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Political Ideology and Feelings Towards Feminism
Why Young People Reject the Feminist Label

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the
Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

Candidate for a B.A. in Political Science and
Renée Crown University Honors
Spring 2017

Honors Capstone Project in Political Science

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Abstract

This project explores the relationship between political ideology, feminist self-identification and support for feminist policy. The purpose of this research is to help explain why millennials reject the feminist label despite holding positive attitudes towards feminist policy. A survey of 312 Syracuse University students is used to study this relationship. Consistent with my hypothesis, I find that compared to conservatives, liberals are more likely to identify as feminist and support feminist policy. However, I also find that among liberals and conservatives, support for feminist policies is greater than self-identification as a feminist and the gap between self-identification as a feminist and support for feminist policy is greater among conservatives. I conclude that while there are significant differences in policy preferences between liberals and conservatives on abortion, scholars and feminists should recognize common ground on the issue of equal pay to help bring more conservatives into the feminist movement.

Executive Summary

My Renée Crown Honors Capstone project in conjunction with my Political Distinction Thesis, “Political Ideology and Feelings Towards Feminism: Why Young People Reject the Feminist Label” explores the relationship between young people’s political ideology and partisan identification with support for feminist policy and feminist self-identification. The purpose of my research is to provide further explanation for young people’s reluctance to identify as feminist. Current literature points to social explanations such as the “man-hating” perception of feminism; however, I suggest that these understandings neglect the impact of political ideology on young people’s hesitancy to identify as feminists.

I use a historical overview of feminism’s association with liberal policy and the Democratic Party to examine how one’s political identity is correlated to one’s acceptance or rejection of the feminist label. Current research finds that self-identified liberals and Democrats are more likely to identify as feminist than self-identified conservatives and Republicans (McCabe 2005). However, I suspect that despite rejecting the feminist label, conservatives and Republicans will be sympathetic to feminist policies such as abortion, equal pay and paid family leave. Using this information, I develop two hypotheses.

The first is the liberal support hypothesis. In this hypothesis, I suggest that consistent with existing research, liberal millennials will be more likely than conservative millennials both to support feminist policies and to self-identify as a feminist. My second hypothesis is the policy-label gap hypothesis. Consistent with existing research, I expect that support for feminist policies will be greater than self-identification as a feminist. However, I expect that this gap between policy support and the feminist label will be greatest among conservative millennials. More

specifically, I anticipate that conservative millennials will more strongly reject the feminist label despite holding views that are quite positive toward gender equality.

I test this hypothesis using survey data collected from 312 Syracuse University undergraduate students. Through this method, I gauge respondent's policy preferences and identification as feminists by asking a variety of self-identification questions and questions regarding general and feminist policies. A randomization component is included in which half the respondents are given policy questions before women's issues questions and vice versa in order to ensure that there is a balance between the possibility of politics priming people's views on feminism and feminism priming people's views on politics. This data is then analyzed using cross tabulations to determine whether the relationships between political ideology and feminism are statistically significant.

Consistent with the expectations of my liberal support hypothesis, I find that there is a statistically significant relationship between political ideology and likeliness to identify as a feminist. The more liberal you are, the more likely you are to agree with the statement: I am a feminist. In addition, the more liberal you are, the more likely you are to agree that when you think of the term feminist, you think of someone like yourself.

I also find that conservatives regard issues of gender equality as less important than liberals. It is extremely important to self-identified liberals that women hold elected office while conservatives are far less likely to be concerned about women's rights and list gender equality as one of their top issues they consider when they vote. Inconsistent with my policy-label gap hypothesis, there is also a significant difference in positions on abortion. Conservatives and Republicans are far more likely to oppose abortion than liberals and Democrats. However, consistent with the policy-label gap hypothesis, there is some common ground on the issue of equal

pay and paid family leave. The majority of conservative, very liberal and somewhat liberal respondents agree that private employers should be required to pay men and women the same salary for equal work. The majority of both Democrats and Republicans said that women should always be paid the same as men for the same job. Additionally, a piece of legislation that provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of paid leave had mild support from conservatives and strong support among liberals. A takeaway from studying support for equal pay, paid family leave and abortion is that consistent with my hypothesis, among both liberals and conservatives, support for feminist policies is greater than self-identification as a feminist. The gap between self-identification as a feminist and support for equal pay and paid family leave is greater among conservatives than liberals.

I use this data to suggest that conservatives have more support for feminist policy than their rejection of the feminist label lets on. I also argue that rather than only focusing on significant policy differences on abortion, scholars and feminists should recognize common ground on the issue of equal pay to help bring more conservatives into the feminist movement. This is worth exploring because after examining how the feminist label impacts the actions of elected officials, it seems probable that identifying as a feminist has positive consequences for the general public. While more research is needed to further examine the relationship between political ideology and partisan identification with support for feminist policies and self-identification as a feminist, this paper brings new understanding to the complicated question of why young people are reluctant to identify as feminist.

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Preface

My junior year at Syracuse University, I took a Gender and Politics class with Professor Danielle Thomsen. There, I found myself frequently reminded about my seemingly contradictory labels: conservative and woman. It was during one class in particular that my identity was questioned. The conversation was about sexism in the Republican Party. During this class discussion, I was told by a fellow classmate that if I identify as conservative, I am sexist.

This was frustrating to me. I always felt that myself, along with other young conservatives, want gender equality no less than any self-described liberal. I starting thinking about the relationship between political ideology and feminism as whole. I thought about the other millions of women that identified as conservative. Were they all sexist, too? Could none of them be considered feminist just because feminism is usually aligned with the Democratic Party? I began to think, just because conservatives don't typically identify as feminist doesn't mean that they don't have similar attitudes and goals of liberal feminists.

These questions and frustrations fueled over a year of independent research that aims to unpack the feminist label. Through my research, I find some answers to my questions. I find similarities and differences between conservatives and liberals on feminist policy issues that I both expect and didn't expect. I also find hope. I find hope that one day, liberals and conservatives in classrooms and political events throughout the country will see beyond their labels in order to work together and discover common ground. I find hope that the feminist movement will one day be a more inclusive movement than it is today.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank the Syracuse University Renée Crown Honors Program and Maxwell Distinction Program for giving me this opportunity to challenge myself academically. Completing this research was by far the most rewarding part of my undergraduate academic experience and it will undoubtedly help me with future endeavors.

Specifically, I'd like to thank Professor Sally Roesch Wagner for being one of the first people to get me thinking about feminism. Your Native American Women's Rights class was the first place I was introduced to feminist ideas.

A very special thanks to Professor Shana Gadarian. Thank you for all of the time you spent helping me with this project and for training me to think and write in new and important ways. This project would not have been possible without your guidance and support.

Thank you Professor Thomsen for inspiring me in your Gender and Politics class to want to better understand the relationship between conservative ideology and feminism. You pointed me in the direction of many important books on this subject that interested me both academically and personally.

Thank you Colleen Burton for taking the time to help an undergraduate student in need. Working closely with you was a privilege. I learned a lot from you about how to approach projects of this size and scope.

Finally, thank you Professor McDowell. Your class brought great structure and comfort to the entire research and writing process. Your helpful feedback and guidance throughout the year is much appreciated.

Introduction

The historic 2017 Women's March on Washington showcased a unique display of feminist activism. *The New York Times* estimated that 470,000 people attended the march that centered on opposing President Donald Trump and advocating for policies regarding women's rights and other human rights issues. Although the march saw great unity, there was a notable divide. New Wave Feminists, a group that was originally listed as a partner for the event, was disinvited after backlash spread about the group's pro-life stance ("Pro-Life Feminist" 2017). The idea that today's feminists reject those who morally oppose abortion is unsurprising given that the majority of pro-life men and women do not identify as feminist (Schreiber 2008). However, this raises questions about how to define the feminist movement and those who identify with it. Who are the men and women that identify as feminist and what does it mean, in terms of policy preferences, to be a feminist today?

