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YOUNG WOMEN'S SEXIST BELIEFS AND INTERNALIZED MISOGYNY: LINKS WITH  
PSYCHOSOCIAL AND RELATIONAL FUNCTIONING AND SOCIOPOLITICAL  
BEHAVIOR

by

Audrianna Dehlin

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with a major in

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## ABSTRACT

Young Women's Sexist Beliefs and Internalized Misogyny: Links with Psychosocial and  
Relational Functioning and Sociopolitical Behavior

by

Audrianna Dehlin

Utah State University, 2018

Major Professor: Renee V. Galliher, Ph.D.  
Department: Psychology

Past literature has examined the impacts of sexism and its correlates. In this study, religious fundamentalism and relationship quality were identified as important factors related to sexist attitudes and internalized misogyny. Two hundred ten women, ages 18-25, completed a survey including the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale, Attitudes Toward Women Scale, Internalized Misogyny Scale, and Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Higher religious fundamentalism was associated with lower relationship quality, mediated by internalized misogyny, traditional gender roles, and hostile sexism. While mental health outcomes were also collected, associations proved to be insignificant. The intersection of sexist attitudes and internalized misogyny with political affiliation and voting behavior was also explored. Participants who voted for Clinton/Kane reported lower levels of internalized misogyny when compared to those who voted for Trump/Pence. In addition, Democrat and Independent individuals reported significantly lower levels of internalized misogyny and hostile sexism when compared to Republican and Not Affiliated individuals.

Keywords: sexism; relationship quality; religious fundamentalism; Trump; internalized misogyny

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Audrianna J. Dehlin

## Young Women's Sexist Beliefs and Internalized Misogyny: Links with Psychosocial and Relational Functioning and Sociopolitical Behavior

(Word Count: 4,822)

Sexism can be defined as a belief, practice, or system that supports the idea that the male sex is intrinsically superior to the female sex (Anderson, 2010; Borrell, Artazcoz, Gil-Gonzalez, Perez, K., Perez, G., Vives-Cases, & Rohlfs, 2011). Past studies have found sexism to be a prevalent form of prejudice that most women experience on a weekly and sometimes daily basis (Berg, 2006; Swim, Hyers, Coher, & Ferguson, 2001). In one such study, Berg (2006) distributed 1,100 surveys within a five-month period. Out of a sample of 382 women, all participants reported experiencing sexism, and 25% said they felt it happened "a lot". In another study, three groups of participants were asked to record the number of sexist incidents they observed within a span of seven to thirteen days (Swim et al., 2001). The first group, with forty participants, reported experiencing one incident per week on average. The second group, with thirty-seven participants, recorded approximately the same number of incidents as the first. The third group, with seventy-three participants, documented witnessing sexism around once a day. These results suggest that sexism is common, and often a daily occurrence for many women.

### **Hostile and Benevolent Sexism**

Ambivalent sexism refers to sexist beliefs that fall into two major types, hostile and benevolent (Anderson, 2010; Huang, Davies, Sibley, & Osborne, 2016). Hostile sexism aims to validate "...male power, traditional gender roles, and men's exploitation of women as sexual objects through derogatory characterizations of women" (Anderson, 2010). While hostile sexism can be easily identified, benevolent sexism has a tendency to go unnoticed (Huang et al., 2016). Benevolent sexism "relies on kinder and gentler justifications of male dominance and prescribed

gender roles; it recognizes men's dependence on women and takes a romanticized view of heterosexual relationships" (Anderson, 2010).

Because it is subtler by nature, people are much less likely to be held accountable when conveying benevolent sexism in comparison to hostile sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Becker (2010) used the hostile and benevolent sexism framework to examine sexist beliefs about different stereotypical groups of women. Some examples of these labels included "career women", "feminists", "housewives", and "temptresses". Individuals were more likely to report hostile sexism as being directed toward feminists or career women, than themselves. Additionally, participants with higher levels of hostile sexism reported feelings of hostility towards non-traditional groups in particular, career women and feminists. Casad and colleagues (2015) collected online survey responses from 99 female participants who were engaged to be married within the year. The survey included measures of benevolent sexism, relationship quality, and well-being. Positive correlations were found between benevolent sexism and adverse relationship outcomes. Individuals involved in these relationships reported feeling lower relationship satisfaction and self-assurance. In addition, benevolent sexism endorsement was associated with lower educational expectations.

### **Correlates of Sexism**

A number of recent studies have examined important links between sexism and the psychosocial functioning of victims. Experiencing prejudice and discrimination has been found to result in a wide range of negative mental health and well-being outcomes, and influence dynamics within romantic relationships.

