

FEATURE

Black and White Women's Perspectives on Femininity

Elizabeth R. Cole
University of Michigan

Alyssa N. Zucker
The George Washington University

The authors explore how Black and White women view three aspects of normative femininity, and whether self-rated femininity is related to feminism. Through telephone surveys, a nationally representative sample of women ($N = 1130$) rated themselves on feminism and items derived from Collins' (2004) benchmarks of femininity: feminine appearance, traits, and traditional gender role ideology. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed both groups conceptualized femininity as including the same dimensions, although Black women rated themselves higher on items related to feminine appearance. Among White women, traditional gender ideology was negatively related to feminism; among Black women, wearing feminine clothes was positively related to feminism. Results are discussed in terms of possibilities for resistance to the hegemonic concept of femininity that both groups share.

Keywords: race, feminism, feminine appearance, traits, gender roles

Feminist theorists argue that the cultural practices and ideologies associated with femininity reflect a gendered power structure in which women are subordinate to men, and in turn, some women attain higher status than others through their successful enactment of a prescriptive set of normative feminine behaviors (Collins, 2004; Connell, 1987). Collins (2004) identified five elements of this dominant femininity: beauty, demeanor, marriage and family arrangements, sexuality, and (White) race. These ideals are pervasive, promulgated through social networks and cultural institutions such as mass media, schools, voluntary associations, and families (Chen, 1999). Consequently, all women necessarily engage with this feminine ideal as they construct and perform gender (Mahalik et al., 2005; Pyke & Johnson, 2003).

Dominant femininity and the typically White upper-middle class women who can achieve it are conspicuously valued within main-

stream American culture, resulting in social devaluation of other women. Collins (2004) referred to this femininity as hegemonic, suggesting beliefs about desirable gender practices help to maintain inequality by persuading subordinated people that ideologies favorable to the ruling group are natural or common sense (Lull, 2003). She argued these prescriptive ideals represent "a normative yardstick for all femininities in which Black women are relegated to the bottom of the gender hierarchy" (p. 193). However, little work has attempted to understand how race is related to the everyday ways that individuals perform gender, and how different racialized versions of masculinity and femininity might be unequally valued in our society (Bettie, 2003; Chen, 1999; Collins, 2004; Pyke & Johnson, 2003). This article explores how Black and White women engage the various aspects of dominant femininity, including appearance, traits (demeanor), and ideology, representing the first three of Collins' (2004) benchmarks; by comparing Black and White women's views of these domains, we have incorporated the fifth as well.

Gender attributes are multifactorial and include appearance, leisure activities, personality traits, and beliefs about appropriate domestic roles (Twenge, 1999). Women who fail to successfully perform these normative behaviors often face social censure (Prentice & Carranza, 2002); for example, people respond negatively to women who act as assertive leaders (Butler & Geis, 1990), who do not say "please" when making even a neutral request (Kemper, 1984), and who choose not to become mothers (Woolett & Marshall, 2001). Recent qualitative studies have explored how different groups of women engage with hegemonic femininity, showing that women devote extensive thought and emotion to these ideals, whether or not they accept them (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aymar, & Kauer, 2004; Rubin, Nemeroff, & Russo, 2004). Rubin et al. (2004) argued that even feminists have difficulty renouncing these ideals because women gain power and status through accommodation to them. Others note that many women experience pleasure or power from behaviors associated with femininity, particularly

Elizabeth R. Cole, Center for Afro-American and African Studies, Women's Studies Program, University of Michigan; Alyssa N. Zucker, Psychology Department, Women's Studies Program, The George Washington University.

A version of this article was presented at the 2005 Meetings of the International Society of Political Psychology in Toronto, Ontario.