While much literature focuses on the topic of feminist self-identification, there is little attention to understanding its relationship with political ideology. Although both liberals and conservatives are reluctant to identify as feminist (Anderson 2009), there is a largely accepted view among scholars that people with liberal political views are more likely to identify as feminist because liberal social and economic policies are more compatible with feminist ideas. However, as young conservatives become increasingly moderate (Jacobson 2016) it seems probable that their political views may be more compatible with those of the feminist movement.

Using survey data collected from 312 Syracuse University students, I find that, consistent with existing research, conservatives regard issues of gender equality as less important than liberals. Despite this difference and differences in opinion on abortion, I find that there is some common ground among young liberals and young conservatives on women's issues like equal pay

and paid family leave. For both conservatives and liberals, support for feminist policy is greater than their self-identification as a feminist. I also find that this gap between identification and support is greatest among conservatives.

I use this data to suggest that rather than only focusing on policy differences between conservatives and liberals (such as with abortion in the case of the Women's Rights March), scholars and feminists should recognize that common ground on equal pay can help bring more conservatives into the feminist movement. In order to fully examine this relationship, I will first provide background information and review existing research on this topic. Then, I will outline the research design and provide the results of my survey. Finally, I will draw conclusions from the data and discuss its further implications. As I will explore in the conclusion, studying the relationship between political ideology and feminist self-identification is important because if more women identified as feminists, it is probable that more policy improving women's rights would be passed.

Background Information

In order to evaluate the current relationship between political identity and feminism, it is important to understand how party positions on women's rights have changed over time. Before the late 1960s, the agenda for women's rights was mostly limited to concerns such as the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), discrimination in employment and benefits and equal pay (Wolbrecht 1997). Early on, issues like the ERA drew support from both sides. Today, the ERA is not supported by the Republican Party (Wolbrecht 1997) and the women's rights agenda includes many other issues such as sexual harassment, maternity and family leave, child care, women's health and abortion. According to existing literature (Wolbrecht 1997), these changes were more

compatible with the Democratic Party's platform. For Democrats, "The changing women's rights agenda fit well with the party's position in favor of an activist government and sympathetic posture," especially given their history of being linked to social movements of the 1960s (Wolbrecht 1997).

Furthermore, the initiation and activism of Democratic women played a large role in shaping conceptions of women's rights and ultimately making the Democratic Party the party of feminism. Wolbrecht (1997) examines the co-sponsorship of pro-women's rights bills by female legislators of both major parties to measure this. Although women from both parties are more likely to be the first co-sponsor of pro-women's rights legislation than men, Democratic women are consistently significantly more likely to be the first cosponsor than Republican women (Wolbrecht 1997). Feminist Democrats were also more active in advocating for women's rights. One example is Martha Griffith's efforts to secure the discharge petition signatures necessary to bring the ERA to a vote in the House of Representatives. A more modern day example is Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's Military Justice Improvement Act, aimed at reforming procedures to help combat sexual assault that takes place in the military ("Military Justice Improvement Act" 2017).

In contrast with this acceptance by the Democratic Party, these new issue areas included in women's rights conflicted with traditional social conservatism in the Republican Party. To Republicans, policies such as sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination and equal pay required government action that interfered with business action. Wolbrecht (1997) argues that Republicans were uncomfortable with the new women's rights agenda. More currently, there is further evidence that today's Republican Party rejects feminist policies. This is illustrated by what the author of *Righting Feminism*, Ronnee Schreiber, calls anti-feminist women's rights organizations, such as the Independent Women's Forum (IWF) and Concerned Women for America (CWA). The IWF is

a fiscally conservative organization founded by activist Rosalie Silberman to promote a “conservative alternative to feminist tenets”. Concerned Women for America is a Christian socially conservative group that opposes feminist policies such as abortion (Schreiber 2012).

Overall, these changes in party positions on women’s rights have made feminism more closely aligned with the Democratic Party. This helps explain why more Democrats identify as feminist than Republicans (McCabe 2005). Yet, in the middle of this hostile divide on feminism between liberals and conservatives, demographic shifts are underway that impact attitudes on feminism. According to Pew Research’s survey of more than 10,000 Americans, millennials are considerably more liberal than other generations. Even conservative millennials are more moderate than older conservatives (Jacobson 2016). According to Jacobson (2016) fewer young Republicans are willing to identify themselves as conservative. Seventy percent of Republicans who are older than 65 consistently identify as conservative. Fewer than half — about 20 percent — of the oldest Republicans call themselves moderates. In contrast, among Republicans under the age of 30, the amount of self-identified moderates and self-identified conservatives are about equal. Young Republicans are also more likely to support the Affordable Care Act and be to the left of their elders on issues of immigration, environmentalism, and same-sex marriage (Jacobson 2016).

This is reason to believe that young conservative’s likeliness to identify as a feminist would increase. Yet, it does not. Even though millennials are more liberal across the board, young people are consistently reluctant to identify as feminists (Anderson 2009). Anderson (2009) conducted a study that found that a large portion of university women (45.4%) agreed with some of the objectives of the feminist movement but chose not to identify as a feminist, while 32.6% of men agreed with some feminist objectives, yet did not identify as a feminist. A minority of both female

and male participants, 6.6% of women and 0.8% of men, stated that they would identify themselves as a feminist either privately or publicly.

Since millennials are increasingly liberal yet still reluctant to identify as feminist, this suggests that policy attitudes do not completely explain it. This thesis explores what explains this disconnect.

Literature Review

There have been various explanations for young people's reluctance to embrace the feminist label, yet, it appears two main perspectives have emerged. One viewpoint is that young women find feminism obsolete and do not want to fight for equality. The other explanation is that there are undesirable stereotypes and ideas associated with feminism that prevent young people from identifying as feminist. I will then suggest that political ideology is also playing a critical role in the lack of feminist self-identification.

The "Post-Feminism Era"

The first body of literature suggests that after women earned the right to vote and significant control over their reproductive rights with the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, many young people do not find that there are serious barriers to gender equality (Scharff 2012; Dicker 2008). In one study by Scharff (2012), qualitative in-depth interviews with young women concluded that views on feminism often correspond to the perception of what obstacles women face and the severity of them. Since millennials live in a "post-feminism" era, it is argued that they do not understand what it has taken to strengthen gender equality and therefore, do not prioritize further steps to achieve it. Aronson (2003) agrees, finding that since the early 1980s, "Women in their teens and twenties [have been labelled] the "postfeminist generation", ... who are thought to

benefit from the women's movement through expanded access to employment and education ... [but] do not push for further political change".

This notion of a "Post-Feminist generation" is fundamental to Lisa Hogeland's argument (1994). She suggests that young women are afraid to have the type of awareness and gender consciousness that it takes to be a feminist. Hogeland argues that young people are not willing to emotionally commit to being feminists partially because standing "opposed to your culture...critical of institutions, behaviors [and] discourses" does not appear to be in their immediate interest (Hogeland 1).

The Anti-Feminine and "Man Hating" Perception of Feminism

Another finding by Scharff (2012) is that young women associate feminism with extremism and non-traditional womanhood. As Scharff notes, "Young women who discuss feminism often feel they have to navigate, or pre-empt, being regarded a man-hater or a lesbian" (Scharff 2012). Anderson (2009) also found that this negative stigma around the feminist label influences both men and women to not identify as a feminist, despite often agreeing with many feminist objectives. There was significant variation in how feminist men and women were viewed. Feminist men were associated with "more stereotypically feminine characteristics (i.e., cooperative, affectionate, patient ... and weak, emotional, and submissive)". In contrast, feminist women were rated by male and female respondents as lower in these categories and were deemed less feminine. Feminist women were also rated by male and female respondents as lower on the attractiveness measure (Anderson 2009).

Additionally, a 2015 Washington Post/Kaiser poll captures the belief that feminism is associated with "man-hating". The poll showed that 46% of men and women said that the feminist movement unfairly blames men for women's problems. This position was particularly strong

among conservative women (57%) and men as whole (52%). Despite this popular belief, a study of 488 college students regarding ambivalent sexism towards men showed that feminists reported lower levels of hostility toward men than did non-feminists (Anderson 2009).

