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### Satanists' Sexual Self-Concept

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Satanists' Sexual Self-Concept

By

Samuel Danielson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Clinical Psychology

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2022

March 28, 2022

Satanists' Sexual Self-Concept

Samuel Danielson

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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Abstract

The present study examines sexuality within an international sample ( $n = 908$ ) of modern Satanists. Sociodemographic and religious data from this sample are provided. Frequencies of Satanists' engagement in different sexual behaviors are also explored. Furthermore, two aspects of Satanists' sexual self-concept, sexual self-esteem and sexual anxiety, are assessed along with these variables' relationships with the strength of Satanists' group identity and the length of time identifying as a Satanist. Results indicate that the strength of Satanists' identity impacts both their sexual self-esteem and sexual anxiety. Limitations and directions for future research on Satanism and sexuality are discussed.

### Satanists' Sexual Self-Concept

The relationships between religion, spirituality, and sexuality have been investigated by researchers for decades, with much of this research occurring in the last 15-20 years. Throughout this time, some research has indicated that religion and spirituality may have some enhancing effects on sexual outcomes, especially in the context of marriage (Hernandez-Kane & Mahoney, 2018), though others have found primarily diminishing effects of religion and spirituality on sexual outcomes (Grubbs et al., 2020; Perry, 2018; Perry & Whitehead, 2019). One commonality among prior research on the relationship between religiousness and sexuality is that these studies tend to use samples that are made up of individuals from predominantly traditional, evangelical, and sexually restrictive or sex-negative religions. Though these samples may be more accurate representations of the distribution of religious affiliations of a population (Schlosser, 2003), they fail to shed any light on the experiences of individuals from minority religious groups. One such minority religion that is routinely overlooked in psychological literature is modern Satanism.

#### **What is Satanism?**

The term *Satanist* was originally used as a derogatory term to refer to political and religious rivals and cultural outsiders (Van Luijk, 2016). Satanist was not used to describe one's religious identity until 1966 with the founding of the Church of Satan by Anton Szandor LaVey (Dyrendal et al., 2016). The Church started as a small congregation of adherents who would regularly meet at LaVey's home in San Francisco. After the publication of LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* in 1969, the new religion experienced a period of rapid expansion in the number of its congregants and would eventually spread worldwide (Dyrendal et al., 2016). Over time, several schisms within modern Satanism occurred, resulting in the creation of several other sects within the overarching umbrella of Satanism including the Temple of Set and The Satanic Temple (see

Foertsch, 2021 for more on schisms within modern Satanism). Of these sects, The Satanic Temple, established in 2011, has since overtaken the Church of Satan as the largest Satanic organization in the world (The Satanic Temple, n.d.). Despite differing in several aspects, many Satanists share similar beliefs.

Most modern Satanists are atheists or non-theists, despite Satan appearing as a central figurehead for the religion (Dyrendal et al., 2016; Van Luijk, 2016). Rather than believing in an actual god or devil, Satanists have adopted the figure of Satan from Christian mythology as a symbol of their beliefs (Dyrendal et al., 2016; Faxneld & Petersen, 2014; Van Luijk, 2016). In Christian mythology, Satan is depicted as the god of materialism and carnality, traits that are embraced by modern Satanism, creating a juxtaposition between modern Satanism's beliefs and those of more traditional religions.

*The Satanic Bible* features a section that identifies several core beliefs for members of the Church of Satan called the "Nine Satanic Statements" (LaVey, 1969). These statements include beliefs such as valuing indulgence over abstinence, materialism, wisdom, conditional kindness, vengeance, responsibility, denying human exceptionalism, embracing the "seven deadly sins," and recognizing Christianity's reliance on Satan for its own survival. However, due to schisms within modern Satanism (Foertsch, 2021), not all Satanists abide by the teachings put forth by LaVey in *The Satanic Bible*.

The Satanic Temple has also proffered a list of "Seven Fundamental Tenets" for members of the organization. The tenets consist of values or beliefs including compassion, justice, personal responsibility, nobility in action and thought, respect for the freedoms of others including the right to offend, scientific reason, and bodily autonomy (The Satanic Temple, n.d.). Of particular note for the current study are the teachings of indulgence from the "Nine Satanic

Statements” and bodily autonomy from the “Seven Fundamental Tenets,” as they both may be applied to modern Satanism’s beliefs, values, and practices regarding sexuality.

### **Satanic Sexuality**

Sexuality is a prominent topic throughout modern Satanism and has been celebrated since the religion’s birth out of the counterculture of the 1960s. Modern Satanism is highly permissive of any sexual acts (including masturbation, sex with multiple partners, fetish and kink play, and sadomasochistic behaviors), so long as consent is present (LaVey, 1969). Sexuality within the context of modern Satanism also serves spiritual purposes, as engaging in sexual behavior may be considered an expression or affirmation of one’s Satanic beliefs (Faxneld & Petersen, 2014; Sprankle et al., 2021). Engaging in sexual activity also allows Satanists opportunities for transgression against traditional societal norms (Faxneld & Petersen, 2014), which may aid Satanists in the pursuit of rebelling against traditional evangelical teachings.

