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

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**ABSTRACT.** The current study examined links among sexism, psychosocial functioning, and political behavior in 210 young women from the United States. Participants 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. Although mental health outcomes were also collected, associations with sexist attitudes were nonsignificant. 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

*S*exism is defined as a belief, practice, or system that supports the notion that men are intrinsically superior to women (Anderson, 2010; Borrell et al., 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 this study, we explored young women's endorsement of sexist ideology, as it relates to a number of important socialization experiences and psychosocial outcomes.

Sexism is a ubiquitous experience in the lives of young women in the United States. For example, Berg (2006) reported that all 382 women in her sample reported experiencing sexism, and 25% said they felt it happened "a lot" (p. 975). In another study, participants were asked to record the number of sexist incidents they observed over a span of 7 to 13 days (Swim et al., 2001). Participant records indicated that incidents of sexism occurred at least once per week, with some participants reporting sexist experiences daily. Thus, sexism is common, and often a daily occurrence for many women.

Perhaps the most well-known conceptualization of modern sexism is the ambivalent sexism framework proposed by Glick and Fiske (1996). Ambivalent sexism refers to sexist beliefs that fit in to two major categories, 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, p. 151). Although 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, p. 151). 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).

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 psychological distress, disordered eating, and mental illness. Given the omnipresent nature of misogynistic and sexist messages received by women in patriarchal societies, the internalization of sexist ideology is often automatic and unnoticed. One study found that women conveyed dialogic practices of internalized sexism (i.e., invalidating, derogating, or objectifying women in everyday language) on average 11 times per 10-minute increment of conversation (Bearman, Korobov, & Thorne, 2009). This rate of frequency illustrated how extensive internalized sexism truly is within society.

### Religious and Political Context of Sexism

Religious and political contexts are powerful and overlapping socialization forces related to attitudes about gender. We hypothesized that conservative religious and political affiliations support adherence to traditional, rigid gender attitudes. In the following section, we outline the relevance of religious and political contexts for embracing sexist ideology.

**Religion.** A number of authors have identified conservative and traditional religious belief systems as an important socializing context for attitudes about women and gender role expectations. For example, Mikolajczak and Pietrzak (2014) found that higher levels of religiosity in a sample of Catholic Polish women were related to higher endorsement of benevolent sexism, mediated by their adherence to values for conservatism. Burn and Busso (2005) found that benevolent sexism was linked positively to internal and external religiosity and scriptural literalism in a sample of U.S. Christian college students. Maltby, Hall, Anderson, and Edwards (2010) observed a significant relationship between the "protective paternalism" (p. 619)

component of benevolent sexism and Christian Orthodoxy in a sample of evangelical Christian college students, although only for men. Finally, Glick, Sakalh-Uğurlu, Akbaş, Orta, and Ceylan (2016) examined the association between honor beliefs—a strict set of rules for women that typically include compliance to men, sexual purity, and religious adherence—and two correlates, religiosity and sexism. In their large Turkish sample, men were more apt to report endorsing honor beliefs than women. Hostile and benevolent sexism were positively correlated with religiosity. Furthermore, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and religiosity were positively correlated with honor belief acceptance.

The body of research related to religiosity and sexism has operationalized religiosity using a wide variety of definitions and measures. In this study, we introduced the concept of *religious fundamentalism* as a potentially relevant aspect of religious belief systems (Alderdice, 2010). Defined as the belief in the absolute authority and unquestionable superiority of a particular sacred text or set of religious teachings, religious fundamentalism can be endorsed to varying degrees within any faith community. In general, more conservative faith traditions—those which espouse literal interpretations of their sacred texts or more rigid expectations for maintaining spiritual morality—are more closely associated with religious fundamentalism. However, across faith contexts, we hypothesized that the more dogmatic, morally rigid or narrow religious beliefs and attitudes associated with religious fundamentalism would be associated with sexist attitudes (i.e., more rigid, morally driven attitudes about gender), and would link to psychosocial outcomes through their relationship with sexist beliefs (i.e., mediation).

