



School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

Assignment Submission Form

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POP77011-Research Design for the Social Sciences

Final Project: Research Design (2,500 words)

Chenxi Li, 23330541

Symbolic Capital¹ and Field² Affect Female's Feminist Consciousness

Research Background

With the rise of feminism thought in recent years, on the one hand, people pay more attention to equality between genders, and on the other hand, gender inequality on broader global issues has also begun to enter people's field of vision. It has been found that feminism in the traditional sense depicts white elite women and ignores women who are poor, powerless, or marginalized (Wolf, 2018). As early as 50 years ago, Bourdieu suggested using a pluralistic capital analysis paradigm to study social phenomena in the field. This study focuses on feminist consciousness and hopes to deeply explore the factors that influence individual feminist consciousness through quantitative analysis.

Concept Description

- *Feminism*

Historically, it is believed that the first germination of feminism originated from Christine de Pizan's pamphlet refuting misogyny in 1405 (Bennett, 1989), and the term "feminist" first came into use in English during the 1880s, it was used to describe the relationships between

¹ This article uses Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital. He believes that symbolic capital is the realized and perceived form of economic, social, and cultural capital. More specifically, symbolic capital refers to an individual fulfillment of the social expected obligations and get prestige from it, and finally become a resource for this individual.

² This article uses Bourdieu's theory of field. A social field refers to a distinct and autonomous sphere of social life characterized by its own set of rules, norms, and dynamics. Different from the physical spatial structure, the social spatial structure presents more of the mutual relationship between subjects and objects. The fit or separation between these subjects and objects constitutes a series of distances and inequalities.

sexes and inequality, which was caused by political power rather than a fact of nature (Bryson, 2016). With the development of feminism, this theory also began to be combined with other theories. For example, the combination with Marxist theory produced the Marxist school of feminism; correspondingly, there is also the school of liberal feminism; cultural feminism that promotes femininity Genres and more.

- *Feminism Consciousness*

Feminist consciousness refers to the degree of "feminism" of an individual, in layman's terms, that is, in our daily language, how feminist this person is. As mentioned above, scales of feminist consciousness usually consider the feminist consciousness of different schools, so when designing the scale, questions are set based on the theories of different schools.

- *Symbolic Capital*

In his article, Bourdieu claimed that:

*As a fundamental operation of social alchemy, the transformation of any species of capital into symbolic capital, [...] a visible expenditure of time, money, and energy, a redistribution that is necessary to ensure the recognition of the distribution.*³ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2013)

Therefore, here we regard symbolic capital as the explicit form of three types of capital after labor, that is, in a social sense, the sum of economic, social, and cultural capital owned by women that is commonly recognized by people.

- *Field*

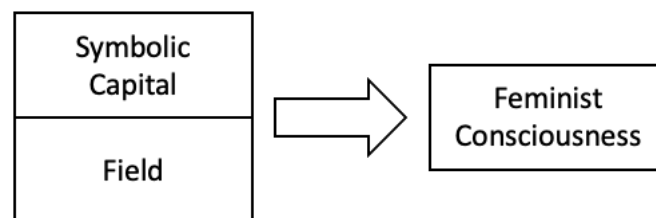
Position in the field indicates the potential for a force exerted on the person (Martin, 2003), and it relates to a series of power positions in a space. Within a specific field, as some scholars have pointed out, its structure involves the state of power relations between subjects and institutions, and there is the generation of capital and the mutual conversion between various capitals (Savage & Silva, 2013).

³ Here, Bourdieu hoped to use symbolic capital and the subsequent use of symbolic violence theory to analyze a kind of distinction between classes. The theoretical part adopted in this article focuses more on symbolic capital itself, rather than symbolic capital and its subsequent series of deductions.

