like in the lecture?” were analysed. Initially, coding was open-ended and consisted in creating categories that captured all the impressions of the respondents. The first phase ended when the data were saturated; then the second phase of coding began, i.e. assigning digital symbols to the respondents’ statements. The students’ opinions were divided into two separate categories (corresponding to the two parts of the question: [A] and [B]), each of which having eight items. The category “positive opinions” consisted of: **1** – the use of a multimedia presentation during the lecture, **2** – **the use of examples, anecdotes** [here and in the further part of the paragraph the

categories corresponding to sexist content are in bold], 3 – the subject of the classes, 4 – elicitation, encouraging students to reflect, **5 – pictures on slides**, 6 – references to many interesting scientific publications and books made by the lecturer, 7 – understandable and/or dynamic way of conducting classes, **8 – jokes**. The category “negative opinions” comprised: 1 – too fast pace of the lecture, 2 – incomprehensible (too scientific) terminology, 3 – the way of checking presence (delivering opinions expressed on cards), 4 – problems with the multimedia projector [on the first lecture], 5 – too little information on the slides, 6 – too much information on the slides, **7 – too many examples, anecdotes**, 8 – other (e.g. unfavourable weather, too dark in the lecture hall, too short breaks between classes). In the analysis of results presented below, particular attention was paid to three items in the category of positive opinions (items: 2, 5 and 8) and one in the category of negative opinions (item 7), as they relate to the experimental intervention (the remaining items concerned content or formal aspects of the lecture).

Analysis of the experiment’s results

In order to verify the research hypothesis, a statistical analysis using the chi-square test was applied, showing the significance of the obtained results ($p < 0.05$). On this basis, the null hypothesis was falsified, and an alternative hypothesis assuming the existence of a significant cause-and-effect relationship between the sexist digressions used by the lecturers and the attractiveness of the lectures for their participants was adopted.

In total, 77 people participated in the study (47 in the experimental group and 30 in the control group), who altogether formulated 361 opinions about the attended classes. Full-time students took part in seven measurements (i.e. in seven lectures), whereas part-time students participated in four measurements; (it should be added that the number of teaching hours for full-time and part-time students was identical [15 hours], but the extramural studies were “condensed” in the schedule to four meetings). In total, 442 important observations were collected, most of which were based on positive opinions. Negative opinions accounted for 22.44% of all observations. This means that 81 times students indicated both positive and negative aspects of the lectures. Descriptive statistical analysis allowed to determine what the students liked in the lectures.

The next stage of the research procedure was to carry out a statistical analysis using cross tables that collectively gather all nominal data, represented both in absolute numbers and as a percentage (Tab. 1).

Tab. 1. Numbers and percentages of students' positive opinions about the lectures

		Cross table								
		Measure/lecture number							Total	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Positive opinions	1	Group size	4	6	12	4	4	3	1	34
		% of the lecture	6.3%	9.7%	16.9%	7.7%	9.1%	10.3%	2.6%	9.4%
	2	Group size	12	18	19	18	11	10	7	95
		% of the lecture	18.8%	29.0%	26.8%	34.6%	25.0%	34.5%	17.9%	26.3%
	3	Group size	14	20	28	11	20	9	8	110
		% of the lecture	21.9%	32.3%	39.4%	21.2%	45.5%	31.0%	20.5%	30.5%
	4	Group size	8	3	1	4	4	2	16	38
		% of the lecture	12.5%	4.8%	1.4%	7.7%	9.1%	6.9%	41.0%	10.5%
	5	Group size	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
		% of the lecture	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
	6	Group size	5	3	0	5	1	3	4	21
		% of the lecture	7.8%	4.8%	0.0%	9.6%	2.3%	10.3%	10.3%	5.8%
	7	Group size	9	12	11	8	3	2	3	48
		% of the lecture	14.1%	19.4%	15.5%	15.4%	6.8%	6.9%	7.7%	13.3%
	8	Group size	9	0	0	1	1	0	0	11
		% of the lecture	14.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%
Total	Group size	64	62	71	52	44	29	39	361	
	% of the lecture	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Both groups of subjects participated in the study – [1] experimental and [2] control; from measurement 5, information on the results applies only to the experimental group

Source: Author's research.

