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## Endorsement of Feminist Beliefs, Openness, and Mindful Acceptance as Predictors of Decreased Transphobia

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### ABSTRACT

The inclusion of transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) individuals in feminist theory, discourse, and activism is fraught with controversy. Given this historical tension within various feminism movements, the current study sought to understand the nature of the relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobia, and whether the specific individual-level factors such as openness to experience and mindful acceptance, moderate such a relationship. Analyzing data from a sample of  $n = 211$  participants recruited from the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform, the regression analyses indicate both endorsement of feminist beliefs and openness to experience are independent inverse predictors of transphobia, net of other variables in the regression models. However, openness to experience does not moderate the relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobia. Further, mindful acceptance was not a significant predictor or moderating variable regarding transphobia. For the feminist community, this is an important contribution as it supports the idea that feminist attitudes may be inclusive of TGNC identities, along with the individual personality facet of openness to experience. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

### KEYWORDS

Transphobia; anti-trans prejudice; openness to experiences; feminist beliefs; feminism; LGBT issues

Common themes in feminist writings include equal pay for equal work, fighting sexism, reducing violence against women, and other women's issues (Gay, 2014; hooks, 2000; Shaw & Lee, 2014; Tong, 1989). Feminism, however, historically struggles to define conclusively what “woman” is and whether transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) individuals should be included in feminist movements (Bornstein, 2013; MacDonald, 1998). Given this historical tension within feminism, the current study seeks to understand the nature of the relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobia, and whether the specific individual-level factors such as openness to experience and mindful acceptance, moderate such a relationship.

### ***Transgender inclusion in feminist movements***

The role of TGNC individuals in feminist theory, discourse, and activism is fraught with controversy (Stryker, 2007). The most striking examples come from the era of second wave feminism where considerable emphasis was placed on identity politics and the women's liberation movement. For example, some feminist spaces such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and the historical Lesbian Organization of Toronto adopted "womyn-born womyn only" policies, explicitly excluding TGNC individuals (Browne, 2011). Issues of power and privilege were central to this viewpoint through questions of legitimacy in terms of what constitutes "real" men and women. The womyn-born womyn movement denied the legitimacy of transgender women to speak about the oppression of women, while transgender men were viewed as attempting to access power and privilege while abandoning the oppressed position (Browne, 2011). According to Connell (2012), some feminist literature historically has also been antagonistic to women who exist outside the normative bounds of the gender binary. Examples range from the famous anthology, *Sisterhood is Powerful* (Morgan, 1970) which markedly omits stories of transgender women, to the more overtly hostile overtones of feminist separatists Mary Daly (1978) and Raymond (1979).

However, in more recent times third wave postmodern feminism has broadened the lens of feminism to include intersectional issues, gender as performativity, and launched a movement towards poststructuralist and queer feminism (Evans, 2015). Yet, even within this more pluralistic feminism TGNC individuals are often still marginalized. For example, Namaste (2009) asserts that as transsexual women's stories are appropriated within feminism to demonstrate the plurality and socially constructed nature of gender, while the realities of poverty, discrimination, and violence within transsexual lives are occluded and ignored. For other feminist poststructuralists, the situated experience of gender is operationalized in a way that denies the reality of gender for TGNC individuals (MacDonald, 1998). In some cases, this type of poststructuralist feminist thinking denies the TGNC experience and promotes the idea that sexist stereotypes are maintained through performativity. This tension and lack of inclusion can be characterized as further oppression, marginalization, and exclusion of TGNC people.

Despite controversies within this philosophical battle of gender essentialism, there has always been a relatively large segment of feminist individuals in support of TGNC inclusion at both the personal and political level (Connell, 2012). Further, critiques of the second wave feminist movement emphasize lack of inclusivity, a focus on gender essentialism, and a lack of understanding from an intersectional lens (Bettcher, 2012; Hagen, Hoover, & Morrow, 2017). What is not well understood are the underlying personality factors and behavioral traits that could contribute to the variation in levels of

transphobia among those who endorse feminist beliefs. Although there is a common belief system at the core of feminism, questions remain regarding the diversity of opinion on transgender issues. To that end, the goal of the current research is to quantitatively investigate (1) the nature of the relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobia, and (2) test whether the personality trait of openness to experience and the behavioral trait of mindful acceptance serve as potential moderator variables to that relationship.

