

Onamaimię (She Has a Name): Combating Sexist Hate Speech in Poland

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Girls are commonly and casually called derogatory terms. The problem is often exacerbated when these terms are not regarded as sexist hate speech because they do not appear obviously offensive. We selected four of those Polish terms to craft and build a social campaign against sexist hate speech called Onamaimię (She Has a Name).

Hate speech towards women and girls in Poland

Exposure to hate speech is relatively high and can be harmful. Research from Warsaw University's Centre for Research on Prejudice found that up to 70% of young Poles said they encountered hate speech online (Bilewicz, Marchlewska, Soral, & Winiewski, 2014). For women and girls, a 2012 EU Social Survey showed that almost 40% of women up to age 30 had experienced sexism, including sexist hate speech (Council of Europe). As shown by research on hate speech towards other minority groups (Bilewicz, Marchlewska, Soral, & Winiewski, 2014), this kind of exposure to hate speech has the possibility of reinforcing prejudices of both the majority and minority group towards each other.

Although there is some research and strategy about this topic at the EU level (Council of Europe, 2016), there is very little research in and specific to Poland. This reflects a lack of interest on funders' part and conveys how little concrete knowledge both researchers and the general public have about the magnitude and details of the problem.

Despite the lack of official research, many Polish women told our team that they had been called derogatory terms growing up and felt strongly about the sexist nature of these terms. Anecdotally, this was reinforced during our team's visit to Aim High Association, a local NGO that works with underprivileged youth. Aim High staff members who work closely with adolescent girls told us that one of the major issues their girls face is encountering hate speech and name-calling at school and online. Often, these girls are unclear about what qualifies as hate speech and unsure how to react when faced with it.

Developing the campaign

Our goal was to use an unexpected but obvious space to ask Poles if the comparisons that these derogatory terms state about women make any sense.

We were inspired by campaigns such as Everyday Feminism (Everyday Feminism) and the [Mamygłos initiative](#) (Mamygłos), which work on empowering women and girls in their everyday life. These campaigns challenged us to focus the scope of our campaign. Because we heard that girls sometimes didn't know what terms they could tolerate, we wanted to center our campaign on a few seemingly innocuous words that represent the beginning of sexist hate speech. We chose the Polish words: *świnia*, *pasztet*, *laska*, and *foczka*. These words roughly translate to pig, pate, seal, and cane. All of these terms directly objectify girls by comparing them to an animal or inanimate object.

During the Humanity in Action Poland program, we heard from the creative director of a PR agency who challenged us to think about social campaigns from an advertising perspective. The examples provided had an element of surprise and meeting people where they're at. With these campaigns in mind, we zoned in on the idea of being unexpectedly confronted with the terms *świnia*, *paszтет*, *laska*, and *foczka* to see what the reaction would be like. We chose the coffee cup because it's a place where a person's name is often written. We wanted to make the connection that seeing the terms *świnia*, *paszтет*, *laska*, and *foczka* on a coffee cup is essentially replacing a woman's name and reducing her personhood. We named the campaign *Onamaimię* (She Has a Name) to convey this message.

In collaboration with Polish artist Aga Strzeżek, the campaign made illustrations of the four words in a simple, black and white style as a visual representation of the comparisons that are made when women are called *świnia*, *paszтет*, *laska*, and *foczka*. The visuals (Figure 1) form the core of the campaign.