Despite the centrality of sexuality to modern Satanism’s teachings and beliefs, the practice of sex is largely idiosyncratic among Satanists (Faxneld & Petersen, 2014). However, two general, overlapping themes – liberation and magic – exist that help define the boundaries of Satanic sexual attitudes. Liberation refers to the use of sexual activity to express one’s Satanic beliefs as well as one’s sexuality. This is typically done through engagement in sexual acts that are typically considered taboo within traditional, evangelical norms. Sexual magic is utilized by Satanists from more esoteric circles for the purpose of facilitating spiritual transformation through the accumulation and release of sexual energies (Schreck & Schreck, 2002). This is accomplished in largely the same way as liberation, with Satanists engaging in taboo sexual behavior to decondition themselves to traditional, repressive social, cultural, and religious norms, and recondition themselves to a new state of spiritual enlightenment. Although sexuality

occupies a central role within modern Satanism, no research has attempted to provide an empirical description of Satanists' sexual behaviors and attitudes toward sexuality.

### **Sexual Self-Concept**

Research within the last twenty years has led sexual health care providers and researchers to include cognitive and emotional sexual well-being in their conceptualizations of overall sexual health (Edwards & Coleman, 2004). Because of this reconceptualization of what constitutes sexual health, researchers began exploring a construct called *sexual selfhood*, which refers to how individuals perceive themselves as sexual beings (Tolman & McClelland, 2011). However, much of the literature on sexual selfhood focuses on a sub-construct called sexual self-concept (SSC; Deutsch et al., 2014). SSC refers to an active, dynamic cognitive structure formulated by perceived personal sexual qualities. Several biopsychosocial factors have been identified by past research to affect SSC, including age, gender, marital status, race, disability status, sexually transmitted infection status, body image, mental health, history of sexual abuse, social learning from parents and peers, and media (Potki et al., 2017). Prior research on SSC has shown the construct to consist of five factors: sexual arousal, sexual exploration, sexual self-efficacy, sexual self-esteem (referred to as sexual esteem from here), and lack of sexual anxiety (Deutsch et al., 2014). The present study only assessed sexual esteem and sexual anxiety, so the discussion will be limited to these two factors. Though there is disagreement within the literature on the precise definitions of sexual esteem and sexual anxiety (see Deutsch et al., 2014 for more on other definitions), the current study utilized the constructs as conceptualized by Snell et al. (1993) as these conceptualizations have been used previously in a study assessing religion/spirituality, sexual self-concept, and hypersexual behavior (Griffin et al., 2016). According to this conceptualization of sexual self-concept, sexual esteem is defined as, “A



generalized tendency to positively evaluate one's capacity to relate sexually with another person," whereas sexual anxiety is described as, "The tendency to feel tension, discomfort, and anxiety about the sexual aspects of one's life" (Snell et al., 1993). Using these definitions, we sought to explore some of the ways in which Satanists perceive themselves as sexual beings.

### **Research Questions**

As very little research has attempted to empirically describe the sexual experiences of modern Satanists, we aimed to begin filling in this gap in the literature. To assess how Satanists see themselves sexually, we developed three research questions: (1) What behaviors do the sexual repertoires of Satanists consist of? (2) Does strength of Satanist identity predict SSC? and (3) Does the number of years one has been a Satanist predict SSC? Because Satanism is a sex-positive and sexually non-repressive religion, the first question was created to determine what kinds of sexual behaviors Satanists engage in. The second question aimed to determine if the salience of one's Satanist identity affected one's sense of sexual esteem or anxiety. The third question was generated as Satanists do not tend to be born into or raised as Satanists, rather Satanists typically convert or adopt Satanism later in life. Because of this, we were curious if the length of time one has engaged with Satanism would affect individuals' sexual esteem or anxiety, since sexuality is such a large part of Satanic values and beliefs.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Research questions were explored using an international sample of 908 Satanists aged 18-66 ( $M = 31.84$ ,  $SD = 9.29$ ). Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique utilizing a sharable link posted on social media. 578 responses were removed from the analysis due to trolling, the use of response sets, finishing the survey in a very short amount of time (less

than 500 seconds), or not completing enough of the survey (failure to respond to two or more complete measures).

The majority of participants were white (77%), cisgender women (43%) from the United States (74%). Interestingly, more than half (55%) of participants identified as bi- or pansexual (see Table 1 for full list of sociodemographic variables and frequencies). Ages of participants ranged from 18 to 66 years of age, with an average age of 31.84 ( $SD = 9.29$ ).

Table 1.