### ***Feminism values and transgender attitudes***

There is a paucity of specific research examining the relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobia. However, prior research has identified numerous factors thought to inversely correlate with transphobia, such as egalitarianism between sexes, desire to reduce societal power structures, reducing sexism, and challenging traditional gender roles. (Hill & Willoughby, 2005; Tebbe & Moradi, 2012; Tebbe, Moradi, & Ege, 2014). These factors are also key aspects of feminism, thus supporting the idea of an inverse relationship between feminist belief systems and transphobia, despite variation seen historically. For example, studies have shown that support of egalitarianism between the sexes is related to more positive attitudes toward gays and lesbians (Ojerholm & Rothblum, 1999), and TGNC individuals (Hill & Willoughby, 2005; Norton & Herek, 2013). Similarly, Tebbe et al. (2014) found a strong positive correlation between the degree to which individuals desire to maintain societal hierarchies, as measured by the Social Dominance Orientation scale (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), and transphobic attitudes.

There are also known relationships between transphobia and right-wing ideologies that support sexist concepts, and adherence to traditional gender roles (Tebbe et al., 2014). For example, Makwana, Dhont, Akhlaghi-Ghaffarokh, Masure, and Roets (2017) found right-wing ideological attitudes and traditional gender role beliefs mediated the relationship between need for closure and transphobia. Tebbe et al. (2014) found a strong positive correlation between sexist attitudes toward the rights and roles of women, as measured by the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) and transphobic attitudes. Adams, Nagoshi, Filip-Crawford, Terrell, and Nagoshi (2016) showed that discomfort with violations of gender identity norms significantly mediated the relationships linking right-wing authoritarianism and benevolent sexism to transphobia in a sample of male and female college students. This body of evidence demonstrates important inverse correlations among central feminist values and transphobia. This lends support for the current hypothesis that endorsement of feminist beliefs will be inversely correlated with transphobic attitudes. However, given the

historical tensions with inclusion of TGNC individuals in feminist movements, there may be other factors that influence the nature of this proposed relationship.

As such, this study is also investigating whether the individual factors of openness to experience and mindful acceptance of emotional distress moderate the hypothesized feminist-transphobia relationship. To the best of the authors' knowledge no research has directly examined these variables together in this manner. However, prior research has shown each to potentially play a role in reduction of prejudice and acceptance of diversity.

### ***Openness to new experience and transgender attitudes***

Although Openness to Experience is perhaps the least well understood construct of the Big Five personality trait structure (i.e.: Openness, Conscientious, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism), most researchers agree that this facet includes constructs such as curiosity, tolerance of complexity, creativity, innovation, desire for change, and variety. Importantly, openness to experience has consistently demonstrated an inverse relationship with prejudice, both generalized (Akrami, Ekehammar, & Bergh, 2011) and specific (Flynn, 2005). For example, Ekehammar and Akrami (2003) found openness to experience significantly related to seven different types of prejudice including racial prejudice and sexism. More broadly, Han and Pistole (2017), found the factors of openness to experience and agreeableness were the most predictive of appreciation for human universality and diversity.

The links between openness to experience and sexual minority prejudice (i.e: heterosexism or homophobia) show a trend worth exploring in connection to transphobia as well. For example, several recent studies have also found an inverse relationship between openness to experience and heterosexism and homophobia (Cramer, Miller, Amacker, & Burks, 2013; Miller, Wagner, & Hunt, 2012). Older research by Cullen, Wright, and Alessandri (2002) also found a inverse correlation between homophobia and openness to experience. Further, openness to experience has been shown to have an influence on victim blaming in gay and lesbian hate crime scenarios (Plumm, Terrance, Henderson, & Ellingson, 2010). However, less research has directly investigated openness to experience and transgender prejudice specifically, although preliminary work by Loo (2015) found openness to experience inversely related to transphobia in a community sample.

Taken together, this body of research indicates that the personality factor of openness to experience is likely a contributor to how individuals respond to diverse groups, with more openness related to less prejudice. However, there are several dimensions worth further investigation regarding this relationship. First, little research has directly investigated the likely association

between openness and transphobia. Although transphobia is similar to other forms of prejudice such as sexual minority prejudice, there may also be differences worth exploring. Second, in the context of this study, openness to experience may be an important moderator of the hypothesized link between feminist beliefs and transphobia, potentially explaining some variation in TGNC inclusion seen in feminist communities.

