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Religion's Impact on Sexual Experiences and Attitudes Among Women: Exploring Sexual Satisfaction and Sex Guilt

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Religion's Impact on Sexual Experiences and Attitudes Among Women:

Exploring Sexual Satisfaction and Sex Guilt

by

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George Fox University

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Newberg, Oregon

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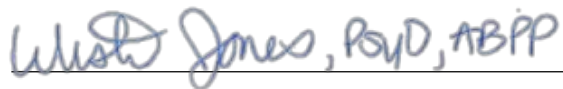
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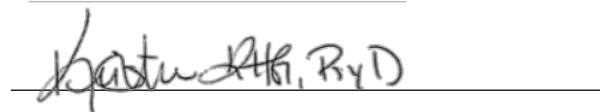
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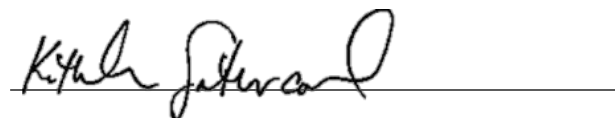
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Abstract

Sexual satisfaction has been linked to higher self-esteem, marital stability, and general relationship satisfaction. The combination of religious values, sex attitudes, and experiences of sex guilt have been shown to significantly impact women's sexual satisfaction. Two theories of religious values have been defined: identification, a religious perspective which considers sexuality to be a valuable and sacred experience, as well as introjection, which views sexuality as inherently sinful and a symptom of human weakness. This study included 85 female participants; they completed a survey on their experiences of sexual satisfaction, sex guilt, religion (identification or introjection), and sex values. The findings of this study demonstrated that lacking permissiveness was predictive of sex guilt. In addition, women who reported greater religiosity (both religious identification and religious introjection), also reported less permissiveness

Keywords: female sexuality, sex guilt, sex satisfaction, religiosity, sex values

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The body of literature on the female sexual experience has expanded in recent decades, striving to identify the complex, contradictory, and nuanced nature of what predicts women's sexual satisfaction, with some attention to religiosity as well. With a high preponderance of Americans who believe in God, are affiliated with a religion, attend religious services, and engage in private religious practices (Pearce & Denton, 2011), influences of religiosity on sex attitudes, sex guilt, and their collective influences on sex satisfaction are worth exploring in more detail.

In addition to religion, research has identified that sexual satisfaction is another important aspect of well-being, with findings showing that individuals with high satisfaction in their sex lives possess higher self-esteem and adjustment in intimate relationships (Blanco et al., 2017). Sexual satisfaction also increases marital stability and general relationship satisfaction (Dew et al., 2018). In addition to factors such as religious behaviors, attitudes, and sex guilt have been found to significantly impact sexual satisfaction in young adults (Hackathorn et al., 2016).

However, models of the relationship between religiosity and sexual satisfaction are not necessarily linear (Robinson et al., 2019). Previously identified inverse relationships between religiosity and sex have come under question, as these findings open the possibility that other variables such as sex attitudes (and their influence on sex guilt) are involved in the relationship between religiosity and sex satisfaction, particularly for those who are highly religious.

However, more research is needed exploring the influences of religiosity (both behavior and internalization), sex attitudes (sociosexual orientation), and sex guilt on sexual satisfaction. The interactions of these factors can be particularly influential for women when faced with cultural mixed messages about sexual behavior.

Cultural Influences on Women's Sexuality

In general, favorable attitudes toward premarital sex, and the occurrence of it, have increased (Twenge et al., 2017). As young people transition into adulthood and independence, they are barraged with mixed messages about the significance of dating, self-discovery, and sex. Cultural messaging impacts female identity development at a time when women are learning about themselves as sexual beings (Eşsizoğlu, 2011). For instance, popular movies, songs, and television programs convey that having sex is an expected milestone for women in their late teens and 20s (Farvid et al., 2017). Conversely, Karin Martin (1996) found that young women felt profound anxiety about their bodies in addition to when and why to have sex,

Because female sexuality in our culture is associated with dirty, shame, taboo, and danger, girls are scared and unsure of their new bodies. They rarely take pleasure in and often feel that they are not in control of their bodies. (p. 11)

In these ways, sexual behavior is both encouraged and discouraged by American culture (Montemurro, 2014), making sexual development difficult to navigate.

In combination with societal pressures, women who identify as moderately to highly religious have an additional unique challenge. Religious moral codes about sex clash with mainstream messages that sexual expression is an integral aspect of one's identity (Sellers, 2017; Burdette et al., 2009). Therefore, understanding how religion and other cultural factors influence

sex attitudes and sex guilt is important in understanding sex satisfaction in adolescence and adulthood (Montemurro, 2014).

Religion and Higher Sexual Satisfaction

Regarding the positive influences, research has uncovered that married women who report higher levels of religiosity are more sexually satisfied within their marriage (Dew et al., 2018). Another study found that religiosity can imbue sexuality with positive meaning and increase sexual pleasure and bonding between partners. Other researchers have found that religious women who committed themselves to abstinence until marriage also reported a sense of community and empowerment, feeling that they had the agency to choose an alternative way to live from a mainstream culture where sex was a key part of identity (Sharma, 2008). With that alternative way of living, the women had a faith community to support their convictions (Sharma, 2008). Other researchers found that abstinence until marriage beliefs allowed religious women to redefine themselves, preserve their sense of femininity, and feel content with their decision to be sexually active (Montemurro, 2014). In sum, some researchers have found positive relationships between religiosity and sexual satisfaction. However, other research in this area has identified negative impacts of religiosity on sexual satisfaction, exploring sex guilt as a mediator (Hackathorn, 2016).

