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Whither Feminist Solidarity? Critical Thinking, Racism, Islamophobia, Gender, Authoritarianism, and Sexism in a U.S. National Sample

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Abstract: Feminist solidarities form when people from a variety of social locations and accompanying power and privilege actively forge alliances across difference(s) to support gender equity and justice and to resist systemic gender bias. While nations from the Global North depict themselves as bastions of gender equity in comparison to nations of the Global South, countries such as the US, making dubious claims to "post-sexist" and "post-racial" societies, protest too much. Using a representative, national sample in the US, most participants did not disagree with sexist and racist attitudes and beliefs, and six variables accounted for 60.1% of the variance in sexism in a multiple regression model ($F = 89.62$, $p < 0.001$): racism, critical thinking dispositions, Islamophobia, conspiracy mentality, gender, and authoritarianism. Implications for educators and social science researchers are discussed.

Keywords: feminist solidarity; critical thinking; dispositions; gender bias; assessment; social location

1. Introduction

The building of feminist alliances across culturally disparate communities and social locations (Hooks 1986; Koobak 2023; Prasad and Zulfiqar 2021) brings to the fore the complexity of "intersectional solidarity" (Pražić and Vilenica 2023) and raises salient questions about whose ideas of "femininity" and "masculinity", and what kind of "feminisms", are being advanced, for what purposes, and to whose benefit. Feminists from the Global South have critiqued the liberal universalism of Western feminism, highlighting power hierarchies between the Global North and Global South (Choi et al. 2023; Agathangelou and Turcotte 2016). Asymmetry in power and privilege along axes of power such as race (Arvan 2023), class (Pálmadóttir et al. 2023), and nation and religion (Elhinnawy 2023) "has given way to a growing concern with how difference challenges coalition building across boundaries, borders, and identity categories" (Choi et al. 2023, p. 565). Positing that feminism requires an "expansive solidarity and vice versa", Koobak (2023) conceded "there are so many ways we can fall flat on our faces when trying to act in the name of solidarity, no matter how noble our intentions. There are ways our solidarity can painfully bruise those we are trying to support" (p. 127). Thus, when it comes to forging feminist solidarity, "it's complicated".

Further, while nations of the Global North promulgate the notion that they are models of gender (and racial) equity and equality on the globe—even boasting "post-racial" and "post-sexist" societies—participant observation and studies (see, for example, Abu-Lughod 2009; Ghodsee 2009) go a long way to dispelling the notion that sexism and racism are things of the past *anywhere*, and how colonial and imperial modes of knowledge production produce norms and standards of what might be considered "sexism" and what is not, and what constitutes "feminist freedom" and what is not. Commenting on gendered dynamics of organizations across the globe, Enloe stated, "People in so many countries—Americans at the top of the list!—are being pushed. . . to come to grips with racist and ethnocentric violence. . . It calls on us each to candidly explore our own ignorance, our own complicity and our own complacency. That's hard" (Prasad and Zulfiqar 2021, pp. 725–26).

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Engaging obstacles to feminist solidarity (Vachhani and Pullen 2019; Weatherall 2020), even within communities of women within the same nations, Prasad and Zulfiqar (2021) stated, "We've seen the deleterious outcomes of women not supporting each other when they encounter myriad forms of sex-based harassment or discrimination (Fernando and Prasad 2019; Ozkazanc-Pan 2019, p. 727)". Asked about the importance of assembling solidarities to achieve overarching feminist goals, Enloe responded, "It's so urgent and yet so complex. Genuine solidarity between any groups of diverse people takes a sustained building and nurturing process. It doesn't 'come naturally'" (Prasad and Zulfiqar 2021, p. 728).

Building feminist solidarity can be challenging, demanding self-reflection, self-appraisal, and intellectual *curiosity*. To assess patriarchy's persistence in recurrent and mutated forms, Enloe asserted that "a feminist curiosity" is crucial to "thoroughly examine gendered political dynamics of any sector one is investigating" (Prasad and Zulfiqar 2021, p. 730):

> Even when examining social justice groups, one has to keep one's feminist goggles polished; there is no guarantee that a well-meaning civil society advocacy group's members will have their analysis or actions infused with feminist understandings or objectives. . . [W]hat's propelled me to write so many books. . . is that reflecting on my past *un*-curiosities and wondering about new actors and new forms of patriarchy is so energizing. (p. 729)

