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## The Effect of Misogynistic Humor on Millenials' Perception of Women

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# The Effect of Misogynistic Humor on Millennials' Perception of Women

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**ABSTRACT:** Humor is often a controversial genre of entertainment. It is not critically examined due to its intentionally offensive nature. This study examines the impact of sexist humor on millennials' perception of women. Students ( $n = 1,096$ ) from a four-year university were divided into two groups and both participated in a survey examining attitudes toward women and media-viewing habits. One group was exposed to clips of sexist humor from television shows and the other was not. A series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) conducted on the two groups did not find significant differences between those who had viewed sexist clips and those who did not, implying sexism in media may have a smaller impact on college-aged individuals than previous research indicates. However, linear regressions found media viewing habits and preferences were significant predictors for five out of eight factors of sexism: dependency/deference, purity, caretaking, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism. The factors not found to be significant were modern sexism, stereotypical images/activities, and emotionality. Overall, the results indicate no difference between the control and experimental groups regarding immediate exposure to sexist humor, but cumulative exposure was correlated with higher levels of sexism. These findings support the need for more critical analysis of sexist humor, particularly with the millennial demographic.

**KEYWORDS:** sexist humor, sexism, humor, women in media

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## INTRODUCTION

Sexist humor is present in film, television, music, and even advertising. The influence sexism has on the social atmosphere is palpable. Critical examination of media is particularly important among college-aged individuals referred to as “millennials” since they are an increasingly influential demographic. This study seeks to examine the relationship between sexist humor and the perception of women, including reinforcement of gender norms, heteronormative views, and traditional femininity. I hypothesize that men and women exposed to sexist humor will hold more sexist attitudes than those who have not been exposed. For this study, sexist humor is defined as mentally degrading women’s capabilities, physically objectifying women, or belittling relationships between women.

### *Women in Media*

An unfortunate reality of nearly all media is that it contains misogynistic content. It is hard to get away from the ideal image of a woman who is skinny, pretty, and submissive (Dworkin et al., 1998; Rosewarne, 2008; Yoder, Christopher, & Holmes, 2008). Slevac & Tiggemann (2011) introduced four media-processing variables to explain how a viewer is influenced by sexism: internalization of thinness/beauty ideals, comparison of physical features, appearance investment in beauty, and aging anxiety. Women in film are often relegated to secondary roles, where they reinforce heteronormative stereotypes, are presented as attractive and sexualized, and display more feminine-coded behaviors and indirect aggression (Escholz, Bufkin & Long, 2002; Thruer, 2007). Research by Attwood (2009) observes that women are defined by their sexuality and are either criticized for being too sexual or not sexual enough. This leads to sexualization of young girls, contributing to increased violence against women (Purcell & Zurbriggen, 2013). Exposure to media objectifying women results in self-objectification, higher feelings of anxiety/anger, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating (Krawczyk, 2014; Halliwell, Malson, & Tischner, 2011; Slevac & Tiggemann, 2011; Lavine, Sweeney, & Wagner, 1999).

Research by Peter and Valkenburg (2007) has found that adolescents who view more sexually explicit content on the Internet were more likely to regard women as sexual objects. Video games commonly feature eroticized aggression, a phenomenon in which female characters are shown as both sexy and violent, which may

increase violence against women (Dill & Thill, 2007). Furthermore, Dietz (1998) reports that only 15% of video games targeting children had leading female characters; 30% had no female characters at all and another 21% only depicted them in “damsel in distress” roles. Stermer and Burkley (2013) demonstrated exposure to sexist video games increased levels of hostile and benevolent sexism in men. Not only do sexist depictions occur in fiction, but female politicians in media coverage are also portrayed with the “competent, but cold” trope, which paints them as unlikeable compared to male politicians (Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad, & Gaffney, 2012).

Evidence suggests exposure to female-positive media may protect against misogyny. Studies show that women who view positive body image advertisements have less anxiety and body dissatisfaction, which makes them less likely to be affected by negative environmental influences (Halliwell, 2013; Owen & Spencer, 2013). Furthermore, listening to songs with pro-equality messages decreased sexist views and behaviors toward women (Greitemeyer, Hollingdale, & Traut-Mattausch, 2012). Women who consume media depicting women in non-stereotypical roles tend to have higher self-perception and self-esteem, more leadership aspirations, and more progressive views about gender roles; women who have low self-esteem tend to gravitate toward more traditional roles (Simon & Hoyt, 2007).

### *Sexist Humor*

One of the more dangerous aspects of humor is that it is not analyzed as seriously as other genres. Derogatory expressions present in comedy are not examined critically, and so misogynistic humor is generally one of the more “acceptable” forms of sexism (Ford & Gray, 2013). It is considered humorous and commonplace, creating a social context in which it is okay to laugh. People who preferred sexist humor to non-sexist humor were found to have higher measures of sexism, particularly hostile sexism (Eyssel & Bohner, 2007; Moore, Griffiths & Payne, 1987; Thomas & Esses, 2004).

As a matter of fact, for sexist men, the exposure to sexist humor can actually promote discrimination and prejudice against women due to the social norm that has been created (Ford, Boxer, Armstrong, & Edel, 2008; Ford, Wentzel, & Lorion, 2001). Men also tend to be less critical of visual media they consume, according to media literacy scales (Lambiase, Reichert, Adkins, & LaTou, 2012). Exposure to sexist humor for women

led to increased disgust, loss of self-esteem, and non-verbal reactions indicating embarrassment and contempt (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998). This may be explained by a study by Love and Deckers (1989) that suggested women found sexist humor less funny because they identified with the victim, having previously been discriminated against on the basis of their gender. Women will identify with the female characters they view; therefore, when the character who is a stand-in for women is abused or mocked, it becomes personal for women in the audience.

The effects of sexist humor reach even further, however. A study done by Ford (2000) showed that sexism in comedy was deemed appropriate and led to an increased tolerance of sexist events. The more humorous a person found a situation to be, the less likely they were to call it sexist and more likely to approve of it (Bill & Naus, 1992). Humor is essentially used to mask the severity of misogyny. Several studies show that exposure to sexist jokes led to an increase in levels of rape proclivity among men (Romero-Sánchez, Durán, Carretero-Dios, Megías, & Moya, 2010; Thomae & Viki, 2013). Enjoyment of sexist humor was also linked with increased physical and sexual aggression in men and increased acceptance of interpersonal violence in women (Ryan & Kanjorksi, 1998).

#### *Theoretical Perspective and Current Study*

This study draws from Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971). This theory posits that the primary way children learn behaviors, emotional reactions, and attitudes is through observation and modelling of others. Social Learning Theory has been applied to the understanding of aggression, behavior modification in psychological disorders, and increasing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1969; Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1993). Thus, this theory predicts how frequently viewing sexism and negative attitudes toward women in media may cause a direct increase in that behavior.

Prejudiced Norm Theory builds off Bandura's theory to explain how misogynistic humor creates a social norm that makes it acceptable to laugh at sexism (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). The theory proposes that a lack of negative reaction or a positive reaction such as canned/studio laughter following a sexist joke allows the viewer to believe this is an appropriate reaction, which normalizes degrading and objectifying attitudes toward a target group. My study examines the effect that viewing

sexist humor in television has on one's perception of women, including ideas of heteronormativity, hostile and benevolent sexism, femininity, and paternalism. I theorize that exposure to sexist humor will lead to higher levels of sexism.

## **METHOD**

### *Participants and Procedure*

Data for the study was collected from the University of Central Florida via the online Sona System and has received approval from the International Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). A total of 1,096 students participated. The majority of students were female ( $n = 811$ , 75%). Participants were mostly White ( $n = 634$ , 57.8%) or Hispanic ( $n = 185$ , 16.9%). The age of students ranged from 18 to 62 ( $M = 20.38$ ;  $SD = 4.64$ ). Participants were divided into two different groups using the Sona System based on their interest in participating in two different studies. The experimental group consisting of 561 students (436 females; 125 males) was exposed to clips of sexist humor prior to completing the online questionnaire. The control group of 535 students (375 females, 160 males) completed the same online questionnaire without being exposed to clips of sexist humor. Each online study took about 35 minutes to complete.

### *Measures*

#### **Exposure to Short-Term Sexist Humor**

Participants in the experimental group were primed with three clips of sexist humor prior to completing the online questionnaire to examine the effects of exposure to short-term sexist humor. All three were from popular television shows, *The Big Bang Theory*, *How I Met Your Mother*, and *Family Guy*. Sexist humor in the clips is defined as mentally degrading (e.g., women only vote for an attractive presidential candidate, women can't learn science), physically objectifying (e.g., women's bodies useful as commodities or for sex, counting past sexual partners, men pitting women against each other in appearance), or belittling women's relationships (e.g., displaying indirect aggression by subtly insulting each other or referring to each other with gendered slurs).

#### **Modern Sexism Scale**

Participants in both groups were asked eleven questions

about their views on women in the modern era, specifically about refusal to admit discrimination against women, antagonism toward women's movements toward equality, and resentment about certain special favors such as affirmative action (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). Examples of questions include: "Women will make more progress by being patient and not pushing too hard for change," "Universities are wrong to admit women in costly programs such as medicine, when in fact a large number will leave their jobs after a few years to raise their children," and "In order not to appear sexist, many men are inclined to overcompensate women." Participants are being asked to respond to questions on a scale of 1 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*). Scores ranged from 11 to 66 with lower scores indicating more sexist attitudes. The alpha reliability was measured as .75 in the original study (Swim et al., 1995) and .82 two years later (Swim & Cohen, 1997). Reliability for the current study was .62.

### Feminist Ideology Scale

Participants in both groups were asked 45 questions that assess their expectations of how women should act (Levant, Richmond, Cook, House, & Aupont, 2007). This was measured by five categories: stereotypic images and activities, dependency/deference, purity, caretaking, and emotionality. Examples of questions include: "A woman should not swear," "Women should act helpless to attract a man," and "A woman should be responsible for teaching family values to her children." The answers are given from a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Overall, higher scores indicated more stereotypical views. The Cronbach's alpha reliability was .93 in the original study (Levant et al., 2007). Questions were grouped into five subscales: stereotypic images and activities (11 questions) ( $\alpha=.86$ ), dependency/deference (10 questions) ( $\alpha=.87$ ), purity (9 questions) ( $\alpha=.77$ ), caretaking (7 questions) ( $\alpha=.81$ ), and emotionality (8 questions) ( $\alpha=.87$ ). For all forty-five questions, alpha reliability was .93 in the current study.

### Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

Both groups of participants were asked 22 questions that measure hostile sexism, which is actively antagonistic toward women, and benevolent sexism, which relegates women to traditionally feminine roles such as more caring or compassionate while dismissing their other features (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This is measured with three main categories: protective paternalism, complementary gender

differentiation, and heterosexuality intimacy. Examples of questions include: "No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman," "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men," and "Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility." Answers are given on a scale of 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 6 (*agree strongly*), with six of the items being reversed scored. Higher scores indicated more sexist views. The Cronbach's alpha reliability was .83 in the original study (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Questions were divided into two subscales: hostile sexism (11 questions) ( $\alpha=.86$ ) and benevolent sexism (11 questions) ( $\alpha=.82$ ). For all 22 questions, alpha reliability was .82 in the current study.

### Demographic Questionnaire

Participants were asked five questions regarding their age, race, gender, year in college, and grade point average.