Religion and Sexual Guilt

Impacts of religiosity on sex guilt and sex satisfaction have been explored, with religiosity measured in the following ways: importance of faith, prayer frequency, closeness to God, and attending religious services (Hackathorn et al., 2016). Level of internalization of religious values has also been explored, describing identification as a perspective in which an aspect of life, such as close relationships, are seen to have divine character and significance.

With an identification perspective, sex is a sanctified manifestation of God. Alternately, introjection is an internalization of religion based on guilt, self-approval, and need for esteem (Hernandez-Kane & Mahoney, 2018). Individuals with an introjection perspective maintain a rule-bound, restrictive internalization of sex. In fact, research has found that religious introjection can negatively impact sexual satisfaction and promote sex guilt (Hernandez-Kane & Mahoney, 2018; Leonhardt et al., 2019).

Sexual guilt has been defined as a negative affective component imposing self-punishment for violating standards of “proper” sexual conduct (Woo, Brotto, & Gorzalka, 2012). Montemurro (2014) asserts that when women adopt negative and fearful perspectives toward sex, it becomes difficult for them to accept their own sexual desire and allow themselves to feel entitled to sexual pleasure. For some women, internalization of religious teachings promotes sexual guilt, perception of being objectified, and fear of sexual experiences. Simply experiencing sexual desire can bring about feelings of inadequacy that one cannot properly suppress “sinful” urges (Blum, 2017). In the evangelical Christian church, three kinds of love are preached including *Agape* love (a Godly and unconditional love), *philia* love (a non-sexual and affectionate love), and *eros* (a sexual form of love). *Agape* and *philia* are openly allowed to be expressed, while *eros* is cautioned related to the perception that it can lead to corrupt behavior (Sellers, 2017). Even common language within religious communities communicates that premarital sex is inherently deviant, using terminology such as “battling” one’s sexuality and referring to the “sickness” of sexual desire (CBN.com, 2016; Davidson et al., 2004).

In more restrictive religious traditions, a woman engaging in sex before marriage is proscribed and treated as a shameful act. Feeling as though they have broken a moral code, pre-

marital sex produces guilt and low self-esteem for many women (Abbott et al., 2016; Davidson et al., 2004). For women involved in these kinds of religious communities, sexual guilt is common; even after marriage, sexual expression can instill feelings of guilt and anxiety for individuals who have deeply internalized the importance of sexual purity and the deviance of sexual desire (Leonhardt, et al., 2019). Additionally, the sex attitudes adopted by young women often persist into adulthood. If young women see sex as deviant and anxiety-producing, acceptance of sexual desire and pleasure carries forward even into later life (Opayemi, R., 2011). For instance, research on newly-married young women who committed purity pledges earlier in life revealed they experienced a delay in the onset of sexual activities and a significant increase in self-loathing and self-condemnation once they became sexually active with their spouses (Sellers, 2017).

In a study of qualitative interviews conducted by Sonya Sharma (2008), one young Baptist woman explained,

I think the church culture says that you need to take dating very seriously. You can't mess around with each other. Respect each other. In the experience of my friends, it is your close friends keeping you accountable and who have every right to be talking to you and keeping you accountable . . . it's like a fish bowl. (p 1)

In that same study, Sharma heard from women who found accountability and the pressure to conform to “conventional femininity and sexuality” distressing and overwhelming. As these women noticed themselves growing sexually and relationally, they ultimately decided to disaffiliate from the church to lessen the pressures of accountability and conformity. It is important to note that between religions, there is such diversity in how sexuality, sexual pleasure, and sexual “deviance” are understood (Browning et al., 2006)

Identification Versus Introjection

While research has outlined the influence of religion on sexual satisfaction and sex guilt, identification and introjection have begun to be explored as mediators of that relationship. Identification in this context describes an aspect of religious teachings that considers sexuality to be a valuable, spiritual, bonding, and a sacred experience. People who understand sexuality as being sanctified hold what's known as an *identification perspective* when it comes to sexuality, viewing sexuality as being a manifestation of their faith and God (Hernandez et al., 1999). A diverse range of religious teachings adopt a view of identification toward sex in the context of marriage. The Judeo-Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions consider sexual activity a God-given gift and path toward spiritual union (Hernandez-Kane & Mahoney, 2018). In recent studies, newlywed couples who held these identification perspectives experienced greater sexual satisfaction and higher sexual frequency in their marriage (Hardy et al., 2017; Hernandez et al., 2018). Murray-Swank et al. (2005) posit that within the context of love and commitment, sanctification of sex amongst religious men and women legitimizes sexual intercourse and therefore decreases sex guilt.

Conversely, introjection is defined as a perspective in which sexual drive and expression are viewed as weakness, sin, or evidence of human wickedness. Individuals with this perspective experience an internalization of religion that is characterized by approval-based pressures. Introjection emphasizes the restrictive nature of religion. In other words, individuals who internalize religion through an introjection stance focus greater attention on measuring up to spiritual standards. And when individuals perceive distance from God because they have not personally measured up to spiritual standards, they also suffer greater sexual shame than individuals who view sexual experiences through an identification

In sum, women who have an identification perspective on their sexuality report little to no sexual shame and even higher sexual satisfaction than non-religious women. Conversely, prior research suggests that those with an introjection perspective on sexual drive and experiences have increased sexual guilt and decreased self-esteem. These findings describe initial research which has begun to uncover how identification and introjection mediate the relationship between religiosity and sexual satisfaction and sex guilt, but more research is needed in this area.