These capacities for intellectual curiosity and self-reflection speak to a variable that could play a crucial role in the alliance, coalition (Carastathis 2013), or division of would-be members of any feminist solidarity: critical thinking. Often defined in terms of skill sets, critical thinking includes evaluating the credibility of an information source, muting one's own reactant responses, assessing the strength of reasons that support and fail to support a conclusion, and recognizing hindsight bias or confirmation bias (Facione 2015; Halpern and Dunn 2021). "Critical thinkers use these skills appropriately, without prompting, and usually with conscious intent in a variety of settings" (Halpern and Dunn 2021, p. 24), even when the analysis spurred by the application of these critical thinking skills fails to support their a priori beliefs, presuppositions, assumptions, and/or their position in an argument in which they may be highly emotionally invested. Thus, critical thinking *dispositions* "affect one's *willingness* to use critical thinking skills" and to "self-monitor" whether or how well critical skills are being applied or performed (Ren et al. 2020). Danvers (2018) posited that "critical thinking refers to a diverse set of knowledge practices involving in-depth questioning and academic debate that have come to represent the intellectual mission of higher education institutions", with UNESCO (2009) identifying "educating critical and ethical thinking graduates as core to the purpose of global higher education" (p. 548). I posited that operationalizing critical thinking in terms of *dispositions*—for instance, an openness towards listening to and considering new information and others' perspectives—moves away from specific micro-skills often cited in curricula in secondary schools and higher education; such a dispositional conceptualization moves the construct toward persons' proclivity or willingness to engage views *contrary* to one's own, and to self-reflect sufficiently to allow changes in one's beliefs, views, and biases when warranted. Do critical thinking dispositions have a significant association with gender and race bias, and might they be a critical factor, and resource, for those seeking to create inclusive, equitable feminist solidarities?

2. Research Purposes

Using a representative, national sample from the United States, this study investigated what variables might pose significant impediments to feminist solidarity. Before determining which factors significantly contribute to the variance in sexist beliefs and views, I sought to develop and validate a brief and reliable measure of critical thinking dispositions. Thus, this article comprises two studies, the first describing a principal component analysis of a Critical Thinking Disposition Scale, establishing evidence of reliability and validity for the measure, and the second focused on the results of correlational and multiple re-

gression procedures aimed at identifying variables accounting for sexism's variance. In sum, this study's purposes are (1) the development of a brief, reliable, and valid measure of critical thinking dispositions, (2) an investigation of the extent to which respondents in a U.S. national sample subscribe to sexist and racist beliefs and views, and (3) determining significant contributors to sexism as a means of identifying impediments/points of division in the forging of feminist solidarities.

3. Study 1

While numerous frameworks of critical thinking dispositions have been proposed (e.g., Bensley 2018, 2023; Butler and Halpern 2019; Dwyer 2017), some commonly identified dispositions are open-mindedness, intellectual engagement, and a proclivity to take a reflective stance or approach to evaluating information and the views and beliefs of both oneself and others. Demir (2022) postulated that critical thinking dispositions reflect persons' attitudes toward and routine ways of responding to new information and diverging ideas, willingness to engage in nuanced and complex rather than either/or reductionistic thinking, and perseverance in attempts to understand and resolve complex problems. Critical thinking sprung from the notion of reflective thought proposed by Dewey (1933), who borrowed from the work of philosophers such as William James and Charles Peirce. Reflective thought was defined as the process of suspending judgment, remaining open-minded, maintaining a healthy skepticism, and taking responsibility for one's own development (Gerber et al. 2005; Stoyanov and Kirschner 2007).

Acknowledging Dewey's seminal musings, Kurland (1995) suggested the following:

> critical thinking is concerned with reason, intellectual honesty, and open-mindedness, as opposed to emotionalism, intellectual laziness and closed-mindedness. Thus, critical thinking involves. . . considering all possibilities. . . being precise; considering a variety of possible viewpoints and explanations; weighing the effects of motives and biases; being concerned more with finding the truth than with being right; . . .being aware of one's own *prejudices* and *biases*. (p. 3, emphasis added)

Reviews of the critical thinking literature suggest that assessment of this construct ought to include aspects of motivational dispositions, such as inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity, thinking about thinking, honesty in assessing or evaluating biases, and willingness to reconsider one's own views and ways of doing things (Facione et al. 2001). The personality attributes associated with these proclivities include a need for cognition (a desire for intellectual stimulation), need for closure (a motivated cognitive style in which individuals prefer predictability, firm answers, and rapid decision making), and anti-intellectualism (a resentment of "the life of the mind" and those who represent it); an ideological component that can *impede* critical thinking is *dogmatism*. Thus, all these variables should be included to establish the validity of critical thinking assessments (Cheung et al. 2002; Elder and Paul 2012; Hodson and Dhont 2015; Klaczynski et al. 1997; Klaczynski et al. 1998). Further, rigid, dichotomous thinking impedes critical thinking in that it oversimplifies the complexity of social life in a pluralistic society (Bensley 2023; Cheung et al. 2002; Halpern and Dunn 2021) and tries to reduce complicated phenomena and resolve complex problems via "either/or" formulations and simplistic solutions.

In sum, it is hypothesized that critical thinking helps individuals avoid oversimplifying reality, permits perspective-taking, and can facilitate their awareness of diversity and systematic biases, such as gender bias. Some research has indicated that critical thinking dispositions uniquely contribute to academic performance beyond general cognitive ability or IQ (Ren et al. 2020), and may help to reduce conspiracy beliefs (Bensley 2023; Lantian et al. 2021). In an integrative review, Bensley (2023) asserted that "people who endorse unsubstantiated claims less tend to show better critical thinking skills, possess more relevant knowledge, and are more disposed to think critically" (p. 207). Persistence of one's basic attitudes formed during socialization (regardless of attained educational level) has been supported by research for some time (for example, see Sears and Funk 1999). A constellation of socialized predispositions—from conservative to liberal ideology, to party identification,

to gender (and racial) attitudes—are remarkably stable as one ages (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Ksiazkiewicz et al. 2020). People's attitudes, beliefs, and values (including sexist views) may stem from experiences early in life and may not undergo significant change over time, despite the attainment of higher education. Finally, rather than education in general, *specific* kinds of education (i.e., training targeting the enhancement of critical thinking dispositions) might be key to diminishing gender and race biases (see Oliver et al. 2023).