The analysis of the obtained data separately indicated that in the experimental group a total of 63 positive opinions were given for item 2 (23.7% of all responses), 4 – for item 5 (1.5%) and 11 – for item 8 (4, 1%). In the control group, positive opinions were expressed only with regard to item 2 (32, i.e. 33.7%). The cross tables (not included in the text) show that the share of item 2 in positive opinions (i.e. using examples, anecdotes) in the experimental group varies from 11.1% to 34.5% depending on the lecture, the share of item 5 (pictures on slides) from 0.0% to 8.3%, while the share of item 8 (jokes) from 0.0% to 25%. At the same time the share of item 2 (using examples, anecdotes) ranges from 28.0% to 50.0% in the control group; items 5 and 8 did not occur in the students' assessment in the control group.

The same listings were made below (Tab. 2) for the negative opinions formulated by the respondents about the following lectures, with highlighting item 7 (too many examples, anecdotes).

Tab. 2. Numbers and percentages of students' negative opinions about the lectures

		Cross table								
		Measure/lecture number							Total	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Negative opinions	1	Group size	5	4	6	3	4	0	2	24
		% of the lecture	41.7%	20.0%	35.3%	18.8%	66.7%	0.0%	25.0%	29.6%
	2	Group size	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	4
		% of the lecture	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%	18.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%
	3	Group size	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
		% of the lecture	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%
	4	Group size	2	4	0	0	0	0	1	7
		% of the lecture	16.7%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	8.6%
	5	Group size	0	1	3	0	0	0	2	6
		% of the lecture	0.0%	5.0%	17.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	7.4%
	6	Group size	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	4
		% of the lecture	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	4.9%
	7	Group size	2	3	2	3	1	0	1	12
		% of the lecture	16.7%	15.0%	11.8%	18.8%	16.7%	0.0%	12.5%	14.8%
	8	Group size	3	6	5	4	1	2	1	22
		% of the lecture	25.0%	30.0%	29.4%	25.0%	16.7%	100.0%	12.5%	27.2%
Total	Group size	12	20	17	16	6	2	8	81	
	% of the lecture	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Both groups of subjects participated in the study – [1] experimental and [2] control; from measurement 5, information on the results applies only to the experimental group

Source: Author's research.

Negative opinions of students related to the experimental intervention concerned only item 7 (too many examples, anecdotes) – such opinions were expressed by 4 full-time students (9.1%) and 8 extramural students (21.6%).

Statistical analysis conveyed by the means of the chi-square test (Tab. 3) allows to notice the differences in the occurrence of individual positive items in subsequent lectures. The value of the chi-square test is $\chi^2(42)=121.292$; $p<0.05$.

The analysis of negative opinions using the chi-square test (Tab. 4) indicated that the observed differences are not large enough to be considered statistically significant. There is no substantial difference between the lectures with regard to the intensity of the selection of individual items distinguished in the category “negative opinions”. The lectures did not differ in terms of the presence of items. Chi-square test $\chi^2(42)=42.905$; $p=0.432$.

Tab. 3. Statistics of the chi-square test for positive respondents’ opinions from both groups

Chi-square tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson’s chi-square	121.292 ^a	42	.000
Likelihood ratio	108.153	42	.000
Linear relationship test	3.662	1	.056
N of significant observations	361		
a. 51.8% of cells (29) have an expected abundance of less than 5. The minimum expected abundance is .32.			

Source: Author’s research.

Tab. 4. Statistics of the chi-square test for respondents’ negative opinions from both groups

Chi-square tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson’s chi-square	42.905 ^a	42	.432
Likelihood ratio	46.460	42	.294
Linear relationship test	.022	1	.882
N of significant observations	81		
a. 94.6% of cells (53) have an expected abundance of less than 5. The minimum expected abundance is 0.5.			

Source: Author’s research.

Further statistical analysis was conveyed using the chi-square test separately for the control group and the experimental group. The results obtained in the categories “positive opinions” and “negative opinions” for the control group are not statistically significant; $p > 0.05$. On the other hand, statistically significant differences occurred in the respondents’ positive opinions on individual lectures in the experimental group; the chi-square test value was $\chi^2(42) = 124.791$; $p < 0.05$ (Tab. 5). However, no correlation between the lecture and negative opinions in this group was found. The chi-square test value was $\chi^2(42) = 49.294$; $p > 0.05$.