Sex Attitudes

Researchers Hendrick et al. (2006) identify four types of sexual attitudes; permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality. Permissiveness is an attitude characterized by an acceptance of open relationship/casual sex, birth control by responsibility in birth control, communion by connection or melting together with sex partner, and instrumentality by pleasure of physical sex. In three studies conducted by Hendrick et al. in 2006, men were more likely to endorse instrumentality and permissiveness in the Brief Attitude Sex Scale, while women displayed more responsible attitudes toward birth control and endorsed communion of sex. Highly religious adolescents were also shown to less frequently endorse a permissive attitude toward sex (Thornton et al., 1989). Additionally, studies conducted by Ahrold et al. (2011) and Beckwith et al. (2005) revealed that religiosity and fundamentalism were strong predictors of women's conservative sexual attitudes.

Though previous studies have explored the relationship between religiosity and sex shame or sexual satisfaction, there is a gap in the literature looking at the impact of religiosity and sex attitudes on sex guilt *and* sexual satisfaction, especially amongst women. The aim of the present study is to understand ways in which religiosity and sex attitudes play a role in women's

sexual satisfaction and sex guilt. The results of this study will help provide greater insight into the relationship between religion, sex attitudes, sexual satisfaction, and sexual guilt. With the results of this study, therapists may be able to better assist their female clients in integrating sexuality and spirituality in a way that honors sex attitudes.

Hypotheses

1. Sex attitudes will mediate the relationship between religiosity and sexual satisfaction.
2. Sex attitudes will mediate the relationship between religiosity and sex guilt.

Chapter 2

Methods

Participants

The sample of the present study consisted of 85 participants who identified as females from the United States, ages 18 and above.

Demographics

There were 82 female participants who participated. Regarding ethnicity, the sample was 91.8% White, 3.5 % Latino, 1.2% Asian, 1.2% Pacific Islander, and 2.4% Other. Of the participants, 18.8% endorsed pelvic pain, while 81.2% denied pelvic pain; 29.4% endorsed experiencing sexual violence at some point in their lives, 68.2% denied experiencing sexual violence, and 2.4% preferred not to say. Participants reported having anywhere between 1 and 400 sexual partners with 27% of participants reporting 1 sexual partner in their lifetime. Regarding frequency of vaginal sex, participants endorsed between 1 to 11 times a year and 8-10 times a week with a majority of participants (38.8%) endorsing having vaginal sex 1 to 2 times a week.

Procedure

A survey was electronically administered to individuals who volunteered to complete the study. The survey was e-mailed to graduate students at George Fox University and posted to Facebook groups including majority female members. Consent and a debrief were included in the survey form. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time up until data analysis.

For survey completion, participants were entered into a raffle for a \$20 Amazon gift card. Five gift cards were given to selected participants. Data will remain protected; the survey did not ask for participants' names and no names will be included in the report. Data was encrypted once electronically stored. This study was reviewed and approved by the George Fox University Human Subjects Research Committee.

Measures

Demographics

The survey allowed participants to remain anonymous, but asked individuals to identify their age, ethnicity, whether or not they have had sex, number of lifetime sexual partners, whether or not they are currently sexually active, whether or not they experience significant pelvic pain, as well as the frequency of sexual activity in the last month.

Christian Religious Identity Scale

Participants responded to the Christian Religious Identity Scale (CRIS; Ryan et al. 1993). This survey has twelve items that participants respond to using a four-point Likert scale (1 = *never true*; 4 = *always true*). The items are then averaged for a final score. The scale consists of two subscales that represent two types of internalization: identification and introjection. Religious identification measures how much the individual experiences personal value in religious activities and beliefs and sees his or her religious behavior as based on an internal locus of control. An example of a religious identification item is "I often pray because I enjoy it". Higher scores indicate more religious internalization. The second subscale measures religious introjection, which is how much a person internalizes religion based on guilt, self-approval and need for esteem. An example of a religious introjection item is "I

attend church because one is supposed to go". Higher scores on this scale indicate more religious introjection. Cronbach's alpha has been reported to be 0.81 (Ryan et al., 1993).

Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale

This study employed the Hendrick et al.'s 2006 reliable and valid 23-item Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale. The scale is comprised of four dimensions assessing attitudes towards sexuality: (a) Permissiveness (alpha=.94), (b) Sexual Practices, (c) Communion in the Relationship, and (d) Instrumentality. Example questions are, "I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him/her," and "Sex as a simple exchange of favors is okay if both people agree to it." Respondents may choose from (a) Strongly Disagree, (b) Disagree, (c) Mildly Disagree, (d) Neutral, (e) Mildly Agree, (f) Agree, (g) Strongly Agree. Inter-rater reliability for the SAS factors are as follows: Permissiveness (.92), Sexual Practices (.78), Communion in the Relationship (.82), and Instrumentality (.77).

Sexual Satisfaction Scale

Sexual satisfaction was measured using items from the Sexual Satisfaction Scale (Ashdown et al., 2011). The Sexual Satisfaction Scale asks participants to rate on a Likert scale from 0-8 (0 = *do not agree*, 8 = *completely agree*) to statements including, "My sexual relationship is much better than others' sexual relationships". Cronbach's alpha was reported to be .91.

Revised Mosher Sex-Guilt Scale

Sex guilt was measured using the Revised Mosher Sex-Guilt Scale (Janda & Bazemore, 2011). The Sex-Guilt Scale requires participants to answer 10 items on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 (1 = *very strongly disagree*, 7 = *very strongly agree*) to statements like, "Unusual sex practices are dangerous to one's health and mental conditions." The measure has good convergent

validity, correlating as expected with constructs that often correlate with sexual guilt, such as regretting the decision to have sex for the first time and waiting longer to have sex for the first time (Janda & Bazemore 2011). Cronbach's alpha was reported as .93.