### ***Mindfulness and transgender attitudes***

Along with the personality factor of openness to experience, the current study also hypothesizes that mindful acceptance will moderate the feminist-transphobia relationship. Cardaciotto, Herbert, Forman, Moitra, and Farrow (2008) define mindfulness as “the tendency to be highly aware of one’s internal and external experiences in the context of an accepting, nonjudgmental stance toward those experiences (p. 205). Positive interpersonal experiences with individuals different from oneself require a certain level of tolerance for ambiguity, the unknown, and a willingness to be comfortable in non-conventional situations (Bucher, 2015). Internalized prejudice, lack of experience, and fear of difference can elicit a host of negative emotions which can interfere with an individual’s ability to have positive diversity attitudes (Sue & Sue, 2016)

Mindfulness applications are theorized to be a productive strategy in coping with the range of uncomfortable emotions that can arise in new, diverse interactions. (Berila, 2016). To that end, the utility of mindfulness-based concepts in reducing prejudice and improving diversity attitudes is notable. For example, one meta-analysis of 16 prior studies demonstrated the effect of mindfulness-based training and exposure as a means of reducing stigma in minority populations (Krafft, Ferrell, Levin, & Twohig, 2018). Prior research has also shown Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, which encourages mindful acceptance of emotions, to be effective for decreasing stigma related to race, mental health, and sexual orientation (Luoma & Platt, 2015). Similarly, acceptance as measured by the Philadelphia Mindfulness and Acceptance scale has been found to be supportive of decreased racist and homophobic attitudes (Nicol & De France, 2018). Further, Levin, Luoma, Lillis, Hayes, and Vilardaga (2014) found that acceptance as a measure of psychological flexibility is predictive of stigma in general, which could be applied to racial groups, sexual minority groups and other minority groups. Less research has directly investigated the likely association between mindful acceptance and transphobia. However, the two could theoretically be related given that transphobia is a form of prejudice. Further, in the context of the variables in this study, mindful acceptance may be an important moderator of the hypothesized link between feminist beliefs and transphobia, potentially

explaining some variation in willingness for TGNC inclusion in feminist communities.

### ***Current study hypotheses***

The current study seeks to investigate the possible inverse relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia. To understand more about the variation in this relationship seen in certain feminist circles, this study is also investigating whether the personality traits of openness to new experiences and mindful acceptance may moderate the relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia. The present study investigated three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant inverse correlation between endorsement of feminist beliefs and endorsement of transphobic beliefs.

Hypothesis 2: The significant inverse relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and endorsement of transphobic beliefs will be moderated by the variable of openness to new experiences.

Hypothesis 3: The significant inverse relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and endorsement of transphobic beliefs will be moderated by the variable of mindful acceptance of emotional discomfort.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The sample consisted of 211 participants in the United States recruited from the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. Participants mean age was 34.43 years of age ( $SD = 10.74$ ). The sample was relatively well educated, with 43.4% reporting a college degree, 14.2% indicating graduate education, 29.2% reporting some college, and the remaining 13.2% holding a high school diploma or less. The sample was 57.1% male, 42.9% female. No participant selected the gender identifiers of Transgender or Other. Regarding racial identity, 79.2% identified as White, 5.2% as Latino/a, 7.5% as African-American, 5.2% Asian, 2.4% multi-racial, and .5% Native American. A total of 58.5% of participants identified as married, domestic partnered, or in a long-term relationship, 34.4% identified as single, and 7.1% as divorced. Individuals in the sample were 83.5% heterosexual, 11.3% bisexual, .9% prefer to not say, 1.9% gay, 1.9% lesbian, .5% queer. The sample population was divided between rural and metropolitan areas, with 6.6% residing in cities with less than 1,000 people, 44.4% residing in cities 85,000 and above, and 49% living in cities with a population between 1,000 and 80,000 people.



Although the sample was a non-representative convenience sample, it provides a reasonable pool of the general public in the United States (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Participants were compensated \$.75 for the estimated 15 minutes of time it took to complete the online survey.