This data collection was funded by a research contract from Proctor and Gamble to study the compatibility of femininity and feminism among contemporary women. We are grateful for their support. We thank our collaborators Abigail J. Stewart and Janet E. Malley, for their labors in data collection and helpful feedback on the manuscript. Thanks also to Zakiya Luna for research assistance, Carla Grayson for suggestions concerning the data analytic strategy, and Hannah Rosen for advice on our review of the historical literature. Brady West and Laura Klem of the University of Michigan Center for Statistical Consultation and Research provided invaluable assistance regarding Stata and AMOS, respectively. We also thank Eileen Zurbriggen for statistical consultation. We appreciate all their efforts and any errors are ours alone.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Elizabeth R. Cole, University of Michigan Women's Studies Program, 204 S. State Street, Ann Arbor MI 48109-1290. E-mail: ecole@umich.edu

those associated with appearance (Black, 2004) and mothering (Woolett & Marshall, 2001); however, such activities can simultaneously be experienced as attempts to meet a frustratingly exacting ideal (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999).

The concept of femininity has long been fraught for Black American women in particular because they have historically been treated as though they exist outside of its boundaries as they faced economic exploitation, virulent stereotyping, and lack of legal protection by virtue of their race (Collins, 2000). We use the term “race” in this article to acknowledge the structural inequality associated with this socially constructed status (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997). Depictions of Black women as unattractive (Sekayi, 2003), aggressive (Freydberg, 1995), sexually promiscuous, and bad mothers (Hancock, 2004; Roberts, 1997) continue in the popular imagination. Interview studies report that many Black women feel keenly that this normative femininity places them at a disadvantage, both in comparison to White women, and in the eyes of men (Jones & Shorter-Goodwin, 2003; Rose, 2003). Indeed, Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight (2004) found that Black women who endorsed stereotypes of Black women grounded in negative historical representations had lower self esteem.

In response, Black women activists have long asserted their femininity (and correspondingly, their respectability) as a means to claim entitlement to legal protection and civil rights and standing for the race as a whole (Giddings, 1984). There is some evidence femininity continues to be particularly important to Black women. They are more invested in and concerned with their appearance than White women and men of both races (Smith, Thompson, Raczynski, & Hilner, 1999), and many Black women devote a great deal of money, time, and attention to achieving and maintaining a feminine appearance (Citrin, 2004; Craig, 2002; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Haynes (2000) found that middle class Black women’s definitions of femininity emphasized expressive traits and that although most of her sample worked outside the home, they nevertheless endorsed a traditional division of household labor between husbands and wives. On the other hand, some Black women strive to resist these feminine ideals because of their discriminatory aspects (Sekayi, 2003). Black communities have historically encouraged and rewarded Black women for incorporating certain traits and behaviors that are incompatible with hegemonic femininity—including strength, assertiveness, wage labor, and community leadership (Gilkes, 2001)—particularly when doing so in the service of family, community, or racial advancement. Over time Black femininity came to be understood as encompassing traits of expressiveness, instrumentality, and resilience. For example, a respondent in Hill’s (2002) study of Black parents said she was teaching her 11-year-old daughter to be both a “warrior” for racial justice, and to “act like a lady by carrying herself well” (p. 498). Thus, Black women have simultaneously both embraced and challenged hegemonic femininity (see also Binion, 1990; Harris-Lacewell, 2001).

The Current Study

Given that Black and White women, as groups, are positioned differently in relation to hegemonic femininity, do they conceptualize the components of femininity in the same ways? Do they view themselves as equivalently feminine? And if hegemonic

femininity functions through both coercion and consent, if femininity is the “velvet glove” that makes men’s dominance over women palatable, even pleasurable (Jackman, 1994), do their perceptions of their own femininity differentially predict their attitudes toward feminism, the movement that fosters social change on behalf of women (Crawford & Unger, 2000)?

The first dimension of femininity with which we are concerned is feminine appearance (Twenge, 1999). Creating and maintaining a feminine appearance, including clothing, grooming, and presentation of home are important and public elements of “doing” femininity (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Such values may have additional meaning for Black women, whose pain at being held to White standards of beauty has been well documented in literature and memoir (e.g., Golden, 2004; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Morrison, 1970). Craig (2002) described how generations of Black women have employed a strategy of meticulous attention to grooming and clothing to defy racist stereotypes of Blacks as uncouth and sexually immoral (see also Peiss, 1999). Smith et al. (1999) found that although Black and White women did not differ in their evaluation of their own appearance, Black women reported a greater emphasis and investment in their appearance.