3.1. Materials and Methods

3.1.1. Sample

The sample comprised 365 adults, ages 18 to 64 (M = 39.62, SD = 14.1). Female participants comprised 50.9% of the sample, males 48.0%, transgender males 0.8%, and transgender females 0.3%. The sample was diverse and very close to proportional to the racial demographics of the US population, with whites comprising 61.4%, Latino/Latina 16.4%, African American 13.2%, Asian 6.0%, Native American/Indigenous 1.1%, multiracial 1.6%, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0.3%. Regarding education, 35% had a bachelor's degree, 28.1% had a high school diploma or GED, 19.8% an associate's degree, 12.1% a master's degree, 2.7% had completed some high school, 1.9% had a PhD, and 0.4% an MD. In total, 47% percent of the participants were working 40 or more hours per week, 18.5% were working 1 to 39 h a week, 7.1% were unemployed and looking for work, 6.5% were unemployed and not looking for work, 4.1% were disabled, and 16.8% were retired. The median household income of the sample was USD 60,000, very close to the national average. Of those employed, the six most prevalent occupations were management, sales, construction and extraction professions, finance, education, and healthcare professions. Participants hailed from 44 states and the District of Columbia, and 38% reported living in an urban area, 42% in a suburb, and 20% in a rural area. The median time taken to complete the online questionnaire was 19.2 min.

3.1.2. Procedure

The 230-item survey questionnaire and informed consent form for this study were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university at which I am employed. Qualtrics collected the data via an electronic version of the questionnaire, which included a detailed informed consent form and an explicit statement that participants could discontinue participation at any time. Specified quotas for the participant panel permitted the creation of a representative sample regarding sex, race, political party affiliation, education, and income. The original data set (N = 398) was cleaned by deleting participants who (a) engaged in instances of nonmeaningful repetitive responses, and (b) completed the survey in less than 8 min (too rapid for thoughtful responses to all items, as the median time for survey completion was 31 min). In addition, Qualtrics' data collection software is designed to detect possible automated responses by nonhuman participants (i.e., "robots") via a specific index. All participants (n = 8) scoring below a criterion on this index were replaced with human participants. Missing data were managed by replacing missing cells with the average of the participants' other endorsements on the scale in question. The final data set (N = 365) was imported into SPSS 29 and principal component analysis and correlational procedures were conducted.

3.1.3. Measures

Participants completed a questionnaire that included questions about sex, age, race, household income in 2019, and educational attainment. Additional measures are listed below.

Critical Thinking Disposition Scale. I created a pool of 64 critical thinking disposition items tapping motivational dispositions (e.g., intellectual curiosity vs. anti-intellectualism, perspective-taking capacity, need for cognition, need for closure or intolerance for ambiguity, and a disengaged stance towards new information, the gathering of evidence, and challenging, complex problems) and ideological components (dogmatism, reductionism,

and binary "either/or" thinking) antithetical to critical thinking processes. This initial pool of items was pre-screened via an undergraduate research participant pool at a university in Ontario (N = 357), and descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were examined to ascertain the items' ability to form a normal-like distribution in a final scale. Fifty-one items performed adequately (with means and standard deviations that were normal-like), qualifying for their inclusion in an electronic survey administered to a US sample.

In sum, 25 positively worded items tapped participants' willingness to engage in innovative thinking and to pursue difficult problems, and 26 negatively worded items captured (1) a lack of engagement of evidence contradicting one's beliefs, (2) an unwillingness to consider new perspectives and differing points of view, and (3) an intolerance for ambiguity or uncertainty. A six-point Likert-type response format was utilized, assessing the degree to which each statement on the screening was true for the participant. The directions on the instrument were as follows: "The following statements describe thoughts, feelings and experiences that many people have. Please read each item carefully and then select the response that best reflects how much you agree. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, so respond with the answer that indicates how often it is true for you as follows: (0) Strongly Disagree, (1) Moderately Disagree, (2) Slightly Disagree, (3) Neither Agree nor disagree, (4) Slightly Agree, (5) Moderately Agree, and (6) Strongly Agree".

Sample items from the total pool included "I am known to revise my beliefs and views when honest reflection suggests a change is warranted", "I really like contemplating or reflecting on the nature or meaning of things", "It doesn't matter much whether people read and stay informed" (reverse-scored), "I am very curious about a wide variety of topics and issues", "I pursue a line of questioning even if the answers are not likely to support my original opinions or self-interest", and "I become impatient when attempting a complex or complicated task" (reverse-scored). Although I had anticipated that the positively and negatively worded items would split into different factors in the subsequent principal component analysis, a mix of positively and negatively worded items was included to (a) enhance participants' thoughtful and meaningful engagement during administration, and (b) provide adequate coverage of participants' appraisals of their various capacities as thinkers and doers and to thoroughly assess how open or closed they were in the face of diverse cognitive tasks and scenarios. Psychometric information is detailed in the results section.