Tab. 5. Statistics of the chi-square test for respondents' positive opinions from the experimental group

Chi-square tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson's chi-square	124.791 ^a	42	.000
Likelihood ratio	107.310	42	.000
Linear relationship test	1.518	1	.218
N of significant observations	266		

a. 62.5% of cells (35) have an expected abundance of less than 5. The minimum expected abundance is .44.

Source: Author's research.

Furthermore, while analysing the collected results of the experimental research, I focused on describing the key data allowing to verify the hypothesis. In this part of the text, the results relating to the subjective attractiveness of the lectures (i.e. to items 2, 5 and 8 in the “positive opinions” category, and item 7 in the “negative opinions”) will be graphically presented, separately for the experimental and control groups. The distribution of items in individual lectures in both groups is presented in the charts below.

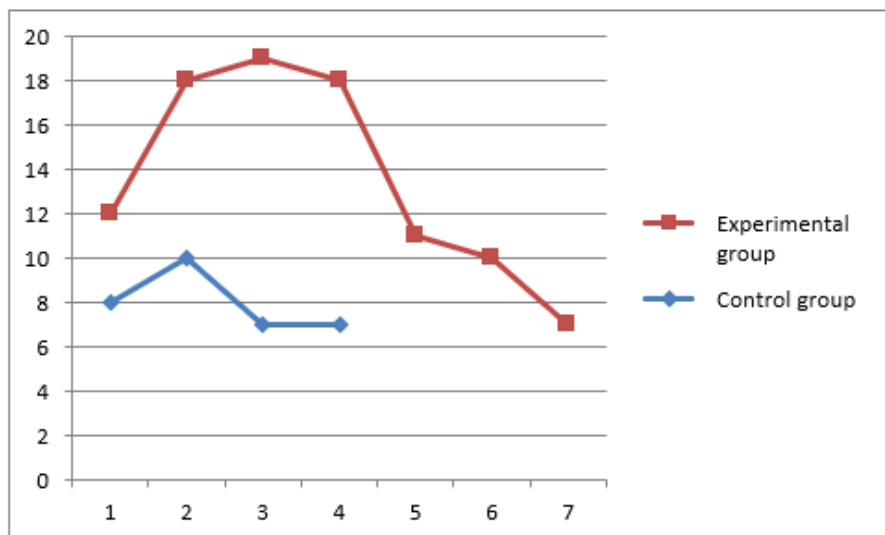


Chart 1. Selection of item 2 (anecdotes; positive opinions) by the experimental group and the control group

Source: Author's research.

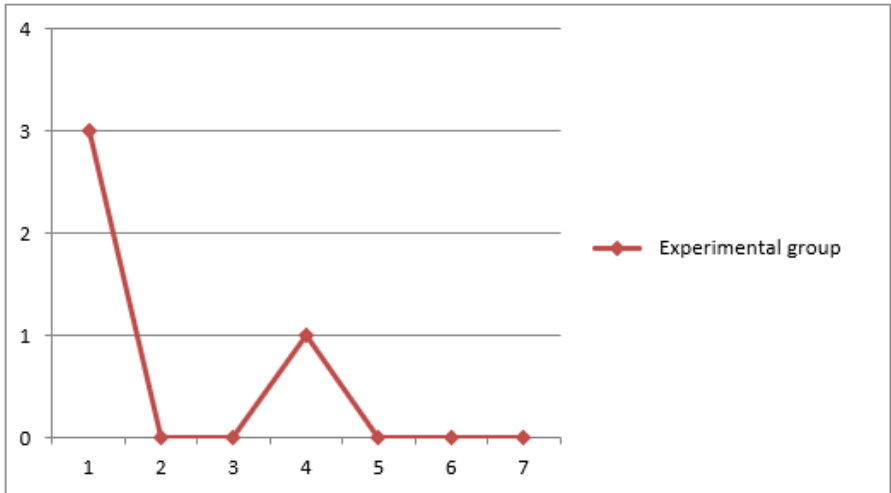


Chart 2. Selection of item 5 (pictures on slides; positive opinions) by the experimental group and the control group

Source: Author's research.

