



Examining Structural Reasoning and Political Ideology as Predictors for Modern Racism and Sexism



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Introduction

- **Inequity** refers to unjust disparities across various groups including but not limited to race, gender, religion, and sexuality
- **Structural explanations**¹ of inequity take into consideration the broader context of an individual and often recognize systemic factors that may limit an individual's success
- **Individual explanations** cite personal attributes (ex. work ethic) or choices as a cause of inequity and put the onus on the individual to overcome their situation
- The key to **systemic change** is recognizing structural barriers rather than placing blame on an individual

Research Questions

- Does expression of structural reasoning about racial or gender inequity vary based on participant political ideology?
- Does structural reasoning about racial/gender inequity relate to expressions of racism/sexism?
- Does structural reasoning about inequity relate to racism or sexism similarly or differently as a function of political ideology?

Methods

Participants (607 UMass undergraduates over the age of 18) were given a survey in which they were asked to rate their overall political views on a scale of 1-7.

1 - Very conservative
2 - Conservative
3 - Slightly conservative
4 - Middle of the road
5 - Slightly liberal
6 - Liberal
7 - Very liberal

For the purpose of this study, responses from 1-3 were considered conservatives, 4 was considered moderate, and 5-7 were considered liberals.

Participants were also given a series of statements and asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree (1 = not at all & 7 = completely). These responses determined where the participants fall on various scales.

Modern Racism Scale ²	Modern Sexism Scale ³
Discrimination against blacks is no longer a problem in the United States.	Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.
Race Structuralism Scale	Gender Structuralism Scale
Racial disparities in wealth reflect differences in work ethic, ability, and/or intelligence.	If women want to earn more money, they should be tougher negotiators.

The table above displays a sample statement out of the many that were used to determine a participant's score on each scale. Scores were inverted when necessary so that ultimately, a low score indicates either lower racism/sexism or less structural reasoning.

Results

Political ideology	Number of participants
Conservative	62
Moderate	173
Liberal	350
Did not answer	22

Table 1. Participant distribution based on political ideology

Political ideology	Mean (Race Structuralism Scale)	Standard Error	95% Confidence Intervals
Conservative	4.112903	0.12242434	(3.872452, 4.353355)
Moderate	4.837433	0.07393314	(4.692222, 4.982644)
Liberal	5.629310	0.05167423	(5.527818, 5.730803)

Table 2. Examining whether political ideology predicts responses on the race structuralism scale. Relative to conservatives, both moderates and liberals are more likely to express structural reasoning on the race structuralism scale (higher score = more structural reasoning). The same was observed with the gender structuralism scale, with both moderates and liberals being more likely to express structural reasoning about gender inequity than conservatives were. Moderate: $\beta=0.7245$, $SE=0.1430$, $t=5.066$, $p<0.001$. Liberal: $\beta=1.5164$, $SE=0.1329$, $t=11.412$, $p<0.001$.

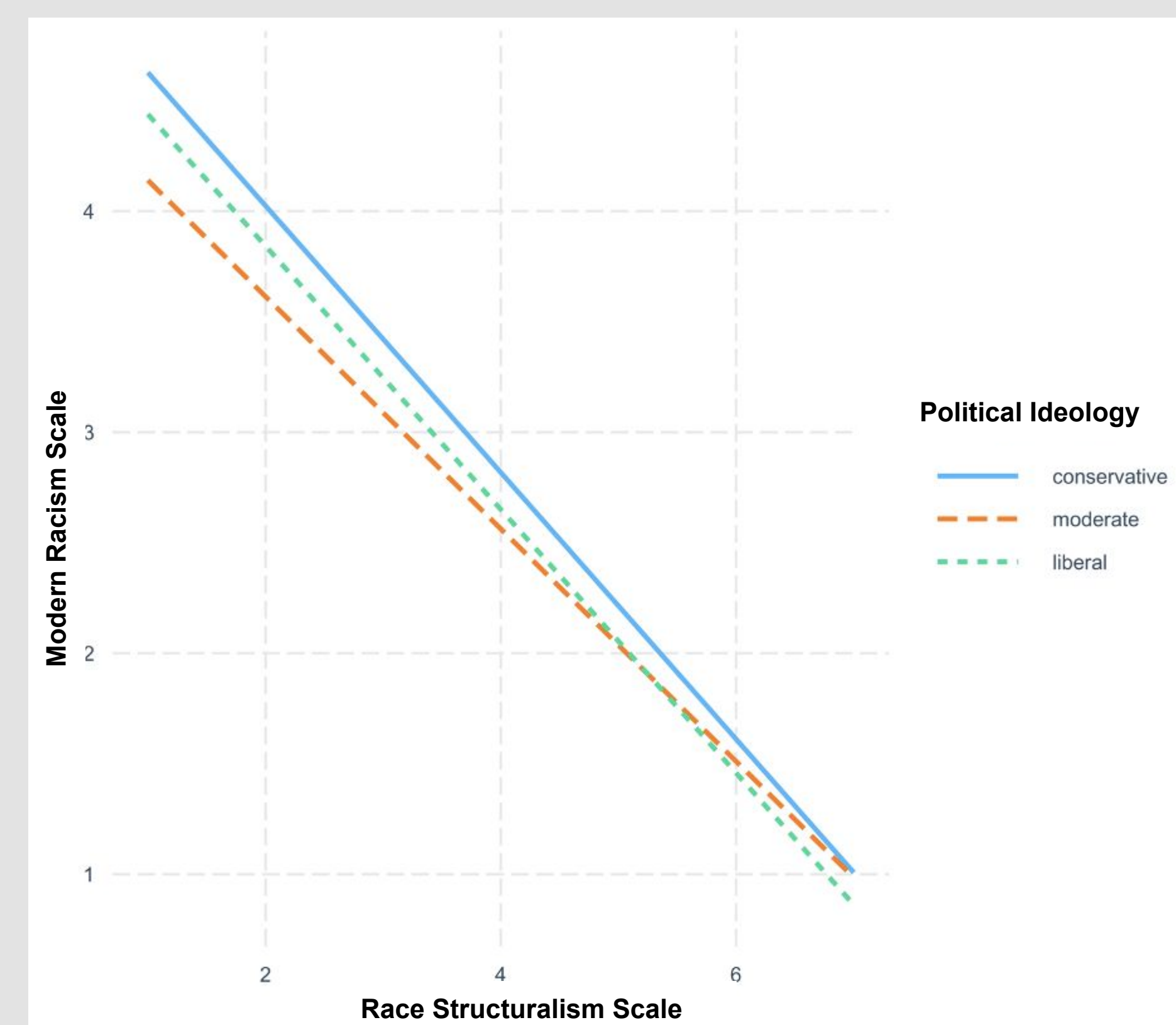


Figure 1. Model examining whether political ideology and responses on the race structuralism scale (RSS) predict responses on the modern racism (MR) scale. MR x RSS: $\beta=-0.603307$, $SE=0.083047$, $t=-7.265$, $p<0.001$

- Lower values on the race structuralism scale were associated with higher values on the modern racism scale (less structural reasoning = higher racism)
- No interaction with political ideology, and no main effects of political ideology (relatively similar slopes)



A participant's tendency to engage in structural reasoning does a better job explaining their racism than their political ideology does.