Political Ideology

These more social explanations seem to neglect the impact of political ideology on young women's hesitancy to identify as feminists. In terms of political opinion, we already know that conservative women are more reluctant than liberal women to identify as feminists (McCabe 2005). Using data from the 1996 General Society Survey, McCabe looked at self-identified liberals and conservatives as well as self-identified Democrats and Republicans. Her results showed that feminists are more likely to be highly educated, urban women who self-identify as liberals and Democrats. However, the relationship between political ideology and young people's attitudes towards feminism is yet to be fully explored. It is not clear whether young people who do not identify as feminist, truly have policy attitudes towards women's issues that are not, in fact, feminist. McCabe looked at self-identified liberals, conservatives, Democrats and Republicans rather than viewing their policy preferences. This is important to note because someone can still identify as a Republican or a conservative and have policy preferences on women's issues that are considered feminist. Fully studying the relationship between political ideology and feminism opens up a new door in understanding why young people, and specifically young conservatives, are reluctant to identify as feminists.

Hypothesis

This history of support for feminist policies and the feminist label among liberals and Democrats (Wolbrecht 1997) paired with data on feminist self-identification (McCabe 2005) led me to my first hypothesis.

1. **Liberal support hypothesis:** Consistent with existing research (McCabe 2005), I expect that liberal millennials will be more likely than conservative millennials both to support feminist policies such as equal pay, paid family leave and abortion and to self-identify as a feminist.

H₁: More liberal ideology → more support for feminist policy

More liberal ideology → more feminist self-identification

The social stigmas about feminism such as the “man-hating” perception, along with other data showing reluctance to identify as feminist (Anderson 2009), led me to my second hypothesis (H₂A). Additionally, data that suggests conservative millennials are becoming more liberal on social issues (Jacobson 2016) as well as the lack of research on political ideology and its relationship with feminism led me to my second hypothesis (H₂B).

2. **Policy-Label gap hypothesis:**

- A. Consistent with existing research (Anderson 2009), I expect that for both liberal and conservative millennials, support for feminist policies will be greater than self-identification as a feminist.

H₂A: For all ideology groups feminist policy support > feminist self-identification

- B. I expect that this gap between policy support and the feminist label will be the greatest among conservative millennials. I anticipate that conservative millennials will more strongly reject the feminist label despite holding views that are quite

positive toward gender equality. For example, I think that young conservatives will have general support for feminist policies such as equal pay, paid family leave and abortion despite not identifying as feminist. If the data support my expectations, it would suggest that conservative millennials are sympathetic to feminist policy positions yet strongly reject the label. This would highlight that there is a negative stigma about feminism prohibiting young conservatives from identifying as feminists.

H₂B: Difference between policy support and feminist self-identification > for conservatives than for liberals

Research Design

In order to test these hypotheses, I created, distributed and analyzed an online survey using Qualtrics. The survey was distributed by professors in the Political Science Department at Syracuse University to their students in order to ensure a younger sample.¹ The sample size is 312 people. A full list of survey questions can be found in the Appendix.

A survey is used as the research method because it is particularly helpful when trying to measure how people identify with feminism. Self-identification as a feminist is an important part of both of my hypotheses, particularly H₁. Specific to feminism, there is social pressure. For example, some respondents may feel it is socially desirable to answer that they are feminists, or, some may be hesitant to identify as feminists due to negative social stigmas about feminism. The anonymity provided by a survey decreases this social pressure and allows people to answer these

¹ This project was approved by Syracuse University's Institutional Research Board IRB #: 17-100

questions more honestly than they would if this was a face-to-face interview.

Similarly, the survey helps capture attitudes on women's issues in a clear and measurable way. This survey included questions specific to feminism and issues commonly categorized as women's issues such as equal pay, paid family leave and abortion. I selected these issues because they are at the forefront of current gender equality debates and feminist legislative action. An example of a question asked was: Should private employers be required to pay men and women the same salary for the same job? Each question is measured based on the specific question, but in many cases there are options such as, "Always, almost always, sometimes, almost never, and never". In this example, the people who select "Always and almost always" have stronger support for the policy and the people who select "almost never and never" have weaker support for the policy. These questions in the form of a survey help test H₂A by providing a clear measurement of respondent's support for feminist policies to compare to their identification as a feminist.

Through the survey, I am also able to gauge respondent's policy preferences and part identity. I designed the survey to identify where each person falls on the political ideological scale by asking a variety of general policy questions. Some of the questions include: Where do you place yourself on an ideological scale from very liberal to very conservative? Do you identify as Democrat, Independent, Republican or other? A survey helped capture a spectrum on political attitudes and identities, rather than interviews with Republican affiliated and Democratic affiliated organizations that would have left out moderate individuals.

A survey is also used because it allows for a particular structure that is beneficial to gathering data that wasn't skewed. Specifically, the survey included a randomization component in which half the respondents were given policy questions before women's issues questions and

vice versa. I designed the survey this way to ensure that there was a balance between the possibility of politics priming people's views on feminism and feminism priming people's views on politics.

Finally, a survey is used to help determine whether differences between political groups are statistically significant. Rather than comparing verbal statements of liberals and conservatives with a broad way of measurement, this survey allows for the statistical measurement of the data. This occurs at the p.00 and the p.05 level.

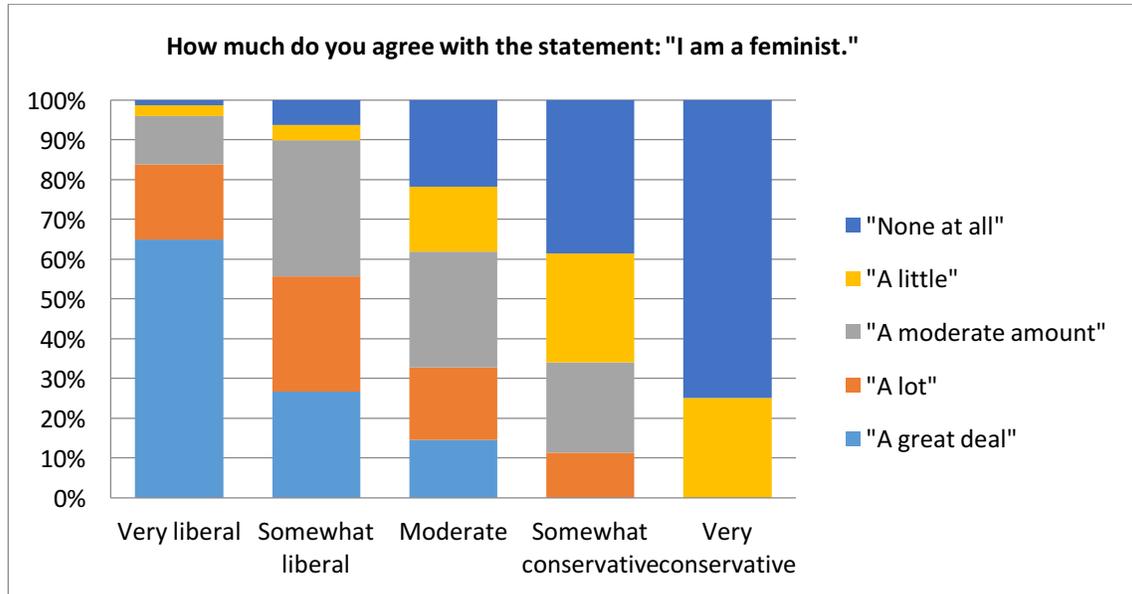
There are several limitations of the study. It is evident that my respondents are not entirely representative of the U.S. millennial population in terms of geography, socio-economic status, sex and ethnicity. All of my respondents were from Syracuse University. Their education level presumes that many of them are from similar socio-economic status. In terms of sex, about 65% of my respondents are female. Additionally, 79% of my respondents are white. According to the Brookings Institute, this is very different from the general population. Overall, millennials are only 55.8% white (Frey 2016). A more racially diverse group of respondents would have been a better representation of the population.