The second dimension, feminine traits or demeanor, is associated with psychological theories of gender as manifested in personality traits. Widely used measures of masculinity and femininity were derived from asking samples of predominantly White respondents to rate traits in terms of their social desirability for men and for women (e.g., Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). More recent studies have shown that Black and White women rate themselves similarly on the femininity subscale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI-F; De Leon, 1993; Harris, 1996).

The third dimension, traditional gender role ideology, stems from heteronormative assumptions about the appropriateness and desirability of separate and well-defined roles for women and men implicit in hegemonic femininity (Ussher, 1997). Although relatively few women endorse legal restrictions on women’s access to education and occupational opportunities (Twenge, 1997), many believe that women and men may be most suited to their domestic and work/leadership roles, respectively, and that each gender finds success and fulfillment within its prescribed domain (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Scholars disagree about whether Black families typically adhere to traditional gender roles. Kane (1992) found that Black women generally had more egalitarian views than White women and men of both races. An exception to this pattern was found for attitudes toward domestic roles; in this case, White women were the most egalitarian, followed by all Blacks, and then White men. Binion (1990) found a similar difference in Black and White women’s endorsement of traditional sex role ideology in an adult sample drawn from a low-income inner-city community. Davis (1971) argued that given the historic exploitation of Blacks’ labor outside the home, work that serves Black families can be viewed as a form of resistance, and thus Black women value it highly.

Femininity and Feminism

Many have argued that Black women may be more highly politicized than White women, both because Black women have long occupied nontraditional roles in the family and the workplace, and because they may have a unique consciousness based on

membership in two groups that suffer discrimination (Baxter & Lansing, 1983; Cole & Stewart, 1996; Collins, 2000; Kane, 1992). This is supported by findings that Black women tend to score high on measures of feminist attitudes (see Hunter & Sellers, 1998, for a review). However, some Black women find the label feminist problematic because of racial tensions within the women's movement (Harnois, 2005; Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997). Nevertheless, in a recent study, Harnois found that for both Black and White women, feminist identification loaded significantly on a latent variable tapping salience of feminism (although among White women, the relationship was stronger). Notably, in Harnois' study, feminism was more salient in the lives of Black women. For these reasons, we expected that Black women would score higher than their White counterparts on feminism.

We expected a complex relationship between dimensions of femininity and feminism. Many feminist scholars have argued femininity is a distraction and a form of self-objectification; furthermore, lay people have been shown to believe that feminists are typically unfeminine (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994; Kamen, 1991). However, relatively little research has explored the assumption that feminism and femininity are incompatible and most has employed largely White samples of undergraduates. These studies suggest that although there is little empirical evidence to date that feminism is associated with femininity, the relationship between the two constructs may differ for different aspects of femininity. Generally, trait femininity has been found to have no relationship to any measure of support for feminism (Jackson, Fleury, & Lewandowski, 1996; Toller, Suter, & Trautman, 2004; for an exception see Henley, Spalding, & Kosta, 2000). However, in a predominantly White sample of college women, Twenge (1999) found that feminist attitudes were negatively correlated with behaviors related to feminine appearance. Finally, Harnois' (2005) findings suggested that feminism and femininity may have different relationships for Black and White women. In a national sample, she found that traditional gender ideology was negatively related to the salience of feminism in White women's lives, but had no relationship for Black women.

Hypotheses

Given the strong cultural demand for women to perform hegemonic femininity, we hypothesized that Black and White women would conceptualize femininity as including the same components, and that for both groups, the relationships among these components would be comparable. However, given the different histories of the two groups, we also expected that the groups would differ in their self-ratings on certain aspects of femininity. Specifically, we expected that Black women would rate feminine appearance as more important to them (Smith et al., 1999) and would be more likely to endorse traditional gender role ideology (Haynes, 2000; Kane, 1992) because of the emphasis within Black communities on respectable feminine behavior (including domesticity) as a route to upward mobility. The literature on race differences on the BSRI led us to expect that the two groups' scores on the feminine traits would be comparable (DeLeon, 1993; Harris, 1996). Previous work on Black women's political participation and longstanding paid labor force participation led us to believe that Black women would be more likely to endorse feminism, operationalized here as feminist self identification.