Internal Cognitive Experience Seeking. Pearson (1971) developed a Novelty Experiencing Scale (NES) measuring four constructs related to novelty-seeking. One of the constructs, Internal Cognitive Experience Seeking (IC), is defined as liking new cognitive processes dealing with explanatory principles and cognitive schemes. A 16-item version of IC was included in the survey questionnaire (sample item: "I like thinking about ideas that contradict each other"; α = 0.84).

Openness. A trait in the Big Five Personality theory, openness represents how much persons are willing to try and enjoy new things, or the degree to which they are open to experience. High scores on openness tend to reflect curiosity and open-mindedness. Openness was measured by 10 items from the Big Five Inventory (BFI, John and Srivastava 1999; sample item: "I see myself as someone who is curious about many different things"; α = 0.81).

Need for Closure (NFC) Scale. Developing a theoretical framework for the cognitive–motivational aspects of decision making, Kruglanski and Webster (1996) described NFC as the desire to come to a solution or response quickly to alleviate confusion stemming from a state of ambiguity. NFC involves two underlying process tendencies: urgency or a proclivity to seize upon closure rapidly, and permanence, referring to a wish to maintain this sense of closure (Roets and Hiel 2011). Kruglanski and Webster (1996) found evidence that NFC impacts impression formation, stereotyping, attribution, persuasion, group decision making, and language use in intergroup contexts (p. 263). As the original and revised NFC scales were quite lengthy, Roets and Hiel (2011) developed a 15-item version. For

the purposes of brevity, six of the items with the highest factor loadings were included in the current study. Sample items included "I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways" and "I would become quickly impatient and irritated if I didn't find a solution to a problem immediately" ($\alpha = 0.80$).

Need for Cognition. The need for cognition refers to a dispositional tendency to engage in and enjoy thinking (Cacioppo and Petty 1982; Tam et al. 2008). Need for cognition may moderate intolerance toward deviant and stigmatized groups and may be associated with lower scores on prejudice (Hogan and Mallot 2005). The six-item Need for Cognition-6 scale (Lins de Holanda Coelho et al. 2020) featuring items tapping openness to experience and epistemic curiosity was utilized in the current study. Sample items include "The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me" and "Thinking is not my idea of fun". Cronbach's alpha was 0.77.

Dogmatism. Altemeyer (2006) reconceptualized dogmatism as *immutable and unjustified certainty* regarding one's beliefs. An 8-item measure of this version of dogmatism, reflecting absolutism and cognitive closure (DOG scale, Crowson et al. 2007), was used (sample item: "The things I believe in are so completely true, I could never doubt them"; $\alpha = 0.91$).

Anti-intellectualism. Hofstadter (1966) defined anti-intellectualism as a disposition to resist intellectual rigor and to minimize and even resent "the life of the mind". To measure anti-intellectual dispositions, or the degree to which participants experienced negative affect when engaged in epistemic activities, a five-item anti-intellectualism scale (Marques et al. 2017) was utilized (sample items: "Intellectual discovery is okay, but I prefer other forms of excitement" and "Working on difficult intellectual problems is enjoyable and stimulating for me"; $\alpha = 0.81$).

Conspiracy mentality. The 5-item, unidimensional Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire (Bruder et al. 2013), measuring susceptibility to explanations based on conspiracy theories, was included in the survey because a conspiracy mentality represents a proclivity for believing various ideas in the absence of empirical evidence, and thus represents an inclination in opposition to those informed by critical thinking dispositions. Sample items included "I think that events which superficially seem to lack a connection are often the result of secret activities" and "I think there are secret organizations that greatly influence political decisions" ($\alpha = 0.83$).

Political views. Participants were asked "Overall, my political views are" with the response options of "very progressive", "progressive/liberal", "lean a little to the left", "moderate/centrist", "lean a little to the right", "conservative", and "very conservative". This item was normally distributed, with 48.2% of the sample endorsing the middle three categories, 11% endorsing "very progressive", and 9.6% endorsing "Very conservative" in the tails.

Cognitive ability. A 10-item measure of verbal ability (synonym and antonym questions) and math ability (high school algebra problems), derived from items used in publicly available IQ tests, was utilized to measure overall cognitive ability ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Social Desirability Scale. Eight items from the Social Desirability Scale (SDS, Stober 2001) were included as a check of participants' tendency to indicate higher levels of critical thinking dispositions in their responses to the item pool for the CTDS. A sample item was "I take out my bad moods on others now and then". Cronbach's alpha in this study was 0.86.