**U.S. political climate**. Following the presidential election of 2016, discussion of internalized sexism, or women holding beliefs that support their own oppression, was in the mainstream consciousness (Bialik, 2017; Fenton & Lopez, 2016; Moore, 2016). Conversations surrounding gender equality were a central component of ongoing divisive dialogue. Bock, Byrd-Craven, and Burkley (2017), in a sample of college students from a southwestern university in the United States, observed that those who affiliated with the Republican political party and voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election reported higher levels of benevolent and hostile sexism and greater adherence to traditional gender roles, compared to Democrats and those who voted for Hilary Clinton. Similarly, Blair (2017) capitalized on the timing of

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her study of general attitudes regarding a number of social issues (e.g., LGBTQ rights, racism and Islamophobia, sexism). As a follow-up to original data collection, she assessed voting intentions just prior to the 2016 presidential election and found ambivalent sexism to be a strong predictor of intention to vote for Donald Trump or a third party/undecided relative to Hilary Clinton. However, because of the inclusion criteria for the original, larger study, Blair's sample was 95% male, and 60% resided in the state of Utah. In the current study, we examined self-reported voting behavior and political affiliation in a nationwide sample of young women.

**Psychosocial Correlates of Sexism**
A number of recent studies have examined links between sexism (both externally experienced and internalized) 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.

Berg (2006) assessed associations among gender-related stressors, frequency of experienced sexist events, and PTSD symptoms in a large community sample of women. A significant positive correlation emerged between experienced levels of everyday sexism and PTSD scores. This relationship was found to be especially strong when individuals reported "recent sexist degradation" (p. 984). Similarly, Borrell and colleagues (2011), with a sample of over 10,000 women, found that 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.

Although research on internalized misogyny is still developing, some studies have assessed outcomes associated with women's internalization of sexist beliefs. Szymanski, Gupta, Carr, and Stewart (2009) examined relationships between sexist events and psychological distress in a sample of college women. Internalized misogyny moderated, and "intensified" (p. 101), the relationship between sexism and distress. Subsequently, Szymanski and Henrichs-Bech (2014) more directly assessed links between psychological distress and internalized misogyny, and observed a direct association between internalized misogyny and psychological distress.

As research on sexism continues to expand, its role in romantic relationships has also emerged as a significant area of study. Lee, Fiske, Glick, and Chen (2010) examined endorsement of benevolent and hostile sexism and the traits American men and women preferred/selected in romantic relationships. Women and men who endorsed benevolent sexism ideals were more likely to select for a "traditional gender partner" (p. 590) when compared to those who did not endorse benevolent sexism ideals. For women, "traditional" was characterized by selecting traits such as "strong" and "traditional male," while discarding traits like "feminine" (p. 590). For men, "traditional" was characterized by selecting traits such as "warm and traditional female" and discarding "not traditional" (p. 590). However, Casad, Salazar, and Macina (2015) found that engaged women who reported higher levels of benevolent sexism reported lower relationship satisfaction and self-assurance, suggesting that endorsement of traditional roles in relationships may come with a relational and personal cost.

Overall, Sibley, and Tan (2011) used observational methodology to examine links between sexism and relationship conflict in a sample of 99 heterosexual couples. Higher levels of self-reported hostile sexism in men was related to lower levels of openness during a recorded conflict interaction in both men and women, as rated by couple members while they reviewed the recording. Further, men's hostile sexism was linked to higher observer ratings of hostile communication by both men and women. Men's hostile sexism was also indirectly linked to lower couple members' ratings of the success of the discussion in bringing about their desired change, via its effect on openness in the interaction. Interestingly, when men endorsed higher levels of benevolent sexism, men were more open and less hostile in the interaction. However, if women endorsed benevolent sexism and their husbands did not, women were more hostile, less open, and perceived their discussions as less successful. Thus, sexism emerges as a dyadic process that unfolds in a relational context.