**Mental health and well-being.** Berg (2006) analyzed 382 female participant responses to a survey measuring gender-related stressors, frequency of experienced sexist events, and

PTSD symptoms. Surveys were distributed in a variety of public spaces, meetings, classes, and women's organizations. Some were mailed by request through a feminist social work list server and women's web site. Results showed a significant positive correlation between experienced levels of everyday sexism, and PTSD scores. This relationship was found to be especially strong when individuals reported "recent sexist degradation". Similar results were reported by Borrell and colleagues (2011) after analyzing data from a health survey with responses from over 10,000 women. Individuals who reported experiencing sexism had poorer overall mental health when compared to those who did not perceive sexism. The same was true when researchers looked at the prevalence of specific types of mental illness. Pervasiveness of depression and anxiety was highest among survey participants who perceived sexism.

**Romantic relationships.** As research on sexism increases, its role in romantic relationships has emerged as a significant area of study. Lee and colleagues (2010) looked at the endorsement of benevolent and hostile sexism ideals and the traits American men and women preferred/selected for in romantic relationships. To examine this tendency, a relationship questionnaire was distributed to 311 undergraduate volunteers. American women and men who endorsed benevolent sexism ideals were more likely to select for a "traditional gender partner" when compared to those who did not endorse benevolent sexism ideals. For women, "traditional" was characterized by selecting traits such as "romantic strong" and "traditional male", while discarding traits like "feminine". For men, "traditional" was characterized by selecting traits such as "warm and traditional female" and discarding "not traditional" traits. Another study examined levels of hostile and benevolent sexism, and relationship conflict (Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011). Participants included 99 heterosexual couples who filled out a questionnaire about relationship quality and were then observed while having a conversation about their significant other about

bringing about some desired relational change. Higher levels of hostile sexism in men was related to lower openness and lower discussion success in both men and women. Higher levels of benevolent sexism in men was correlated with discussion success for male, but not female, participants. So far, studies conducted specifically on sexism and relationship quality have not found a statistically significant correlation between study variables.

### **Internalized Misogyny**

In addition to the sexist attitudes individuals confront externally on a day to day basis, these beliefs can be internalized. According to Spengler (2014), internalized misogyny is made up of two main elements: self-objectification and passive acceptance of gender roles. These components are linked to a plethora of negative outcomes including identity foreclosure, psychological distress, disordered eating, and mental illness. The exact nature of internalized misogyny is unknown, because often this form of oppression goes unnoticed. However, one study found that women conveyed dialectic practices of internalized sexism on average 11 times per 10-minute increment of conversation (Bearman, Korobov, Thorne, 2009). This shockingly high rate illustrated just how extensive internalized sexism truly is within society.

Internalized misogyny has been measured in a variety of different ways. The most prevalent method used was created by Piggot (2004), known as the “Internalized Misogyny Scale”. Another method is through qualitative interviews or recordings. Analysis of this data involves intensive coding based on themes like competitive commentary, self-objectification, expressions of helplessness, remarks about observance of traditional gender roles, and placing males as a top priority (Bearman et al., 2009).

### **Correlates of Internalized Misogyny**

While research on internalized misogyny is still building, there are some studies that have assessed outcomes associated with women's internalization of sexist beliefs. In 2009, Szymanski and colleagues examined the relationship between sexist events and psychological distress. Participants included 274 heterosexual women from a large university, and data was collected through online survey responses. Researchers found that internalized misogyny moderated, and "intensified", the relationship between sexism and distress (p.101). A later study took this result one step further and examined the direct correlation between psychological distress and internalized misogyny (Szymanski & Henrichs-Bech, 2013). For this research, 473 participants completed surveys assessing internalized misogyny, coping, and psychological distress. Results found internalized misogyny to be a significant predictor of psychological distress.

### **Sociopolitical Context of Sexism**

Sexism is a worldwide phenomenon that can exist in a wide variety of locations and cultures. This type of prejudice takes on many forms, one being honor beliefs--a strict set of rules for women to follow that typically include compliance to men, sexual purity, and religious adherence. Glick and colleagues (2016) examined the association between these honor beliefs and two correlates, religiosity and sexism. Their sample consisted of 313 women and 122 men from Turkey, a country where honor beliefs are a common aspect of society. These individuals participated by completing an online survey. Results showed that males were more apt to report endorsing honor beliefs when compared to females. That said, on average females still reported honor belief scores that were above the midpoint. Hostile and benevolent sexism were found to be positively correlated with religiosity. Furthermore, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and religiosity were found to be positively correlated with honor belief acceptance. In short, sexism

was closely associated with participants' level of religiosity and observance of traditional gender roles.