Finally, we expected that among White women, feminism would be predicted negatively by feminine appearance and traditional gender role ideology. Among Black women, we expected no relationship between feminism and endorsement of traditional gender roles (Harnois, 2005). Because of the dearth of empirical work addressing how femininity relates to feminism among Black women, these analyses were otherwise exploratory.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were drawn from a large national random digit dialing study examining women's values and preferences, stratified on age and oversampled for Blacks. Data were collected in the spring of 2002 by trained interviewers at McGuire Research Services, using Computer Assisted Telephone Interview software. Randomly generated telephone numbers were prescreened for disconnected and business numbers. The remaining telephone numbers were screened in the field by trained interviewers. Telephone numbers were called back on different days and times (including weekends) until contact was made, up to 10 attempts.

The person answering the phone was screened on whether they, or someone in their household were female, and in one of the following age cohorts: 18 to 25, 33 to 40, and 48 to 55. These age groups were selected because they defined different relationships to the second wave of the women's movement of the 1970s (this was relevant to another aspect of the project; see Zucker & Cole, 2006). The first available age-eligible woman in each household was invited to participate. The interview consisted of closed-ended questions and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The overall response rate was 54%, and included 1261 women. Only Black and White women are included in these analyses ($N = 1130$, 326 Black women and 804 White women). Compared to White women, Black women were younger ($M_{White} = 36.34$, $SD = 11.91$; $M_{Black} = 33.71$, $SD = 11.94$, $t(1129) = 2.92$, $p < .01$), had less education ($M_{White} = 5.78$ [6 = some college], $SD = 1.68$; $M_{Black} = 5.09$ [5 = trade/technical school], $SD = 1.66$, $t(1129) = 6.33$, $p < .001$), were less likely to be in a committed relationship (62% of White women, 41% of Black women, $\chi^2(1, 1126) = 39.12$, $p < .001$), and were equally likely to have children [63% of White women, 64% of Black women, $\chi^2(1, 1129) = .02$, ns].

Measures

Three operationalizations of femininity were assessed, corresponding to three of Collins' (2004) benchmarks. Feminine Appearance consisted of three items developed for this study. Participants rated how important it was to them to wear feminine clothes, make their home attractive, and to wear makeup on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*). The decision to combine appearance and domestic items was supported by the positive relationship between these subscales on the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory (Mahalik et al., 2005). Feminine Traits consisted of three items drawn from the femininity subscale of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence & Helmreich, 1978) and/or Landrine, Klonoff, & Brown-Collins' (1992) list of gender-stereotypic adjectives. Participants rated their

gentleness (PAQ), sensitivity to the needs of others (Landrine et al.), and passivity (both) on a scale ranging from 1 (*never/almost never true of me*) to 7 (*always/almost always true of me*).

Traditional Gender Role Ideology consisted of five items drawn from Gurin, Miller, and Gurin (1980). These items, such as "A woman's place is in the home," were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha was .63.

Feminism was measured with a single item, "I am a feminist," rated on the same seven-point scale used for the feminine traits. In order to keep the survey brief, we were not able to include a multi-item measure of feminism. Single item measures of feminism are prevalent in large scale social science surveys such as the National Election Study and the General Social Survey (Huddy, Neely, & Lafay, 2000) and endorsement of the label "feminist" is strongly associated with endorsement of feminist attitudes (Zucker, 2004).

Education was measured by asking participants the highest grade they had completed in school on a scale ranging from 1 (*less than eighth grade*) to 9 (*earned a postgraduate degree*).

Age was self-reported in whole numbers.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

All analyses were conducted using weighted data to correct for oversampling of Blacks and sampling only within certain age groups. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analyses were conducted in AMOS 5.0, and all other analyses were conducted in Stata 8.2 under the survey functions.