Theoretical Structure & Operationalize

Symbolic capital and field, individual feminist consciousness, they are the two ends of the causal relationship in this study. Sarachild had proved that education can affect feminist consciousness improved in her small-group experiment (Sarachild, 2000), which is related to an increase in individual's culture capital. And other scholars also suggested that except education, income and social network is also a significant index in improving feminist consciousness (Swank & Fahs, 2017). On the other hands, different country, which refers to a series of different field, will also influence residents' feminist consciousness (Wilcox, 1991; Drew, 1995). Now we can draw the following unoperationalized theoretical framework.

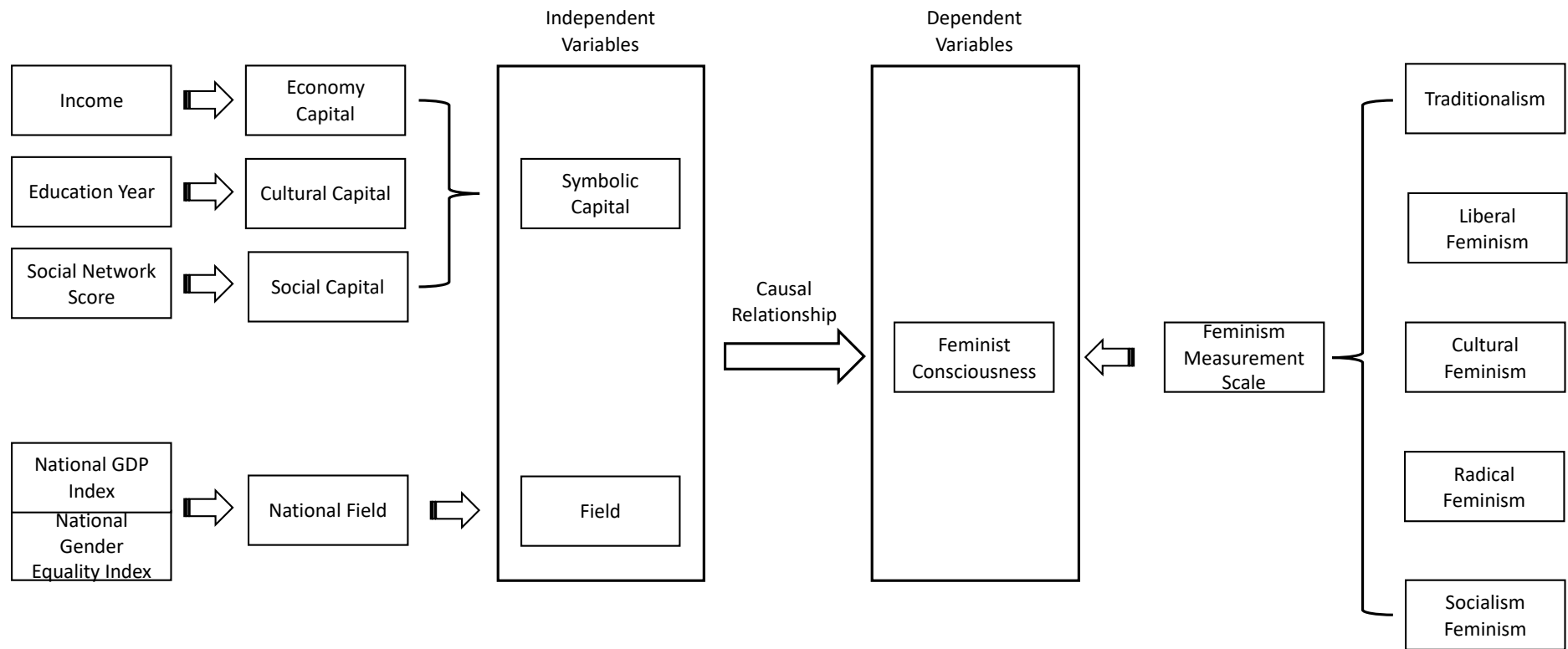
Figure 1. Unoperationalized Theoretical Structure