*Sociodemographic characteristics of sample of Satanists*

Sociodemographic Variables	<i>n</i> (%)
Race and Ethnicity	
White	703 (77.4%)
Black or African American	8 (0.9%)
Hispanic or Latinx	38 (4.2%)
Asian or Asian Indian	18 (2%)
American Indian, Alaskan Native, First Nation, or other indigenous North American	7 (0.8%)
Middle Eastern or North African	4 (0.4%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0 (0%)
Other	13 (1.4%)
Multiracial	116 (12.8%)
No answer	1 (0.1%)
Gender Identity	
Woman or Female	391 (43.1%)
Man or Male	322 (35.5%)
Transgender	14 (1.5%)
Agender	8 (0.9%)
Genderqueer, Gender Fluid, or Non- Binary	62 (6.8%)
Questioning or Unsure	7 (0.8%)
Other	103 (11.3%)
No answer	1 (0.1%)
Sexual Orientation	
Gay or Lesbian	58 (6.4%)
Heterosexual or Straight	263 (29.0%)

Bisexual or Pansexual (includes heteroflexible and bi-curious)	503 (55.4%)
Asexual	34 (3.7%)
Questioning or Unsure	22 (2.4%)
Other	28 (3.0%)
Relationship Style	
Monogamous	588 (64.8%)
Non-Monogamous	320 (35.2%)
Relationship Status	
Single and Not Dating	178 (19.6%)
Casually Dating (No Committed Partner or Partners)	135 (14.9%)
Partnered Either Monogamously or Non-Monogamously (boyfriend, girlfriend, significant other, fiancé)	342 (37.7%)
Legally Partnered Either Monogamously or Non-Monogamously (marriage/spouse, civil union)	236 (26.0%)
Other	16 (1.8%)
No answer	1 (0.1%)
Children	
None	684 (75.3%)
One	117 (12.9%)
Two	64 (7.0%)
Three	29 (3.2%)
Four or More	14 (1.5%)
US Residency	
US Resident	670 (73.8%)
Non-US Resident	238 (26.2%)
Continent of Residence (Non-US Residents)	
North America (including Mexico and Central America)	48 (20.2%)
South America	10 (4.2%)
Europe	142 (59.7%)
Africa	3 (1.3%)
Asia (including India and the Middle East)	19 (8.0%)
Australia and Oceania	16 (6.7%)
Age, mean (SD)	31.84 (9.29)

(Min-Max)

(18-66)

Responses to the religious history items indicated that most participants heralded from childhood homes where Christian religions were prominent (71.7%). However, most participants indicated that they are currently atheistic or non-theistic Satanists (82.8%) who do not believe in any god(s), deities, or higher powers (66.6%). 60.1% of the sample also identified as being members of The Satanic Temple. The average age at which participants first identified as a Satanist was 24.82 ( $SD = 9.52$ ), and the average length of time in years that participants had identified as a Satanist was 6.99 ( $SD = 8.13$ ). Table 2 shows the full list of religious history variables, as well as the frequencies of each response in the sample.

Table 2.

*Religious characteristics of Satanists*

Religious Variables	<i>n</i> (%)
Dominant Religion in Childhood Home	
Christianity (including Catholicism, Protestantism, and Mormonism)	651 (71.7%)
Judaism	15 (1.7%)
Islam	9 (1.0%)
Paganism	16 (1.8%)
Hinduism	7 (0.8%)
Buddhism	3 (0.3%)
No Religion	173 (19.1%)
Other	34 (3.7%)
Belief in Gods, Deities, or Higher Powers	
Do Not Believe	605 (66.6%)
Uncertain	210 (23.1%)
Believe in One or More	90 (9.9%)
No answer	3 (0.3%)
What Best Describes Your Satanism	
Atheistic/Non-Theistic	752 (82.8%)
Theistic	41 (4.5%)
Other	109 (12.0%)
No answer	6 (0.7%)

Satanic Organization Membership	
The Satanic Temple (including international council, local chapter, Friends of TST groups)	546 (60.1%)
Church of Satan	26 (2.9%)
Other	23 (2.5%)
No Affiliation	310 (34.1%)
No answer	3 (0.3%)
<hr/>	
Age First Identifying as a Satanist, mean (SD)	24.82 (9.52)
(Min-Max)	(7-63)
Number of Years as a Satanist, mean (SD)	6.99 (8.13)
(Min-Max)	(0-52)
<hr/>	

## Measures

### *Sociodemographic and Religious History*

Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions relating to race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship style, relationship status, number of children, US residency status, and continent of residence for individuals living outside of the US. As participants were able to report identifying as more than one category for the race and ethnicity question, a new variable called “multiracial” was created. For the gender identity question, participants who marked more than one gender identity were added to the “other” category.

Participants were also asked to respond to a series of questions about their religious history and beliefs. Questions were about the dominant religion in participants’ childhood homes, current belief in gods, deities, or a higher power, how they would describe their Satanism, membership in Satanic organizations, and the age at which they first identified as a Satanist. An additional variable for the number of years participants had identified as a Satanist was calculated by subtracting the age at which participants first identified as a Satanist from their current age.