In terms of ideology, my respondents are fairly representative of the young population when compared with recent data. The majority of respondents in this survey consider themselves very liberal (29%) or somewhat liberal (29%) compared to moderate (21%) somewhat conservative (16%) and very conservative (4%). The majority of respondents also consider themselves Democrats (52%). In a 2014 Pew Research survey of more than 10,000 Americans, Millennials are considerably more liberal than other generations: About four-in-ten Millennials are mostly (28%) or consistently (13%) liberal in their views, compared with 15% who are mostly (12%) or consistently (3%) conservative. This translates into a greater affiliation with the

Democratic Party. Today, about half of Millennials (50%) are Democrats or lean to the Democratic Party, while just 34% affiliate with or lean to the GOP.

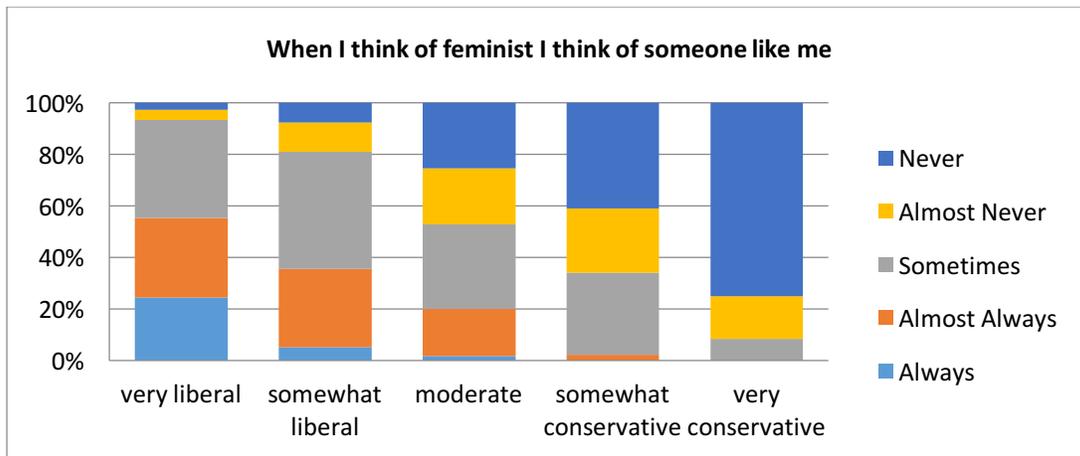
Data:

Testing the Liberal Support Hypothesis



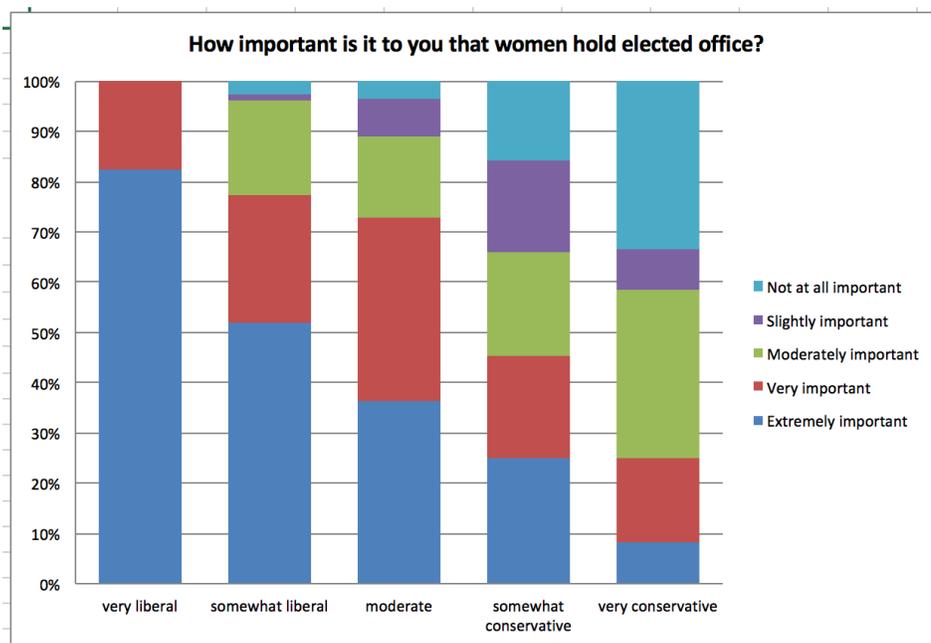
The question, “How much do you agree with the statement: “I am a feminist” is used to test H₁, the liberal support hypothesis. I expect to find that the more liberal you are, the more likely you are to agree with the statement: I am a feminist. Consistent with my expectations and existing research (McCabe 2005), I find by running a cross tabulation that the more liberal you are, the more likely you are to agree with the statement: I am a feminist (See Table 1 in Appendix). For instance, 64.86% of very liberal respondents said that they agree “A great deal” with the statement “I am a feminist” while not a single conservative respondent said that they agree “A great deal” with that statement. About one percent of very liberal respondents said that

they do not identify at all with being a feminist while 75.00% of very conservatives didn't identify with being a feminist at all. These findings are significant at ($X^2=(df=12)=84.22$ $p<.05$).



“When I think of feminist, I think of people like me” is also designed to test H₁. I expect that there is a statistically significant relationship between whether a person thinks of themselves as a feminist and whether or not they are liberal or conservative. Specifically, I expect that the more liberal a person is the more likely they are to think of feminist and think of people like themselves. Consistent with my hypothesis, I find that the more liberal a person is the more likely they are to think of feminist and think of people like themselves. Not a single respondent who identified as very conservative or somewhat conservative said that when they think of feminist they “Always” think of someone like themselves. In fact, about forty percent of somewhat conservatives said they “Never” think of people like themselves as feminists and the majority of respondents who identified as very conservative (75.00%) said they “never” think of people like themselves as feminists. This is important because it suggests that there is an understanding among conservatives that most feminists are liberal, supporting the idea that perhaps based off of their identification alone, conservatives are reluctant to identify as feminist. These findings are significant at ($X^2=(df=16)=111.61$ $p<.00$).

It is worth noting that in both of these feminist identification questions, there is a distinct difference between men and women. Thirty-eight percent of men said they “Never” think of feminists as people like themselves in comparison to only 8.67% of women who said they “Never” think of feminists as people like themselves. When asked, “How much do you agree with the statement: I am a feminist” 38.20% of men answered “None at all” while only 5.78% of women answered “None at all”. These findings are consistent with Anderson (2009) who found that men were far more reluctant than women to identify themselves as feminists. These findings may also support the broader idea that there is a “Man-hating” perception of feminism that prevents young people, particularly young men, from identifying as feminist.



The question, “How important is it to you that women hold elected office?” also helps test my liberal support hypothesis. Placing importance on women in office may explain why some people are more likely to identify as feminist and support feminist policies. Consistent with the existing understanding that the Democratic Party is the party of women’s rights (Schreiber 2012), I expect to find that liberals regard women holding office as more important than

conservative women. I find that 82.43% of respondents who identify as very liberal, and 51.9% of respondents who identify as somewhat liberal, say that women holding elected office is “Extremely important”. Only 25% of those who identify as somewhat conservatives and 8.33% of respondents who identify as very conservative say that women holding elected office is “Extremely important”. No respondents that identified as very liberal say that having women hold elected office is “Not at all important” when 33.33% of respondents that are very conservative say this was “Not at all important.” These findings are significant at $(X^2=(df=16)=99.61 p<.00)$.

