The Significance of Feminist Identity in Psychologically Abusive Relationships

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THE CORRELATION BETWEEN FEMINIST IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL MALTREATMENT IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG
COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Presentation Outline

- Learning Objectives
- Purpose of the Study
- Review of Relevant Literature
- Research Methodology
- Results
- Open Discussion on Implications for Theory, Practice, & Research
- Conclusion & Evaluation

Learning Objectives

- To learn about current perspectives on feminist identity development and psychological maltreatment in heterosexual college relationships

- To learn about recent findings on the relationship between feminist identity development and psychological maltreatment

- To work with one another and the presenter to identify implications for theory, practice, and future research in the student affairs profession

Purpose of the Study

- To determine if a relationship exists between feminist identity development and psychological maltreatment in intimate relationships among college students

- Correlational Study

Literature Review

- Intimate partner violence (IPV) is "a pattern of physical, sexual, and/or emotional violence by an intimate partner in the context of coercive control."
  - Emotional violence used synonymously with psychological violence in the literature

- IPV is a considerable health problem worldwide
  - 2 million injuries and 1,500 deaths each year

(Ford-Gilboe, Wuest, Varcoe, Davies, Merritt-Gray, Campbell, & Wilk, 2009; Fincham, Cui, Braithwaite, & Pasley, 2008)

Literature Review

- In 2008, 74% of all dating relationships in college involved some form of IPV

- Physical and psychological effects of IPV considerable problem for college students
  - 1 in 3 students perpetrator or target

(Fincham et al., 2008; Fass, Benson, & Leggett, 2008)

Literature Review

- Casual and serious college relationships affect men and women differently
  - Stronger connection between identity and intimate relationships

- Intimate relationships can provide women with a better sense of their individual identities

(Hodgson & Fischer, 1979; Josselson, 1987)

The Study

- **Sample**

- Instrumentation

- Procedures

- Results

- Implications

Sample, N = 171

- Heterosexual female college students between the ages of 18-24 who have experienced intimate relationships with men within the past 6 months

- Public, four-year university in western Pennsylvania

- Sent email requesting participation to 1,500 randomly selected female college students; 291 responses; 171 usable surveys

Sample (Demographics)

- 65% between the ages of 18-20
  - Mean age 20.06 (s.d. = 1.65)
- 52% freshmen and sophomores
- 83% White
- 76% Christian
- Role of religion varied greatly
- 81% currently in relationships
  - 45% dating 1-5 years
- Past relationships
  - 9% dated for less than 3 months

The Study

- Sample

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Instrumentation

- Bargad and Hyde's (1991) Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS)

- Tolman's (1995) short-form female version of the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI-F)

- Researcher-designed background demographic form (BDF)

FIDS

- Used to measure current level of feminist identity

- 48-item Likert scale
  - Ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
  - 5 subscales

- 5 subscales based on Downing and Roush's (1985) Feminist Identity Development Model
  - Passive Acceptance
  - Revelation
  - Embeddedness-Emanation
  - Synthesis
  - Active Commitment

- Higher score = more characteristic of stage

(Downing & Roush, 1985)

PMWI-F

- Used to measure degree of psychological maltreatment experienced by participants

- 14-item Likert scale
  - Ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Frequently) and NA (Not Applicable)
  - 2 subscales: Dominance-Isolation and Emotional-Verbal

- Higher score = reported very frequently experiencing incidents

(Tolman, 1989)

BDF

- To identify participants who met criteria for inclusion (i.e., age, sexual orientation, and relationship history)

- To identify any co-variates that needed to be controlled for in the correlational data analysis

Reliabilities: FIDS

Subscale	Reliability
Passive Acceptance	.73
Revelation	.76
Embeddedness-Emanation	.79
Synthesis	.55
Active Commitment	.84

Reliabilities: PMWI-F

Subscale	Reliability
Dominance-Isolation	.81
Emotional-Verbal	.91

The Study

- Sample

- Instrumentation

- Procedures

- Results

- Implications

Procedures

- Received IRB approval from participating university in December 2010
- Setup survey on Qualtrics website
- Completed pilot study in January 2011
- University's research lab randomly selected 1,500 female college students
- Started data collection in January 2011
- Follow-up email in February 2011
- Correlation matrix and 2 partial correlations

The Study

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Mean Scores & Standard Deviations

Subscale	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
FIDS1-PA	2.76	.54
FIDS2-R	2.98	.66
FIDS3-EE	2.89	.66
FIDS4-S	3.75	.53
FIDS5-AC	3.23	.62
PMWI1-DI	1.36	.56
PMWI2-EV	1.67	.84