### *Objective Sexual Behavior Scale*

Participants were asked to report the frequency in which they engage in several sexual behaviors: masturbation, pornography use, partnered sexual activity, partnered BDSM play, and partnered non-BDSM kink or fetish play (Hook et al., 2015). Respondents to the survey indicated whether they engaged in each sexual behavior on the scale (1) *never*, (2) *less than once a month*, (3) *once a month*, (4) *several times a month to weekly*, (5) *several times a week to daily*, or (6) *more than once a day*. See Appendix B1 for full measure.

### ***Three-Dimensional Strength of Group Identification Scale***

The Three-Dimensional Strength of Group Identification Scale (SGIS; Cameron, 2004) was used to measure the degree to which participants identify with being a Satanist. This measure was modified from its original form to be relevant to Satanists for this study. The SGIS consists of three factors; cognitive centrality (how much time one spends thinking about being a member of the group), in-group affect (positive feelings associated with being a group member), and in-group ties (closeness, similarity, and bonds with other members of the group). All three subscales demonstrated acceptable reliability (ingroup-ties:  $\alpha = .792$ , centrality:  $\alpha = .821$ , ingroup-affect:  $\alpha = .788$ ). Participants responded to items (e.g., “In general, being a Satanist is an important part of my self-image.”) using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The overall scale has demonstrated good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .84$ ) and previous research has provided evidence for content, structure, and construct validity (Cameron, 2004; Obst & White, 2005). See Appendix B2 for full measure.

### ***Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire***

Two subscales (sexual anxiety and sexual esteem) from the Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire were administered to assess participant's sexual self-concept (Snell et al., 1993). Participants responded to items using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*

*characteristic of me*) to 5 (*very characteristic of me*). An example of an item on the sexual anxiety subscale is, “I feel nervous when I think about the sexual aspects of my life,” whereas the sexual esteem subscale consists of items such as, “I feel good about the way I express my own sexual needs and desires.” Higher scores on the sexual esteem subscale indicate more positive perceptions of one’s sexual activities, whereas an inverse relationship exists for the sexual anxiety subscale. Both the sexual anxiety and sexual esteem subscales were found to have good internal consistency ( $\alpha=.89$  and  $\alpha=.92$ , respectively). See Appendix B3 for full measure.

### **Procedure**

The data used for the current study is part of a larger data set that has been used for a previous study (Lyng, 2021). A sharable link to the Qualtrics survey was posted to the primary investigator’s social media accounts (Twitter and Instagram). The social media posts included the recruitment script, “Are you a Satanist? Are you 18+? Do you want to share your experiences as a Satanist to better inform and train therapists about your systems of support and your sexual values and satisfaction? If yes to all, feel free to take my new 15-min research survey and share with others!” When the survey link was clicked, participants were provided with informed consent information about the study (see Appendix A). Participants were screened to ensure they were at least 18 years old and currently identified as a Satanist in order to participate in the study. If an individual indicated that they were not 18 or did not currently identify as a Satanist, they were directed to the end of the survey. Participants were not compensated for their participation.

### **Analysis Plan**

Data analyses were completed in three steps. First, the frequencies of the five sexual behaviors measured by the objective sexual behavior scale (Hook et al., 2015) were calculated.

Next, correlations between scores on the three subscales of the SGIS, sexual anxiety and sexual esteem scores from the Multidimensional Sexual Self-concept Questionnaire, the number of years individuals have identified as a Satanist, and age were assessed to determine if relationships existed between the study variables. Then, separate hierarchical regressions were run using sexual esteem and sexual anxiety as the outcome variables, SGIS subscale scores and the number of years one has been a Satanist as the predictor variables, while controlling for age, as age has been found in previous literature to be associated with sexual self-concept (Potki et al., 2017).

### Results

The first step of the analyses involved calculating the frequencies of Satanists' sexual behavior as reported on the objective sexual behavior scale (Hook et al., 2015). The analysis indicated that about 67% of Satanists in this sample have ever engaged in partnered BDSM play, and about 68% have engaged in non-BDSM kink or fetish play with a partner. It was also found that about 58% of Satanists masturbate more than once a week and about 35% use pornography more than once a week. Additionally, it was found that 29% of Satanists in the sample engage in sex with a partner more than once a week. Table 3 shows the frequencies of each sexual behavior within the sample.

Table 3.