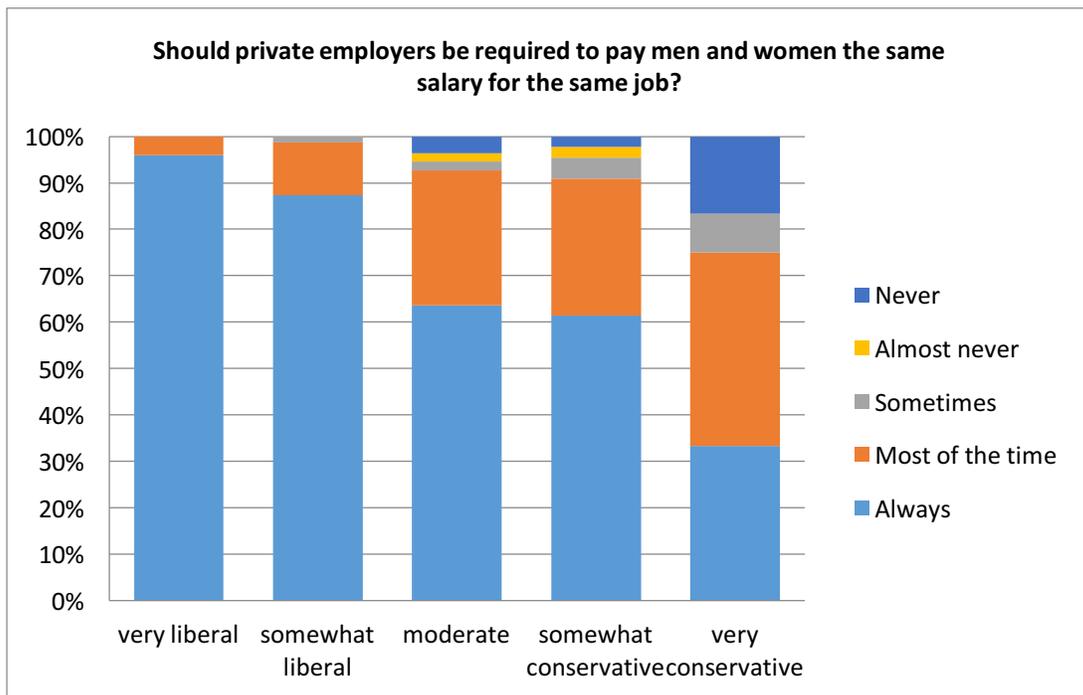
It is important to note that there is a larger relationship coming into play here. It is a general fact that fewer Republican women than Democratic women hold elected office; however, the causal direction is still in question. Are there fewer Republican office holders because conservatives don’t care about women holding elected office as demonstrated here? Or it the other way around? With just this data, causation can’t be proven. This question has serious implications for understanding how attitudes on feminist issues may shape the demographics of our elected office holders.

Similar to, “How important is it to you that women hold elected office?”, the question, “How concerned are you personally about women’s rights?” helps test the liberal support hypothesis. I expect that the more liberal you are, the more likely you are to be concerned about women’s rights. Consistent with my expectations, the majority of respondents who identified as very liberal (79.73%) and Somewhat liberal (56.96%) were “Very concerned” about women’s rights, whereas the largest percentage of people who identified as somewhat conservative were only “Moderately concerned” (34.09%) and the largest portion of very conservative respondents were “Not concerned” (41.67%). These findings are significant at $(X^2=(df=16)=120.38 p<.00)$.

Additionally, 57% of very liberal respondents and 40% of somewhat liberal respondents said that gender equality was one of their top three issues they consider when they vote, whereas 13% of conservatives and 0% of very conservative respondents said that gender equality was one of their top issues.

Overall, these questions regarding the importance of women’s issues seem to suggest that conservatives think that gender equality is less important than liberals, which may explain why more conservatives are reluctant to identify as feminist. Specifically, this data on young conservatives appears to be compatible with the theory of the “Post-Feminist Era” as described by Aaronson (2003) and Scharff (2012).

Testing the Policy-Label Gap Hypothesis



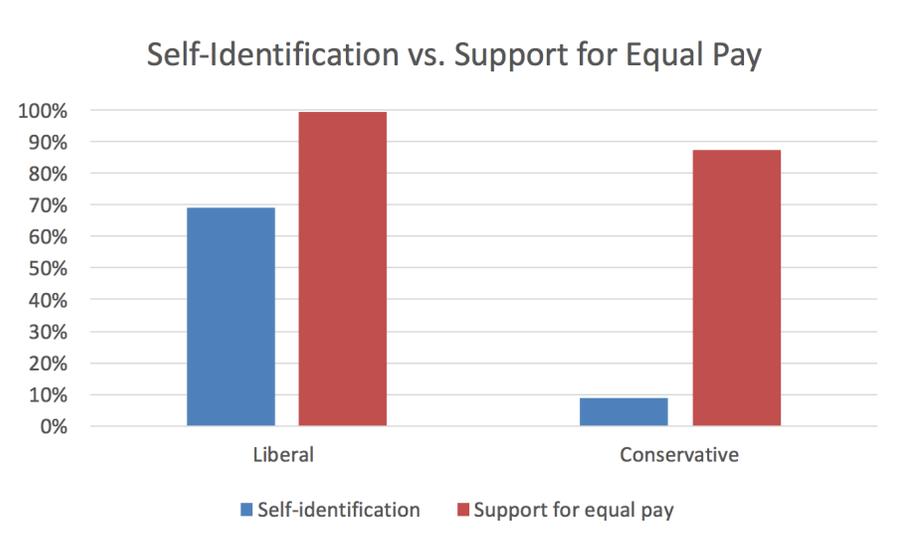
The question, “Should private employers be required to pay men and women the same salary for the same job?” helps test the policy-label gap hypothesis. Based on this theory, I predict that conservative respondents will support equal pay despite not using the label of feminist. The majority of very liberal (95.95%), somewhat liberal (87.34%), moderate (63.64%), and somewhat conservative (61.36%) respondents said that employers should always be required to pay men and women the same for the same job (This is consistent with my liberal support hypothesis). Only the largest amount of very conservative respondents said private employers should be required to pay both sexes the same salary “most of the time” (42.67%). These findings are significant at ($X^2=(df=16)=58.18$ $p<.00$). Although the majorities of conservative respondents agreed that men and women should be paid equally, there are still big differences across groups. Notably, there is more support for mandating equal pay among liberals.

Similar to this finding, the vast majority of self-identified Democrats (88.41%) said that private employers should “Always” be required to pay men and women the same salary for the same job. The majority of Republicans (57.14%) also said this should “Always” be the case ($p<.00$).

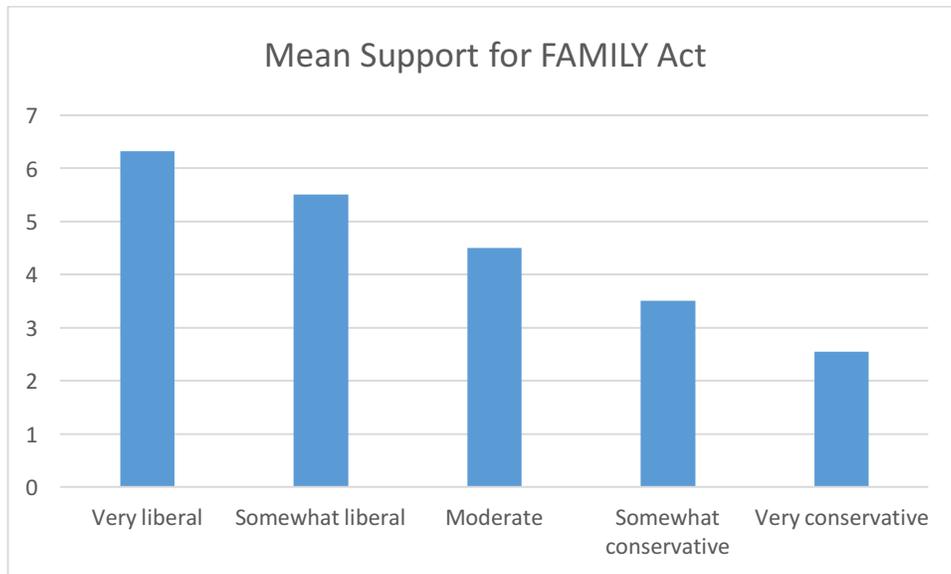
These findings are somewhat surprising since conservatives often push back against the notion of a gender pay gap. Top conservatives, along with The Republican National Committee have called statistics regarding pay inequality “misleading” and said that the gender pay gap as whole is a “myth” (Bassett 2014). This finding shows that young conservatives and young Republicans might be more supportive of equal pay legislation than what their lack of feminist identification initially suggests.