### Media Viewing Questionnaire

Participants in both groups were asked twelve questions about their media viewing habits, specifically about the shows they watch and their preference for them. Six of the questions were asked on the basis of how often a show is watched from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*frequently*). Six questions were asked on how much the program is liked from 1 (*extremely disliked*) to 5 (*extremely liked*). These questions were used in determining effects of cumulative exposure to sexist humor. The programs in alphabetical order are: *The Big Bang Theory*, *Community*, *Family Guy*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *Parks and Recreation*, and *The Simpsons*. Of these shows, three often include humorous sexist portrayals of women according to the criteria described above (*The Big Bang Theory*, *Family Guy*, *How I Met Your Mother*), and three have received praise for their diversity and equality in gender and have less instances of sexist humor (*Community*, *Parks and Recreation*, *The Simpsons*).

### Video Clip Analysis

The video clips used were from three shows that were also used for the sexist TV show preference section of the study: *The Big Bang Theory*, *Family Guy*, and *How I Met Your Mother*. Each show contributed three scenes. The specific instances shown in the clips were intended to demonstrate the kind of sexism commonly pervading the shows.



For *The Big Bang Theory*, the first clip shows the use of women as sex objects, particularly pitting women against each other in terms of physical attractiveness. As several studies indicate, the objectification of women leads to increased sexist views among men and body dissatisfaction among women (Lavine, Sweeney & Wagner, 1999; Krawczyk, 2014). The second clip has three main characters discussing one woman's sexual history, including using derogatory terms such as "slut." As Halliwell, Malson, and Tischner (2001) demonstrated, the consistent depiction of women in sexual contexts increases self-objectification and body dissatisfaction among women. The final clip from early in the show depicts the only female character as incapable of understanding concepts of physics and referring to herself as "stupid" for her failure. Along with the notable discouragement of women in scientific fields, relegating women to non-intellectual roles is a common trope that perpetuates the image of women in traditionally feminine roles and results in lower self-esteem (Simon & Hoyt, 2007).

In the clips for *Family Guy*, the first showed a parody of the women's suffrage movement in which their leader encourages them to vote for a particular candidate due to his attractiveness. The appreciation of sexist humor is often contingent on the stereotypical "ditzy" depictions of women (Moore, Griffiths & Payne, 1987). The second clip shows a conversation between two women consisting entirely of subtle insults disguised as admiration and underhanded compliments. As Thruer (2007) points out, women are more likely in television to display indirect aggression in the form of gossiping and other spiteful behaviors that are rarely shown for male characters. The third clip is of a woman having an overreaction to a simple statement made by a man, immediately sobbing, and throwing herself out of a window. The depiction of women as typically overemotional and irrational intentionally frames women as antagonists and further perpetuates harmful stereotypes of women's emotionality.

The third show was *How I Met Your Mother*. In the first clip, a man makes a series of lewd and sexual comments about his friend's younger sister. The hypersexualization of girls and women in media has a noted effect on the increased sexism and aggression aimed at them in society (Purcell & Zurbriggen, 2013). This effect may be exacerbated by the fact that the age of the younger sister is never clarified, leaving it up to the viewer to fill in any inappropriate age. In the second clip, one of the main characters describes his preference for "bimbos,"

in which women are depicted as unintelligent and vapid beings defined only by their sexual interest in him. The secondary role women are often relegated to, in which they are defined solely by their heterosexual attraction to a primary male character, has a long history in media. The consistent sexualization of women lowers their self-esteem and increases body dissatisfaction (Escholz, Bufkin & Long, 2002; Halliwell, Malson, & Tischner, 2011). The final clip describes the "Bro Code," in which a male character details his book, sharing tips on how to woo women through deception, encouraging violence, and often referring to women with gendered slurs such as "hoes." Along with more sexual depictions, it is also important to note that the socialization of sex and violence in women, referred to as "eroticized aggression," has troubling implications in the increased exploitation of women, particularly in pornography (Dill & Thill, 2007).