Method of Analysis

Multiple linear regression was used to explore how religiosity predicts sexual satisfaction and sex guilt. Test of mediation was used to explore sex values as a mediator of that relationship. Statistical software including Statistical Package for Social Sciences, PROCESS, and AMOS will be used to conduct these analyses.

Chapter 3

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the measures included in this study are provided in Table 1, including score means, standard deviations and kurtosis

Table 1

Descriptives

Variable	Mean	SD	Shapiro-Wilk <i>p</i> -value (Normality)
Number of Sexual Partners	10.793	44.236	<0.001
CRISIntroject*	1.805	0.599	<0.001
CRISIdentif*	1.855	0.673	<0.001
SSSAvg*	4.746	2.194	<0.001
RMSGSAvg*	2.679	1.023	0.003
BSASPermisiveness*	2.988	0.911	0.99
BSASBirthControl*	1.380	0.552	<0.001
BSASCommunion*	2.436	0.689	0.234
BSASInstrumentality*	3.207	0.754	0.40

Note. *CRISIntroject = Christian Religious Identity Scale, Introjection, CRISIdentif = Christian Religious Identity Scale, Identification, SSSAvg = Sexual Satisfaction Scale average, RMSGSAvg = Revised Mosher Sex Guilt Scale Average, BSASPermisiveness = Brief Sexual Attitude Scale, Permisiveness, BSASBirthControl = Brief Sexual Attitude Scale, Communion, BSASInstrumentality = Brief Sexual Attitude Scale, Instrumentality

Regression and Test of Mediation

In order to explore whether sex values mediated relationships between religiosity and sex satisfaction or religiosity and sex guilt, stepwise linear regressions and Sobel Test of Mediation were conducted.

Stepwise linear regressions were conducted to determine the accuracy of religiosity (introjection and identification) in predicting sex values (permissiveness, birth control, instrumentality, communion), sex satisfaction, and sex guilt. A second set of stepwise linear regressions were conducted to determine the accuracy of sex values (permissiveness, birth control, instrumentality, communion) in predicting sex satisfaction and sex guilt.

Significant predictors are outlined in Table 2, though of the four sex values domains, only one (permissiveness) was significantly predicted by religiosity (introjection and identification) ($R^2 = 0.293$, $R^2_{adj} = 0.276$, $F(1, 82) = 6.853$, $p < 0.001$). This model accounted for 29.3% of the variance in predicting sex values. In addition, neither religiosity nor sex values were significant predictors of sex satisfaction. Finally, only one of the sex values domains (permissiveness) was predictive of sex guilt ($R^2 = 0.426$, $R^2_{adj} = 0.420$, $F(1, 83) = 62.705$, $p < 0.001$). This model accounted for 42.6% of the variance in sex guilt. See Tables 2 through 5.

Sobel Test of Mediation

The effect of introjection on sex guilt was fully mediated via permissiveness. As Figure 1 illustrates, the regression coefficient between introjection and sex guilt and the regression coefficient between permissiveness and sex guilt was significant. The indirect effect was $(.77) * (.73) = .56$. We tested the significance of this indirect effect using a Sobel Test of Mediation, in which the indirect effect was statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Table 2*Model Summary for Religiosity Predicting Sex Values (Permissiveness)*

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² _{adj}	ΔR^2	<i>F</i> _{chg}	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i> ₁	<i>df</i> ₂
Identification	.297	.088	.077	.088	8.05	.006	1	83
Introjection	.484	.234	.225	.234	25.371	<.001	1	83
Introjection & Identification	.541	.293	.276	.059	6.853	<.001	2	82

Table 3*Coefficients for Final Model Religiosity Predicting Sex Values*

BSAS	CRIS	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	Partial <i>r</i>
Permissiveness	Introjection	1.376	.904	4.874	.474
	Identification	-.658	33-.486	-2.618	-.243

Table 4*Model Summary for Sex Values Predicting Sex Guilt*

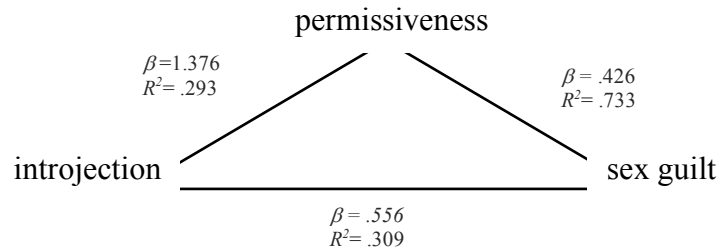
	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² _{adj}	ΔR^2	<i>F</i> _{chg}	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i> ₁	<i>df</i> ₂
Permissiveness	.653	.426	.420	.426	61.705	<.001	1	83

Table 5*Coefficients for Final Model Sex Values Predicting Sex Guilt*

	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	Partial <i>r</i>
Permissiveness	.733	.653	7.855	.653

Figure 1

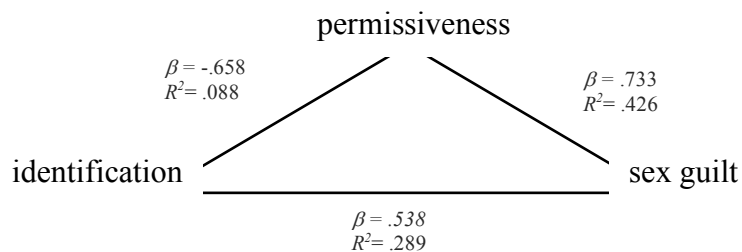
Permissiveness Mediates the Relationship Between Introjection and Sex Guilt