**Summary and Research Questions**
In sum, a review of the literature highlights a number of psychosocial and relational outcomes that have been linked consistently to sexist belief systems. We highlight fundamentalist, dogmatic religious beliefs as a potential socializing context for the development of sexist attitudes. We also note that the broader political climate appears to

be tightly connected to contemporary attitudes about women. Within this context, we posed the following questions. First, how are sexist attitudes and beliefs related to psychosocial health (i.e., anxiety, depression, and self-esteem) and *relationship quality*? We hypothesized that endorsement of sexist attitudes would be associated with lower self-reported mental health and more relationship distress. Second, do sexist attitudes mediate links between *religious fundamentalism* and psychosocial health or relationship quality? We expected that the indirect effect of religious fundamentalism would be deleterious, through its effect on sexist beliefs. And third, is there a relationship between endorsement of sexist attitudes and political affiliation or behavior? We expected participants with a higher endorsement of sexist attitudes to report more conservative political affiliations, with an increased likelihood to have voted for Donald Trump.

## Method

### Study Design
This study was approved and monitored by the authors' institutional review board for the protection of human research participants. A correlational design examined relationships among internalized misogyny/sexism, psychological health, relationship quality, religious fundamentalism, and political behavior.

### Participants
Our sample included 210 women, ages 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. Table 1 provides a summary of demographic data.

### Measures
**Demographic information.** Items assessed age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, educational status, relationship status, political affiliation, voting behavior, and ethnicity/race.

**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory**. (Glicke & Fiske, 1996). This measure consists of 22 items rated on a Likert 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. Glicke and Fiske reported evidence of convergent and discriminate validity

over six different measure development samples (1996). Cronbach's αs reported by Glicke and Fiske ranged from .62 to .86. In the current study, hostile sexism yielded an α of .86, and benevolent sexism yielded an α of .80.

**Internalized Misogyny Scale.** (Piggott, 2004). This measure consists of 17 items rated on a Likert-type scale 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) reported significant positive correlations with the Body Image scale and Modern Sexism scale, and Cronbach's αs of .87 and .88. In the current study, Cronbach's α = .93.

**Attitudes Toward Women Scale**. (Spence & Hahn, 1997; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973). This measure consists of 12 items assessing endorsement of traditional gender roles, rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Following reverse scoring adjustments, higher scores indicate stronger adherence to traditional gender roles. Spence and colleagues have confirmed a single factor structure in multiple samples. The scale also showed acceptable test-retest reliability, and αs in the mid .80s or higher (Spence & Hahn, 1997). In the current study, Cronbach's α = .89.

**Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale.** (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). This measure assesses rigid, dogmatic religious attitudes, and consists of 12 items rated on a 9-point scale. One total score is calculated as the mean across all items, with higher scores indicating greater fundamentalism. Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2004) reported a correlation of .68 with right-wing authoritarianism, and Cronbach's α of .92. In the current study, this scale yielded an α of .88.

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item Scale (GAD-7).** (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Löwe, 2006). This measure assesses day-to-day experiences of anxiety, and consists of 7 items rated on a Likert-type scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 3 (*nearly every day*). GAD-7 scores were significantly related to declines in functioning, self-reported disability, number of clinic visits, and level of difficulty attributed to symptoms in a clinical sample (Spitzer et al., 2006). Spitzer and colleagues (2006) reported a Cronbach's α of .92, with a test-retest reliability of 0.83. In the current study, α = .92.

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)**. (Rosenberg, 1965). This measure consists of 10 items rated on a Likert-type scale from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Following reverse

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scoring adjustments, higher scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem. Evidence of good construct validity for the RSES has been reported by multiple studies (Tinakon, & Nahathai, 2012). Rosenberg (1965) reported test-retest reliability of .85, and a Cronbach's α of .92. In the current study, this scale demonstrated an α of .84.

**Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D)**. (Radloff, 1977). This measure assesses symptoms of depression over the past week, and consists of 20 items rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*rarely or none of the time*) to 4 (*most or all of the time*). Following reverse scoring adjustments, higher scores indicate higher levels of depression. Radloff (1977) found that the scale effectively discriminated between depressive and nondepressive cases. Radloff reported αs ranging from .85 to .90, and test-retest correlations between .45 and .70. In the current study, the CES-D yielded an α of .90.

**Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)**. (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). This measure consists of 14 items rated on a 5 or 6-point Likert-type scale. Items are divided into three scales: consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. Consensus refers to the level of reported agreement between romantic partners in their decision making, leisure, values, and affection. Satisfaction is defined by stability and conflict—assessed through participants' divorce consideration, marriage regret, quarrel frequency, and overall annoyance with partner. Cohesion assesses the degree to which romantic partners have activities in common and engage in a "stimulating exchange of ideas" (Busby et al., 1995, p. 296). Items 1–6 assess with consensus, items 7–10 assess satisfaction, and items 11–14 assess cohesion. Higher scores indicate higher relationship quality. The measure has been found to effectively discern between satisfied and distressed relationships (Busby et al, 1995). Busby and colleagues (1995) reported an α of .90 for the overall scale. In the current study, αs were calculated for each subscale: Relationship Consensus = .83, Satisfaction = .83, and Cohesion = .82.

## Procedure

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

| TABLE 1 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Demographic Information** | | |
| Variable | *n* | % |
| **Sexual orientation** | | |
| Heterosexual | 149 | 71.0 |
| Gay/Lesbian | 8 | 3.8 |
| Bisexual | 38 | 18.1 |
| Queer/Pansexual/Questioning | 12 | 5.7 |
| Asexual | 3 | 1.4 |
| **Ethnicity*** | | |
| African American | 57 | 27.1 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 7 | 3.3 |
| Asian/Asian American | 16 | 7.6 |
| Latinx | 28 | 13.3 |
| Middle Eastern | 2 | 1.0 |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 1 | 0.5 |
| White/European American | 122 | 58.1 |
| Other | 1 | 0.5 |
| **Relationship Status** | | |
| Single/Not Dating | 74 | 35.2 |
| Dating Nonexclusively | 20 | 9.5 |
| In a Committed Relationship | 76 | 36.2 |
| Engaged/Married | 37 | 17.6 |
| Separated/Divorced | 3 | 1.5 |
| **Education Level** | | |
| Less than High School | 10 | 4.8 |
| Completed High School | 76 | 36.2 |
| Some College/Vocational Training | 100 | 47.6 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 22 | 10.5 |
| Graduate/Professional Degree | 2 | 1.0 |
| **Income** | | |
| Less Than $20,000 | 74 | 35.2 |
| $20,000–$39,999 | 65 | 31.0 |
| $40,000–$59.000 | 36 | 17.1 |
| $60,000–$79,000 | 16 | 7.6 |
| $80,000–$99.000 | 6 | 2.9 |
| $100,000 and above | 13 | 6.2 |
| **Religion/Faith Tradition** | | |
| Agnostic/Atheist | 41 | 19.5 |
| Christian | 124 | 59.0 |
| Buddhist | 6 | 2.9 |
| Muslim | 4 | 1.9 |
| Jewish | 2 | 1.0 |
| Other/None | 33 | 15.7 |

*Note*. *Participants could select more than one ethnicity, so that total exceeds 100%.

of participants. Survey participants were existing members of the survey panels, and were offered the opportunity to participate in the survey through standardized e-mail notifications. If they chose to participate in the survey, they were 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 were delivered to researchers in an anonymous format.

## Results

### Research Question 1: Bivariate Correlations
Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for all study variables, along with bivariate correlations between measures of sexist attitudes and psychosocial functioning. Measures of sexist attitudes were roughly normally distributed around the midpoints 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).

### Research Question 2: Test of Indirect Effects
Table 3 presents a summary of the mediation models. 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 because 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. 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 and traditional gender roles, which in turn linked to lower relationship quality.

### Research Question 3: Political Behavior
Means and standard deviations for all groups for all measures of sexist ideology are presented in Table 4. A series of one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) 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).

**Political affiliation.** All four ANOVAs examining differences 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, $F(3, 198) = 3.63$, $p = .014$, $\eta = .05$. 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. 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

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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.

**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, $F(3, 194)$ = 3.90, $p$ = .010, $\eta$ = .06. There were no differences among the voting groups on attitudes toward women, $F(3, 194)$ = 1.07, $p$ = .361, $\eta$ = .02. Table 3 displays the results of Scheffe post-hoc tests. 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.

## Discussion

This study supports several conclusions regarding the connection between sexism and internalized misogyny and a variety of psychosocial and political factors. As hypothesized, sexist beliefs were consistently linked to both relational functioning and political behavior. However, we did not observe the hypothesized links to mental health variables.