For the purpose of further testing the policy-label gap hypothesis, H₂A and H₂B, I then combined very liberal and somewhat liberal respondents to make the category of liberal. I also combined very conservative and somewhat conservative to make the category of conservative. I did this to more easily compare liberal and conservatives. In terms of the self-identification as a feminist question, I combined “a great deal” and “a lot” in order to encompass all majority support/use of the feminist label. This was also done to simplify the comparison.

I then compared liberal and conservative’s identification as feminist with support for equal pay. The answers “Always” or “Most of the time” constitute support for equal pay.



Consistent with my expectation in H₂A, support for feminist policies is greater than self-identification as a feminist for both conservatives and liberals. Consistent with my expectation in H₂B, the difference between policy support and feminist self-identification is greater among conservatives than liberals. This suggests that conservative millennials are sympathetic to the position of equal pay yet strongly reject the feminist label. This highlights that there is a strong negative stigma about feminism prohibiting young conservatives from identifying as feminists despite holding some positive views towards gender equality. (See Table 5 in Appendix).



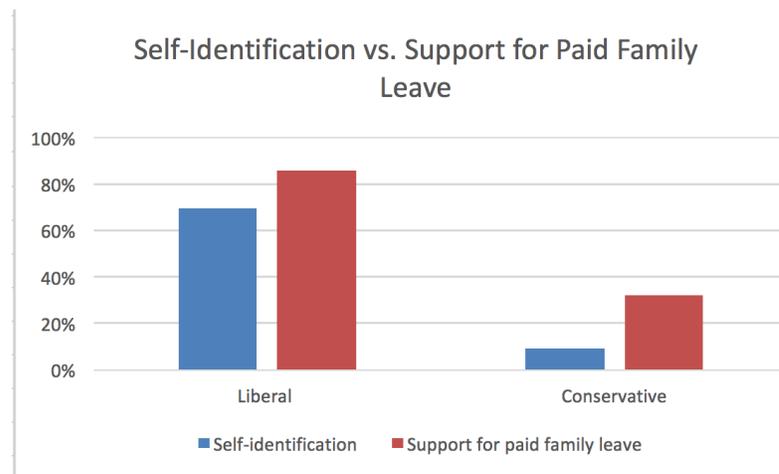
The question “How much do you support the following bill” asks about support for the FAMILY Act and tests support for actual policy involving government involvement in the gender pay gap issue. Specifically, I ask about support for the FAMILY Act in order to test the policy-label gap hypothesis to see if despite not holding the title of feminist, respondents support this legislation. The FAMILY Act establishes a national insurance fund paid for through employee and employer contributions and provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of paid leave with 66 percent wage replacement (A full description of the FAMILY Act can be found in the Appendix.)

Support was measured using a seven-point scale. 0 was the lowest score possible (lowest amount of support for the legislation) and 7 was the highest score possible (highest amount of support for the legislation). Specifically, a score of 0 meant there was no support, a score of 1 or 2 meant there was little support, a score of 3 or 4 meant there was moderate support, a score of 5 or 6 meant there was a lot of support and a score of 7 meant there was complete support.

Consistent with the liberal support hypothesis, the most support for the bill came from respondents who identified as “Very liberal” and “Liberal” with 58.10% of Very liberal

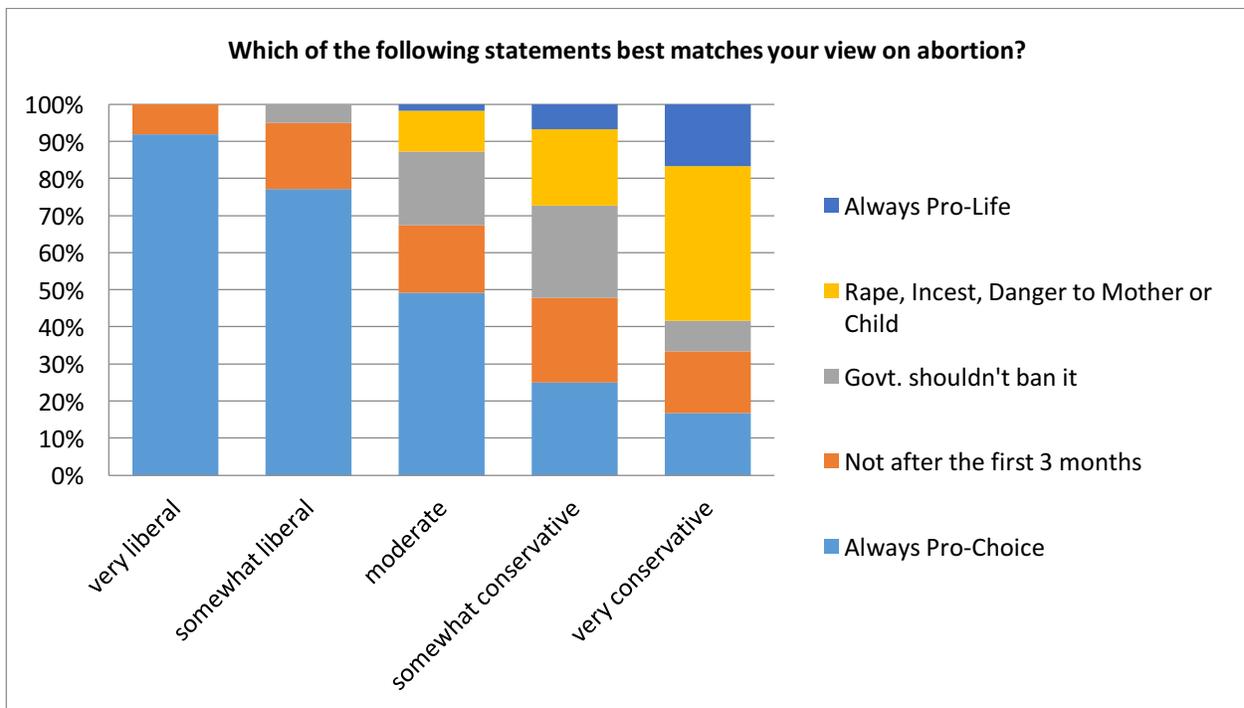
respondents giving their total support (score of 7) for the bill and 29.11% of Liberal respondents giving their total support (score of 7) for the bill. Moderates, Somewhat conservatives and Very conservatives had mixed support of the bill. The largest percentage of moderates (25.45%), conservatives (29.54%) and strong conservatives (36.36%) all had some support for the bill (score of 4).

Although there is far more support among liberals than conservatives, the fact that conservatives had some support for the bill may be considered surprising since, historically, Republicans have opposed paid family leave laws. The only federal parental-leave law currently in place is The Family and Medical Leave Act (1993), which ensures 12 weeks of unpaid time off, only for full-time workers at companies with at least 50 employees. Although this bill ultimately passed, 134 House Republicans voted against it, including former Speaker of the House John Boehner (Mertens 2015).



To further test the policy-label gap hypothesis, I compared self-identification as a feminist with support for paid family leave. In this case, I combined responses that were a 5, 6 and 7 and recorded them as “support for paid family leave” because all of these numbers indicate strong

support for the FAMILY Act. (Similar to how variables were combined in the equal pay question, this was done to simplify the comparison between liberal and conservative's self-identification and policy support.) Consistent with my expectation in H₂A, support for feminist policies is greater than self-identification as a feminist for both conservatives and liberals. Consistent with my expectation in H₂B, the difference between policy support and feminist self-identification is greater among conservatives than liberals. The differences are not as big as they were with attitudes towards equal pay. It is important to note that among conservatives, there is less support for the FAMILY Act than there is for the general idea of paying men and women the same salary for the same work. This implies that conservatives and liberals may have different solutions to the same goal, pay equality. Although complicated, overall this finding suggests that conservative millennials are somewhat sympathetic to paid family leave yet strongly reject the label. (See Table 5 in Appendix).