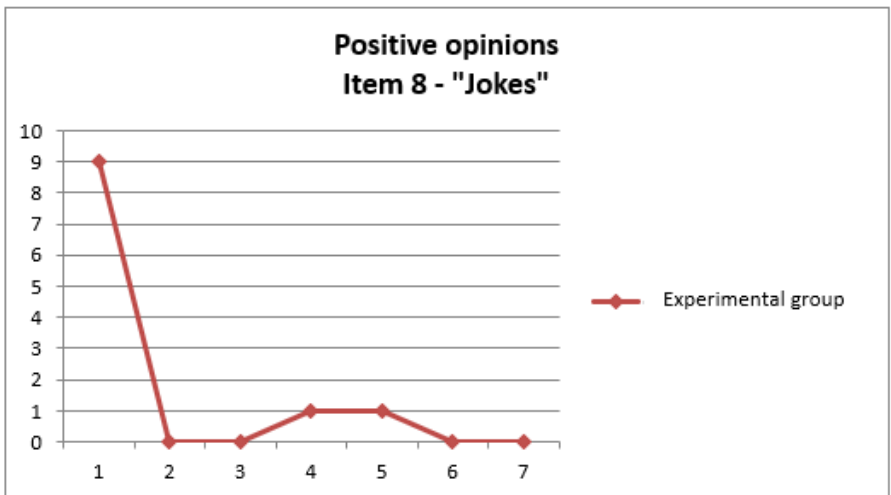


Chart 3. Selection of item 8 (jokes; positive opinions) by the experimental group and the control group

Source: Author's research.

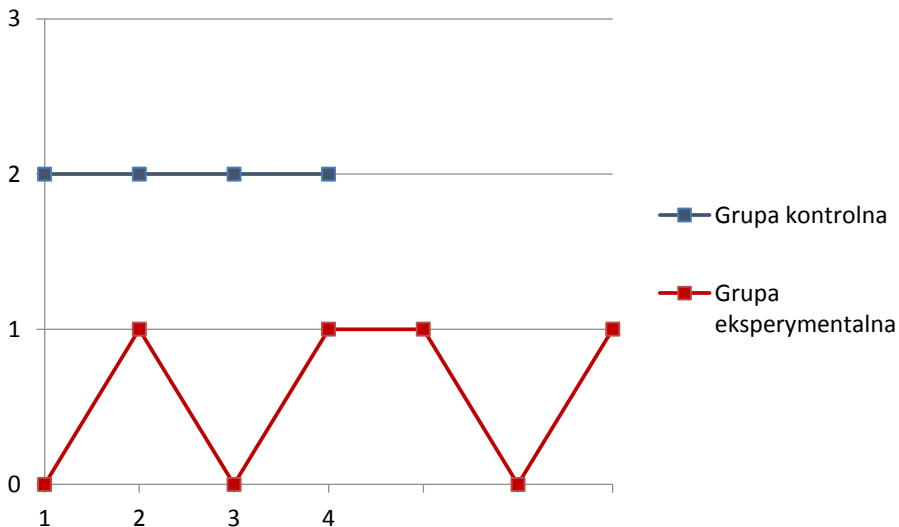


Chart 4. Selection of item 7 (too many anecdotes; negative opinions) by the experimental group and the control group

Source: Author's research.

The items in both categories, i.e. positive and negative opinions, were also summed up for both study groups (separately) (Tab. 6).

Tab. 6. The total numerical comparison for four selected items from the positive and negative opinion categories, divided into the experimental and control group

„Impressions” in total	Item name	Experimental group (lectures 1–7)	Control group (lectures 1–4)
Positive	2 – examples, anecdotes	63	32
	5 – pictures on slides	4	–
	8 – jokes	11	–
Negative	7 – too many examples, anecdotes	4	8
Total – positive opinions / negative opinions		78 / 4	32 / 8

Source: Author's research.

On the basis of the presented collective results, it can be noticed that in the experimental group, negative opinions constituted less than 5% of all responses.

However, in the control group, negative responses constituted 25% of all opinions. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students from the experimental group enjoyed the lectures much more (over 95% of positive opinions) than the students from the control group (75% of positive opinions). This is also illustrated in chart 5 below.