3.2. Results

A principal component analysis was conducted on the pool of 51 items for the Critical Thinking Disposition Scale. As items were tapping distinct subcomponents of critical thinking dispositions as described in the literature, and the correlations among the components were expected to be small but significant, the selected extraction method was principal components, and the rotation method was Varimax, with the rotation matrix converging in 10 iterations, with items possessing factor loadings less than 0.45 suppressed.

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.900, and Bartlett's test of sphericity produced a chi-square of 4389.12 (df = 496, $p < 0.001$), indicating sampling adequacy. The scree plot indicated five component factors accounting for a total of 53.40% of the variance.

Most loadings ranged from 0.60 to 0.76, indicating potential for a measure possessing good internal consistency. Eight items cross-loaded on more than one factor and were less than 0.10 apart in their factor loadings, and therefore were deleted from further analysis. Further, reliability analysis indicated which scale items could be deleted to increase Cronbach's alpha and this procedure continued until the maximum internal consistency was obtained. The first factor (see Table 1) comprised four positively worded items that reflected commitment to reflection and perspective-taking; the second factor comprised six negatively worded items tapping a disengagement from new information, evidence, and abstract thinking. The third factor comprised five negatively worded items tapping a proclivity for rigid, dichotomous, and reductionistic thinking. The fourth factor comprised four negatively worded items reflecting an intolerance for ambiguity and a need for quick closure. The fifth comprised three negatively worded items tapping a lack of initiative when challenged with complexity.

Table 1. Factor loadings of Critical Thinking Disposition Scale items.

Item	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Listen to and seriously consider other views and evidence	0.727				
2. I am known to revise my beliefs and views when reflection warrants	0.666				
3. Pursue a line of questioning even if answers not likely to support original opinions or self-interest	0.607				
4. Willing to change old ways of thinking and try new ways	0.600				
5. Doesn't matter much whether or not people read and stay informed		0.760			
6. Disregard evidence that contradicts established beliefs		0.591			
7. Changing one's mind is a sign of weakness		0.580			
8. Spending time trying to understand a problem is a waste of energy		0.511			
9. Usually one correct way of completing a task		0.505			
10. Introspective thinking or self-reflection does not appeal to me		0.491			
11. Two kinds of people: those who know the truth and those who don't			0.674		
12. Coming to quick decisions is a sign of strength or wisdom			0.631		
13. Prefer "tried and true", established ideas and ways of doing things			0.628		
14. Know what I believe, why act as if I am considering other beliefs			0.492		
15. Faced with a problem, tend to see the one best solution very rapidly			0.491		
16. Don't like when a question can be interpreted in different ways				0.772	
17. Don't like movies with endings that can be interpreted in different ways				0.667	
18. Abstract or philosophical thinking not my idea of fun				0.582	
19. My basic truths and beliefs do not change				0.484	
20. Have difficulty "getting going" or starting certain tasks or jobs					0.821
21. Avoid projects and situations where it is uncertain how well I will do					0.628
22. Become impatient when attempting a complex or complicated task					0.535

Negatively worded items were reverse-scored and a reliability analysis was conducted. The 22-item scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 and a split-half reliability of 0.85. The distribution of scale scores was a bell-shaped curve with the measures of central tendency

close together (M = 93.07, SD = 19.62, a median of 91, and a mode of 88), and a skewness of 0.345 and kurtosis of 0.093, making it normal-like.

Regarding evidence of construct validity, the 22-item Critical Thinking Disposition Scale (CTDS)—as a measure of innovative, reflective, and perseverant thinking, curiosity, and willingness to reassess one's beliefs and views based on new information—was expected to positively correlate with Internal Cognitive Experience Seeking, openness, cognitive ability, and need for cognition. It was also hypothesized that the CTDS would *not* correlate significantly and positively with education because the measure was designed to tap respondents' *dispositions*—such as curiosity, a willingness to acquire and engage with new ideas and perspectives, and to self-reflect—capacities and proclivities that can exist regardless of one's educational attainment. It was anticipated that the CTDS would correlate negatively with dogmatism, need for closure, conspiracy mentality, and anti-intellectualism. As evidence of discriminant validity, the CTDS was expected to have nonsignificant correlations with income, education, political views, and social desirability. A nonsignificant mean difference across gender was also anticipated.

Convergent and discriminant validity for the CTDS came in the form of correlations with key study variables (see Table 2). As expected, the correlations between the CTDS and Internal Cognition Experience Seeking (IC), openness, cognitive ability, and need for cognition were significant and positive, and there were significant and negative correlation between the CTDS and dogmatism, conspiracy mentality, need for closure, and anti-intellectualism. These significant correlations in the expected directions provided initial evidence for construct validity. For example, the CTDS' negative correlation with a need for closure demonstrated the measure's tapping of respondents' capacity to resist what Kruglanski and Webster (1996) referred to as the "motivated closing of the mind", the urge in some persons to recoil, seize, and "freeze" in the face of ambiguity, complexity, and information or views contrary to those they previously held to be "true". Regarding discriminant validity, the CTDS did not correlate significantly with income, education, political views, or social desirability. Finally, a *t*-test comparing the means on critical thinking between male and female participants found a nonsignificant difference ($p = 0.097$). Controlling for age and education, I also ran t-tests comparing racial groupings, and all tests were insignificant between racial subsamples.