Note.   PA   =   Passive Acceptance
         R   =   Revelation
         EE   =   Embeddedness-Emanation
         S   =   Synthesis
         AC   =   Active Commitment
         DI   =   Dominance-Isolation
         EV   =   Emotional-Verbal

Correlation Matrix
Significant Relationships

	FIDS2-R	FIDS3-EE	FIDS4-S	FIDS5-AC
Age	--	-.15, p<.05	--	
Role of Religion	--	--	--	-.16, p<.05
PMWI1-DI	.29, p<.01	.20, p<.01	-.17, p<.05	--
PMWI2-EV	.28, p<.01	.20, p<.01	-.22, p<.01	--

Note. R   =   Revelation
       EE   =   Embeddedness-Emanation
       S   =   Synthesis
       AC   =   Active Commitment
       DI   =   Dominance-Isolation
       EV   =   Emotional-Verbal

Primary Analysis
Partial Correlations

Controlling for Age*

Subscales	Zero-Order Correlation	Partial Correlation
FIDS2-R & PMWI1-DI	.29	.28
FIDS2-R & PMWI2-EV	.28	.28
FIDS3-EE & PMWI1-DI	.20	.19
FIDS3-EE & PMWI2-EV	.20	.20
FIDS4-S & PMWI1-DI	-.17	-.17
FIDS4-S & PMWI2-EV	-.22	-.22

Note.   R   =   Revelation
         EE   =   Embeddedness-Emanation
         S   =   Synthesis
         DI   =   Dominance-Isolation
         EV   =   Emotional-Verbal

*All relationships significant at p < .01 or p < .05

Primary Analysis
Partial Correlations

Controlling for the Role of Religion*

Subscales	Zero-Order Correlation	Partial Correlation
FIDS2-R & PMWI1-DI	.29	.28
FIDS2-R & PMWI2-EV	.28	.27
FIDS3-EE & PMWI1-DI	.20	.21
FIDS3-EE & PMWI2-EV	.20	.21
FIDS4-S & PMWI1-DI	-.17	-.18
FIDS4-S & PMWI2-EV	-.22	-.23

Note.   R   =   Revelation
         EE   =   Embeddedness-Emanation
         S   =   Synthesis
         DI   =   Dominance-Isolation
         EV   =   Emotional-Verbal

*All relationships significant at p < .01 or p < .05

General Themes

- Younger college females are more likely to be cautious in their interactions with men and characterize themselves by their connectedness with women (and vice versa).

- The more important a college female believes the role of religion is in her life, the less likely she is to be committed to a nonsexist world and consider men as equal but different (and vice versa).

General Themes (Con'd)

- The more likely a college female is to recognize oppression and view men as negative, the more likely she is to report psychological maltreatment in her intimate relationships with men (and vice versa).

- The more likely a college female is to be cautious in her interaction with men and characterize herself by connectedness with other women, the more likely she is to report psychological maltreatment in her intimate relationships with men (and vice versa).

- The more likely a college female is to develop an authentic and positive feminist identity and evaluate men on an individual basis, the less likely she is to report psychological maltreatment in her intimate relationships with men (and vice versa).

The Study

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Implications for Theory

- Psychological maltreatment as a new dimension to feminist identity development

Implications for Future Research

- Different institutions and more diverse populations (i.e., other sexual orientations, different age range)
- Qualitative studies over longer periods of time
- Explore significant inverse relationship between age and feminist identity
- Explore significant inverse relationship between religion and feminist identity

Implications for Practice

- Functional areas that address identity and intimacy development (i.e., student organizations, residence life)
- Counseling and psychological centers
- Women's centers
  - Commitment to exploring feminist identity as it relates to psychological maltreatment
- Women's centers and religious centers
- Campus constituents outside student affairs (i.e., police and organizations)
- Consider constructs in relation to one another

Open Discussion

Questions

Comments

Other Implications

Session Evaluation

Thank you for attending the session! Please provide feedback on the evaluation form located on your seat and place in the blue bowl as you exit. Thank you.

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The Significance of Feminist Identity in Psychologically Abuse Relationships
Presenter: Ashley I. Fowler

Thank you for attending this session! Please provide feedback by answering the following questions.

1.) Did you believe the findings of this study were presented well? Why or why not?

2.) What is one thing that the presenter did well during the presentation?

3.) What is one thing the presenter can work on for the future?

4.) Other comments: