

# College Women's Feminist Consciousness and Perceptions of Parents' Gender-Related Attitudes

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## Introduction

### Background

- Feminist identity and attitudes are generally linked to better psychological well-being (Yakushko, 2007; Yoder et al., 2012)
- Family factors may be important predictors of feminist consciousness in college women
  - Exposure to feminism, including through relationships with family, is an important predictor of feminist consciousness (Frederick & Stewart, 2018; Leaper & Arias, 2011; Nelson et al., 2008)
  - Mother's feminist identification related to daughter's feminist identification and collective action (Liss et al., 2004, Nelson et al., 2008)
- Research on family factors primarily focused on women's mothers and not fathers, feminist self-identification and not broader gender-related attitudes, or overall exposure to feminism instead of family specifically

### The Current Project

- Using canonical correlation, we sought to examine the connection between college women's feminist and gender ideologies (measured by feminist self-labeling, feminist attitudes, and attitudes toward gender roles) and those of their parents (measured by feminist self-labeling and attitudes toward gender roles).
- Major hypotheses
  1. Women's feminist self-labeling will relate to their perceptions of their parents' self-labeling.
  2. Women's feminist attitudes will be related to their parents' feminist self-labeling and gender role attitudes.
  3. Women's gender role attitudes will be related to their parents' gender role attitudes.

**Table 1: Canonical Loadings for Participant and Parent Attitudes**

	Feminist Identity	Gendered Behaviors	Mother's Attitudes	Father's Attitudes
<b>Personal Variables</b>				
Feminist Self-Identification	.94	-.13	.23	.10
Gender Transcendence (Self)	-.03	.04	.95	.15
Gender-Linked Behaviors (Self)	-.01	.85	-.42	-.11
Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology	.41	-.26	.47	.15
Conservatism	-.09	.52	-.39	.09
Liberal Feminism	.24	.06	.59	.12
Radical Feminism	.35	.19	.11	.31
Socialist Feminism	.35	.18	.21	-.32
Cultural Feminism	.21	.32	.19	.38
Woman of Color Feminism	.25	.09	.22	.04
Percentage of Variance	.15	.13	.20	.04
Redundancy	.09	.05	.07	.01
<b>Parent Variables</b>				
Feminist Identification (Mother)	.92	-.18	.29	.11
Gender Transcendence (Mother)	-.18	-.07	.92	.21
Gender-Linked Behaviors (Mother)	.11	.89	-.23	-.05
Feminist Identification (Father)	.56	-.16	.12	.50
Gender Transcendence (Father)	-.07	.02	.27	.89
Gender-Linked Behaviors (Father)	.19	.76	-.27	-.46
Percentage of Variance	.21	.24	.19	.22
Redundancy	.12	.09	.07	.02

## Methods

### Participants

- 217 college women
- Mean age of 19.73 ( $SD = 2.44$ )
- Most women identified as European-American/White (88.9%), heterosexual (92.6%)
- Most listed their biological mother as their primary mother figure (96.3%), their biological father as their primary father figure (88.0%), and their family structure as growing up in a household with both biological parents (68.7%)

### Measures

*Social Roles Questionnaire (SRQ; Baber & Tucker, 2006)*

- Measures attitudes toward gender roles with two subscales: *Gender Transcendence* (nondichotomous and flexible thinking about gender roles) and *Gender-Linked Behaviors* (holding traditional associations between specific roles and genders)
- Participants completed one on their own attitudes and one for the attitudes of each primary parental figure

*Feminist Perspectives Scale, Short Form (FPS; Henley et al., 1998)*

- Measures six types of perspectives toward feminism: *Conservatism, Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Socialist Feminism, Cultural Feminism, and Woman of Color Feminism*

*Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology Scale, Short Form (LFAIS; Morgan, 1996)*

- Measures liberal feminist attitudes

*Feminist Self-Identification Items*

- Dichotomous items for participants to indicate whether they self-identify as a feminist and whether they believe each of their primary parental figures would self-identify as a feminist

### Procedures

- Participants first given the informed consent and demographic form, on which they identified their primary mother figure, their primary father figure, and their family structure growing up
- Participants then provided with the SRQ, the FPS, and the LFAIS for themselves, as well as the SRQ for all primary parental figures identified; order of parent and self questionnaires randomized
- Feminist self-identification questions provided last
- Men and those with more than one mother or father figure were excluded from the current analysis

## Results

### Overview

- Canonical correlation analysis with personal variables (feminist self-identification, six subscales of the FPS, two subscales of the SRQ, and LFAIS) on one side, parent variables (two subscales of the SRQ and feminist self-identification for both mother and father) on the other side
- Four significant canonical functions found (see Table 1)

### Function 1: Feminist Identity

- Clearly marked by positive loadings for participant, mother, and father feminist self-identification
- Weaker positive loadings of LFAIS score, radical feminist attitudes, socialist feminist attitudes

### Function 2: Gendered Behaviors

- Strong positive loadings for participant, mother, and father endorsement of gender-linked behavior attitudes
- Slightly weaker positive loading for participant conservatism

### Function 3: Mother's Attitudes

- Strong positive loadings for participant and mother gender transcendence
- Weaker positive loadings for participant liberal feminist attitudes and LFAIS score
- Weaker negative loadings for participant gender-linked behaviors and conservatism

### Function 4: Father's Attitudes

- Characterized by positive loadings for father gender transcendence and feminist identification, weaker negative loading of father gender-linked behaviors
- Weak positive loadings of participant cultural feminist and radical feminist attitudes, as well as a weak negative loading of participant socialist feminist attitudes

## Conclusions

### Feminist Identification

- Women whose parents, particularly their mothers, self-label as feminists are more likely to self-identify as feminists and hold liberal, radical, and socialist feminist attitudes
- Explicit identification may reflect a stronger commitment to feminist ideals within the home

### Traditional Attitudes

- Women whose parents hold attitudes that reflect strong associations between genders and traditional behaviors are more likely to hold those associations, themselves, and they are more likely to report conservative attitudes
- May indicate more modeling of traditional behaviors in parents and other family members

### Mothers' and Fathers' Attitudes

- The same attitudes in mothers and fathers are associated with different attitudes in participants
- Fathers' attitudes show lower loadings throughout, and the function focused on fathers' attitudes accounts for less variance in participants' attitudes
- Mothers may be more direct models of gender-related attitudes and behaviors

### Implications

- Clinicians may wish to discuss familial attitudes when working with women who are developing feminist consciousness
- Researchers may seek to expand this study to a more diverse sample and could directly ask parents of attitudes instead of relying on women's perceptions of parents' attitudes
- Follow-up research necessary to determine unique impacts of different parents' attitudes, as well as the process by which attitudes are imparted

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