3.3. Discussion

The 22-item Critical Thinking Disposition Scale demonstrated good reliability and high convergent and discriminant validity in Study 1. There were significant correlations in the expected directions between the CTDS and multiple measures of various theorized critical thinking components and capacities. For example, the CTDS correlated positively with Cognitive Experience Seeking ($r = 0.674$, $p < 0.001$) and openness ($r = 0.664$, $p < 0.001$), as well as negatively with a need for closure ($r = -0.309$, $p < 0.001$), reflecting, respectively, a motivation for cognitive engagement/stimulation, a stance of curiosity, and a willingness to maintain an open mind and remain engaged even in the face of ambiguous, contradictory, or complex stimuli. The CTDS did not significantly correlate with political views or income, meaning that it did not show bias towards persons possessing progressive, centrist, or conservative views, nor a bias towards persons of low or high income. The CTDS also did not correlate with education, which could be interpreted as meaning that education in general does not *necessarily* go hand in hand with critical thinking, but *specific* forms of education and training might. There was a nonsignificant mean difference between male and female participants, and controlling for the factors of age and education, there were no significant differences in CTDS across racial subgroups in the data set.

Table 2. Correlations supporting the construct validity of the Critical Thinking Dispositions Scale (CTDS).

	CTDS	IC	Openness	Dogmatism	Conspiracy Mentality	CA	Need for Closure	Need for Cognition	AI	Ed	Income	Political Views
Internal Cognitive Experience Seeking (IC)	0.674 ***											
Openness	0.664 ***	0.565 ***										
Dogmatism	−0.501 ***	−0.400 ***	−0.362 ***									
Conspiracy Mentality	−0.434 ***	0.391 ***	0.211 ***	0.466 ***								
Cognitive Ability (CA)	0.394 ***	0.383 ***	0.310 ***	−0.269	−0.177 ***							
Need for Closure	−0.309 ***	0.246 ***	−0.173 ***	0.352 ***	0.219 ***	−0.013						
Need for Cognition	0.208 ***	0.673 ***	0.504 ***	0.123 ***	−0.023	0.099	−0.088					
Anti-Intellectualism (AI)	−0.155 ***	−0.033	−0.051	−0.007	0.014	−0.097	−0.021	−0.649 ***				
Education (Ed)	0.047	0.004	0.076	−0.097	−0.107 *	0.071	−0.048	0.167 ***	−0.180 ***			
Income	−0.017	0.064	0.010	−0.008	−0.025	0.053	0.007	0.102	−0.159 ***	0.441 ***		
Political Views	0.006	−0.039	−0.189 ***	0.078	0.133 ***	0.065	0.020	0.021	0.086	−0.161 ***	−0.054	
Social Desirability	−0.037	0.017	0.011	0.009	−0.023	0.004	0.029	0.034	0.021	0.054	−0.032	0.062

* Pearson's r coefficient significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. *** Pearson's r coefficient significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

The CTDS is a brief, reliable instrument that resists socially desirable responding and can be administered in approximately six minutes. A one-page measure of adults' inclination toward curiosity, a commitment to intellectual engagement, and willingness to evaluate and change one's own beliefs and perspectives in the face of new information could prove valuable in explaining many social attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. For example, and on point, is there a significant association between CTDS and gender bias, as operationalized by sexist attitudes and beliefs?

4. Study 2

Sexism is a discriminatory attitude towards another sex, most commonly involving references to the "inferiority" of those identifying as female, or corresponding cultural constructions based on gender (Ayres et al. 2009; Oliver et al. 2023). In the field of social psychology, sexism can be defined as a specific instance of *general prejudice* towards an outgroup (Allport 1954). Hodson and Dhont (2015) concluded that individual differences (personality, ideological, cognitive, and emotional constructs) can go a long way towards explaining bias or "general prejudice". Agreeing with this, I surmised persons' social locations on sex, race, religion, and other ecosystemic axes of power likely to contribute to gender bias as well. To identify impediments to feminist solidarity, I sought to investigate significant contributors to sexism, a proxy variable for the theoretical *opposite* of a feminist, equalitarian worldview or "way of thinking about the world", as Allport (1954) wrote about his concept of general prejudice(s). In addition, researchers (e.g., Oliver et al. 2023) have called for research that accounts for a higher percentage of variance in sexism, perhaps via the inclusion of critical thinking dispositions, social–ideological attitudes, and variables associated with cognitively rigid thinking, such as religious fundamentalism, Islamophobia, and right-wing authoritarianism.

As alluded to earlier, feminist solidarities can be difficult to form and sustain due to identity politics, divergent social locations and accompanying privilege and power, and people sometimes having a very different ideas about what gender equity and justice look like. Reflecting on the challenges surrounding the forging of feminist alliances (Prasad and Zulfiqar 2021), I had pondered what sorts of locations and worldviews could contribute to division among would-be allies. Several variables came to mind: racism, Islamophobia, conspiracy theory mentality (a belief that secret groups and organizations are behind various phenomena without empirical evidence), critical thinking dispositions (tapping respondents' willingness to reflect on their views, listen seriously to perspectives that differ from their own, and to revise their beliefs and views when it seems warranted), gender (i.e., persons who identify as male can be feminists in walk and talk, but persons who identify as female are more likely to identify and empathize with women's struggles, though not *necessarily*), and right-wing authoritarianism (e.g., a worldview wherein one welcomes a harsh, merciless crackdown by a country's leadership against "troublemakers" who defy, flout, or "pollute our cultural traditions").