To operationalize these concepts, we need to back to Bourdieu's theories. In his article *The Forms of Capital*, he divided capital into three categories: Economic capital institutionalized in the form of property rights, cultural capital institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications, and social capital institutionalized in the form of noble titles (Bourdieu, 2018). Therefore, I selected annual income, years of education and social network scale scores as operational indicators. The second concept that needs to be operationalized is that of field, and as mentioned earlier, the state is - in some ways - the very field that is rife with unequal relations of power between genders, and so I have chosen to use the National Gender Equality Index, as well as the national GDP, as a way of operationalization of this concept. The third concept that needs to be operationalized is the Feminist Awareness Scale, which is used in this paper as the Columbia University Feminism Measurement Scale⁴. The scale includes traditionalism, liberal feminism, cultural feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism, and at the end of the scale a five-dimensional feminism score will be returned, which will also be the dependent variable for this study. We can check the full theories structure in next page:

⁴ Feminist Perspectives Scale -Attitudes, https://emerge.ucsd.edu/r_1lid8sa3r3yrkh3/, Last Accessed: 9 December 2023

Figure 2. Operationalized Theoretical Structure



Hypothesis

- Hypothesis 1

The more symbolic capital a woman possesses (that is, the more recognized economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital a woman possesses), the higher the woman's feminist consciousness. The symbolic capital owned by a woman is positively related to the individual's feminist consciousness.

Theoretical Support: Many of the impacts of income, education, and social relationships on feminist consciousness have been mentioned above, so I will not go into details here.

- Hypothesis 2

The more balanced the power structure of the field in which a woman is located, or the more balanced the ability (that is, the higher the gender equality index, or the higher the country's GDP), the higher the woman's feminist consciousness. The explicit or implicit balancing ability of the field in which a woman is located is positively related to the woman's feminist consciousness.

Theoretical Support: This hypothesis is based on the center/semi-marginal/marginal world system of Immanuel Wallerstein's classic global social theory. In the framework of this world system, the center is economically ahead and more active in ideological transformation, while the periphery is more in the position of being dominated by the system.

- Hypothesis 3

The impact of the field a woman is in on her feminist consciousness will be greater than the impact of the woman's symbolic capital on her feminist consciousness.

Theoretical Support: This hypothesis is an exploration of the classic social perspective-individual perspective methodology. In fact, from a quantitative sociological point of view, we prefer a macrosocial perspective on social facts, i.e., in a broader sense, society has a stronger influence on social facts than the individual.

Data Source

Data from these sections are needed for this study:

- 1) Women's income,
- 2) Educational attainment of females,
- 3) Women's social network scores,
- 4) The GDP of the country the women are in,
- 5) The gender equality index of the country the women are in,
- 6) Women's own sense of feminism.

In all these data, some of them we can get from authoritative sources, while others we need to design our own questionnaire to get. This study will combine several databases to design the questionnaire and place the questionnaire. The table below shows the sources of data for each section of the final questionnaire.

Table 1. Data Source

Theoretical Dimensions	Data Frames	Source
Symbolic Capital	1) Women's income	Questionnaires Design
	2) Education year	Questionnaires Design
	3) Social Network Score	Lubben Social Network Scale ⁵
Field	4) National GDP	Gross Domestic Product 2022 ⁶
	5) Gender Equality Index	Global Gender Gap Report 2022 ⁷
Feminist Consciousness	6) Feminist Scale	Feminist Perspectives Scale Attitudes ⁸

In practice, the final questionnaire will integrate the questionnaires and scales from the six sections mentioned above to form the final draft, select the sampling frame, and then randomly select and deliver the questionnaires, and finally enter, tidy, and analyze the data.