Interitem correlations, a necessary first step in SEM, of all femininity items are presented by race in Table 1. As expected, correlations tended to be highest among the items hypothesized to measure distinct factors, as opposed to cross factors. Additionally, Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and racial group

differences on variables related to each aspect of normative femininity. Black women scored significantly higher than White women on two of the appearance items (clothing and home), but White women were significantly higher than Black women on the third item (makeup). There were no race differences on the endorsement of feminine traits. Black women scored significantly higher than White women on two of the traditional gender role ideology items; White women scored significantly higher than Black women on one item. There were no race differences on the remaining two items.

Testing for Factorial Invariance of Femininity

We followed the procedure outlined by Byrne (2001) for testing the invariance of the factor structure of femininity for the Black and White women. We first established a baseline three-factor model, derived from our theoretical expectations that femininity should involve appearance, traits, and beliefs. In doing so, we discovered that one indicator of feminine traits, passivity, had a very low factor loading (.30 for Black women and .16 for White women), so this item was dropped from the model. We then used confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS to estimate the baseline model for each group with no constraints imposed. Although the χ^2 for this model was significant [$\chi^2(64) = 133.59, p < .001$], suggesting poor fit, χ^2 is notoriously sensitive to large N (e.g., MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996), so we turned to other indicators of fit to evaluate the model. The CFI value of .94, falls slightly short of the current recommendations of .95 and above (Hu & Bentler, 1999). However, the GFI of .98 (Shevlin & Miles, 1998) and the RMSEA of .03, with a confidence interval completely below .05 (MacCallum et al., 1996) suggest excellent fit, and allow us to reject the hypothesis that the model is not a close fit to the data.

As a next step, we constrained all the factor loadings, factor variances, and factor covariances to be equal across both groups

Table 1

Zero-Order Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for Indicator Variables for Black Women (above diagonal) and White Women (below diagonal)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Feminine appearance										
1. Clothes	—	.29***	.20***	.13*	.15*	.04	.00	.04	.10*	.16**
2. Home	.26***	—	.11*	.07	.12	-.03	.00	-.02	.01	.11*
3. Make-up	.40***	.29***	—	-.08	.05	.04	.04	.05	.02	-.04
Feminine traits										
4. Gentle	.13***	.10*	.06	—	.35***	-.08	-.08	-.01	-.04	.09
5. Sensitive	.06	.12**	.02	.32***	—	-.07	-.21*	-.06	-.05	.10
Traditional gender role ideology										
6. Woman's place is in the home	.14***	.02	.04	.08*	.01	—	.31***	.18**	.28***	.29***
7. Equal role in business (reversed)	.05	-.03	.02	-.03	.00	.21***	—	.18*	.19**	.10
8. Men more drive for success	.08*	-.01	.07	-.02	.00	.23***	.23***	—	.44***	.17**
9. Men more qualified	.11**	.07*	.00	-.01	.00	.27***	.23***	.38***	—	.27***
10. Women happiest at home	.21***	.14***	.10**	.08*	.05	.35***	.18***	.22***	.33***	—
<i>M (SD) Black</i>	4.08 (.06)	4.59 (.05)	2.46 (.08)	5.69 (.09)	5.99 (.09)	2.01 (.08)	1.44 (.06)	1.76 (.07)	1.71 (.07)	3.06 (.09)
<i>M (SD) White</i>	3.45 (.04)	4.33 (.03)	2.97 (.05)	5.50 (.05)	6.05 (.04)	2.24 (.05)	1.50 (.04)	1.72 (.04)	1.53 (.04)	2.66 (.05)
<i>t</i>	8.27***	4.50***	5.26***	1.92	.60	2.50*	.91	.52	2.42*	4.05***

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

$[\chi^2(77) = 149.01, p < .001]$. The difference between the χ^2 values at the two steps was 15.42 with 13 degrees of freedom. The critical value of χ^2 with 13 degrees of freedom at $p = .05$ is 22.36. Thus our change in χ^2 failed to be significant. Given this lack of significance and the strong indices of fit for the initial model, we concluded that the factor structure was invariant for Black and White women. A three-factor solution—of feminine appearance, feminine traits, and traditional gender ideology—appears to adequately explain the experience of femininity for both Black and White women (see Figure 1).