Why these specific variables? While the possibility of feminist solidarity might be powerful, and social and political activists proclaim their commitment to doing what is needed to advance gender equity and equality, our social locations on ecosystemic axes of power such as sex, race, ethnicity, and religion vis-à-vis other persons who *might* become allies in the cause can be the source of implicit biases and pose points of division as we engender solidarity. A white, Protestant woman might have doubts about the commitment of a Muslim man (or woman) to the cause of gender equality or might see a black woman (or man) as being "too loud" or "too angry" in the ways in which they express themselves. Further, lower scores on critical thinking dispositions might reflect a lack of willingness to (1) remain curious and open to others' points of view, (2) engage in critical self-reflection, and (3) maintain the perseverance to do the hard work of assessing one's beliefs and views and choosing to change them based on a clear-eyed application of critical thinking skills. High scores on critical thinking dispositions would reflect respondents' commitment to a stance of curiosity, self-reflection, and a willingness to change one's views and challenge

one's own biases and prejudices, capacities that could go a long way towards feminist solidarity across differences in social location (Prasad and Zulfiqar 2021).

As discussed in Study 1, conspiracy mentality is the tendency to believe specific, fictive "theories" without empirical evidence and consequently represents an inclination opposite that of critical thinking dispositions. Conspiracy theorists tend to express a great deal of suspicion regarding the motivations of others and what goes on "behind closed doors". A subscriber to conspiracy beliefs may tend to mistrust scientists, academics, journalists, and social and political activists, and may view feminists as trying to acquire "special rights" or accrue more than their fair share of power vis-à-vis men. Hence, its inclusion here in Study 2. Finally, authoritarianism (RWA) is about submission and obedience to mainstream and normative authority. Therefore, high scorers on RWA are more likely to perceive feminists, and social and political activists of all stripes, as "rabblerousers and troublemakers" who are "up to no good", conspiring to "contaminate" their conventional culture, beliefs, and values. In sum, it was hypothesized that sexism would correlate significantly and positively with racism, Islamophobia, conspiracy mentality, and RWA, and negatively and significantly with critical thinking dispositions and gender. Finally, the notion that Global North nations such as the United States are paragons of post-sexism and post-racism may be the conventional, hegemonic "wisdom" of individuals from the Global South, but is it supported in data? I examined the frequency distributions of the study variables of sexism and racism to answer the question "What percentage of a national sample of the US subscribed to sexist and racist views?".

4.1. Materials and Methods

4.1.1. Sample

Information about the sample is detailed in Study 1 above.

4.1.2. Procedure

As in Study 1, the data set (N = 365) was imported into SPSS 29, and frequency distribution, correlational, and multiple regression procedures were conducted.

4.1.3. Measures

Sexism. Four items tapping hostile, sexist attitudes toward women were taken from Glick and Fiske (1996) (items included "Women exaggerate problems at work" and "Women seek special favors under the guise of equality") and two items measuring toxically masculine norms were borrowed from Levant et al.'s (2020) short form of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI-30) ("Women should be subservient to men" and "In general things go better when men are in charge"). The six-item scale was unidimensional, normally distributed, and highly reliable (split-half reliability for this study was 0.92).

Critical thinking dispositions. A 22-item measure (see Study 1) tapping the central components of critical thinking, including motivation to seek and evaluate information, intellectual curiosity, and valuing philosophical reflection and debates was part of the electronic survey. Items include "I am known to revise my beliefs and views when honest reflection suggests a change is warranted", "I listen to and seriously consider other views and evidence that go against my ideas and beliefs", "It doesn't matter much whether people read and stay informed" (reverse-scored), "There is usually one correct way of completing a task" (reverse-scored), and "I pursue a line of questioning even if the answers are not likely to support my original opinions or self-interest". Cronbach's α in this study was 0.88.

Racism. Three items from the Duckitt (1993) Subtle Racism Scale were included in the survey (sample items: "Overall, some minorities complain too much about discrimination" and "Multiracial children are more likely to be confused and unhappy than other children") (α = 0.82).

Islamophobia. Three items measured negative views against Islam and Muslims. A sample items were "Would it be good or bad for the country if Muslims built more

mosques?" and "Islam is an archaic religion, unable to adjust to the present". Cronbach's alpha was 0.71.

Conspiracy mentality. The Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire (Bruder et al. 2013) measured susceptibility to explanations based on conspiracy theories ($\alpha = 0.83$).