## **Materials**

### ***The revised and abbreviated forms of the genderism and transphobia scale***

The Revised and Abbreviated Genderism and Transphobia Scale (GTS-R-SF; Tebbe et al., 2014) is a 13-item scale assessing anti-transgender attitudes with eight items measuring genderism/transphobia and five items measuring gender bashing. The GTS-R-SF was included in the survey as a measure of negative evaluations of transgender individuals, labeled transphobia. Sample questions of the GTS-R-SF include “If I found out my best friend was having a sex change, I would freak out,” and “I have beat up men who look like sissies.” Items are rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. After reverse scoring one item, higher scores indicate higher degrees of transphobia.

The GTS-R-SF is designed to be a brief but reliable and valid measure of transphobia. Tebbe et al. (2014) report excellent internal consistency of the items, with alpha coefficients ranging from .91 to .93. In the current study, the GTS-R-SF internal consistency of items was  $\alpha = .93$ . In prior research, the GTS-R-SF showed evidence of convergent validity with measures of social dominance orientation, which is prevalent in homophobic attitudes, and yielded alpha coefficients between .80 and .91 (Tebbe et al., 2014). Total scores on the GTS-R-SF were the outcome variable in the present study.

### ***Liberal feminist attitudes and ideology scale-short form***

The Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology Scale- Short Form (LFAIS-SF; Morgan, 1996) is a 10-item scale assessing endorsement of support for feminist beliefs. Sample items of the LFAIS-SF include “A woman should have the same job opportunities as a man,” and “Although women can be good leaders, men make better leaders.” Answers are provided on a Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree. After reverse coding several items, scores are summed with a higher score indicating stronger endorsement of feminist attitudes. The LFAIS-SF has good internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha reported as .81 in the original investigation (Morgan, 1996) and  $\alpha = .85$  in the current investigation. In regard to validity, previous research with the LFAIS-SF was found to significant correlations with behaviors such as advocacy for women’s rights, responses to sexual insults, and recognition of sexism in a commercial (Morgan, 1996). Total scores on the LFAIS-SF were included as a predictor variable in the current analyses.



### *The big five aspects scale-openness*

The Big Five Aspects Scale-Openness (BFAS-O; DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007) is a 10-item subscale of the larger 120-item full scale BFAS. The BFAS is designed to be a psychometrically sound measure of the Big Five personality facets, including Openness to Experience. The BFAS-O is designed to measure how open one is to non-conventional ideas and reflects the ability and tendency to explore sensory and aesthetic information through perception, fantasy and artistic endeavor (DeYoung et al., 2007). Openness to Experience describes a dimension of cognitive style that distinguishes imaginative, creative people from down-to-earth, conventional people. Open people are intellectually curious, appreciative of art, and sensitive to beauty. They tend to be, compared to closed people, more aware of their feelings. They also tend to think and act in individualistic and nonconforming ways (DeYoung et al., 2007). Sample items on the BFAS-O include, “I enjoy the beauty of nature,” and “I love to reflect on things.” Items are scored on a five-point Likert type scale with responses ranging from (1) very inaccurate to (5) very accurate. Scores are then totaled, with higher scores indicating more openness to experience.

Internal consistency alpha levels for the BFAS range from .85 to .96 in past research (DeYoung et al., 2007). The BFAS-O internal consistency was good in the current study at  $\alpha = .81$ . In regard to validity, the BFAS is also known to correlate with other known measures of openness to experiences and the other Big Five personality constructs (DeYoung et al., 2007). The BFAS-O is considered a moderating variable in the current analyses.

### *The Philadelphia mindfulness scale*

The Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS; Cardaciotto et al., 2008) is a 20-item questionnaire designed to measure behaviors of (1) mindfulness and (2) acceptance. For the purpose of this study, only the acceptance (MS-A) subscale was used. This 10-item survey measures levels of acceptance related to experiencing emotional discomfort. Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1) strongly agree and (5) strongly disagree. All items on the acceptance scale are reverse scored with higher scores indicating greater levels of acceptance. Sample items include “I try to distract myself when I feel unpleasant emotions,” and “I try to put my problems out of my mind.”

The MS-A has good internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha reported at .82 in the original investigation (Cardaciotto et al., 2008), and the current investigation demonstrated excellent reliability with  $\alpha = .90$ . Cardaciotto et al. (2008) found evidence of convergent validity with the White Bear Suppression Inventory (Wegner & Zanakos, 1994) at  $r = -.52$ , since thought suppression includes the unwillingness to experience thoughts. Total scores on the MS-A were analyzed as a moderator variable in the current analyses.