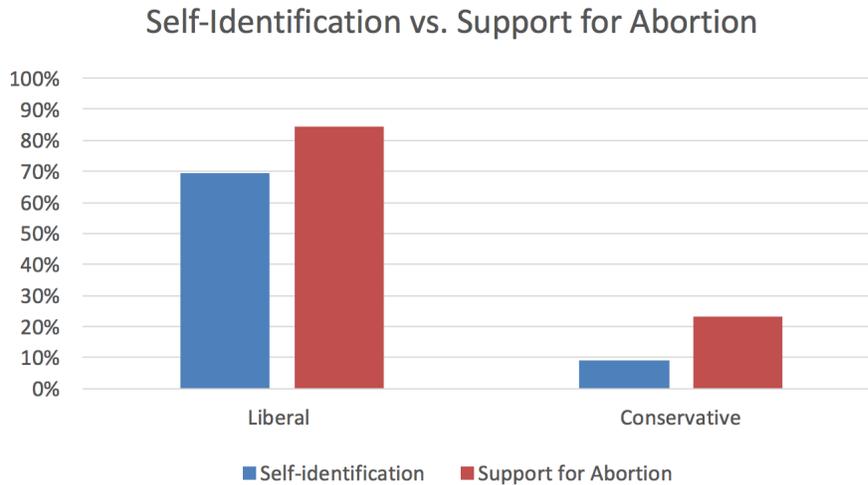


Asking about abortion is important when studying the meaning of feminism because for so many, like in the feminist march on Washington, the right to choose is a non-negotiable part of the feminist platform. This issue has been one of the biggest sources of contention among conservatives and liberals; however, new data (Jacobson 2015) shows that conservatives are increasingly socially liberal. This led me to expect that young conservatives will be relatively pro-choice. However, this is not the case. The vast majority of very liberal (91.89%) and somewhat liberal (77.22%) respondents said that it should always be the woman's choice. Somewhat conservatives were very split, 25% said it should always be the women's choice, 22.73% said not after the first three months, 25% said they don't agree with abortion but government shouldn't ban it, 20.45% said it should only be legal in certain instances and only 6.82% said abortion should never be legal. Very conservative respondents were also split but the greatest percentage of them thought that abortion should only be legal in the cases of rape, incest or danger to the mother or child (41.67%). These findings are significant at ($X^2=(df=16)=115.28$ $p<.00$).

Very similar results appear when Democrats and Republicans answered this question. Eighty-two percent of Democrats said that it should always be the woman's choice compared to only 23.21% of Republicans. Republicans were very split, but the largest percentage of Republicans (25.00%) said that abortion should only be legal in the cases of rape, incest or danger or the mother or child.

These findings are relatively consistent with national studies on abortion among the general population. The most recent Pew Research poll (2016) showed that 38% of Republicans said that abortion should be legal in all/most cases compared to 70% of Democrats that said abortion should

be legal in all/most cases. There is a very clear divide between these two political groups on the issue of abortion and not much room for common ground.



To further test the policy-label gap hypothesis, I compared self-identification as a feminist with support for abortion. The different answers for the abortion question captured very distinct attitudes on abortion such as whether or not it should be legal in specific cases, (ie. Rape). I chose to only include the response “It should always be the women’s choice” to indicate someone who supports abortion. As shown in the women’s march on Washington, pro-choice is the only acceptable feminist position on abortion (“Pro-Life Feminist” 2017). Consistent with my expectation in H₂A, support for abortion is greater than self-identification as a feminist for both conservatives and liberals. Inconsistent with my expectation in H₂B, the difference between policy support and feminist self-identification is not greater among conservatives than liberals. The difference is about the same.

Conclusion:

It is important to remember several limitations of this study. There were only 312 respondents and they were not representative of the country in terms of geography, socio-economic status, sex and ethnicity. More research is needed on a wider scale that uses a representative population. Also, more research is needed that compares younger conservatives and Republicans to older conservatives and Republicans. While Jacobson (2016) helps lay the foundation for understanding that young conservatives are more moderate than their older counterparts, more research is needed to explore how this applies to feminist values. It is important to have information on a possible trend of more conservatives supporting feminist policies and it is important to have data from older age groups to draw better comparisons.

Despite these limitations, there are still important takeaways from this research. One of my major findings is that there is a statistically significant relationship between political ideology and likeliness to identify as a feminist. Consistent with my liberal support hypothesis, the more liberal you are, the more likely you are to agree with the statement: I am a feminist. In addition, the more liberal you are, the more likely you are to agree that when you think of the term feminist, you think of someone like yourself.

There are differences when looking at what liberals and conservatives view as important. It is “Extremely important” to self-identified liberals that women hold elected office while conservatives are far less likely to be concerned about women’s rights and list gender equality as one of their top issues they consider when they vote. These findings suggest that conservatives are more likely to subscribe to the idea that they live in a “post-feminist era” where young men and women no longer need to make strides to achieve equality, or alternatively that equality wasn’t the

end goal (Aaronson 2003; Scharff 2012). Conservatives perceiving the need for gender equality differently may very well contribute to their lack of identifying as feminist.

There are both similarities and differences between conservatives and liberals on policy issues. The majority of conservative, very liberal and somewhat liberal respondents agreed that private employers should be required to pay men and women the same salary for equal work. Additionally, the majority of both Democrats and Republicans said that women should always be paid the same as men for the same job. When looking at paid family leave, the FAMILY Act had mild support from conservatives and strong support among liberals. These findings were consistent with my hypothesis that conservatives would be sympathetic to feminist policies despite not identifying as feminist. In both of these cases, support for feminist policy was greater than feminist self-identification and the gap between these was greater among conservatives than liberals. Yet, inconsistent with my hypothesis, conservatives and Republicans were far more likely to oppose abortion than liberals and Democrats and the gap between self-identification as a feminist and support for abortion was not greater among conservatives.

The overall question of why young people are reluctant to identify as feminists is worth exploring. Not identifying as feminist seems as though it can have negative implications for policy preferences and outcomes that strengthen gender equality. If more women identified as feminists, it seems probable that more policy favoring women's rights could be passed. This can be explained by the "feminist accountability" mechanism described by Mansbridge (1995) which is when women who identify as feminist internalize accountability to the women's movement and in turn, help create or support policy that favors women's rights. This idea is supported by the fact that there is a clear relationship between feminist identity and work on women's rights bills within the state legislature (Carroll 2003). The women legislators who identify as feminist and are involved

with feminist women's organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) are more likely than other women to work on legislation aimed at helping women (Carroll 2003). More research involving national politics rather than state politics is needed to understand the effect of feminist identification on policy.

If the feminist label impacts the actions of elected officials, it seems probable that identifying as a feminist has positive consequences for the general public. If more women identified as feminists it seems likely more women would hold themselves accountable to participate in demonstrations and activities that help strengthen women's equality. It also seems possible that these women would hold their legislators accountable for passing legislation that increases gender equality. More research is needed to examine whether or not identifying as a feminist is positively correlated with more women's rights activism and support for policy that favors gender equality.

I use this information to conclude that rather than focusing on the policy differences there are between conservatives and liberals on abortion, scholars and feminists should recognize that there is common ground on issues like equal pay that can help bring more people into the feminist movement. For the issues of equal pay, paid family leave and abortion, support for the policy was greater than self-identification as a feminist among both liberals and conservatives. The gap between self-identification and policy support was also greatest among conservatives for the issues of equal pay and paid family leave. This shows that respondents, particularly conservatives, are sympathetic to feminist policies despite not labeling themselves as feminist.

This research has led me to believe that for every young conservative that has negative feelings towards feminism or is sidelined at a women's march, there is someone that, maybe unknowingly, supports some feminist objectives. Whether they are turned away by the label or

completely rejected by the movement, I believe that being conservative and being feminist aren't mutually exclusive. Understanding the complex relationship between feminist self-identification and the common ground conservatives share with liberals on feminist policies is important. Hopefully one day, conservatives and liberals will be able to walk side by side at a Women's March on Washington, with some similar objectives, some different values, but just one label: Feminist.