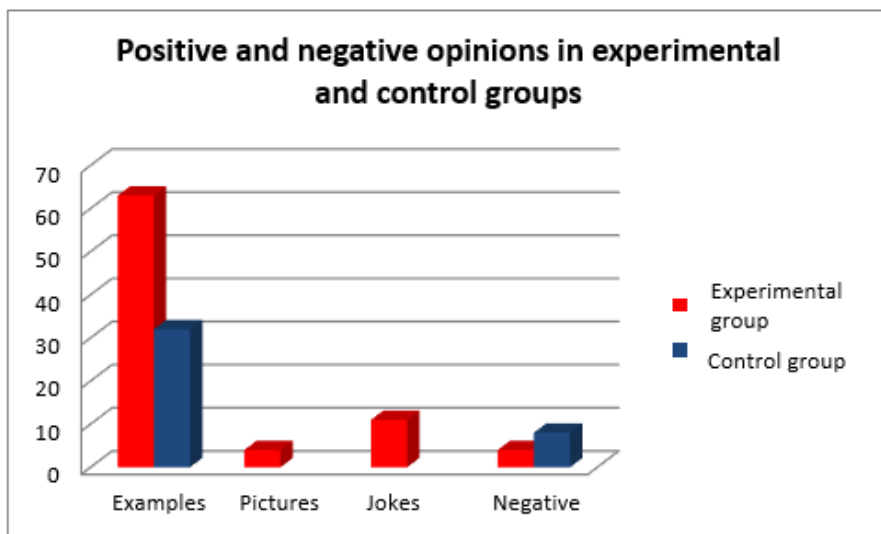


Chart 5. Graphical presentation of the total results for four selected items from the categories of positive and negative opinions, divided into the experimental and control groups

Source: Author's research.

Discussion of the results

The aim of the conducted experimental research was to verify the hypothesis assuming the presence of the influence of sexist digressions added to the course lectures on the attractiveness of the lectures for students participating in them. The research used the method of an experiment in natural conditions, which consisted in adding “sexist anecdotes”, which were not related to the content of the course, to the lectures. The experimental group was acquainted with such anecdotes at each lecture, while the control group participated in the lectures without such additions.

The collected empirical data was statistically analysed using the chi-square test. The test proved the significance of the results in the experimental group for positive opinions. As far as the key items tested in the experiment are concerned (as shown by the percentages and graphic illustrations), their presence at the lectures clearly increases the attractiveness of the lectures in the assessment of students. Statistical analyses (both in the experimental and control groups) proved that the assumed alternative hypothesis was confirmed. The respondents distinguished as particularly attractive: examples enhancing the so-called dry (theoretical) content, funny pictures on slides and jokes/joking remarks. Compared to the control group, the acceptance of the lecture formula (with the experimental procedure) was very clearly marked in the experimental group.

The obtained results require consideration and possibly new hypotheses to be verified in subsequent empirical projects. Trying to explain the potential reason for the attractiveness of lectures with sexist anecdotes, it can be reviewed whether it is not due to the specificity of lecture forms, which, in the opinion of students, are usually “monotonous”, “wearisome” or even “boring”. Funny and off-topic anecdotes make students feel amused and therefore enhance positive attitude towards participating in the lecture. Another reason may be the “nature” of sexist anecdotes, i.e. their commonness and acceptability in society. Students focus on the overt layer of the message, which is easy to perceive and evokes a sense of belonging to a certain communicative community, strengthening the sense of security and understanding. The hidden layer of sexist anecdotes in Polish society is rarely subject to public “analysis”, so the feeling of embarrassment, humiliation, irritation, etc. due to their promotion of inequality in relations between women and men is considered a discomfort of a “badly” – in the common sense – socialized individual. Yet another reason may be the specific “exoticism” of telling “jokes” to students at an academic lecture. From the information obtained from the chairwoman of the *Komisja ds. Oceny Jakości Kształcenia* [Education Quality Assessment Committee], I concluded that students of our institute have not reported (in anonymous evaluation surveys) the problem of sexism at the university for at least last 10 years (such cases were previously reported.) Therefore, one might wonder if telling stories of this type was not a kind of cultural shock for them and at the same time a possibility of “reacting” to the need of respecting the Western rule of political correctness. At this point, however, it is necessary to note that not the (sexist) anecdotes were considered the most positive (95 opinions in total – 63 in the experimental group and 32 in the control group), but the interesting subject of the lectures (110 opinions in total – 78 to 32). On the other hand, with regard to negative

opinions, most frequently attention was given to position 1 (too fast pace of the lecture; 24 opinions in total) and 8 (others, e.g. too short breaks between classes; 22 opinions in total).