### **Demographic questionnaire**

A 9-item demographic questionnaire was also included in the survey. These items included age, race, education level, city size, socioeconomic status currently and in the past, sexual orientation, gender identity, and marital status. This questionnaire was used to gather more information about the demographic make-up of the sample. Demographic variables were also entered as control variables in the current analyses.

### **Procedure**

This study received approval from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection commencing. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform was used to obtain a sample of individuals over the age of 18 residing in the United States. MTurk is being utilized by a growing number of researchers in the past 10 years, as it has proven reliable, valid, and more diverse than college student samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Those who opted to participate in the survey were given a link to the Qualtrics survey which began with an informed consent page including the rate of compensation. Generally, Human Intelligence Task (HIT) workers on the MTurk platform are paid \$.01 to \$1.00 per survey. As survey participants often complete many surveys per day, and most surveys are easily completed in only a few minutes, the \$.75 rate paid in this study is an average to above-average compensation rate on MTurk (Buhrmester et al., 2011).

Respondents were first presented with an IRB approved cover letter detailing the study and providing appropriate informed consent information. Upon checking a box indicating respondents' willingness to participate, they were then presented with a questionnaire consisting of the four counter-balanced measures to avoid ordered response patterning. Participants completed the nine demographic items last. Participants were then provided with a de-identified completion number which allowed researchers to use the MTurk platform compensate individuals \$.75 for their time.

### **Results**

The goal of the current study was to identify the relationship between the outcome variable of transphobia and the predictor variable of endorsement of feminist beliefs, with two potential moderating variables, openness to new experience and mindful acceptance of emotions.

#### **Bivariate correlations**

To test the first hypothesis, that there will be a significant inverse correlation between endorsement of feminist beliefs and endorsement of transphobic

beliefs, a Pearson bivariate correlation analysis was conducted. A bivariate correlation matrix was created with the remaining study variables as well. These bivariate correlations allow for an examination of the associations among all of the study variables. As seen in [Table 1](#), the first study hypothesis was supported, ( $r = -.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicating that more endorsement of feminist beliefs is inversely related to endorsement of transphobic attitudes.

Also of note in [Table 1](#), Openness to experience is inversely correlated with transphobic attitudes ( $r = -.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and is positively correlated with endorsement of feminist beliefs ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Surprisingly, the variable of mindful acceptance did not have any significant correlations with any of the other study variables.

## Regression analyses

### *Openness to experience as a moderating variable*

Upon establishing the zero-order inverse correlation between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobic attitudes, a series of regression analyses were conducted to test the second study hypothesis. This hypothesis states that the significant inverse relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and endorsement of transphobic beliefs will be moderated by the variable of openness to new experiences.

To test this hypothesis, a series of regression models were conducted, as seen in [Table 2](#). In Model 1, the two predictor variables of feminist beliefs and openness to experiences were first mean centered and then regressed onto the outcome variable of transphobia measured by the GTS-SF. Both predictor variables in this model were shown to be significant predictors. In Model 2, control variables were added to account for participant demographic variables in the findings. Both predictor variables in this model remained significant. Among the demographic variables, gender and the race category of Black were also significant predictors. In Model 3, the interaction term of feminist beliefs x openness to experiences was included in the model to determine if openness is a moderating variable in the inverse relationship between feminist beliefs

**Table 1.** Correlations among possible predictor variables of transphobia.

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. GTS-R-SF	–			
2. LFAIS-SF	** $-.69$	–		
3. BFAS-O	** $-.43$	** $.48$	–	
4. MS-A	$.03$	$-.06$	$-.04$	–

*Note.*  $N = 211$ ; GTS-R-SF = Genderism and Transphobia Scale-Revised-Short Form; LFAIS-SF = The Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology Scale-Short Form; BFAS-O = Big Five Aspects Scale-Openness; MS-A = The Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale, Acceptance Subscale; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 2.** Summary of multiple regression analyses for variables predicting endorsement of transphobic attitudes: openness as a moderating variable.