#### *Frequencies of Satanists Sexual Behavior*

Sexual Behavior	<i>n</i> (%)
Masturbation	
Never	17 (1.87%)
Less than Once a Month	49 (5.40%)
Once a Month	43 (4.74%)
Several Times a Month to Weekly	273 (30.07%)
Several Times a Week to Daily	446 (49.12%)
More than Once a Day	80 (8.81%)
Pornography Use	



Never	70 (7.72%)
Less than Once a Month	131 (14.44%)
Once a Month	96 (10.58%)
Several Times a Month to Weekly	292 (32.19%)
Several Times a Week to Daily	275 (30.32%)
More than Once a Day	43 (4.74%)
Partnered Sex	
Never	81 (8.92%)
Less than Once a Month	152 (16.74%)
Once a Month	88 (9.69%)
Several Times a Month to Weekly	327 (36.01%)
Several Times a Week to Daily	232 (25.55%)
More than Once a Day	28 (3.08%)
BDSM with a Partner	
Never	299 (32.93%)
Less than Once a Month	247 (27.20%)
Once a Month	122 (12.44%)
Several Times a Month to Weekly	158 (17.40%)
Several Times a Week to Daily	61 (6.72%)
More than Once a Day	21 (2.31%)
Non-BDSM Kink and Fetish Play	
Never	294 (32.41%)
Less than Once a Month	213 (23.48%)
Once a Month	120 (13.23%)
Several Times a Month to Weekly	187 (20.62%)
Several Times a Week to Daily	68 (7.50%)
More than Once Day	25 (2.76%)

The second step of the analyses consisted of a series of correlations between study variables (see Table 4). A significant moderate correlation was found between scores on sexual esteem and sexual anxiety ( $r = .577, p < .001$ ). Small significant correlations were found between sexual esteem and in-group ties ( $r = .147, p < .001$ ), centrality ( $r = .073, p = .028$ ), and in-group affect ( $r = .176, p < .001$ ). Sexual anxiety was found to only be associated with in-group ties ( $r = .128, p < .001$ ) and in-group affect ( $r = .184, p < .001$ ), but not centrality ( $r = .003, p = .928$ ). The three subscales of the SGIS were all found to be significantly correlated with a small to medium effect size ( $r = .36 - .40, p < .001$ ). A small to moderate association was observed between age and years as a Satanist ( $r = .408, p < .001$ ), suggesting that the two

variables may explain some of the same variance in the hierarchical regressions of step two of the analysis. However, this association between age and years as a Satanist was not large enough to be concerned about multicollinearity between the two variables.

Table 4.

*Correlations between Study Variables*

	Sexual Esteem	Sexual Anxiety	In-group Ties	Centrality	In-group Affect	Years as Satanist	Age
Sexual Esteem	-						
Sexual Anxiety	.577***	-					
In-group Ties	.147***	.128***	-				
Centrality	.073*	.003	.380***	-			
In-group Affect	.176***	.184***	.400***	.360***	-		
Years as Satanist	.080*	.132***	-.021	-.080*	.027	-	
Age	.053	.129***	.021	.004	.054	.408***	-

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

The final part of the analysis consisted of several hierarchical regressions to control for age, as it has been found to be associated with sexual self-concept in past research (Potki et al., 2017). The first hierarchical regression assessed for the effect of the strength of group identification for Satanists on their sexual esteem. The first step assessed for the effect of age on sexual esteem, which was found to be nonsignificant ( $p = .116$ ) and accounted for less than 1% of the total variance in sexual esteem (see Table 5 for beta values). Next, the three subscales of the Three-dimensional Strength of Group Identification Scale were added to the regression. The regression indicated that in-group ties ( $p = .010$ ) and in-group affect ( $p < .001$ ) were significant predictors of sexual esteem. However, the centrality dimension of the SGIS was not found to be a significant predictor of sexual esteem ( $p = .724$ ). Adding the strength of Satanist identity

variables significantly improved the model to represent about 4% of the total variance within sexual esteem,  $F(3, 892) = 11.895, p < .001$ .

Table 5.

*Hierarchical Regression for Strength of Satanist Identity and Sexual Self Concept*

Variable	Sexual Esteem		Sexual Anxiety	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Age	.053	.044	.129***	.119***
In-group Ties	-	.096*	-	.092*
Centrality	-	-.013	-	-.094**
In-group Affect	-	.143***	-	.176***
$R^2$	.003	.041	.017	.059
$\Delta R^2$	-	.038	-	.042
Sig.	-	< .001	-	< .001

*Note.* Sig. = significance of  $F$  test for  $\Delta R^2$  test

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

The second hierarchical regression assessed how strength of Satanist identification effects sexual anxiety. Step one included age which was found to be a significant predictor and accounted for about 2% of the total variance within sexual anxiety ( $p < .001$ ; see Table 5 for beta values). The next step of the hierarchical regression added in-group ties, centrality, and in-group affect to the model while controlling for age. Age ( $p < .001$ ), in-group ties ( $p = .013$ ), centrality ( $p = .009$ ), and in-group affect ( $p < .001$ ) were all found to significantly predict sexual anxiety. Adding the strength of group identity variables to the regression model helped to explain a significantly greater amount of the variance in Satanists' sexual anxiety than step one,  $F(3, 892) = 13.50, p < .001$ , with the model explaining nearly 6% of the overall variance in sexual anxiety.