## RESULTS

Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the reliability of scales, distributional characteristics, intercorrelations of measures, and the extent of missing data. Missing data for the current study was minimal (< 5%), therefore a simple mean substitution method was used (Kline, 2005). This method involves replacing the missing data with the overall mean value for the variable. There is the possibility that replacing missing data in this manner can distort the distribution of the data. However, this procedure had no detectable effect on this dataset: the distribution of data was the same before and after data imputation. This method of handling missing data is preferable to deletion methods as it allows for complete case analyses, does not reduce the statistical power of tests, and takes into consideration the reason for missing data (Twala, 2009). Moreover, this method of data imputation is a good representation of the original data as long as the missing data is less than 20%, which was the case in this study (Downey & King, 1998).

Analyses relevant to the study aims are described in the following sections. These include (a) intercorrelations of study variables, (b) a series of analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if there is a difference in sexist attitudes based on exposure to sexist humor on television, and (c) linear regression analyses to determine how media viewing habits relate to levels of sexism.

*Sexist Humor and Sexism*

Data were analyzed using a series of analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if exposure to sexist humor impacts participants' level of sexism. No significant differences between those participants who viewed sexist humor on television and those who did not view the video clips were found on any of the dependent measures. These measures included: modern sexism,  $F(1, 1094) = .06, p = .81$ ; stereotypical images/activities,  $F(1, 1094) = 1.48, p = .22$ ; dependency/deference,  $F(1, 1094) = .71, p = .40$ ; purity,  $F(1, 1094) = .15, p = .70$ ; caretaking,  $F(1, 1094) = 1.28, p = .26$ ; emotionality,  $F(1, 1094) = .29, p = .59$ ; benevolent sexism,  $F(1, 1094) = .79, p = .38$ ; and hostile sexism  $F(1, 1094) = .87, p = .35$ . Descriptive statistics for exposure to sexist humor and measures on the dependent measures can be found in Table 1.

*Intercorrelations of Study Variables*

Correlations were conducted to determine if there were significant relationships between the variables examined, including demographics (i.e., age, gender, race), year in college on TV viewing, and preference habits. All four factors in TV viewing and preference were significantly correlated with each other. A significant positive correlation occurred between age and equality TV preference. There was a significant negative correlation between gender and sexist TV viewing, equality TV viewing, and equality TV preference. Results of correlation analysis among TV viewing/preference habits and demographic variables can be found in Table 2.

TV show viewing habits and preferences were studied with measures of sexism. Sexist TV viewing habits were significantly correlated to lower levels of Purity but higher levels of Hostile Sexism. Equality TV viewing habits were significantly correlated to lower levels of Purity, Caretaking, and Benevolent Sexism. Preference for sexist TV was significantly correlated to lower levels of Dependency/Deference and Purity. Preference for equality TV was significantly correlated to lower levels of Purity but higher levels of Hostile Sexism. Results of correlation analysis among TV viewing/preference habits and measures of sexism can be found in Table 3.

*Media Viewing Habits*

Linear regressions were conducted to determine how media viewing habits relate to the level of sexism. Preference and regular watching of sexist or equality-

promoting TV shows were used to predict levels of sexism. The model was found to be significant for: dependency/deference,  $F(4, 1091) = 6.37, p = .00, R^2 = .02$ ; purity,  $F(4, 1091) = 18.74, p = .00, R^2 = .06$ ; caretaking,  $F(4, 1091) = 2.88, p = .02, R^2 = .01$ ; benevolent sexism,  $F(4, 1091) = 7.97, p = .00, R^2 = .03$ ; and hostile sexism,  $F(4, 1091) = 4.31, p = .00, R^2 = .02$ . Results of the regression analysis can be found in Table 4.

No significant findings were found for: modern sexism,  $F(4, 1091) = .55, p = .70, R^2 = .00$ ; stereotypic images and activities,  $F(4, 1091) = 2.29, p = .06, R^2 = .01$ ; and emotionality,  $F(4, 1091) = .61, p = .70, R^2 = .00$ . Results of the regression analysis for non-significant media viewing are in Table 5.

**DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between sexist humor and the perception of women, including the reinforcement of gender norms, heteronormative views, and traditional femininity. The hypothesis was that men and women exposed to sexist humor would display more sexist attitudes. The importance of this study is emphasized by the fact that humor is a genre that is frequently difficult to critically examine due to its controversial nature and subjective preferences.

*Exposure to Sexist Humor*

The results of this study found that sexist views as measured by the control and experimental groups did not significantly differ between those who were exposed to clips of sexist humor and those who were not. However, cumulative exposure to sexist humor compared to those with immediate exposure did have an impact. These results may seem predictable since long-term cumulative exposure to sexist humor has an expected history.

However, the results also raise another important observation – college-aged students of the experimental group were not found to be as sexist as previous research seems to suggest, despite being primed with sexist video clips. Particularly considering that age was significantly positively correlated with preference for equality-promoting television, this is an interesting contradiction. Evidence previously observed has firmly set a precedent for sexism in all generations. This lack of difference between the control and experimental groups may be due to an increase in critical examination of media and a

general recognition of injustice.

The label of “feminism” has pervaded our society. Both men and women are more aware of systemic and institutional inequalities between the genders in sociocultural, political, and economic contexts. Unfortunately, the feminist movement has historically been plagued with conflict, from semantics and definitions to the rise of opposing movements, such as the meninists or men’s rights activists. For more than a century, activism done by feminists has existed only in well-funded and elite circles in the United States, creating problems with racism, classism, partisan politics, homophobia, and xenophobia.

However, simply having the resources to better understand the issues of sexism and misogyny may be giving rise to a more socially-conscious generation. The existence of the Internet has changed the face of the movement as more and more millennials get involved and actively work to form a united intersectional front. Younger generations naturally are not growing up with the same ideas of gender as the previous generations. Perhaps being more media savvy and having increased exposure to activism regarding misogyny means that critical analysis of media, previously thought to only exist within socially-aware individuals, is now occurring among all college-aged individuals. The significance of this result, that perhaps college-aged students are not as sexist as previous research demonstrated, holds weight in the constant debate regarding millennials and helps explain their mindsets.

To sum up, exposure to immediate sexist humor in the form of the video clips did not affect participants’ views. This may be interpreted in two ways: either the priming of sexist humor was ineffective through the use of video clips, or there was simply not a difference of views between the two groups. The results do indicate immediate exposure to sexist humor made a difference in sexist views when compared to cumulative exposure to sexist humor. This result is consistent with previous research indicating that until a social context is established and the humor in the clips is not approved by one’s peers, it may not be accepted (Ford & Gray, 2013). In other words, watching isolated clips of TV shows to which one does not have previous exposure or peer approval is more likely to be subject to critical examination. Also, short-term exposure to sexist humor may not affect one’s views.

Participants who reported cumulative exposure and preference to sexist TV shows in the media viewing

habits questionnaire did tend to have slightly higher levels of sexism, particularly in dependency/deference, purity, caretaking, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism. These results seem to suggest that exposure to sexist media must be continuous as opposed to brief clips and must be preferred in order to have an effect on personal beliefs. This supports Prejudiced Norm Theory (Ford & Ferguson, 2004), which states that the creation of a culture that normalizes disparaging humor toward a certain group and reinforces it is a process that takes time. Tolerating and enjoying sexist humor, therefore, is learned over time and cannot be appropriately measured by immediate exposure to brief clips. A much better indication of media portrayals impacting sexist views comes from cumulative exposure, in which one has peer approval. Such cumulative exposure might eventually result in the creation of a social context that accepts and even actively promotes sexism.

The positive correlations found between preference for equality-promoting TV shows with age and year in college suggests lower levels of sexism with age indicates that sexist humor aimed at younger audiences may be responsible for the result. This finding would corroborate research by Peter and Valkenburg (2007), who noted that younger audiences viewing sexually objectifying content on the Internet hold more sexist views with exposure to sexism. It is also important to note that exposure to media now begins at a younger age through the use of widely available technology, particularly for teenagers. This widespread Internet access results in exposure to sexism at younger and more impressionable ages, leading to the positive correlation between age and preference for non-sexist television viewing.

#### LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

This study had certain weaknesses, which may affect the internal and external validity of the data. The study only used a sample size of students from a four-year university, with the majority within an 18 to 22 year old age width. Most of the participants were female and White or Hispanic, which means my results cannot be generalized to all populations. For exposure to sexist humor, there is only a correlation and not a causation, which leaves some of the results of the study ambiguous. Also, the videos and questionnaire were both online, leaving no way to ensure that the videos were actually watched and that all the questions were properly understood or read before being answered.



As discussed above, the instances of sexist humor were chosen for their negative and harmfully stereotypical portrayals of women as described by previous research. However, humor is a highly subjective field, and it is possible that the interpretations of certain scenes may have occurred in a positive light for individuals. For example, in *The Big Bang Theory*, women being overtly sexualized and discussing their sexual history may have been viewed as positive due to the agentic and sexually liberating nature of the characters. In *Family Guy*, the seemingly spiteful conversation between women may have been interpreted as a close friendship in which insults are not taken seriously and are used to add levity in conversations.

The video clips may also have been interpreted critically before the questionnaire was answered, which may negate the effect of its sexist humor. According to Ford & Gray (2013), social context plays a major role in the acceptance and enjoyment of sexist humor. If a participant does not know how one's peers will react to the video clips, they may be less likely to find it humorous and therefore less likely to let it affect their views. Therefore, another case where the clips may have an opposite effect is if the peer group of a participant has expressed disapproval of the shows the clips were taken from. In this scenario, the participant may view the clips with a more critical and negative mindset.

Another shortcoming of the research was the time period in which the scales used were developed. They were all created to analyze views in the 1990s, not in the 2010s. Due to the strides made in equality and sociocultural views during these years, the scales used may be outdated. The social context of both sexist humor and the perception of women has also changed. In addition, the reliability and validity of the Modern Sexism Scale was not high enough to be considered consistent. Furthermore, many of the result analyses were not found to be statistically significant, leading to no conclusion being drawn about their meaning.

An additional shortcoming in this research is the lack of significant findings regarding exposure to immediate sexist humor. Since no difference was found between the experimental and the control group, it is a fair conclusion to make that watching the sexist video clips did not, in fact, affect the views of the students in the study. Further research will be needed to determine what this result ultimately means, as discussed below.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Several questions have been raised in regards to sexism, particularly in the comedy genre, from this research. Future research should examine the differences between cumulative and short-term or immediate exposure to sexist humor in a controlled setting. The TV shows that were chosen for each category, promoting either equality or sexism, may have affected the opinion of participants. For example, if a participant liked the show the clips were from, it would lead to a more positive association which may lead them to downplay examples of sexism present in them. Another direction future research can take is to study whether the presence of canned/studio laughter in media leads to the humor being accepted and normalized, therefore contributing to the tolerance of sexist events. This has been proposed in the past but not studied (Ford, 2000). The study should also be conducted with a more diverse sample size.

As mentioned several times throughout the discussion, one of the more surprising results that this study yielded, or didn't yield as the case may be, is the lack of significant results regarding differences in the views of the control and experimental group. It is possible to attribute this to several factors, such as critical examination of media consumed, a culture of increased gender acceptance, a higher female population in college, etc. Ultimately, it is only with further research that this topic can be fully understood, particularly regarding the college demographic of millennials.