Variables	Model 1 Feminist Beliefs and Openness on Transphobia			Model 2 Feminist Beliefs and Openness on Transphobia + Control Variables			Model 3 Feminist Beliefs and Openness on Transphobia + Control Variables + Interaction Term		
	adj $R^2 = .48$ ( $SE = 12.81$ )			adj $R^2 = .53$ ( $SE = 12.25$ )			adj $R^2 = .53$ ( $SE = 12.26$ )		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
LFAIS-SF	-1.21	.11	-.62**	-1.05	.11	-.54**	-1.05	.11	-.54**
BFAS-O	-.32	.14	-.13*	-.30	.07	-.21**	-.31	.07	-.22*
Feminist x Openness	—	—	—	—	—	—	.006	.008	.03
Gender (ref: Male)	—	—	—	-5.80	1.87	-.16*	-5.79	1.87	-.16*
Age (P)	—	—	—	.02	.08	.01	-.02	.08	.01
Education	—	—	—	.23	1.01	.01	.17	1.02	.009
Income	—	—	—	1.19	.76	.08	1.14	.76	.07
Marital Status	—	—	—	-.32	1.91	-.009	-.29	1.91	-.008
Town Size	—	—	—	-.31	.36	-.04	-.30	.37	-.04
Race (ref: White)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Black	—	—	—	8.60	3.25	.12**	8.75	3.26	.13**
Latino/a	—	—	—	-2.41	4.00	-.03	-2.18	4.01	-.02
Asian	—	—	—	-4.74	3.93	-.05	-4.63	3.94	-.05
Other	—	—	—	4.11	5.67	.03	3.86	5.69	.03
Sexual Orientation (ref: heterosexual)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lesbian	—	—	—	4.38	6.27	.03	4.29	6.28	.03
Gay	—	—	—	-9.25	6.53	-.07	-8.82	6.56	-.06
Bisexual	—	—	—	2.27	2.77	.04	2.02	2.79	.03
Other	—	—	—	2.64	7.30	.01	1.43	7.48	.009

Note.  $N = 211$ ; GTS-R-SF = Genderism and Transphobia Scale-Revised-Short Form; LFAIS-SF = The Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology Scale-Short Form; BFAS-O = Big Five Aspects Scale-Openness; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

and transphobia, as stated in the second study hypothesis. However, this hypothesis was not supported. The interaction term was not a significant predictor in Model 3, meaning that openness does not moderate the inverse relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia attitudes. Nevertheless, openness is an independent inverse predictor of transphobia attitudes, as seen in the regression analyses and the significant inverse correlation between the two ( $r = -.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ), seen in Table 1.

### *Acceptance of emotions as a moderating variable*

Next, a series of regression analyses were conducted to test the third study hypothesis. This hypothesis states that the significant inverse relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and endorsement of transphobic beliefs will be moderated by the variable of mindful acceptance.

To test this hypothesis, a series of regression models were conducted, see Table 3. In Model 1, the two predictor variables of feminist beliefs and mindful acceptance were mean centered and then regressed onto the

**Table 3.** Summary of multiple regression analyses for variables predicting endorsement of transphobic attitudes: mindful acceptance as a moderating variable.

Variables	Model 1 Feminist Beliefs and Acceptance on Transphobia			Model 2 Feminist Beliefs and Acceptance on Transphobia + Control Variables			Model 3 Feminist Beliefs and Acceptance on Transphobia + Interaction Term+ Control Variables		
	adj $R^2 = .47$ ( $SE = 12.96$ )			adj $R^2 = .50$ ( $SE = 12.67$ )			adj $R^2 = .49$ ( $SE = 12.69$ )		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
LFAIS-SF	-1.34	.09	-.69**	-1.25	.10	-.64**	-1.26	.10	-.65**
MS-A	-.09	.10	-.04	-.15	.11	-.07	-.16	.11	-.07
Feminist x Acceptance	—	—	—	—	—	—	.004	.01	.01
Gender (ref: Male)	—	—	—	-6.10	1.97	-.16*	-6.05	1.98	-.16**
Age (P)	—	—	—	.06	.08	.03	-.06	.08	.03
Education	—	—	—	.53	1.05	.02	.50	1.05	.02
Income	—	—	—	1.09	.79	.07	1.07	.79	.07
Marital Status	—	—	—	-.64	1.97	-.01	-.69	1.98	-.01
Town Size	—	—	—	-.45	.38	-.06	-.46	.38	-.06
Race (ref: White)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Black	—	—	—	7.75	3.36	.11**	7.78	3.37	.11*
Latino/a	—	—	—	-1.51	4.13	-.01	-1.43	4.14	-.01
Asian	—	—	—	-4.67	4.08	-.05	-4.77	4.10	-.05
Other	—	—	—	4.12	5.89	.03	3.92	5.93	.03
Sexual Orientation (ref: heterosexual)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lesbian	—	—	—	5.24	6.50	.04	5.31	6.51	.04
Gay	—	—	—	-8.13	6.74	-.06	-8.18	6.76	-.06
Bisexual	—	—	—	1.79	2.94	.03	1.81	2.95	.03
Other	—	—	—	1.43	7.55	.01	1.42	7.56	.009