Two additional hierarchical regressions were conducted to determine the effects of the length of time in years that individuals have identified as Satanists has on sexual esteem and

sexual anxiety. The first regression assessed the effect of age on Satanists' sexual esteem and found it to not be a significant predictor ( $p = .116$ ; see Table 6 for beta values), similar to the previous analyses. The following step added the number of years as a Satanist to the model, which was found to be a significant predictor of sexual esteem ( $p = .039$ ) while age remained nonsignificant ( $p = .747$ ). However, the overall model in step two was not significant,  $F(2, 885) = 2.937, p = .053$ , and only accounted for less than 1% of the total variance in sexual esteem.

Table 6.

*Hierarchical Regression for Number of Years One has been a Satanist and Sexual Self-Concept*

Variable	Sexual Esteem		Sexual Anxiety	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Age	.053	.012	.129***	.091*
Years as a Satanist	-	.076*	-	.095*
$R^2$	.003	.007	.017	.024
$\Delta R^2$	-	.004	-	.007

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

The final hierarchical regression tested for the effects of the number of years identifying as a Satanist on sexual anxiety. Step one assessed for the effects of age on sexual anxiety. Age was once again found to be a significant predictor of sexual anxiety ( $p < .001$ ; see Table 6 for beta values) and accounted for nearly 2% of the total variance. The second step added the number of years identified as a Satanist to the model while controlling for age. The number of years identified as a Satanist was found to be a significant predictor of sexual anxiety ( $p = .009$ ). Age retained its significance in step two as well ( $p = .013$ ). Overall, the model in step two accounted for approximately 2.5% of the variance in sexual anxiety, but was significant,  $F(2, 885) = 10.97, p < .001$ .

### Discussion

Results from the current study highlight some of the important aspects of Satanists' religious identities, sexual behaviors, and sexual attitudes. Demographic data indicated that this sample of Satanists consists primarily of white, cisgender women, from the United States with an average age of about 32 years. Additionally, more than half of the sample also identified as being bi- or pansexual. The sample used for the current study was similar in age to previous demographic assessments of Satanists (Dyrendal et al., 2016). However, the current sample was more diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity/race than previous samples. Religious demographic data showed that most Satanists in this sample were raised in childhood homes where Christianity was the primary religion. Participants also reported primarily engaging in forms of Satanism that are atheistic or non-theistic. A majority of participants also reported being members of The Satanic Temple, in line with The Satanic Temple's assertion that they are the most prevalent Satanic organization in the world (The Satanic Temple, n.d.). The average age that participants converted to Satanism was about 25.

The analysis of Satanists' sexual behavior indicated that two-thirds of Satanists in this sample have engaged in partnered BDSM play. More than two-thirds of the sample also reported having ever engaged in non-BDSM kink or fetish play with a partner as well. This surpasses the percentage of individuals in the general population who have reported engaging in these sexual behaviors in studies using nationally representative samples (Holvoet et al., 2017; Richters et al., 2003). Furthermore, it was found that more than half of Satanists masturbate more than once a week, but only about 35% utilize pornography at the same rate. About 30% of Satanists also report engaging in partnered sex more than once a week. The high prevalence of engagement in taboo or stigmatized sexual behaviors within Satanism could be attributable to the sex-positive

and permissive attitudes promoted by the religion (Faxneld & Petersen, 2014; LaVey, 1969; Sprankle et al., 2021).

Hierarchical regression analyses indicated that the in-group ties and in-group affect subscales of the SGIS are significant positive predictors of Satanists' sexual esteem. This finding supplements the findings of Lyng (2021), who reported that joint religious activity increased sexual satisfaction for Satanists. As engaging in sexual activity may be considered a religious activity for Satanists (Sprankle et al., 2021), engaging in these behaviors with other Satanists may increase the salience of ties to the in-group. Additionally, the more positive feelings one has about being a Satanist and engaging in the religious activity of sex, the more positively one may evaluate their ability to relate with others sexually, as engaging in sex is an affirmation of their Satanist identity and beliefs.

Interestingly, the hierarchical regression analysis also indicated that all three factors of the SGIS, as well as age, are all significant predictors of sexual anxiety. However, centrality is a negative predictor of sexual anxiety, whereas the other two in-group identification variables are positive predictors and so is age. A possible explanation for this relationship between the strength of Satanist identification and sexual anxiety could be minority stress from one's Satanist identity. Prior research has shown that minority stress may be extended into the realm of atheism and may result in negative psychological outcomes (Brewster et al., 2019). As Satanism is an atheistic belief system, it is likely that identification with the religion also leads to social stigma and, therefore, negative psychological outcomes. Furthermore, as sex may be considered a religious activity for Satanists, engagement in sexual behavior may make Satanists' internalized anti-Satanism more salient, leading to increased tension, discomfort, or anxiety (i.e., sexual anxiety) about engaging in sex. However, as indicated by the negative relationship between

centrality and sexual anxiety, cognitive engagement with and affirmation of one's Satanist identity may help to buffer the negative effects of minority stress on sexual anxiety.