Predicting Feminism

Black women ($M = 4.52, SD = .11$) were significantly more feminist than White women ($M = 3.87, SD = .07$), $t(1102) = 5.02, p < .001$. Having established that the structural model of femininity fit well for both groups, we turned to the question of whether those factors were equally predictive of feminist identity by race. We first computed scales for each factor. Unfortunately, the alpha coefficients for two of the three factors were not acceptable (appearance = .53 and traits = .35). We attribute this in part to the small number of items on each scale (3 and 2, respectively;

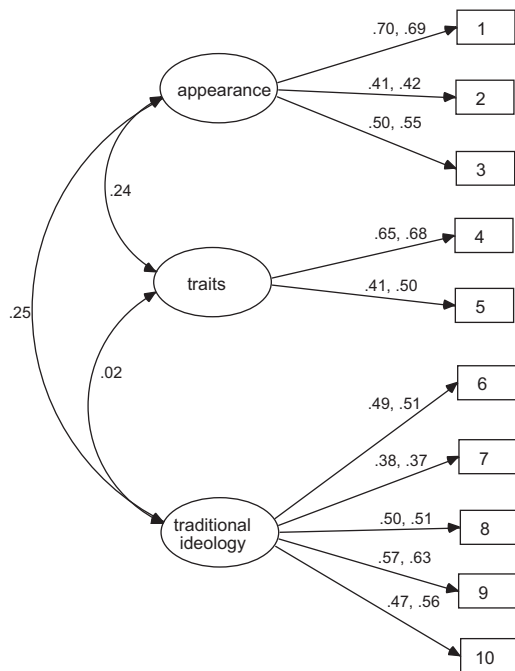


Figure 1. Invariant factorial structure of femininity. Factor loadings before the comma are for Black women; factor loadings after the comma are for White women. These numbers differ slightly because the equality constraints were placed on the unstandardized solution and the standardized results are presented here. 1 = How important is it to you to wear feminine clothes? 2 = How important is it to you to make your home attractive? 3 = How important is it to you to wear makeup? 4 = I am gentle. 5 = I am sensitive to the needs of others. 6 = A woman's place is in the home. 7 = Men and women ought to have an equal role in running business, industry, and government (reversed). 8 = Men are born with more drive to be ambitious and successful than women. 9 = In general, men are more qualified for jobs that have great responsibility. 10 = By nature, women are happiest when they are making a home and caring for children.

McKinnell, 1977). Thus, for further analyses, we used the item with the highest loading on the latent construct (the importance of wearing feminine clothes and self-ratings on the trait of gentleness) to represent each construct.

We computed two separate multiple linear regression analyses to predict feminism among Black and White women from the three aspects of femininity (feminine appearance, feminine traits, traditional gender role ideology) with education and age as controls. For Black women, placing a high level of importance on wearing feminine clothes was a significant positive predictor of feminism and education was a significant negative predictor (see Table 2). For White women, traditional gender role ideology was a significant negative predictor of self-rated feminism.

Discussion

This study began with an investigation of whether Black and White women would both identify the same three domains of hegemonic femininity (feminine appearance, feminine traits or demeanor, and traditional gender role ideology) that have been identified in the scholarly literature (Collins, 2004). SEM analyses revealed that the same model fit the data for both groups very well. In this model, the three domains are separate factors, and appearance is positively correlated with both traits and beliefs, although traits and beliefs are unrelated. This supports the argument that within U.S. culture there is a "common sense" view of the components of femininity that is shared by women of both races. However, cursory examination of the mean scores on these items suggests that the appearance and trait domains are more widely endorsed and thus perhaps more hegemonic: on average both Black and White women rated themselves well above the midpoint of the response scale on the importance of the appearance of clothing and home, and on the traits gentle and sensitive. Items pertaining to traditional gender role ideology received considerably lower ratings by both groups.

The finding that appearance is significantly related to each of the other two domains although traits and beliefs are not related to each other is consistent with theory. Collins (2004) argued feminine appearance is central to hegemonic femininity because femininity and masculinity are premised on difference, and thus there is a cultural imperative that women should not resemble men. Moreover, women devote substantial concern and effort to appearance (Smith et al., 1999), and women's bodies are scrutinized for adherence to feminine appearance norms (Wolf, 1992).