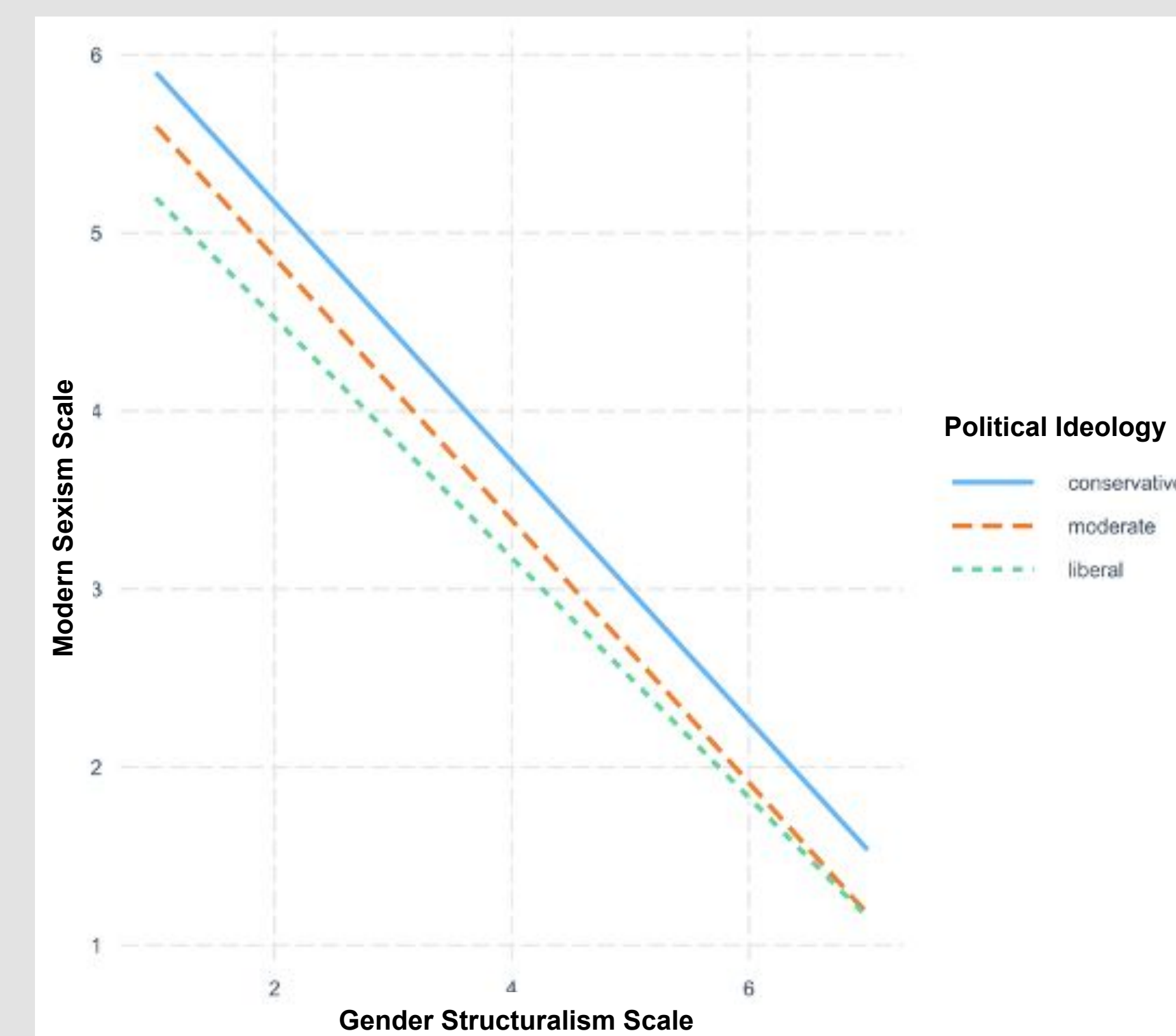


Figure 2. Model examining whether whether political ideology and responses on the gender structuralism scale (GSS) predict responses on the modern sexism (MS) scale. MS x GSS: $\beta=-0.727618$, $SE=0.083466$, $t=-8.718$, $p<0.001$

- Lower values on the gender structuralism scale were associated with higher values on the modern sexism scale (less structural reasoning = higher racism)
- No interaction with political ideology, and no main effects of political ideology (relatively similar slopes)



A participant's tendency to engage in structural reasoning does a better job explaining their sexism than their political ideology does.

Conclusion

- In relation to conservatives, both moderates and liberals are more likely to express structural reasoning about inequity
- Structural reasoning about inequity is inversely related to expressions of racism/sexism (less structural reasoning = higher racism/sexism)
- Structural reasoning shows no interaction with political ideology when predicting responses on the modern racism and modern sexism scales; similar slopes indicate that expressions of structural reasoning do not vary across political ideologies
- A participant's tendency to engage in structural reasoning does a better job explaining their racism/sexism than their political ideology does

Future Directions

- The finding that structural reasoning is inversely related to expression of racism/sexism highlights the importance of incorporating structural explanations into teachings about inequity
- The sample size of this study can be expanded to include adults of more varied ages to determine how generalizable this finding is
- An experimental study can be conducted in which structural/individual explanations are manipulated to establish a more causal relationship between structural reasoning and racism/sexism

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