The effect of identification on sex guilt was fully mediated via permissiveness. As Figure 2 illustrates, the regression coefficient between identification and sex guilt and the regression coefficient between permissiveness and sex guilt was significant. The indirect effect was $(.40) * (.73) = .29$. We tested the significance of this indirect effect using a Sobel Test of Mediation, in which the indirect effect was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

Figure 2

Permissiveness Mediates the Relationship Between Identification and Sex Guilt



Chapter 4

Discussion

Just in the last couple decades, the body of literature on female sexuality has begun to more comprehensively look at the impact of contextual factors on women's sense of sex satisfaction and sex guilt. Religiosity is a significant dimension of identity that has been correlated with higher sex shame for women who have held beliefs that expression of sexuality outside of marriage is inherently bad (Leonhardt, et al., 2019). Women who have experienced highly religious upbringings often continue to experience sex shame and anxiety in adulthood, even after marrying and/or being in loving, committed relationships for years (Carpenter & Levy, 2005).

Additionally, we know that sex satisfaction has been linked to higher self-esteem, marital stability, and general relationship satisfaction (Hackathorn et al., 2016). The relationship between religiosity and sex satisfaction is nuanced. Religious identification, or an experience of religion that ascribes sacredness to sexual expression, has been linked with higher sex satisfaction (Hernandez et al., 2011). On the other hand, religious introjection (a more restrictive, shame-based experience of religion that emphasizes sexual drive as weakness), has been correlated with lower sex satisfaction and higher sex shame than identification (Murray et al., 2007).

Sexual attitudes also play a significant role in predicting sex satisfaction and sex guilt (Hendrick et al., 2006). While there are some studies that employ Hendrick's Brief Sexual

Attitude Scale, which measure four attitudes toward sex (permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality), there is an absence in the literature of how sex attitudes and religiosity interact to shape women's experiences of sex satisfaction and sex guilt. The present study utilized the Christian Religious Identity Scale, Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale, Sexual Satisfaction Scale, and Revised Mosher Sex Guilt Scale to assess how sex attitudes among women mediate the relationship between religiosity and sex satisfaction as well as how sex attitudes mediate the relationship between religiosity and sex guilt.

The findings of this study demonstrated that lacking permissiveness was predictive of sex guilt. In addition, women who reported greater religiosity (both religious identification and religious introjection), also reported less permissiveness. These findings assert that women who reported higher religiosity were less likely to be open to casual sex in their own lives. Furthermore, less openness to casual sex predicted higher sex guilt for participants. However, neither religiosity nor sex values were significant predictors of sex satisfaction.

Prior research, such as Sharma's 2008 study, corroborates these findings; women who grow up within religious traditions that define a strict moral code that upholds purity are more likely to hold negative attitudes toward casual sex and also experience sex shame after becoming sexually active. Interestingly, religiosity did not predict sex satisfaction. However, previous research reveals that level of religious practice and belief appear to influence sex behavior for only 8-30% of adolescents and emerging adults (Hawyard, 2019). Additionally, numerous studies reveal variability within religious women's experiences of sex satisfaction; different religious traditions highlight the importance of female pleasure and satisfaction in sex while others assert it is inherently "wrong" to enjoy sex (Hernandez-Kane & Mahoney, 2018). There are also other variables not explored in this study that impact sex satisfaction and could have

impacted findings. For instance, education level, socioeconomic status, and parental upbringing are factors that influence one's experience of sex satisfaction (DelPriore & Hill, 2013).

Limitations

The scales in this study, as well as majority of empirically validated sex measures, define sex in heteronormative language that excludes women who vary in gender and sexual identity from participating. For example, an item on Ashdown's revision of the Sex Satisfaction Scale, "my current sexual relationship does not fully satisfy my sexual needs", assumes that participants are in a monogamous sexual relationship. The sex guilt and sex satisfaction scale also define sex as "vaginal intercourse", which fails to address the scope of sexual expression that exists, including oral and anal sex, and also excludes female participants who have a penis. Therefore, the findings of this study can only speak to the experience of heterosexually-partnered, monogamous, cis-gender women.

Additionally, few women in this study endorsed high religiosity. Religious institutions that were contacted to share the survey were unwilling to disperse the study. In addition, participants who were willing to respond to this study were those more likely to be open to the topic of sex and perhaps espouse a more permissive mentality. For these reasons, there was limited variability on religiosity, which could have minimized findings.

Future Research

Future research would benefit from looking into the impact of specific religions or denominations on experiences of sex shame and satisfaction. While this study looked at participants' religiosity without delineating their branch of religion, perhaps we would see meaningful differences in sex shame, sex satisfaction, and sexual attitudes held by women of different religious practices. Additionally, research that examines experiences of sex guilt for

women who have left religions would be meaningful work. What this study was not able to explore and what is important to uncover in future research is, do religious, restrictive messages around sexuality instill sex shame in women, even after they no longer identify with that religion?

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Appendix A
Consent Form

Q1 This study has been created to assess women's sexual experiences and how religion might play a role in shaping those experiences. You do not have to identify as "religious" to participate in this study. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during this survey, you are free to discontinue. Your participation and answers will remain entirely anonymous throughout the course of this study and after the completion of this study, meaning that no one will ever know your survey was yours. The survey will take an approximate 10-15 minutes of your time to complete. Your participation in this study is huge! You are helping researchers better understand women's experience of sexual satisfaction and sex guilt. By beginning this survey, you consent your answers are truthful and are your own experience(s). Further, by completing this survey and subsequently submitting it, you consent your answers may be used for research purposes.