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Appendices

Q Rank these issues in order of importance to you, 1 being the most important, 8 being the least:

- _____ Global Terrorism (1)
- _____ Economy (2)
- _____ Gun reform (3)
- _____ Immigration reform (4)
- _____ Social justice (5)
- _____ Gender equality (6)
- _____ Climate Change (7)
- _____ Education (8)

Q Which the following statements best matches your view on the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)?

- I support Obama Care but I think a single payer system would be better (1)
- I support Obama Care (2)
- I don't support Obama Care. Open markets allow for competition that brings down costs (3)

Q Which of the following statements best matches your view on gun control?

- All guns should be banned from public use (1)
- We need stricter background checks and restrictions on assault weapons (2)
- Further restrictions would infringe on 2nd Amendment rights (3)

Q Should employers be required to pay men and women the same salary for the same job?

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Almost never (4)
- Never (5)

Q Which of the following statements best matches your view on abortion?

- It should always be the woman's choice (1)
- I support the woman's right to choose but not after the first three months (2)
- I don't agree with abortion but the government shouldn't have a right to ban it (3)
- Abortion should only be legal in the cases of rape, incest or danger to the mother or child (4)
- Abortion should never be legal (5)

Q On a scale of 0 to 7, 0 being not at all, 7 being fully, how much do you support same sex marriage?

- _____ Same sex marriage (1)

Q Should people who entered the United States illegally be given a chance to become legal citizens?

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q On a scale of 0 to 7, 0 being not at all, 7 being fully, How much do you support the following bill? Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act or the FAMILY Act, which:

- Establishes a national insurance fund paid for through employee and employer contributions of two-tenths of one percent of a worker's wages--about \$2.00 per week for a typical worker.
- Provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of paid leave with 66 percent wage replacement for a personal or family member's medical emergency, including those arising from service members' deployment, or to care for a newborn or adopted baby.
- Is gender and age neutral, and covers workers--young and elderly, single and married, men and women, working part time or full time in all companies, no matter their size.

- _____ FAMILY Act (1)

Q On a scale of 0 to 7, 0 being not a problem to 7 being a big problem, how problematic do you think sexual assault is in the military?

- _____ Sexual Assault in the Military (1)

Q On a scale of 0 to 7, 0 being don't support to 7 being fully support, how much do you support Planned Parenthood?

- _____ Planned Parenthood (1)

Q How important is it to you that women represent you in politics?

- Extremely important (1)
- Very important (2)
- Moderately important (3)
- Slightly important (4)
- Not at all important (5)

Q How concerned are you personally about women's rights?

- Very concerned (1)
- Somewhat concerned (2)
- Moderately concerned (3)
- Slightly concerned (4)
- Not concerned (5)

Q How much do you agree with the statement: I am a feminist

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

Q How much do you agree with the statement: I am an antifeminist

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

Q Do you identify as:

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3)

Q What is your highest level of education

- Highschool Degree (1)
- Associates Degree (2)
- Bachelors Degree (3)
- Masters Degree (4)
- Doctorate Degree (5)

Q Please select your age:

- 18-22 (1)
- 23-26 (2)

Q Please select your race

- White (1)
- African American (2)
- Hispanic (3)
- Native American (4)
- Asian (5)

Q Where do you place yourself on an ideological scale from liberal to conservative?

- Very Liberal
- Somewhat Liberal
- Moderate
- Somewhat Conservative
- Very Conservative

Q Do you identify as:

- Democrat (1)
- Independent (2)
- Republican (3)
- Other (4)

Table 1: **How much do you agree with the statement: "I am a feminist"?**

	A great deal	A lot	A moderate amount	A little	None at all	Total
Very liberal	48 64.86%	14 18.92%	9 12.16%	2 2.70%	1 1.35%	74
Somewhat liberal	21 26.58%	23 29.11%	27 34.18%	3 3.80%	5 6.33%	79
Moderate	8 14.55%	10 18.18%	16 29.09%	9 16.36%	12 21.82%	55
Somewhat conservative	0 0.00%	5 11.36%	10 22.73%	12 27.27%	17 38.64%	44
Very conservative	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	3 25.00%	9 75.00%	12
Total	77	52	62	29	44	264

Table 2: **When I think of feminist I think of someone like me**

	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never	Total
Very Liberal	18 24.32%	23 31.08%	28 37.84%	3 4.05%	2 2.70%	74
Somewhat Liberal	4 5.06%	24 30.38%	36 45.57%	9 11.39%	6 7.59%	79
Moderate	1 1.82%	10 18.18%	18 32.73%	12 21.82%	14 25.45%	55
Somewhat conservative	0 0.00%	1 2.27%	14 31.82%	11 25.00%	18 40.91%	44
Very conservative	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 8.33%	2 16.67%	9 75.00%	12
Total	23	58	97	37	49	264

Table 3: **How important is it to you that women hold elected office in the U.S.?**

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important	Total	
Ideology	Very liberal	61 82.43%	13 17.57%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	74
	Somewhat liberal	41 51.90%	20 25.32%	15 18.99%	1 1.27%	2 2.53%	79
	Moderate	20 36.36%	20 36.36%	9 16.36%	4 7.27%	2 3.64%	55
	Somewhat conservative	11 25.00%	9 20.45%	9 20.45%	8 18.18%	7 15.91%	44
	Very conservative	1 8.33%	2 16.67%	4 33.33%	1 8.33%	4 33.33%	12
	Total	134	64	37	14	15	264

Table 4: **Should private employers be required to pay men and women the same salary for the same job?**

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Almost never	Never	Total	
Ideology	Very liberal	71 95.95%	3 4.05%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	74
	Somewhat liberal	69 87.34%	9 11.39%	1 1.27%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	79
	Moderate	35 63.64%	16 29.09%	1 1.82%	1 1.82%	2 3.64%	55
	Somewhat conservative	27 61.36%	13 29.55%	2 4.55%	1 2.27%	1 2.27%	44
	Very conservative	4 33.33%	5 41.67%	1 8.33%	0 0.00%	2 16.67%	12
	Total						

Table 5:

Self-Identification vs. Support for Policy

	Liberal	Conservative
Self-identification:	106	5
Support for equal pay:	152	49
Support for paid family leave:	131	18
Support for pro-choice:	129	13
Total	153	56

Table 6:

Support for the FAMILY Act

	0.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	Total	
Ideology	Very liberal	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 5.40%	11 14.86%	16 21.62%	43 58.10%	74
	Somewhat liberal	0 0%	0 0%	2 2.53%	6 7.59%	10 12.65%	22 27.84%	16 20.25%	23 29.11%	79
	Moderate	1 1.81%	1 1.81%	0 0%	7 12.72%	14 25.45%	13 23.63%	10 18.18%	9 16.36%	55
	Somewhat conservative	1 2.27%	3 6.81%	5 11.36%	5 11.36%	13 29.54%	9 20.45%	4 9.09%	4 9.09%	44
	Very conservative	2 18.18%	1 9.09%	3 27.27%	0 0%	4 36.36%	1 9.09%	0 0%	0 0%	11
	Total	4	5	10	18	45	56	46	79	263

Table 7: Which of the following best matches your opinion on Abortion?

	Always the woman's choice	Not after the first 3 months	Gov. shouldn't ban it	Rape, incest or danger to mother/ child	Pro-life	Total
Very liberal	68 91.89%	6 8.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	74
Somewhat liberal	61 77.22%	14 17.72%	4 5.06%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	79
Moderate	27 49.09%	10 18.18%	11 20.00%	6 10.91%	1 1.82%	55
Somewhat conservative	11 25.00%	10 22.73%	11 25.00%	9 20.45%	3 6.82%	44
Very conservative	2 16.67%	2 16.67%	1 8.33%	5 41.67%	2 16.67%	12