Huang and colleagues (2016) implemented a series of two studies. In the first, data were analyzed from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study, or NZAVS, at waves three and four. Sample size varied depending on the time point--with 6,884 participants at time three, and 12,183 participants at time four. The study examined individuals' sexism, abortion attitudes, and religiosity, along with their support or rejection of gender-based affirmative action policies and included a follow-up one year later. Benevolent sexism was found to have a negative effect on affirmative abortion attitudes over time. In the second study, 309 undergraduate students completed a questionnaire measuring sexism, abortion attitudes, and motherhood attitudes. From this survey, researchers found traditional views of motherhood to be negatively correlated with support for women's reproductive autonomy. Motherhood attitudes were also found to be a mediator between benevolent sexism and opposition of abortion. These two studies show that benevolent sexism is connected through motherhood attitudes to the undermining of women's reproductive rights.

**U.S. political climate.** There is sufficient reason to believe that the overall climate surrounding women's issues is becoming more contentious. Because of this, discussion of internalized sexism, or women holding beliefs that support their own oppression, is in the mainstream consciousness (Fenton, 2016; Moore, 2016). Conversations surrounding gender equality are a central component of ongoing divisive dialogue. In this climate, political affiliation and voting behavior are very relevant to our study.

Within this context, we posed the following questions. First, how are sexist attitudes and beliefs related to psychosocial health and relationship quality? Second, do sexist attitudes

mediate links between religious fundamentalism and psychosocial health or relationship quality? And third, is there a relationship between endorsement of sexist attitudes and political affiliation or behavior?

## **Methods**

### **Study Design**

A correlational design was used to examine the relationship between internalized misogyny, psychological health, relationship quality, religious fundamentalism, and political behavior.

### **Participants and Procedures**

Our sample included 210 women, age 18-25 ( $M = 22$ ;  $SD = 2.33$ ). This age restriction ensured that individuals were able to answer questions about their voting behavior and political affiliation, focusing on the young adult population in particular. These participants were recruited through a Qualtrics survey panel. Eligibility requirements included identifying as a woman, being able to complete the survey in English, residence in the United States, and age between 18 and 25. Qualtrics representatives worked with researchers to prepare an online Qualtrics survey, and then coordinated with study panel partners to recruit a prearranged number of participants. Survey panelists created accounts with the survey panels, and were offered the opportunity to participate in surveys for which they meet criteria through standardized email notifications. If they choose to participate in surveys that are offered to them, they are compensated by the survey panel partner in accordance with the panel guidelines. Survey participants were typically compensated in the form of airline miles, gift cards, cash, merchandise, or coupons. Complete, cleaned participant data was delivered to researchers in an anonymous format.

Of the sample, 71 % identified as heterosexual, 3.8% gay/lesbian, 18.1% bisexual, and 7.2% other. Regarding ethnicity, 58.1% were White/European American, 27.1% African American, 3.3% American Indian/Alaska Native, 7.6% Asian/Asian American, 12.4% Latinx, 1% Middle Eastern, .5% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1.4% Other. Participants were widely distributed in terms of location, with 39 out of 50 U.S. states represented. In terms of relationship status, 35% were single/not dating, nearly 10% dating non-exclusively, 36% in a committed relationship, nearly 18% engaged/married, and 1.5% separated/divorced. Education level ranged from less than high school to professional—with 1/3 having completed high school, and 1/3 having completed some college. Participants centered around the lower end of the income scale. Religious/faith tradition was widespread across all labels of identification, including agnostic and atheist. Regarding political affiliation, over 35% of participants identified as Democrat, 13% Republican, 2% Libertarian, over 20% Independent, 27% Not Affiliated, and 2% Other.

## **Measures**

**Demographic information.** This section included items assessing age, biological sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, educational status, relationship status, political affiliation, voting behavior, attitudes toward feminism, and ethnicity/race.

**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI).** (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This measure consists of 22 items that can each be rated by participants on a scale from 0 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). Items are divided into two types, hostile and benevolent sexism. Following reverse scoring adjustments, the ambivalent sexism total can be calculated by taking the average of the hostile and benevolent sexism scores. According to Glick & Fiske (1996), alphas ranged from .62 to .86, with convergent and discriminate validity was determined over six different

measure development samples. In the current study, hostile sexism demonstrated an alpha of .86, while benevolent sexism demonstrated an alpha of .80.

**Internalized Misogyny Scale (IMS).** (Piggott, 2004). This measure consists of 17 items that can each be rated by participants on a score from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Totals range from 17 to 119, with higher scores indicating higher levels of internalized misogyny. Piggott (2004) calculated total Cronbach's alphas to be .88 and .87. This scale was also found to have good validity, correlating significantly with the Body Image scale and Modern Sexism scale. In the current study, this scale demonstrated an alpha of .93.

**Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS).** (Spence & Hahn, 1997). This measure consists of 12 items that can each be rated by participants on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Following reverse scoring adjustments, higher scores indicate a stronger adherence to traditional gender roles. Test-retest reliability was found to be acceptable, with Cronbach's alphas in the mid .80s or higher. Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .88. In the current study, this scale demonstrated an alpha of .89.

**Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale.** (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). This measure consists of 12 items that can be rated by participants on a 9-point scale. Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2004) calculated an alpha of .92, and a correlation of .68 with right-wing authoritarianism. In the current study, this scale demonstrated an alpha of .88.

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item Scale (GAD-7).** (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Lowe, 2006). This measure looks at day-to-day experiences of anxiety, and consists of 7 items that can be rated on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 3 (nearly every day). Higher scores indicate higher levels of anxiety. Spitzer and colleagues (2006) found the scale to have a Cronbach's alpha of .92, with a test-retest reliability of 0.83. The GAD-7 was also found to have an

intraclass correlation of 0.83, demonstrating good procedural validity. In the current study, this scale demonstrated an alpha of .92.

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).** (Rosenberg, 1965). This measure consists of 10 items that can be rated by participants on a scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Following reverse scoring adjustments, higher scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem. Rosenberg (1965) found the measure to have a test-retest reliability of .85, with a Cronbach's alpha of .92. RSES has also proved to have good validity. In the current study, this scale demonstrated an alpha of .84.

**Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D).** (Radloff, 1977). This measure looks at experiences of depression over the past week, and consists of 20 items rated on a scale from rarely or none of the time to most or all of the time. Following reverse score adjustments, higher scores indicate higher levels of depression. Radloff (1977) found the measure to have higher internal consistency, with alphas of about .85 and .90. Test-retest correlations were found to be between .45 and .70, and has been shown to effectively discriminate between depressive and non-depressive cases. In the current study, this scale demonstrated an alpha of .90.

**Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS).** (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). This measure consists of 14 items that can be answered by participants on a 5 or 6-point scale. Items are divided into three scales: consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. Items 1-6 correspond with consensus, items 7-10 with satisfaction, and items 11-14 with cohesion. Higher scores indicate higher relationship quality. Busby and colleagues (1995) calculated an alpha of .90 for the overall scale, and the measure's validity has been found to effectively discern

between satisfactory and distressed relationships. In the current study, three alphas were calculated for each subscale--relationship consensus = .83, satisfaction = .83, and cohesion = .82.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations for all study variables, along with bivariate correlations between measures of sexist attitudes and psychosocial functioning. Most of the means for measures of sexist attitudes were roughly normally distributed around the mid-points of the scales. Measures of mental health were also roughly normally distributed, but mean scores for relationship quality were near the high end of the scales.

The most consistent patterns of significant bivariate correlation were with relationship quality. Hostile sexism, internalized misogyny, and endorsement of traditional gender roles were all linked to lower relationship quality across the three RDAS scales. Higher levels of religious fundamentalism were associated with lower levels of self-esteem and with lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Additionally, higher levels of religious fundamentalism were associated with higher scores across three measures—internalized misogyny, ambivalent sexism, and attitudes toward women. There were, however, no significant correlations between measures of sexist attitudes and measures of mental health (i.e., depression, anxiety, or self-esteem). Table 1 displays these correlations.

### **Test of Mediation**

Primary mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2013). The PROCESS macro utilizes bootstrapping techniques and ordinary least square regression to calculate direct effects of the independent variable (religious fundamentalism) on the dependent variables (relationship quality), as well as the indirect effects of religious

fundamentalism through the sexism variables. Based on the patterns of bivariate correlation, mediation analyses were not conducted for the mental health outcomes, as there was no indication that either sexist attitudes or religious fundamentalism consistently linked to mental health. However, mediation models were tested using religious fundamentalism as the independent variable, the four measures of sexist attitudes as mediators (in four separate models), and the three RDAS scales as dependent variables in separate models. Table 2 presents a summary of the mediation models. Significant mediation (indirect effects) are indicated by confidence intervals that do not include zero. Across all models, there was no significant direct effect of religious fundamentalism on relationship quality. However, religious fundamentalism was strongly related to higher scores on all four measures of sexist ideology. Internalized Misogyny, Attitudes Toward Women, and Hostile Sexism all consistently demonstrated negative direct effects on RDAS scales. And finally, significant indirect effects of religious fundamentalism on all three RDAS scales emerged through Internalized Misogyny, Attitudes Toward Women, and Hostile Sexism. Higher levels of religious fundamentalism linked to higher endorsement of sexist attitudes, which in turn linked to lower relationship quality.

### **Political Behavior**

A series of one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine differences in sexist attitudes among participants in terms of political affiliation and voting behavior. Four groups were compared with regard to political affiliation (Republican, Democrat, Independent, not affiliated). Four groups were also compared with regard to voting behavior in the 2016 presidential election (voted for Trump, voted for Clinton, registered but did not vote, and not registered). Means and standard deviations for all groups for all measures of sexist ideology are presented in Table 3.

**Political affiliation.** All four ANOVAs examining difference among the political affiliation groups were statistically significant: internalized misogyny  $F(3, 198) = 6.76, p < .001, \eta = .09$ ; hostile sexism  $F(3, 198) = 11.83, p < .001, \eta = .15$ ; benevolent sexism  $F(3, 198) = 4.03, p = .008, \eta = .06$ ; and attitudes toward women  $F(3, 198) = 3.63, p = .014, \eta = .05$ .

**Voting behavior.** Three of the four ANOVAs examining differences among the voting groups were significant; internalized misogyny  $F(3, 194) = 5.56, p = .001, \eta = .08$ ; hostile sexism  $F(3, 194) = 10.04, p < .001, \eta = .13$ ; and benevolent sexism  $F(3, 194) = 3.902, p = .010, \eta = .06$ . There were no differences among the voting groups on attitudes toward women,  $F(3, 194) = 1.074, p = .361, \eta = .02$ .

**Post hoc tests.** Scheffe post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted among the four groups for each ANOVA. Table 3 illustrates significant mean differences between groups in terms of political affiliation and voting behavior. Participants who identified as Democrat or Independent reported significantly lower internalized misogyny and hostile sexism when compared to Republican and Not Affiliated participants. Republican participants reported significantly higher levels of benevolent sexism when compared to Independent participants. Not Affiliated participants reported stronger adherence to traditional gender roles when compared to Independent participants.

Participants who voted for Trump/Pence reported significantly higher levels of internalized misogyny when compared to participants who voted for Clinton/Kane or participants who were registered, but did not vote. Participants who voted for Trump/Pence or were not registered to vote reported significantly higher hostile sexism scores than those who voted for Clinton/Kane and those who were registered but did not vote. Participants who voted for Trump/Pence also reported significantly higher levels of benevolent sexism when compared to

those who voted for Clinton/Kane. No significant mean differences emerged between participants concerning adherence to traditional gender roles.

### **Discussion**

This study supports several conclusions regarding the connection between sexism and internalized misogyny and a variety of psychosocial and political factors. To begin, measures of sexist attitudes, adherence to traditional gender roles, and internalized misogyny were not related to mental health. However, they were consistently related to relationship quality and fundamentalist religious beliefs. Sexist beliefs mediated relationship between higher religious fundamentalism and lower relationship satisfaction. Participants who identified as Republican/not affiliated or voted for Trump/weren't registered to vote had the highest levels of sexist beliefs and internalized misogyny overall. Participants who identified as Democrats/Independents or voted for Clinton/were registered but did not vote had lower sexist beliefs overall. Group differences are more pronounced in internalized misogyny and hostile sexism, while differences are less pronounced in terms of benevolent sexism and adherence to traditional gender roles. The majority of participants had more liberal ideologies, and half participants did not vote. Of those who voted, 80% were Democrat.

As mentioned previously, past studies have identified religious fundamentalism as an important variable when considering the sociopolitical context of sexism. Many recent studies have further examined the extent of its role and relationship with sexist attitudes. One such study compared the relationship between religiosity, and both benevolent and hostile sexism (Burn & Busso, 2005). In order to do so, researchers distributed questionnaires to students at a California university. Higher religiosity was related to higher benevolent sexism, but not hostile sexism. A more recent study, discovered a similar result. Mikolajczak and Pietrzak (2014) collected survey

responses assessing religiosity and ambivalent sexism from Polish train passengers. A significant positive relationship existed between benevolent sexism and religiosity among women, but not men. Hostile sexism was again found to be a non-significant factor. Another study found different results when looking at gender differences between Muslim participants on these same measures (Tasdemir & Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2009). A significant positive correlation between religiosity and hostile sexism did exist for men, but not for women. In addition, there was no significant relationship between religiosity and benevolent sexism across both groups. All in all, research findings on the subject seem to be rather diverse in nature—making it difficult to form a general conclusion.

We examined the relationship between religious fundamentalism and relationship quality as mediated by internalized misogyny, hostile sexism, and traditional gender role adherence. Benevolent sexism was not found to be a significant mediator. First, no direct relationship was found between religious fundamentalism and RDAS cohesion. However, a significant indirect relationship was identified when hostile sexism and traditional gender roles were selected as mediators. Internalized misogyny was not found to be a significant mediator in the relationship between religious fundamentalism and RDAS cohesion. Second, no direct relationship was found between religious fundamentalism and RDAS satisfaction. However, a significant indirect relationship was identified when internalized misogyny, hostile sexism, and attitudes toward women were selected as mediators. Third, no direct relationship was found between religious fundamentalism and RDAS consensus. However, a significant indirect relationship was identified when internalized misogyny, hostile sexism, and attitudes toward women were selected as mediators. Finding hostile sexism to be significant among women in relation to religious fundametalnism counters the conclusions of some past studies on the topic (Burn &

Busso, 2005; Mikolajczak and Pietrzak, 2014; Tasdemir and Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2009). However, the non-significance of benevolent sexism in relation to religiosity is congruent with results drawn from Tasdemir and Sakalli-Ugurlu (2009). It is possible that the exclusion of men from our sample may have contributed to this occurrence. Regardless, our findings are imperative when considering their potential implications. Fundamentalist religious belief systems tend to emphasize the importance of family and marriage—which is viewed as a critical part of members' lives and development. Our data suggests that embracing these beliefs is associated with gender-related attitudes that are linked to poorer relationship quality. Because of this, religious communities appear to be socializing members in ways that are counterproductive to their own goals.

The election of Trump in the 2016 United States presidential election served as a catalyst for increased dialogue surrounding the impacts of sexism. Following the release of voting demographics, sources across various ideologies reported that white women were the second largest group responsible for Trump's election—with white men being the first ("Exit polls", 2016; "Fox News exit polls", 2016; Huang, Jacoby, Strickland, & Lai, 2016). This was particularly shocking when considering the release of a recorded conversation between Trump and an Access Hollywood interviewer that occurred pre-election (Fahrenthold, 2016). In the recording, Trump is heard relaying a variety of misogynistic sentiments—with the most quoted being, "grab 'em by the pussy" ("Transcript", 2016). This elicited passionate public conversation surrounding the presence and influence of sexism and internalized misogyny within the realm of politics. This translated into the writing and publication of media articles that hypothesized the role of internalized misogyny in the election ("A Vote", 2016; "How Unconscious", 2017). While peer-reviewed research on the subject is relatively scarce, there are a few publications in

existence. One such study examined the relationship between sexism and the 2016 presidential election (Bock, Byrd-Craven, & Burkley M., 2017). The study distributed online surveys to undergraduate students to assess variables such as sexist attitudes, adherence to traditional gender roles, and political party identification. Statistical analysis revealed that participants who reported higher scores on Hostile Sexism and Attitudes Toward Women measures were more likely to have voted for Trump. Our results are consistent with these findings. Because the present sociopolitical climate in America has greatly impacted public awareness, perceptions, and behavior regarding sexism research on the topic is even more relevant. We also observed that participants who were registered but did not vote, and participants who were not registered to vote reported distinctly different response patterns. There is a good chance that those who were registered but did not vote felt disillusioned by the 2016 election in particular. In contrast, individuals who were not registered to vote were completely disengaged from the political process. This difference might lead to a unique set of responses.

### **Limitations/Conclusions**

This study used a nationwide sample that was demographically representative of the United States. A range of psychosocial variables were selected as part of the survey that we anticipated would correlate with sexist beliefs, internalized misogyny, and adherence to traditional gender roles. As mentioned, the present study identified no links with mental health outcomes. This finding does not fit with the literature, which suggests the need for a more comprehensive assessment of mental health. While this study included anxiety and depression measures, there are some variables we did not include (i.e. PTSD symptoms). This provides an opportunity for future research. In addition, while we had reasons for constraining participant

age, we can't apply study findings to other developmental stages. This also provides a great opportunity for future research.

Because this study has far-reaching implications for the American population, it is important to understand the meaning and application of its findings. In order to address the higher levels of sexism found among religiously conservative participants, equity training might be implemented for religious clergy. A program of this nature might help empower spiritual leaders to nurture attitudes of equality within their followers and sermons. Another opportunity exists within sex education curricula. The integration of these findings into lesson plans might help combat previously learned sexist ideals. At a broader level, parents and teachers can gain enhanced awareness of the nature of sexism—enabling them to more readily observe and address these dynamics in children or young adults.