Additional hierarchical regression analyses indicated that the number of years one has been a Satanist is a significant predictor of both sexual esteem and sexual anxiety. The effect of the number of years as a Satanist on sexual esteem is very small and explains very little of the variance in the construct. However, the overall model for sexual anxiety was found to be significant, with both age and the number of years as a Satanist predicting the outcome variable. Age has been reported by past research to affect sexual self-concept (Potki et al., 2017). However, the relationship between age and sexual anxiety reported in past research is the inverse of what the current study has found. Typically, age and sexual experience leads to decreases in sexual anxiety, but the opposite is shown in the results here. It is possible that minority stress may serve a moderating role in the relationship between age and sexual anxiety, where stigmatization of a minority identity modulates the affect that age has on sexual anxiety. Additionally, similar to the results of the previous set of hierarchical regressions, a history of stigmatization and minority stress may also produce exacerbating effects on Satanists' sexual anxiety.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

A major limiting factor for the results of this study is the violation of the assumption of normality that is necessary to conduct multiple regression analyses. All study variables included in the regression analyses were found to violate this assumption. This casts doubt over the reliability and replicability of the significant results indicated in these analyses. Future research could address these concerns by utilizing a different sampling method to try and achieve more

variability within the sample, or by using nonparametric statistical tests if an overly homogenous sample is collected once again.

Furthermore, only two of the five facets of SSC were assessed in this study. Though sexual self-esteem and sexual anxiety are important aspects of SSC, they only provide a fraction of what is needed to understand the complete construct (Deutsch et al., 2014). Additionally, as noted by Deutsch et al. (2014), there are theoretical differences between the conceptualization of SSC put forth by Snell et al. (1993) and more contemporary conceptualizations of SSC. Sexual esteem and sexual anxiety were also moderately related in the current study, which could interfere with interpretations of the results as there may be some overlap between the two constructs. Future research could address these concerns by utilizing a more robust measurement instrument based on the five-factor model of SSC proposed by Deutsch et al. (2014).

Future research could also attempt to control for other biopsychosocial factors that past research has found to be associated with SSC such as gender, marital status, race, disability status, and body image (Potki et al., 2017). Though data for gender, marital status, and race were collected in the data set used for the current study, this data used a nominal scale of measurement which cannot be used for regression analyses if there are more than two levels to the variable, as there were for these variables. The minority stress model could also be applied to Satanism, similar to how it has been applied to atheism (Brewster et al., 2019) in future research. This could also determine if there are any specific affects that minority stress may have on Satanists. Specifically, it could be enlightening to examine the effects of minority stress on sexual self-concept for Satanists.

## **Conclusion**



The present study attempted to empirically study Satanists' sexual behaviors and sexual self-concept. Results of the study indicated that the strength of individuals' Satanist identity may affect sexual self-concept in multiple ways, both positive and negative. These results may be useful for practitioners working with Satanist clients, as they provide insight into how individuals' Satanist identity may affect their personal sexuality. This study also creates several directions future psychological research on Satanism may take.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Informed Consent**

The purpose of this research is to better understand Satanists' sexual attitudes, behaviors, and values, and how they may differ from any previous religious values. The results will be used to better train therapists in understanding how Satanism may or may not influence a person's sexual satisfaction.

Dr. Eric Sprankle, an Associate Professor of Psychology at Minnesota State University, Mankato, is the principal investigator of this project, Tayler Lyng, a clinical psychology graduate student, is assisting in conducting this study.

### **Procedures**

If you consent to participate, you will complete an online survey examining various aspects of your sexuality as a Satanist. Participation should last approximately 15 minutes.

### **Voluntary Nature of Study**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without penalty. You may stop the survey at any time by exiting the page.

### **Confidentiality**

The surveys are anonymous and participant responses cannot be traced to any identifying information. Only Dr. Eric Sprankle and his research team will have secured access to the raw data. Although responses will only be viewed by the research team, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. A couple ways to increase confidentiality is to use a secure internet connection and

complete the survey in a private place. The surveys will be stored on a hard drive in Dr. Sprankle's office for 3 years, after which it will be destroyed. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato IT Solutions Center (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager. You can also contact this office through email at [ITSecurity@MNSU.edu](mailto:ITSecurity@MNSU.edu).

**Risks and Benefits**

The risks you will encounter as a participant in this research are not more than experienced in your everyday life. Since many of the survey's questions ask about your personal sexuality, this may create discomfort. You may stop the survey at any time by exiting the page.

There are not direct benefits for participating.

**Compensation**

There is no compensation for participating.

**Contacts and Questions**

If you have any questions about this research study, contact Dr. Eric Sprankle (the principal investigator) at Minnesota State University, 103 Armstrong Hall, 507-389-5825, or by email at [eric.sprankle@mnsu.edu](mailto:eric.sprankle@mnsu.edu). If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at (507) 389-1242.