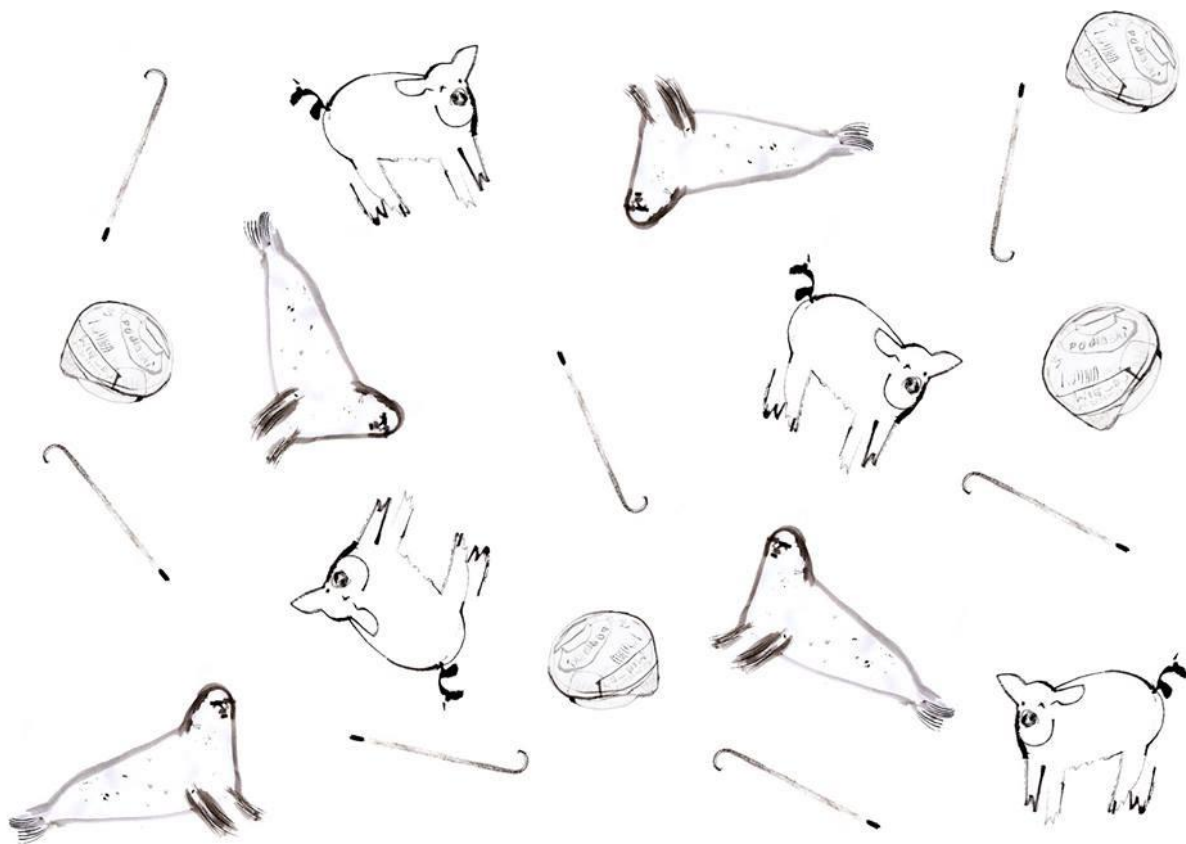


Figure 1: Campaign illustrations of the objects girls are compared to

In addition, we collaborated with Polish artist Katarzyna Piróg to create stop-motion animations further illustrating the concepts (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Still of a campaign animation

The campaign includes two parts:

1. Stickers on beverage cups at local cafes and restaurants: The physical, offline component of our campaign involves making stickers from the campaign images and distributing them at various local cafes and restaurants on customers' beverage cups. The idea is that customers will see these images where their names might be written and follow the link on the sticker to see what the campaign is about on the online portion of our campaign, the *Onamaimię* Facebook fan page.
2. Facebook fan page: We created an online Facebook fan page at <https://www.facebook.com/onamaimie/>. On the page, we have content diving further into the four terms including images, text, and animation. We hope to provide more information and engage users more constantly through the page.

We hope that these two components together will have the effect of getting the generally middle to upper class Poles who buy coffee to stop and take a moment and think about the usage of these four terms. Ultimately, we hope to encourage people to stop using *świnia*, *paszтет*, *laska*, and *foczka* when referring to girls.

Implementing the campaign

Our team was able to implement the core components of our campaign. However, as with most things in an implementation phase, certain parts took longer than anticipated. In this case, some of the difficulties included logistical difficulties and time constraints.

In order to adjust, we made a number of modifications. We were originally focused on designing and distributing coffee cup sleeves, but the ordering process and time necessary seemed to be an issue. At the suggestion of one of our café partners, we decided to use stickers, which could be placed on the cup and include cold beverages as well. In order to get the stickers printed in the time allotted, we changed the shape from circular to rectangular. Another early idea was a photo or video campaign around the idea of

how people would react if they saw the words *świnia*, *paszтет*, *laska*, and *foczka* written where their name should be. While we were unable to do this, it is a viable idea if the campaign be continued.

One unexpected surprise was the enthusiasm of local cafes that we approached about distributing stickers. Companies and organizations seemed eager to collaborate for a socially conscious cause, especially if it requires little time or manpower investment on their part. We were able to partner with a local café and supporting partner, Państwomiesto, to distribute stickers with the campaign design and link to 100+ customers who bought beverages there.

Reactions to the campaign have been generally positive. Our stickers were distributed at 3 cafes around Warsaw. On social media, the Facebook fan page garnered approximately 500 likes. Posts highlighting sexist hate speech and general sexism in Poland reached approximately 300 people on average with some of the most popular posts reaching over 1,100 people. However, it seems like much of this audience already shares our opinions or are mutual acquaintances supporting the project. This highlights the importance of the offline component of our campaign like engaging local artists and reaching local businesses.

Lessons from the campaign:

Through the course of developing, implementing, and reflecting on the campaign, we learned that it's important to think about how to reach an audience that may not already share your beliefs. For us, the offline component was especially important for this. Our ideas changed throughout the course of the campaign, and we learned that it's a natural part of the process. The important takeaway was to make sure all changes were communicated and all team members are on the same page.

If the campaign is continued, we have ideas to increase its scope and reach. We can increase collaborations with more in cafes and restaurants in Warsaw to make the physical component of the campaign more easily accessible with a higher number of locations. We could increase the presence and reach of the visuals associated with the campaign by submitting to design competitions with the permission and continued collaboration of the artist. We will add more words to the list. Most immediately, we would like to add some sort of pledge page so visitors to the Facebook fan page can engage directly and take an action in promising to not use these terms anymore when referring to girls. As much as we hope the campaign will increase awareness and conversation on a societal level, we also do this work in the hopes that an individual girl will be spared the pain of not being called by her name.

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