Appendix B

Survey Content

Revised Mosher Sex-Guilt Scale (Janda and Bazemore 2011)

Please read the following statements and then use the 7-point scale to indicate how true each statement is when applied to you. Simply write the number that corresponds to the correct response in the line provided.

- 1 = Very strongly disagree
- 2 = Moderately disagree
- 3 = Slightly disagree
- 4 = Neither agree or disagree
- 5 = Slightly agree
- 6 = Moderately agree
- 7 = Very Strongly Agree

1. Masturbation helps one feel eased and relaxed. _____*
2. Sex relations before marriage are good, in my opinion. _____*
3. Unusual sex practices don't interest me. _____
4. When I have sexual dreams I try to forget them. _____
5. "Dirty" jokes in mixed company are in bad taste. _____
6. When I have sexual desires I enjoy them like all healthy human beings.
_____*
7. Unusual sex practices are dangerous to one's health and mental conditions.

8. Sex relations before marriage help people adjust. _____*
9. Sex relations before marriage should not be recommended. _____
10. Unusual sex practices are all right if both partners agree. _____*

Note: Items with an (*) are reverse scored so that higher numbers indicate more guilt.

Christian Religious Internalization Scale (Ryan et al. 1993)

Please read the following statements and then use the 4-point scale to indicate how true each statement is when applied to you. Simply write the number that corresponds to the correct response in the line provided.

1 = Never true

2 = Seldom true

3 = Often true

4 = Always true

1. I pray because I enjoy it. _____

2. I turn to a higher power because it is satisfying. _____

3. I turn to a higher power because I enjoy spending time with God. _____

4. I share my faith because my higher power is important to me and I'd like others to know about my higher power, too. _____

5. I pray because I find it satisfying. _____

6. I attend my religious institution because by going I learn new things. _____

7. I share my faith because I want other people from my religious tradition to approve of me.

8. I attend my religious institution because others would disapprove if I didn't. _____

9. I turn to a higher power because I'd feel guilty if I didn't. _____

10. I pray because my higher power would disapprove if I didn't. _____

11. I attend my religious institution because one is supposed to go. _____

12. I actively share my faith because I'd feel bad about myself if I didn't. _____

Sexual Satisfaction Scale (Revision of Rusbult et al. 1998; see Ashdown et al. 2011)

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your current relationship (circle an answer for each item).

1. I feel satisfied with my sex life (please circle a number).

012345678

Do Not Agree Agree Agree At All Somewhat Completely

2. My sexual relationship is much better than others' sexual relationships.

012345678

Do Not Agree Agree Agree At All Somewhat Completely

3. I wish my sexual relationship was better.

012345678

Do Not Agree Agree Agree At All Somewhat Completely

4. My sexual relationship is close to ideal.

012345678

Do Not Agree Agree Agree At All Somewhat Completely

5. Our sexual relationship makes me very happy.

012345678

Do Not Agree Agree Agree At All Somewhat Completely

6. My current sexual relationship does not fully satisfy my sexual needs.

012345678

Do Not Agree Agree Agree At All Somewhat Completely

7. Our sexual relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

012345678

Do Not Agree Agree Agree At All Somewhat Completely

Brief Sexual Attitude Scale (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Reich 2006)

Listed below are several statements that reflect different attitudes about sex. For each statement fill in the response on the answer sheet that indicates how much you agree or disagree with that statement. Some of the items refer to a specific sexual relationship, while others refer to general attitudes and beliefs about sex. Whenever possible, answer the questions with your current partner in mind. If you are not currently dating anyone, answer the questions with your most recent partner in mind. If you have never had a sexual relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

For each statement:

- A** = Strongly agree with statement
- B** = Moderately agree with the statement
- C** = Neutral - neither agree nor disagree
- D** = Moderately disagree with the statement
- E** = Strongly disagree with the statement

1. I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him/her.
2. Casual sex is acceptable.
3. I would like to have sex with many partners.
4. One-night stands are sometimes very enjoyable.
5. It is okay to have ongoing sexual relationships with more than one person at a time.
6. Sex as a simple exchange of favors is okay if both people agree to it.
7. The best sex is with no strings attached.
8. Life would have fewer problems if people could have sex more freely.
9. It is possible to enjoy sex with a person and not like that person very much.
10. It is okay for sex to be just good physical release.
11. Birth control is part of responsible sexuality.
12. A woman should share responsibility for birth control.
13. A man should share responsibility for birth control.

14. Sex is the closest form of communication between two people.
15. A sexual encounter between two people deeply in love is the ultimate human interaction.
16. At its best, sex seems to be the merging of two souls.
17. Sex is a very important part of life.
18. Sex is usually an intensive, almost overwhelming experience.
19. Sex is best when you let yourself go and focus on your own pleasure.
20. Sex is primarily the taking of pleasure from another person.
21. The main purpose of sex is to enjoy oneself.
22. Sex is primarily physical.
23. Sex is primarily a bodily function, like eating.

Note. The BSAS includes the instructions shown at the top. The items are given in the order shown. The BSAS is usually part of a battery with items numbered consecutively. For purposes of analyses, we have A=1 and E=5. (The scoring may be reversed, so that A = strongly disagree, etc.) A participant receives four subscale scores, based on the mean score for a particular subscale (i.e., we add up the 10 items on Permissiveness and divide by 10). An overall scale score is really not useful.

