

Title – Ambivalent Sexism, Religiosity, and Perceptions of College Majors as Masculine or Feminine.

Program of Study – Psychology

Presentation Type – **Choose one of the following:** PowerPoint

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Gender stereotypes exist in many forms. Occupational stereotypes occur when people view certain vocations as masculine or feminine. Men and women indicate their choice of vocation by what they choose as a major in college. In many cultures, religious beliefs impact views on gender roles. This study examines the attitudes of college students towards college majors to determine if certain majors are viewed as more masculine or feminine, and if relationships exist between scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, the Ambivalence Towards Men Inventory, the Revised Religiosity Inventory, and a scale measuring perceptions of majors as masculine or feminine. There were three primary research questions. The first question asked if Christian college students rate certain college majors as more masculine or feminine, and if so, which ones. The second question asked if scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory correlate with perceptions of academic majors as masculine or feminine. The third question asked if high scores on the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale correlate with high scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and Ambivalence Towards Men inventory. There were 492 participants in this study. Out of the 25 majors listed, the three that were rated the most masculine and the three that were rated the most feminine were analyzed, using linear regression to determine if relationships exist between the sexism and rating the majors as gendered. When the scores for the top three feminine majors were summed and averaged, there was a statistically significant relationship

between ratings of majors as feminine and the scores on the Ambivalence Towards Men inventory ($p < .05$). When the scores for the top three masculine majors were averaged, there was a statistically significant relationship with scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory ($p < .01$). Scores on the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale had a severe negative skew. As a result, there was no significant correlation between scores on the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory or the Ambivalence Towards Men Inventory. These results suggest that students hold stereotyped views of certain majors. Of these majors, the three that were rated most feminine were positively correlated with scores on the Ambivalence Towards Men inventory, indicating that people who stereotyped majors as feminine had sexist views of men. Interestingly, the three majors that were rated most masculine were negatively correlated with scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. This indicates that the participants who stereotyped certain majors as masculine may have less of a sexist attitude towards women. This supports the idea that it is more acceptable for women to be in traditionally masculine majors than men in traditionally feminine majors. More research needs to be conducted exploring the implications of college major stereotypes and the resulting impact on students in atypical majors.

Psychological research conducted from a Christian perspective is critically important in today's secular culture. Although researchers try to conduct their studies with as little bias as possible, everyone brings with them a paradigm that influences the research design, interpretation, and communication of their results. Thus, every study is conducted with the implicit bias of the researcher. It is important for Christians to conduct empirical research from a Biblical perspective to accompany the secular studies, allowing there to be a wide variety of psychological research from all frames of reference. The goal of this research was to conduct an

ethical, thorough study into the role of gender stereotypes in how college students perceive academic majors. Understanding the mindsets college students hold about gender-stereotypes in the area of college majors can provide an insight into their beliefs of gender roles. There has been a cultural shift in gender roles and the accompanying stereotypes. It is important to conduct gender research from a Christian perspective, since with the rise of feminism, the gender issue has been increasingly in the news. This study specifically looked at gender stereotypes of academic majors, which reflect beliefs about which areas of study are appropriate for men and women to pursue. Because of Liberty University's Christian worldview, several of the college majors that the study examined were unique to Liberty. The results from this study will be valuable to the Christian community and the secular community, as it provides further information about the role of educational stereotypes and implicit beliefs about masculinity and femininity among Christian college students. Stereotypes have implications for students, particularly in Christian communities. It will be helpful for students to know the perceptions that accompany their chosen college major. Doing this research at a Christian school and being able to discuss the results will provide valuable information to the community as whole.