**Consent**

By continuing on to the survey, you affirm that you are at least 18 years of age, have read and understood the above information, and consent to participate. Participants have the right to obtain a copy of the consent form by contacting Dr. Eric Sprankle (the principal investigator) at

Minnesota State University, 103 Armstrong Hall, 507-389-5825 or by email at  
eric.sprinkle@mnsu.edu.

**IRBNet ID: 1573059**



## Appendix B

### Measures Used

#### Appendix B1

*Objective Sexual Behavior Scale* (Hook et al., 2015)

For the following questions, please inform us of your frequency of various sexual behaviors.

On average, how often do you masturbate?

<i>Never</i>	<i>Less than once a month</i>	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>Several times a month to weekly</i>	<i>Several times a week to daily</i>	<i>More than once a day</i>
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On average, how often do you watch pornography?

<i>Never</i>	<i>Less than once a month</i>	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>Several times a month to weekly</i>	<i>Several times a week to daily</i>	<i>More than once a day</i>
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On average, how often do you engage in sexual activity (of any kind) with a partner?

<i>Never</i>	<i>Less than once a month</i>	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>Several times a month to weekly</i>	<i>Several times a week to daily</i>	<i>More than once a day</i>
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On average, how often do you engage in BDSM with a partner? (specifically bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, and/or sadism/masochism)

<i>Never</i>	<i>Less than once a month</i>	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>Several times a month to weekly</i>	<i>Several times a week to daily</i>	<i>More than once a day</i>
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On average, how often do you engage in kink or fetish behaviors with a partner? (excluding BDSM behaviors from the previous question)

<i>Never</i>	<i>Less than once a month</i>	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>Several times a month to weekly</i>	<i>Several times a week to daily</i>	<i>More than once a day</i>
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#### Appendix B2

*Three-Dimensional Strength of Group Identification Scale* (Cameron, 2004) [Adapted]

In this section, rate how strongly you identify with the following questions.

I have a lot in common with other Satanists.

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
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I feel strong ties to other Satanists.

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
I find it difficult to form a bond with other Satanists.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
I don't feel a sense of being "connected" with other Satanists.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
I often think about the fact that I am a Satanist.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Overall, being a Satanist has very little to do with how I feel about myself.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
In general, being a Satanist is an important part of my self-image.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
The fact that I am a Satanist rarely enters my mind.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
In general, I am glad to be a Satanist.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
I often regret that I am a Satanist.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
I don't feel good about being a Satanist.						
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a Satanist.						

<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Agree nor</i>	<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>
			<i>Disagree</i>			

### Appendix B3

*Multidimensional Sexual Self-concept Questionnaire* (Snell et al., 1993)

Using the 1-5 scale, please indicate your agreement with the following questions about your sexuality.

I derive a sense of self-pride from the way I handle my own sexual needs and desires.

1 ( <i>Not at all</i>	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i>
<i>characteristic of</i>				<i>characteristic of</i>
<i>me</i> )				<i>me</i> )

I am proud of the way I deal with and handle my own sexual desires and needs.

1 ( <i>Not at all</i>	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i>
<i>characteristic of</i>				<i>characteristic of</i>
<i>me</i> )				<i>me</i> )

I am pleased with how I handle my own sexual tendencies and behaviors.

1 ( <i>Not at all</i>	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i>
<i>characteristic of</i>				<i>characteristic of</i>
<i>me</i> )				<i>me</i> )

I have positive feelings about the way I approach my own sexual needs and desires.

1 ( <i>Not at all</i>	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i>
<i>characteristic of</i>				<i>characteristic of</i>
<i>me</i> )				<i>me</i> )

I feel good about the way I express my own sexual needs and desires.

1 ( <i>Not at all</i>	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i>
<i>characteristic of</i>				<i>characteristic of</i>
<i>me</i> )				<i>me</i> )

I expect that the sexual aspects of my life will be positive and rewarding in the future.

1 ( <i>Not at all</i>	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i>
<i>characteristic of</i>				<i>characteristic of</i>
<i>me</i> )				<i>me</i> )

I believe that in the future, the sexual aspects of my life will be healthy and positive.

1 ( <i>Not at all</i>	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i>
<i>characteristic of</i>				<i>characteristic of</i>
<i>me</i> )				<i>me</i> )

I do not expect to suffer any sexual problems or frustrations in the future.

1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )
Thinking about the sexual aspects of my life often leaves me with an uneasy feeling.				
1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )
I feel nervous when I think about the sexual aspects of my life.				
1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )
I feel anxious when I think about the sexual aspects of my life.				
1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )
I'm concerned about how the sexual aspects of my life appear to others.				
1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )
I worry about the sexual aspects of my life.				
1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )
I will probably experience some sexual problems in the future.				
1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )
I anticipate that in the future, the sexual aspects of my life will be frustrating.				
1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )
I'm concerned with how others evaluate my own sexual beliefs and behaviors.				
1 ( <i>Not at all</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )	2	3	4	5 ( <i>very</i> <i>characteristic of</i> <i>me</i> )