Note.  $N = 211$ ; GTS-R-SF = Genderism and Transphobia Scale-Revised-Short Form; LFAIS-SF = The Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology Scale-Short Form; MS-A = The Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale, Acceptance Subscale; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

outcome variable of transphobic beliefs. While the predictor of feminist beliefs was still a significant predictor in this model, mindful acceptance did not significantly predict transphobia. In Model 2, control variables were added to account for participant demographic variables in the findings. Feminist beliefs as a predictor variable in this model remained significant, however, mindful acceptance was still not predictive. Among the demographic variables, gender and the race category of Black were also significant predictors. In Model 3, the interaction term of feminist beliefs x mindful acceptance was included in the model to determine if acceptance is a moderating variable in the inverse relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia, as stated in the third study hypothesis. However, this hypothesis was not supported. The interaction term was not a significant predictor in Model 3, meaning that mindful acceptance does not moderate the inverse relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia attitudes. Further, Models 1 and 2 indicate that mindful acceptance is also not independently predictive of transphobia.

In summary, the findings indicate a significant, inverse relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobia, supporting the first hypothesis of the study. The results also show that openness to experiences is significantly inversely correlated with transphobia. Both endorsement of feminist beliefs and openness to experience are independent predictors of transphobia, net of other variables in the regression models. However, openness to experience does not moderate the relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia, thus the second hypothesis in the study was not supported.

Contrary to expectation, mindful acceptance is not significantly correlated with transphobia, feminist beliefs, or openness. This variable was not significantly predictive in any of the regression models, either as an independent predictor or as a moderating variable. As such, the third hypothesis in the study was not supported.

## Discussion

The goals of the current investigation were to analyze (1) the nature of the relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobia, and (2) to test whether the personality trait of openness and the behavioral trait of mindful acceptance serve as potential moderator variables to that relationship. In summary, the main results indicate both endorsement of feminist beliefs and openness to experience are independent predictors of transphobia, net of other variables in the regression models. However, openness to experience does not moderate the relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs and transphobia. Further, mindful acceptance was not a significant predictor or moderating variable in regard to transphobia.

This information is important for several reasons. First, the results provide initial evidence that although there is controversy about the nature of gender identity and gender essentialism within some feminist circles, on a whole, endorsement of feminist beliefs inversely predicts endorsement of transphobia. This finding supports previous writings by feminist scholars who suggest that inclusion of TGNC individuals is critical to advancing feminist causes (Connell, 2012; Green, 2006). However, the nature of the relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia has rarely been studied empirically. As such, the present findings build on this body of literature. Also, for the feminist community, this is an important contribution as it supports the idea that liberal feminist attitudes may be inclusive of TGNC identities.

Second, as feminist movements continue to change in terms of acceptance of transgender and fluid gender identities, this study provides initial evidence that along with endorsement of feminist beliefs, openness to experience is a key predictor of whether one endorses transphobic attitudes. This finding is relevant because it points to the importance of individual personality factors

in also predicting transphobia. This finding adds to prior research indicating that the personality trait of openness to experience is a factor in how individuals respond to diverse groups, with more openness being related to less prejudice (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2003; Loo, 2015). Further, although prior research has shown a connection between openness to experience and reduced forms of other prejudices such as sexual prejudice, the current results add to the knowledge of how openness and transphobia as a unique form of prejudice are specifically related.