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Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Study Variables*

Variable	Internalized Misogyny	Ambivalent Sexism Inventory — Hostile	Ambivalent Sexism Inventory — Benevolent	Attitudes Toward Women Scale	Religious Fundament- -alism	Mean (SD)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 Scale	-.005	-.047	-.044	-.123	-.087	.244(.90)
Center for Epidemiological Studies- Depression Scale	-.010	-.089	-.100	-.025	-.092	2.27(.63)
Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale	.323**	.376**	.609**	.308**	--	4.57(1.66)
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	-.038	-.085	-.113	-.027	-.172*	2.36(.61)
RDAS— Consensus	-.248**	-.198**	-.099	-.289**	-.038	4.35(1.02)
RDAS— Satisfaction	-.288**	-.218**	-.128	-.411**	-.152*	4.41(1.15)
RDAS— Cohesion	-.112	-.162*	.013	-.145*	-.009	4.57(1.66)
Mean (SD)	3.30(1.32)	3.04(1.05)	3.49(.91)	1.76(.63)	4.57(1.66)	--

Table 2. *Tests of Mediation*

Dependent Variable	Effect	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
<b>Direct Effects: Same for all Models</b>							
	Religious Fundamentalism > Internalized Misogyny	.25	.05	4.83	<.001	.15	.36
	Religious Fundamentalism > Attitudes Toward Women	.11	.03	4.43	<.001	.06	.16
	Religious Fundamentalism > Hostile Sexism	.24	.04	5.76	<.001	.16	.32
	Religious Fundamentalism > Benevolent Sexism	.34	.03	11.02	<.001	.28	.40
Direct and Indirect Effects for Separate Models							
<b>RDAS: Cohesion</b>							
	Religious Fundamentalism > RDAS: Cohesion	.02	.04	0.41	.68	-.06	.10
	Internalized Misogyny > RDAS: Cohesion	-.08	.05	-1.67	.09	-.18	.02
	Attitudes Toward Women > RDAS: Cohesion	-.22	.11	-2.16	.03	-.44	-.02
	Hostile Sexism > RDAS: Cohesion	-.16	.07	-2.49	.02	-.29	-.04
	Benevolent Sexism > RDAS: Cohesion	.03	.09	0.33	.74	-.15	.21
Indirect Effects of Religious Fundamentalism on RDAS: Cohesion							
	Through Internalized Misogyny	-.02	.02			-.05	.00
	Through Attitudes Toward Women	-.03	.02			-.06	-.01
	Through Hostile Sexism	-.04	.02			-.08	-.01
	Through Benevolent Sexism	.01	.03			-.05	.08
<b>RDAS: Satisfaction</b>							
Direct Effects							
	Religious Fundamentalism > RDAS: Satisfaction	-.05	.05	-0.95	.35	-.14	.05
	Internalized Misogyny > RDAS: Satisfaction	-.23	.06	-3.78	<.001	-.35	-.11
	Attitudes Toward Women > RDAS: Satisfaction	-.73	.12	-6.02	<.001	-.10	-.49
	Hostile Sexism > RDAS: Satisfaction	-.21	.08	-2.56	.01	-.37	-.05

	Benevolent Sexism > RDAS: Satisfaction	-.07	.11	-0.65	.52	-.29	.15
Indirect Effects of Religious Fundamentalism on RDAS: Satisfaction							
	Through Internalized Misogyny	-.06	.02			-.11	-.02
	Through Attitudes Toward Women	-.08	.02			-.14	-.04
	Through Hostile Sexism	-.05	.02			-.09	-.02
	Through Benevolent Sexism	-.02	.03			-.10	.04
<b>RDAS: Consensus</b>							
Direct Effects							
	Religious Fundamentalism > RDAS: Consensus	.03	.04	0.63	.52	-.05	.12
	Internalized Misogyny > RDAS: Consensus	-.20	.06	-3.68	<.001	-.31	-.09
	Attitudes Toward Women > RDAS: Consensus	-.49	.11	-4.36	<.001	-.72	-.27
	Hostile Sexism > RDAS: Consensus	-.21	.07	-2.89	.004	-.35	-.07
	Benevolent Sexism > RDAS: Consensus	-.13	.10	-1.37	.17	-.32	.07
Indirect Effects of Religious Fundamentalism on RDAS: Consensus							
	Through Internalized Misogyny	-.05	.02			-.10	-.02
	Through Attitudes Toward Women	-.06	.02			-.11	-.02
	Through Hostile Sexism	-.05	.02			-.10	-.02
	Through Benevolent Sexism	-.04	.03			-.11	.02