The fact that the two groups conceptualized femininity in the same way need not mean that it has the same significance in their lives. The second set of analyses examined mean differences between Black and White women's ratings on the aspects of femininity, and the relationship between femininity and feminism separately by race. Consistent with the review of the literature, Black women rated themselves higher on two of three items pertaining to feminine appearance. Also consistent with the literature, Black and White women's ratings on both feminine traits were comparable. However, contrary to previous research, both groups also gave comparable—and relatively low—ratings to items pertaining to traditional gender role ideology. Most of the findings in this area were published more than 10 years ago. The convergence in these scores could reflect White women's increasing participation in work outside the home (Crawford & Unger,

Table 2
Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Feminist Identification for Black and White Women

Variable	<i>r</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Black women				
Feminine clothing	.19**	.31	.11	.18**
Gentle	.10	.07	.09	.08
Feminine gender role ideology	-.01	-.14	.15	-.06
Education	-.15**	-.15	.07	-.13*
Age	.02	.01	.01	.04
White women				
Feminine clothing	.02	.01	.06	.01
Gentle	.05	.06	.06	.04
Feminine gender role ideology	-.19***	-.50	.10	-.20***
Education	.04	-.01	.04	-.01
Age	.04	.01	.01	.05

Note. R^2 (Black women) = .07**; R^2 (White women) = .04***
* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

2000). Finally, compared to Whites, Black women rated themselves higher on feminism. This replicates past findings (Baxter & Lansing, 1983; Cole & Stewart, 1996; Klein, 1984) and is thought to be the case because the experience of racial oppression sensitizes Black women to issues of sexism, or because Blacks in general approve of social movement as a means of addressing inequality (Gay & Tate, 1998; Hunter & Sellers, 1998).

Taken together, these mean differences suggest that Black women were more interested than their White counterparts in traditionally feminine behaviors such as wearing attractive clothing and decorating their homes, yet they were more likely to describe themselves as feminists. Despite these differences, Black and White women had similar views about the roles of men and women in the home and workplace. Perhaps these beliefs reflect self-interest, are subject to economic demands rather than reflecting personal preferences, or are an expression of what women believe to be true ideally. This later interpretation finds support in the analyses that follow.

To test the contention of some feminist theorists that femininity represents a distraction from political concerns and thus is antithetical to feminism, we examined whether the different aspects of femininity related to feminism. In general, our data do not support this argument. The importance of wearing feminine clothing was a positive predictor of feminism for Black women, but unrelated for White women. Perhaps this finding could be an artifact of our measure of feminism; we asked women to rate their agreement with "I am a feminist" without specifying what attitudes or political behaviors this entailed. In contrast, Twenge (1999) and Mahalik et al. (2005) both found that items related to feminine appearance were negatively related to explicitly political definitions of feminism. Exploring what the term "feminism" means to adult women of diverse racial backgrounds is an important avenue for future research. This finding may also reflect the argument often made by third wave feminists that taking pleasure in bodily adornment and domestic activities need not be incompatible with a feminist identity or embracing feminist values (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). This may be particularly true for Black women and is consistent with Harnois' (2005) finding that feminism held different meanings for Black and White women.

Of the domains of femininity explored here, the rejection of traditional gender role ideology bears the most resemblance to

what might be considered tenets of liberal feminism, and for White women, rejection of these beliefs was predictably related to feminism. This is consistent with other literature on primarily White samples (e.g., Henley, Meng, O'Brien, McCarthy, & Sockloski, 1998; Liss, Hoffner, & Crawford, 2000; Moradi, Subich, & Phillips, 2002). However, traditional gender role ideology was unrelated to Black women's feminism, a discrepancy between the races that replicates Harnois' (2005) findings. Research suggests that Black women bear a complex relationship to traditional family roles. In her qualitative study of Black middle class couples, Haynes (2000) found that although most wives worked outside the home, they believed that men need to play the role of family provider in order to maintain their self esteem and masculinity. In response, despite the fact that most women wanted an egalitarian marriage, they developed "family myths" that rationalized a traditional division of labor within the home. Thus, it is possible that Black women's endorsement of the traditional gender role beliefs reflects these family myths as much as they do the ways they actually live. However, because Haynes' study did not include a poor or working class comparison group, we cannot speculate how her findings might apply to other women in our sample.