Taken together, these findings further understanding of the historical controversies regarding TGNC inclusion in feminist communities. Although endorsement of feminist beliefs predicts reduced transphobia, willingness to be open to new experiences does as well. The within-group tensions in feminist discourse around gender essentialism and inclusion of TGNC individuals highlights how, despite sharing a common ideology, other individual personality factors may influence personal attitudes. Given prior studies and the current findings, interventions cultivating attitudes of openness including curiosity, interest in complexity and variety could potentially provide support more TGNC inclusion (Han & Pistole, 2017).

Interestingly, mindful acceptance was not a significant variable in any of the analyses conducted and does not appear to be related to transphobia, feminist beliefs, or openness to experiences. Mindfulness was originally hypothesized to be related transphobia in that mindfulness applications have been shown to be a productive strategy in coping with the range of uncomfortable emotions that can arise in new, diverse interactions (Berila, 2016). However, the current findings contradict this trend. Instead, this finding suggests that mindful acceptance of difficult emotions may not be a variable in stigma reduction. The results indicate that one's ability to mindfully accept uncomfortable emotions does not predict transphobia attitudes. Nor is mindful acceptance predictive of openness to experience or endorsement of feminist beliefs.

While these results were unexpected, there may be several explanations. First, perhaps mindful acceptance, as an often-learned behavioral trait, is distinct and removed from the other study variables as it occurs on a micro, intrapersonal, psychological level (Cardaciotto et al., 2008). Conceivably, having mindful acceptance in each moment is a different psychological process than the processes underlying personality factors, such as openness, as well as the processes involved in prejudice development. Feasibly it is these differences that contributed to the lack of current findings. A second explanation could involve the difficulty of measuring mindful acceptance, despite having used a reliable and valid measure in the study. This issue is addressed further in the limitations below. Overall, more research is needed to confirm the present findings and understand why the hypothesized relationships were not present.



## **Limitations**

Although the current findings add to the understanding of the relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia, there are limitations to consider. First, although MTurk typically generates samples that are relatively similar to the general population of the US (Buhrmester et al., 2011), the sample should still be considered a convenience, non-representative sample. As such, caution should be used in fully generalizing the results.

Relatedly, the sample was measured on their endorsement of feminist beliefs, which is different than directly measuring those who self-identify with the feminist label. This distinction means that the current findings are only a first step in understanding the relationship between feminist beliefs and transphobia. Importantly, more research is needed with individuals who explicitly place themselves in feminist identities to parse out the nuances of the historical tensions between feminist groups and TGNC individuals.

With any self-report survey design, there are limitations within the measures chosen to represent each construct. Although all measures chosen demonstrated evidence of reliability and validity in prior research, no single measure can completely capture the totality of the constructs being measured. This limitation may be especially pertinent to the MS-A measure, which was not shown to be related to any of the other study variables. While it is possible that mindful acceptance is simply not related to transphobia, feminist beliefs, or openness to experience, it also may be likely that measurement error related to validity concerns in the MS-A impacted the study. More research is needed to determine if the findings of this study would replicate with other measures of mindfulness.

## **Conclusion and future research**

The present study is an initial step in understanding the complex relationship between endorsement of feminist beliefs, individual-level personality factors such as openness and transphobia. Additional research is needed in several areas to build on the results of the current study. First, in general, there is continued benefit to investigating correlates of transphobia as a unique form of prejudice. Continued research can inform prevention and intervention to reduce transphobic attitudes. Second, more research is needed within feminist communities to examine the complexity of TGNC inclusion. Investigation variables could include other personality factors and related constructs to better understand why some segments of the feminist community are resistant to TGNC inclusion and are more adherent to gender essentialist tenets. Third, as mindful acceptance was not a significant variable in the current study, further research is needed to understand this unexpected finding. Last, future research could strategically explore the

intersection of gender and race as they relate to the variables in this study, as gender and the race category of Black are also significant predictors in the regression models.

Taken together, the results of the present study indicate that endorsement of feminist beliefs does inversely predict transphobic attitudes, along with openness to experience. Although ultimately inclusion of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in traditionally “women only” domains challenge the very nature of the binary gender system and what it means to be a woman, these results provide initial evidence that measurable factors can predict individual attitudes on these issues. More quantitative and qualitative inquiry is needed to advance these complicated discussions in the feminist community.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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