The study's results not only confirm the hypothesis, but also provoke further questions and encourage further research. Finally, I would like to mention that these results were truly surprising to me, because – as a student – I do not accept “decorating” academic lectures with sexism. Quantitative research, however, does not allow for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study, but the outcomes allow the formulation of further hypotheses worth verification.

References

- Basford, T. E., Offermann L. R., & Behrend S. T. (2014). Do You See What I See? Perceptions of Gender Microaggressions in the Workplace. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 38(3), 340–349, doi: 10.1177/0361684313511420.
- Benokraitis, N. V. (1997). How Subtle Sex Discrimination Works. In: N.V. Benokraitis (Ed.), *Subtle Sexism. Current Practices and Prospects for Change* (pp. 14–32). Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.
- Budrowska, B. (2004). Szklany sufit, czyli co blokuje kariery kobiet [The Glass Ceiling, or What Blocks Women's Careers]. *Kultura i Historia*, 6, 5–19.
- Buregren, S. (2007). *Mala książka o feminizmie* [The Little Book of Feminism]. Warszawa: Jacek Santorski & Ska.
- Chmura-Rutkowska, I., & Mazurek, M. (2019). (Nie)widzialne granice. Gender [(In)visible Borders. Gender]. In: K. Szafraniec (Ed.), *Młodzi 2018. Wyzwania cywilizacyjne, edukacyjne konieczności* [Young 2018. Civilization Challenges, Educational Necessities], (pp. 129–145). Warszawa: A PROPOS Serwis Wydawniczy Anna Sikorska–Michalak.
- Coady, A. (2018). The Origin of Sexism in Language. *Gender & Language*, 12(3), 271–293, doi: 10.1558/genl.31445.
- Górnikowska-Zwolak, E. (2006). *Mysł feministyczna jako nurt rozważań w pedagogice społecznej* [Feminist Thought as a Line of Considerations in Social Pedagogy]. Mysłowice: Wydawnictwo Górnos Śląskiej Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej.
- Górnikowska-Zwolak, E., & Matysiak–Błaszczuk, A. (2018). „Nasz udział w budowaniu życia”. Ruch kobiet w stulecie praw kobiet [“Our Participation in Building Life”. The Women's Movement for a Century of Women's Rights]. *Pedagogika Społeczna*, 4(70), 303–313.
- Górnikowska-Zwolak, E. (2002). Wpływ struktury języka na konceptualizację świata społecznego (na pozycję społeczną kobiety i mężczyzny) [The Influence of the Structure of