Most research on feminist attitudes and identifications has found that education is positively associated with feminism (Klein, 1984; Peltola, Milkie, & Presser, 2004). Counter to this trend, education was unrelated to White women's feminism and negatively related to feminism for Blacks. Perhaps Black women who are more educated (and thus more middle class) are more invested in conventional notions of femininity, as Haynes' (2000) research suggests. It may also be that some college educated Black women have had the opportunity to learn about racial tensions within U.S. feminism (Roth, 2004) and alternative conceptualizations of feminism (such as Womanism) and thus choose to reject the label of feminist rather than the attitudes.

These findings have important implications for our understanding of how women experience femininity and the possibility for social change. First, our data show that there is a shared conceptualization of femininity that both Black and White women recognize, and that it reflects the benchmarks identified in Collins' (2004) theorizing. This reminds us that Black women represent a subculture within mainstream U.S. culture, not a wholly separate culture. However, the mean differences suggest that there are also

important ways in which femininity is distinctive for Black women. Our findings demonstrate the outward manifestations of feminine appearance are important for Black women to an even greater degree than for White women. But more ethnographic research is needed to fully understand the nature of Black women's engagement with feminine behavior and appearance. To what extent does this concern represent the internalization of oppressive beauty standards that are racialized and classed? Do Black women feel that to achieve a feminine appearance they must "live up to" a White norm? In what ways does their concern with appearance take the form of "aesthetic resistance," in which Black women struggle against these norms and strive to assert the value of their own esthetic judgments (Duke, 2000; Sekayi, 2003)?

Finally, Gramsci noted that hegemony is always incomplete: there is always resistance (Lull, 2003). There is the possibility of resistance in that women from both racial groups describe themselves as feminists independent of their self-ratings on feminine traits/demeanor. But theorists of hegemony also caution us that dominant ideologies seek to appropriate resistance, and it is possible that the independence of feminist identification and other aspects of hegemonic femininity could instead reflect a trend to coopt feminism in the service of the status quo. Some have argued that in the "postfeminist era," the idea of feminism has been diluted to refer to women who want opportunities for themselves as individuals without concern for social change (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003); traditional notions of femininity and its privileges need not be contradictory with this "feminism-lite."

Like all research, this project has limitations. We did not collect data on women's sexual orientation. This omission is important because the meanings of femininity may be tied to sexuality in important ways for heterosexual women (Hyde & Jaffee, 2000) and for lesbians and other sexual minority women (Nestle, 1992). Our conclusions are also somewhat limited by the fact that we did not collect data from large enough numbers of other groups of women of color to analyze them separately (these data were not included). We expect that the intersections of sexism and racism will be unique based on each minority group's history (e.g., Bettie, 2003; Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Thus, the project has limited external validity to other populations. Additionally, the alphas for some of our subscales are quite low. In part, this may be because of the limited number of items on each factor and is tempered somewhat by the goodness of fit of the factor analytic model. It seems important, however, to work to increase the internal consistency of items measuring these constructs in future research. Perhaps stronger measures of feminine appearance and traits will be more predictive of feminist constructs in other studies. Because the current data are cross-sectional, it is impossible to assess internal validity. Although we expect elements of femininity would predict feminist identity, the reverse causal order is plausible and cannot be examined in this project. Finally, many factors in addition to aspects of femininity predict feminism (e.g., Zucker, 2004), and it would be useful in future research to examine a more multidimensional model.

Calls for attention to the intersection of identities in women's lives have been prevalent in feminist scholarship since the 1980s (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Our analyses demonstrate the fruitfulness of such an approach for psychologists, adding complexity and nuance to our understanding of how race and gender

mutually construct each other and in turn shape individuals' perspectives on themselves and their social worlds.

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