Items	Scoring Key
1-10	Permissiveness
11-13	Birth Control
14-18	Communion
19-23	Instrumentality

Appendix C**Debrief**

Thank you for your participation! Your responses to this survey are appreciated and will benefit the growing body of research on female sexuality. This study is looking into women's sexual satisfaction and sex guilt, and exploring religion's impact on sexual experiences. Any feedback, questions, or concerns are welcome and encouraged. You may address your feedback to Maria Lytle at mlytle17@georgefox.edu

Appendix D**Curriculum Vitae****Maria Lytle**

215 South College Street • Newberg, Oregon • 97132
717-779-6293 • mlytle17@georgefox.edu

EDUCATION

- Present **Doctor of Clinical Psychology (PsyD)**, George Fox University, Graduate School of Clinical Psychology (**APA-Accredited**)
Newberg, OR
Anticipated graduation: May 2022
Advisor: Celeste Jones, PsyD
4.0 GPA
- 2019 **Master of Science in Clinical Psychology**, George Fox University,
Graduate School of Clinical Psychology
Newberg, OR
- 2016 **Bachelor of Science in Psychology**, Franklin and Marshall College
Lancaster, PA
Cum Laude graduate

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

- 2020-present **Portland Mental Health and Wellness**
- Provide individual telehealth therapy to adults across the lifespan in a private group practice setting
 - Coordinate patient care with in-practice psychiatrists and mental health nurse practitioners
 - Participate in didactic trainings on anti-racist EFT, risk assessment, and Gestalt therapy
 - Receive individual and group supervision weekly
 - Supervisors: Caryn Zaner, PsyD and Jordan Hendrickson, PsyD
- 2019-2020 **Oregon State University Counseling and Psychological Services**
- Provided individual therapy to ethnically, racially, and sexually

- diverse undergraduate and graduate students
 - Sessions in-person and via telehealth
 - Co-facilitated weekly transgender and LGBTQ+ support groups
 - Conducted triage services
 - Received individual and group supervision weekly
 - Supervisors: Emi Sumida-Brown, PhD and Amanda Buduris, MS
- 2018-2019 **Rural Child and Adolescent Psychological Services,**
St. Paul Elementary School
- Provided short-term and long-term therapeutic interventions, individual and group therapy, suicide risk assessments, and EBT implementation of behavioral health for elementary students
 - Facilitated psychoeducational classes on making healthy lifestyle choices as a part of outcome research
 - Administered comprehensive batteries including intellectual, academic, behavioral, and psychological assessments
 - Wrote integrated reports and presented assessment results for IEP meetings and 504 plans to families and faculty members
 - Supervisor: Elizabeth Hamilton, PhD
- 2017-2018 **Pre-practicum student, Graduate Department of Clinical Psychology,**
George Fox University
- Provided weekly therapy sessions for two simulated undergraduate students over the course of 10 weeks
 - Conducted intake reports, formulated treatment plans, administered MMSE and SRS, and documented progress notes
 - Received individual and group supervision weekly
 - Supervisor: Glenna Andrews, PhD
 - Graduate teaching assistant: Daniel Rodriguez, MA
- 2016-2017 **Therapeutic Support Specialist, Pennsylvania Counseling Services**
- Implemented treatment plans using Applied Behavior Analysis for children and adolescents with trauma-related and conduct disorders
 - Documented daily progress notes
 - Communicated with families, teachers, and school administration surrounding clients' psychological treatment and progress
 - Supervisor: Carrissa Oakes, LCSW

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2017-Present **Dissertation**

Religion's Impact on Sexual Experiences Among Women: Exploring Sexual Satisfaction and Sex Guilt

Committee: Celeste Jones, PsyD (chair), Kathleen Gathercoal PhD, Kristi Knows His Gun, PsyD, George Fox University

Research Team Member

- Provide edits on working manuscripts
- Collaborate with team members on dissertation topics and engage in supplemental research
- Participate in qualitative research methods and provide feedback to peers

2015-2016

Research Assistant

- Research assistant in explorative studies on psychophysiology of sexual arousal and cognitive variables in sexuality
 - Advisor: James Geer, PhD, Franklin and Marshall College
- Presenter at the Psychology Student Research Symposium
 - Bilateral Art Therapy's Efficacy in Promoting Emotion Regulation
 - Rejection Sensitivity's Role in Facial Expression Recognition

TEACHING AND SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE

Present

Graduate Teaching Assistant for Clinical Foundations

- Conduct weekly (80-minute) supervision sessions to support four graduate students in the development of foundational therapeutic skills grounded in Person-Centered theory
- Review, evaluate, and provide feedback on videoed therapy sessions focusing on the students' clinical skill development and therapeutic presence
- Grading all course assignments, providing comprehensive feedback, and entering all student grades into the online grading system
- Participate in weekly (75-minute) group supervision meetings with the course instructor and TA team to guide course progress and student development
- Supervisor/Course Instructor: Aundrea Paxton, PsyD

4th Year Mentor

- Meet weekly with practicum 1 student to provide additional supervision
- Oversee clinical work, provide mentorship, and guide professional

- development
 - Receive supervision of supervision from Aundrea Paxton, PsyD
- January-May 2020 **Graduate Teaching Assistant for Theories of Personality**
- Provided individual feedback to students regarding performance on exams and papers
 - Facilitated group study sessions and maintained routine office hours to meet with students
- June-August 2019 **Graduate Teaching Assistant for Child and Adolescent Therapy**
- Lectured on assessing for risk and providing trauma-informed interventions for children and adolescents who endorse suicidality/exhibit suicidal and self-harm behavior
 - Provided individual feedback for students regarding performance on exams and papers