- Language on the Conceptualization of the Social World (on the Social Position of a Woman and a Man]. In: A. Radziejewicz-Winnicki, & E. Bielska (Eds.), *Edukacja a życie codzienne* [Education and Everyday Life], vol. 1 (pp. 201–215]. Katowice: Wyd. UŚ.
- Górnikowska-Zwolak, E. (2019). Wzmocniona obecność języka wykluczającego w polskiej przestrzeni publicznej – alert dla pedagogów [Increased Presence of the Language of Exclusion in Polish Public Space – an Alert for Educators]. *Kultura i Edukacja*, 1, 126–141, doi: 10.15804/kie.2019.01.08
- Grabowska, B. (2015). O gender przed gender, czyli XVIII i XIX-wieczna refleksja na temat kulturowych i społecznych uwarunkowań kobiecości. Mary Wollstonecraft i John Stuart Mill [On Gender Before Gender, or the 18th and 19th Century Reflection on the Cultural and Social Determinants of Femininity. Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill]. In: D. Majka–Rostek, E. Banaszak, & P. Czajkowski (Eds.), *Genderowe filtry. Różnorodność doświadczenia i percepcji płci w przestrzeni publicznej i prywatnej* [Gender Filters. Diversity of Gender Experience and Perception in Public and Private Spaces], (pp. 8–18). Wrocław: Wyd. Instytutu Socjologii UWr.
- Grzyb, M. (2014). Kobietobójstwo. Kryminologiczna charakterystyka zjawiska [Femicide. A Criminological Characterization of the Phenomenon]. *Archiwum Kryminologii*, 36, 75–108. doi: 10.7420/AK2014C.
- Hildago, D. A., & Royce, T. (2017). Sexism. In: B. T. Turner, C. Kyung–Sup, C.F. Epstein, P. Kivisto, W. Outhwaite, & J. M. Ryan (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. Hoboken: Wiley–Blackwell, doi: 10.1002/9781118430873.est0329.
- Kalinowska-Nawrotek, B. (2004). Formy dyskryminacji kobiet na polskim rynku pracy [Forms of Discrimination Against Women on the Polish Labor Market]. *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny*, 66(2), 231–245.
- Kimmel, M. (2015). *Spoleczeństwo genderowe* [The Gendered Society]. Gdańsk: Wyd. UG.
- Kwiatkowska, A. (2014). Seksizm [Sexism]. In: M. Rudaś-Grodzka, K. Nadana-Sokołowska, A. Mroziak, K. Szczuka, K. Czeczot, B. Smoleń, A. Nasiłowska, E. Serafin, & A. Wróbel (Eds.), *Encyklopedia Gender. Płeć w kulturze* [Encyclopedia of Gender. Gender in Culture], (pp. 501–503). Warszawa: Czarna Owca.
- Łosiewicz, M., & Czechowska-Derkacz, B. (2019). Kryzys obyczajowy na uczelni wyższej w świetle przekazów medialnych [A Moral Crisis at the University in the Light of Media Coverage]. *Kultura – media – teologia*, 37, 25–37.
- Nelson, T. D. (2003). *Psychologia uprzedzeń* [Psychology of Prejudice]. Gdańsk: GWP.
- Ostaszewska, A. (2017). Czarne protesty. Doświadczenia społeczne jako podstawa communitas kobiet [Black Protests. Social Experiences as the Basis of Women’s Communitas]. *Pedagogika Społeczna*, 4(66), 117–132.

- Pankowska, D. (2014). Kwestia płci i rodzaju – „nieobecny dyskurs” w kształceniu nauczycieli [The Question of Sex and Gender. “The Non-existent Discourse” in the Teacher Training]. *Przeгляд Badań Edukacyjnych*, 19(2), 129–148, doi: 10.12775/PBE.2014.025.
- Pankowska, D., & Chomczyńska-Rubacha, M. (2015). Formalne podstawy edukacji a polityka gender mainstreaming [Formal Foundations of Education and Gender Mainstreaming Policy]. *Studia Edukacyjne*, 36, 55–72. doi: 10.14746/se.2015.36.4.
- Riger, S. (2016). On Becoming a Feminist Psychologist. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(4), 479–487. doi: 10.1177/0361684316676539.
- Slany, K., Struzik, J., Ślusarczyk, M., Kowalska, B., Warat, M., Krzaklewska, E., Ciaputa, E., Ratecka, A., & Król, A. (Eds.) (2020). *Utopie kobiet. 100 lat praw wyborczych kobiet (1918–2018)* [Women’s Utopias. 100 Years of Women’s Suffrage (1918–2018)]. Kraków: Wyd. UJ.
- Solnit, R. (2017). *Mężczyźni objaśniają mi świat* [Men Explain Thing to Me]. Kraków: Karakter.
- Solorzano, D. G. (1998). Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 121–136.
- Tambe, A. (2018). Reckoning with the Silences of #MeToo. *Feminist Studies*, 44(1), 197–203. doi:10.15767/feministstudies.44.1.0197.
- Titkow, A., Duch-Krzystoszek, D., & Budrowska, B. (2004). *Nieodpłatna praca kobiet. Mity, realia, perspektywy* [Unpaid Women’s Work. Myths, Realities, Perspectives]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (2011). *Wolanie o prawa kobiety* [The Vindication of The Rights of Women]. Warszawa: Mamina.
- Yoder, J. D. (2013). *Women and Gender. Making a Difference*. Cornwall–on–Hudson: Sloan Publishing.
- Zadykowicz, A. (2012). Zróżnicowanie genderowe języka w środowisku akademickim a strategia „gender mainstreaming” w świetle najnowszych badań [Gender Differentiation of Language in Academia and the Strategy of “Gender mainstreaming” in the Light of the Latest Research]. *Prace Językoznawcze*, 14, 273–285.