## APPENDIX

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Levels of Sexism based on Exposure to Sexist Humor

Measure	Control		Experimental	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Modern Sexism	29.12	6.42	29.03	6.22
Stereotypical Images/Activities	20.80	8.95	20.16	8.45
Dependency/Deference	14.14	6.22	14.46	6.49
Purity	23.68	8.37	23.88	8.83
Caretaking	21.76	7.04	21.28	7.01
Emotionality	23.39	8.63	23.11	9.14
Benevolent Sexism	39.17	10.19	38.63	9.88
Hostile Sexism	33.79	10.58	33.21	10.09

**Table 2: Intercorrelations of TV Viewing/Preference and Demographic Variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Sexist TV Viewing		.27*	.54*	.21	-.03	-.06**	.01
2. Equality TV Viewing	.27*		.27*	.43*	.04	-.20*	-.04
3. Sexist TV Preference	.54*	.27*		.21*	-.04	-.05	.02
4. Equality TV Preference	.21*	.43*	.21*		0.6**	-.26*	-.04
5. Age	-.03	.04	-.04	.06**		.01	-.13*
6. Gender	-.06**	-.20*	-.05	-.26*	.01		-.03
7. GPA	.01	-.04	.02	-.04	-.13*	-.03	

\*p &lt; .01, \*\*p &lt; .05

Table 3: Intercorrelations of TV Viewing/Preference and Measures of Sexism

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Modern Sexism		.57*	.49*	.34*	.42*	.29*
2. Stereotype	.57*		.70*	.51*	.60*	.50*
3. Dependency/Deference	.49*	.70*		.43*	.36*	.28*
4. Purity	.34*	.51*	.43*		.56*	.33*
5. Caretaking	.42*	.60*	.36*	.57*		.42*
6. Emotionality	.29*	.50*	.28*	.33*	.42*	
7. Benevolent Sexism	.28*	.38*	.22*	.46*	.51*	.27*
8. Hostile Sexism	.56*	.57*	.32*	.33*	.50*	.38*
9. Sexist TV Viewing	.02	-.00	-.04	-.18**	-.04*	-.04
10. Equality TV Viewing	.04	.04	.02	-.16**	-.09*	-.01
11. Sexist TV Preference	.01	-.06	-.13*	-.20*	.00	-.04
12. Equality TV Preference	.04	.05	-.05	-.16*	-.02	.00

\* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .05$

**Table 3 Continued: Intercorrelations of TV Viewing/Preference and Measures of Sexism**

	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Modern Sexism	.28*	.56*	.02	.04	.01	.040
2. Stereotype	.38*	.57*	-.00	.04	-.06	.05
3. Dependency/Deference	.22*	.32*	-.04	.02	-.13*	-.05
4. Purity	.46*	.33*	-.18*	-.16*	-.20*	-.16*
5. Caretaking	.51*	.50*	-.04	-.09*	.00	-.02
6. Emotionality	.27*	.38*	-.04	-.01	-.04	.00
7. Benevolent Sexism		.47*	-.05	-.15*	.01	-.04
8. Hostile Sexism	.47*		.07**	-.05	.05	.06**
9. Sexist TV Viewing	-.05	.07**		.27*	.54*	.21*
10. Equality TV Viewing	-.15*	-.05	.27*		.27*	.43*
11. Sexist TV Preference	.01	.05	.54*	.27*		.21*
12. Equality TV Preference	-.04	.06**	.21*	.43*	.21*	

\* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .05$



Table 4: Regression Results for Significant Media Viewing Habits

	Dependency Deference	Purity	Caretaking	Benevolent Sexism	Hostile Sexism
Sexist TV Viewing	.07	-.27**	.09	-.20	.26
Equality TV Viewing	.24**	-.29**	-.34*	-.80*	-.51*
Sexist TV Preference	-.15	-.46*	.15	.37**	.10
Equality TV Preference	-.46*	-.31*	.06	.12	.36*
$R^2$	.02	.06	.01	.03	.02
$F$	6.37	18.74	2.88	7.97	4.31

\* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .05$

Table 5: Regression Results for Non-Significant Media Viewing Habits

	Modern Sexism	Stereotypic Images/Activities	Emotionality
Sexist TV Viewing	.01	.08	-.11
Equality TV Viewing	.07	.14	.00
Sexist TV Preference	.01	-.37**	-.09
Equality TV Preference	.07	.16	.05
$R^2$	.00	.01	.00
$F$	.55	2.29	.61

\* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .05$

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