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

- September 2020 **Didactic Presenter**
Ableism and Disability
 Multicultural Community
 Graduate School of Clinical Psychology
 George Fox University, Newberg, OR
- February 2019 **Panelist**
Being an Ethnic Minority in Positions of Leadership
 Multicultural Community
 Graduate School of Clinical Psychology
 George Fox University, Newberg, OR

Peters, K., Jones, C., **Lytle, M.** (2019) *Growth from Adversity in Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder*. Poster presented at American Psychological Association Annual Convention 2019, Chicago, IL

Blasini, M., Seegobin, W., **Lytle, M.** (2018) *Post-Traumatic Growth and Resiliency in Puerto Rican Hurricane María Victims*. Poster presented at American Psychological Association Annual Convention 2018, San Francisco, CA

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- 2017-present **Multicultural Diversity Scholarship Recipient**
- Yearly scholarship awarded to students who demonstrate dedication to diversity advocacy

- 2016 **Marshall Fellows Scholar**
- Research funding awarded by Franklin and Marshall College for outstanding academic achievement
- 2012-2016 **Robert Fischer Scholarship Recipient**
- Scholarship awarded to a student of need at Franklin and Marshall College based on high school academic achievement

RELATED WORK AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- Present
- Student Council President**
- Preside over all Student Council meetings
 - Coordinate work of Student Council through the other officers and committees
 - Maintain frequent contact with faculty and administrators
 - Lead Town Hall meetings to facilitate dialogue between faculty and student body
 - Keep the Program Director informed of Student Council activities on a regular basis
 - Call executive committee meetings, as needed
 - Follow up with student who have received Emergency Aid
- Student editor and writing tutor**
- Offer edits and suggestions for PsyD student papers based on APA guidelines
 - Supervise students in improving writing techniques and research strategies
- OPA Ethics Committee student member**
- Educate professionals and consult with committee members regarding professional conduct of practicing clinicians in the state of Oregon
 - Publish articles for OPA bulletin concerning ethical practice
- Crisis Text Line Counselor**
- Provide crisis counseling, formulate safety plans, and make referrals
- 2013 **English teaching assistant**
- Facilitated lesson plans in an English classroom at Carmel Matriculation School in Semmandakuppam, India
- 2015-2016 **IFSA-Butler Global Ambassador**

- Published articles for IFSA-Butler website about maintaining mental health while living abroad

ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

Cognitive Assessment

- Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence — Second Edition
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale — Fourth Edition
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children — Fifth Edition
- Wechsler Memory Scale — Fourth Edition
- Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability
- Woodcock-Johnson: Cognitive Abilities

Achievement and Academic Assessment

- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test — Third Edition

Behavioral and Diagnostic Assessment

- ACORN
- Beck Anxiety Inventory
- Beck Depression Inventory
- Behavioral Assessment System of Children — Third Edition
- Brief Pain Inventory
- Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms
- Conners — Third Edition
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-Item Scale
- Patient Health Questionnaire — 9
- Patient Health Questionnaire — extended version
- Patient Activation Measure

Personality Assessment

- Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory — Fourth Edition
- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory — 2
- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory — 2–Restructured Form
- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory — Adolescent
- Personality Assessment Inventory
- Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire

CLINICAL COLLOQUIA AND GRAND ROUNDS

Justin Lee, PhD *Pediatric cancer and epilepsy*. Grand Rounds, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. October 14, 2020

Amy Stoeber, PhD *Child adverse events to adults with substance use problems*. Colloquium, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. February 12, 2020

Forster Cheryl, PsyD *Intercultural communication*. Colloquium, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. October 16, 2019

Worthington Jr. Everett, PhD *Promoting forgiveness*. Colloquium, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. September 25, 2019

Douglas Marlow, PhD, *Foundations of relationships therapy — the Gottman model*. Grand Rounds, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. March 20, 2019

Diomaris Safi, PsyD & Alex Millkey, PsyD, *Opportunities in forensic psychology*. Colloquium, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. February 13, 2019

Scott Pengelly, PhD, *Old pain in new brains*. Grand Rounds, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. October 10, 2018

Lisa McMinn, PhD & Mark McMinn, PhD, *Spiritual formation and the life of a psychologist: Looking closer to soul-care*. Colloquium, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. September 26, 2018

Michael Vogle, PsyD *Integration and ekklesia*. Colloquium, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. March 14, 2018

Carlos Taloyo, PsyD, *The history and application of interpersonal psychotherapy*. Grand Rounds, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. February 14, 2018

Jeffery Sordahl, PsyD *Telehealth*. Colloquium, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. November 8, 2017

Eleanor Gil-Kashiwabara, PsyD *Community based participatory research and tribal participatory research with Indian American/Alaskan Natives*. Grand Rounds, George Fox University, Newberg, OR. October 11, 2017

OTHER CERTIFICATES AND TRAININGS

Sex, Religion, & Spirituality in the Therapy Room

Lewis and Clark College, November 2019

Elisabeth Esmiol Wilson, PhD

Dialectical Behavior Therapy Certificate Course
Digital seminar via PESI, June 2020
Lane Pederson, PsyD

AFFILIATIONS/MEMBERSHIPS

Present	American Psychological Association , student member
2014-2016	Psi Chi (psychology honor society), tutoring associated with membership at Apollo, a social enterprise for K-12 students