⁵ Lubben Social Network Scale, https://www.brandeis.edu/roybal/docs/LSNS_website_PDF.pdf, Last Accessed: 16 December 2023

⁶ World Bank Gross Domestic Product 2022, https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/GDP.pdf, Last accessed: 16 December 2023

⁷ World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2022, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>, Last Accessed: 16 December 2023

⁸ Feminist Perspectives Scale -Attitudes, https://emerge.ucsd.edu/r_1lid8sa3r3yrkh3/, Last Accessed: 9 December 2023

Validity, Reliability and Reproducibility

The study planned to test reliability and validity through these aspects. The first step is to start with a pilot survey within a small sample, for example, a questionnaire drops for a few countries, or a few regions, and a preliminary analysis of the results obtained.

- Reliability

We plan to calculate Cronbach's alpha for all scales to ensure the internal consistency of the scales. In addition, reliability tests can also be carried out during the pilot survey using re-measurement methods, or by halving the measurement questions.

- Validity

After completing the first draft of the questionnaire, we decided to consult leading experts in the relevant fields to assess the validity of the questionnaires. And after obtaining the recall results of the pilot survey, we plan to conduct an exploratory factor analysis of the data to determine which variables can be further synthesized to make the overall structure more compact, and in the process also continue to look for additional theoretical support to further strengthen the interpretation of the questionnaire.

- Reproducibility

In the process of data processing, on the one hand, we plan to control the version flow in GitHub, on the other hand, we adopt a more standardized way of code writing and file naming and maintain a good and concise code style (including the naming of variables, the rhythm of the compact code segmentation and comments, etc.), to make the data processing readable and reproducible at the same time. In fact, three folders are intended to be constructed in the data analysis workflow of this study, namely 00_data, 01_code and 02_outputs, where 00_data holds the initial and processed data, and each time the data is corrected (e.g., a new variable is added or different data frames are merged), a save is made; 01_code holds the code for all the data processing, and each code file carries out the function of the data analysis only once; and 02_outputs holds all outputs, including tables and visualizations.

Expected Results & Limitation

The information collected from the combined questionnaire will be analyzed multivariate statistically according to the research proposal and design. In the multivariate regression analysis, the dependent variable is women's sense of feminism, and the independent variables include their income, years of education, quality of social network, GDP of the country they live in, and gender equality index of the country they live in. The analysis process also focuses on the interaction between the independent variables, for example, it may be possible to create an interaction term between income and years of education, country GDP and the gender equality index of the country where it is located thus controlling for the variables. In addition, considering the possibility that the overall multiple regression model does not present a linear relationship, this study may consider using VIF to eliminate redundant variables, or using ridge regression, or machine learning models like random forest regression or AHP model. And there may be cases where the metric gap is too large during data processing, so some logarithmic treatment of outliers may be performed in these cases.

However, there are still some potential limitations in this research. For example, Reger and Wilcox pointed out that the social groups associated with women will affect their feminist consciousness, which may lead to a positive consciousness raising (Reger, 2004; Wilcox, 1991), and Henderson-King and Stewart also mentioned that religions are important in feminist consciousness (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997). In the actual research, we should also give more consideration to the selection of independent variables from different theoretical perspectives. Besides, since this study takes the form of questionnaire, there may be uncontrollable errors in the process of questionnaire distribution, such as the problem of respondents' incorrect filling in the questionnaire, and these uncontrollable errors may also lead to the limitation of the results. Finally, care should be taken to use relative rather than absolute paths in the code so that readers can run it without problems even on their own local machines. If operationalization exists, an overarching code document can be used for the inclusion and invocation of all other code documents so that the reader can use the overarching code document for process overview and detailed investigation of the data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This study involves the use of a questionnaire to collect data and therefore it is necessary to Informed consent, possible sensitivities, privacy and data confidentiality, equality of stance of the questionnaire, and transparency of data analysis were explained in the cover letter. Besides, when the questionnaire involves minors or the elderly, and when a proxy is required to fill in the questionnaire, the appropriate documentation of the proxy's informed consent is required.

In addition, this study will fully comply with Trinity College Dublin's Code of Ethics for Academic Research.

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