### Associations Between Sexism and Relationship Functioning in the Context of Religion

Internalization of sexist beliefs was consistently significantly related to relationship quality, although effect sizes were relatively small. Furthermore, an indirect pathway emerged from higher religious fundamentalism to lower relationship quality, through internalized misogyny, endorsement of traditional gender roles, and hostile sexism.

Past studies have identified religiosity as an important variable for unpacking the context of sexism (e.g., Burn & Busso, 2005; Mikolajczak and Pietrzak, 2014; Tasdemir & Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2009). Similarly, in this sample, we observed significant and strong relationships between religious fundamentalism and all forms of sexist attitudes and traditional gender roles. Our measure of

religious fundamentalism does not map exactly on to previously used measures of religiosity. For example, Mikolajczak and Pietrzak (2014) assessed religious affiliation (Catholic vs. non-Catholic) and religious participation. Tasdemir and Sakalli-Ugurlu (2009) assessed the extent to which participants endorsed essential components of Islamic beliefs. Rather than assessing religious activity or specific religious ideology, religious fundamentalism, as a construct, captures inflexible, dogmatic religious attitudes, via items such as "To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, fundamentally true religion" and "The fundamentals of God's religion should never be tampered with, or compromised with others' beliefs." (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004, p. 130). Endorsement of the items on the religious fundamentalism appear to link more closely to all forms of sexism, including more overt and intense hostile sexism, and may be particularly relevant in more conservative, dogmatic religious contexts.

When we examined the relationships between religious fundamentalism and relationship quality as mediated by sexist beliefs, benevolent sexism was the only variable not found to be a significant mediator. Consistently, across all three scales of the RDAS, religious fundamentalism related to higher

| TABLE 2 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables** | | | | | | |
| Variable | Internalized Misogyny | Ambivalent Sexism Inventory – Hostile | Ambivalent Sexism Inventory – Benevolent | Attitudes Toward Women Scale | Religious Funda-mentalism | *M (SD)* |
| Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 Scale | -.01 | -.05 | -.04 | -.12 | -.09 | 0.24(0.90) |
| Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale | -.01 | -.09 | -.10 | -.03 | -.09 | 2.27(0.63) |
| Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale | .32** | .38** | .61** | .31** | – | 4.57(1.66) |
| Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale | -.04 | -.09 | -.11 | -.03 | -.17* | 2.36(0.61) |
| RDAS–Consensus | -.25** | -.20** | -.10 | -.29** | -.04 | 4.35(1.02) |
| RDAS–Satisfaction | -.29** | -.22** | -.13 | -.41** | -.15* | 4.41(1.15) |
| RDAS–Cohesion | -.11 | -.16* | .01 | *.15* | -.10 | 4.57(1.66) |
| *M (SD)* | 3.30(1.32) | 3.04(1.05) | 3.49(0.91) | 1.76(0.63) | 4.57(1.66) | – |

*Note.* RDAS = Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

| TABLE 3 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Tests of Mediation** | | | | | | |
| Effect | coeff | *se* | *t* | *p* | LLCI | ULCI |
| Direct Effects: Same for All Models | | | | | | |
| 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 | | | | | | |
| RDAS: Cohesions | | | | | | |
| Direct Effects | | | | | | |
| Religious Fundamentalism > RDAS: Cohesion | .02 | .04 | .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 |
| RDAS: Satisfaction | | | | | | |
| 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 |
| RDAS: Consensus | | | | | | |
| 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 |

*Note.* LLCI = Lower level confidence interval. UCLI = Upper level confidence interval. RDAS = Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

levels of internalized misogyny, hostile sexism, and endorsement of traditional gender roles. In turn, all of those variables linked to more negative relationship qualities. Fundamentalist religious belief systems tend to emphasize the importance of family and marriage—which is viewed as a critical part of members' spiritual 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, it may be that some religious communities are socializing members in ways that are counterproductive to their own goals. Our lack of significant findings related to benevolent sexism speak to the complicated nature of this particular form of sexist ideology. Overall et al. (2011) also observed complex patterns of association between benevolent sexism and observed romantic relationship interactions, suggesting that the impact of benevolent sexism may depend on the way that it manifests within couples.