LLCI: Lower level confidence interval

ULCI: Upper level confidence interval

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Political Groups

Variable	Internalized Misogyny	Hostile Sexism	Benevolent Sexism	Attitudes Toward Women
Political Affiliation	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)
Democrat (n = 75)	3.01(1.41) <sup>a</sup>	2.67(1.09) <sup>a</sup>	3.37(.90)	1.76(.72)
Republican (n = 27)	3.94(1.15) <sup>b</sup>	3.67 (.83) <sup>b</sup>	3.89(.98) <sup>a</sup>	1.77(.56)
Independent (n = 43)	2.92(1.27) <sup>a</sup>	2.75(.92) <sup>a</sup>	3.25(1.05) <sup>b</sup>	1.52(.48) <sup>a</sup>
Not Affiliated (n = 57)	3.71(1.14) <sup>b</sup>	3.42(.88) <sup>b</sup>	3.68(.71)	1.94(.59) <sup>b</sup>
2016 Vote				
Donald Trump/Mike Pence (n = 21)	4.29(1.22) <sup>a</sup>	3.97(.68) <sup>ac</sup>	4.04(.72) <sup>a</sup>	1.98(.58)
Hillary Clinton/Tim Kane (n = 79)	3.06(1.44) <sup>b</sup>	2.71(1.12) <sup>b</sup>	3.30(1.07) <sup>b</sup>	1.75(.69)
I am registered, but did not vote (n = 50)	3.17(1.22) <sup>b</sup>	3.07(.91) <sup>bc</sup>	3.58(.81)	1.69(.60)
I am not registered to vote (n = 48)	3.50(1.08)	3.26(.89) <sup>ac</sup>	3.52(.73)	1.81(.63)

Note: Significant differences among groups noted with superscripts

## REFLECTIVE WRITING

Following the 2016 presidential election, I was overwhelmed with a sense of discouragement and frustration. Reading the news made me feel helpless, frustrated, and utterly confused. Shortly after participating in the Women's March on Capitol Hill, I developed a renewed sense of motivation. I was determined to work within my sphere of influence to make positive change.

I decided to do so through my honors capstone project. While the media made frequent inferences about the role of internalized misogyny in the election of Trump, no peer-reviewed studies were available on the subject. I hoped to fill this gap in the literature with my own research. I proposed the idea to my mentor, Dr. Renee Galliher, and she agreed. Together, we added breadth and depth to my idea, and worked to turn this dream into reality over the final years of my undergraduate education. Though a peer-reviewed publication could be perceived as passive activism by some—I am proud to have taken initiative, and be actively contributing to the growing collection of studies on the subject.

Through this capstone project, I was able to cultivate a greater understanding of psychology, and other disciplines. While engaging in the survey design process, I quickly became acquainted with a variety of reputable psychological measures (i.e. RDAS, IMS, RRFS, etc.). This enhanced my knowledge of, and involvement with, quantitative materials—an aspect of psychology that I did not have much exposure to beforehand. In addition, engaging in a thorough literature review allowed me to become familiar with prevalent researchers in my field and their work. Because conducting research requires competency in statistics, I have also become proficient within this discipline. Implementing classroom concepts, such as significance

and correlation, yielded the invaluable gift of an applied educational opportunity. All of these experiences have helped broaden my academic and world views.

While completing this capstone project was an accomplishment on its own, I greatly appreciated the way in which the process prepared me for future goals. I aspire to work within the field of academia one day, which makes graduating with an applicable skillset all the more priceless. I am grateful that I can pursue occupational and educational ambitions going forward with a newfound sense of confidence in my own abilities. Nurturing a working relationship with a well-established faculty member has also been especially beneficial. Not only will I graduate with a strong reference, but wonderful role model. Having the chance to work alongside someone who personifies my future goals has been inspiring to say the least.

I have been able to acquire a number of instrumental proficiencies as a byproduct of my honors thesis project. One such example involved giving an oral presentation of my research findings to legislators on Utah Capitol Hill. This not only gave me public speaking experience, but enhanced my aptitude for translating verbose conclusions into a more comprehensible structure. Furthermore, I was able to draft, finalize, and submit a grant proposal in order to attain the funding necessary to complete this project. Grant writing is a vital task within academia, making the opportunity to participate in this process extremely valuable.

Looking back, I can identify moments of triumph, as well as difficulty. For me, the most challenging facet of the project was practicing independence. I often felt intimidated and inadequate when conducting high level statistical analyses, or authoring particularly wordy sections of my manuscript. It was difficult to resist dependence, and instead push myself to be more autonomous. However, this quickly turned into the most rewarding piece of my honors thesis project. In the long run, it gifted me self-assurance, and belief in my ability to succeed.

## PROFESSIONAL AUTHOR BIO

### **Audrianna J. Dehlin**

Audrianna is an honors student majoring in psychology with a minor in family, consumer and human development. She has enjoyed gaining experience as an Undergraduate Teaching Fellow, working as an academic mentor for student-athletes, and serving on Utah State University's Honors Student Executive Board. Audrianna looks forward to graduation in May of 2018. She plans to earn a PhD, and eventually work as a tenure-track professor—teaching and researching at an R1 research university. Audrianna is passionate about learning, sustainability, and advocacy.