### Sexist Beliefs and Political Behavior
Participants who identified as Republican/not affiliated or voted for Trump/were not 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 were more pronounced in internalized misogyny and hostile sexism, whereas differences were less pronounced in terms of benevolent sexism and traditional gender roles. The majority of participants had more liberal ideologies, and half of participants did not vote. Of those who voted, 80% voted Democrat.

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, para. 22). 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). Although 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 participation in the 2016 presidential election (Bock et al., 2017), in which 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.

### Strengths and Limitations

This study used a nationwide sample that was demographically representative of the United States to further understand complex relationships between variables associated with internalized sexism. In terms of strengths, results provide individuals with the opportunity to be better informed about conscious and unconscious forces that influence young women as they navigate patriarchal socialization contexts. In addition, our correlational data lay a foundation from which researchers can make predictions and identify areas in need of additional exploration. Finally, because of our broad sampling strategy, findings can be generalized within the given demographic constraints.

There are also limitations that should be taken into account. A range of psychosocial variables were selected 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 is not consistent with existing literature, which suggests the need for a more comprehensive assessment of mental health. Although 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, although we had reasons for constraining participant age, we cannot apply study findings to other developmental stages. This also provides a great opportunity for future research.

### Conclusions

Overall, we observed associations between socialization contexts, internalized sexist beliefs, and psychosocial functioning that were largely consistent with hypotheses. It is important to understand the meaning and application of our findings to the lived experience of young women. The specific types of religious messages inherent in fundamentalist religious ideology, and the rigid gender expectations that correlate so strongly with fundamentalist beliefs, should be framed within a larger values context. We observed associations between fundamentalism, sexism, and relationship quality that may not align with the goals of religiously fundamentalist communities. On the other hand, we observed links to political behavior that may align very closely with the values in more conservative communities. Thus, our findings may be quite relevant in religious and educational contexts, as we continue to grapple with issues of gender equity and gender role definition as a larger society.

| TABLE 3 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Means and Standard Deviations for Political Groups** | | | | |
| Variable | Internalized Misogyny | Hostile Sexism | Benevolent Sexism | Attitudes Toward Women |
| **Political Affiliation** | *M*(*SD*) | *M*(*SD*) | *M*(*SD*) | *M*(*SD*) |
| Democrat (*n* = 75) | 3.01(1.41)[a] | 2.67(1.09)[a] | 3.37(0.90) | 1.76(0.72) |
| Republican (*n* = 27) | 3.94(1.15)[b] | 3.67(0.83)[b] | 3.89(0.98)[a] | 1.77(0.56) |
| Independent (*n* = 43) | 2.92(1.27)[a] | 2.75(0.92)[a] | 3.25(1.05)[b] | 1.52(0.48)[a] |
| Not Affiliated (*n* = 57) | 3.71(1.14)[b] | 3.42(0.88)[b] | 3.68(0.71) | 1.94(0.59)[b] |
| **2016 Vote** | | | | |
| Donald Trump/Mike Pence (*n* = 21) | 4.29(1.22)[a] | 3.97(0.68)[ac] | 4.04(0.72)[a] | 1.98(0.58) |
| Hilary Clinton/Tim Kane (*n* = 79) | 3.06(1.44)[b] | 2.71(1.12)[b] | 3.30(1.07)[b] | 1.75(0.69) |
| I am registered, but did not vote (*n* = 50) | 3.17(1.22)[b] | 3.07(0.91)[bc] | 3.58(0.81) | 1.69(0.60) |
| I am not registered to vote (*n* = 48) | 3.50(1.08) | 3.26(0.89)[ac] | 3.52(0.73) | 1.81(0.63) |

*Note.* Significant differences among groups noted with superscripts.

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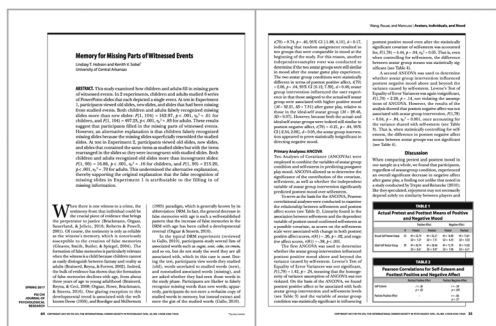online Sept 28

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