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA). Researchers have proposed that authoritarianism is a highly stable personality trait (Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer 1981; Ludeke and Krueger 2013), featuring an expectation or demand of obedience to traditional authority. Eight RWA items from Bizumic and Duckitt (2018) and Altemeyer's RWA Scale were included. Sample items include "What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path", "Once our government leaders give us the 'go ahead', it will be the duty of every patriotic citizen to help stomp out the rot that is poisoning our country from within", and "In the future, laws will have to be enforced very strictly, especially when dealing with people who are stirring things up and causing trouble" ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Gender. For this nominal variable, respondents who identified as male were assigned a zero, and those who identified as female, transgender male, and transgender female were assigned a 1, 2, and 3, respectively, in the data set.

4.2. Results

As a first step, frequency distributions for the variables of sexism and racism were conducted. Respondent *disagreement* with items on the sexism and racism scales was operationalized as responses of "Strongly disagree" and "Moderately disagree". Responses of "Neither agreeing nor disagreeing", "Moderately agree", and "Strongly agree" represented a failure to disagree with these scale items. Therefore, a score of 18 on sexism and above indicated from *moderate to high* agreement with sexist beliefs and views, and a score of 9 and above indicated some degree of agreement with racist views and beliefs. In a national sample, 52.1% indicated subscription to components of a sexist worldview, and 53.2% indicated subscription to components of a racist worldview. Thus, a majority of those in a demographically representative sample from the U.S. subscribed to sexist and racist attitudes and views.

Next, a Pearson's *r* correlational procedure was run on the variables of interest to examine if there were significant associations among key study variables (see Table 3). There were strong correlations between sexism and all five variables, and once again, education and income had nonsignificant correlations with sexism. As gender is not a variable measured on an interval or ratio scale, it was excluded from the correlational matrix but included with all variables significantly correlated with sexism in a multiple regression model.

Table 3. Correlations between sexism and key study variables.

	Sexism	Racism	CTDS	Islamophobia	Conspiracy Mentality	RWA	Ed
Racism	0.637 ***						
Critical Thinking Dispositions Scale (CTDS)	−0.601 ***	−0.598 ***					
Islamophobia	0.548 ***	0.434 ***	−0.417 ***				
Conspiracy Mentality	0.509 ***	0.394 ***	−0.447 ***	0.399 ***			
Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)	0.506 ***	0.408 ***	−0.615 ***	0.370 ***	0.344 ***		
Education (Ed)	−0.025	−0.052	0.030	−0.126 *	−0.107 *	−0.071	
Income	0.030	0.013	−0.030	−0.033	−0.025	0.029	0.441 ***

* Pearson's *r* coefficient significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. *** Pearson's *r* coefficient significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

Next, a stepwise multiple regression model was run with sexism as the dependent variable and racism, Islamophobia, critical thinking dispositions, conspiracy mentality, gender, and authoritarianism as independent variables. The model ($F = 89.62$, $p < 0.001$) accounted for 60.1% (Adjusted R-Square) of the variance in sexism, with the following percentages (Adjusted R-Square) contributed by the six independent variables: racism 40.1%, Islamophobia 9.2%, critical thinking dispositions 5.9%, gender 2.4%, conspiracy mentality 1.3%, and authoritarianism 1.2%. All independent variables were included in the regression model at a p-level equal to or less than 0.001. Standardized Beta coefficients, as another indicator of the strength and direction of the impact of these variables, were as follows: racism ($B = 0.29$), Islamophobia ($B = 0.21$), critical thinking dispositions ($B = -0.20$), conspiracy mentality ($B = 0.18$), gender ($B = -0.12$), and authoritarianism ($B = 0.14$). Critical thinking dispositions accounted for a greater proportion of the variance in sexism than gender and authoritarianism combined.

Noting the strong negative correlation between critical thinking dispositions and racism in Table 3, I ran an additional multiple regression procedure, this time with racism as the dependent variable and sexism, Islamophobia, critical thinking dispositions, conspiracy mentality, gender, and authoritarianism as independent variables. Overall, 50% (Adjusted R-Square) of racism was accounted for ($F = 122.15$, $p < 0.001$) by three variables: sexism (40.1%), critical thinking disposition (6.8%), and Islamophobia (3.1%). With only three variables retained in the model, the standardized Beta coefficients were substantial: sexism ($B = 0.32$), critical thinking disposition ($B = -0.31$), and Islamophobia ($B = 0.21$). Thus, critical thinking dispositions accounted for significant percentages of the variance in both sexism *and* racism.

4.3. Discussion

The finding that most respondents in a national sample *did not disagree* with components of sexist and racist worldviews suggests that the rumors of the demise of sexism and racism in the United States are greatly exaggerated, and clearly there is much work to still be done. It is possible that while a majority of people might agree *in the abstract* that equal rights for women and persons of color sounds fine (for example, it is probably easy to endorse the principle "equal work deserves equal pay"), the word "feminism" may elicit negative connotations and discomfort for many and may continue to be viewed as the "F-word" even in Global North nations (see Higgins 2016). Can persons confidently subscribe to a "feminism" that calls for equity and equal opportunities across gender in cultures where feminists are frequently derided and dismissed in popular culture, social media (e.g., the platform X), and conservative media outlets as "militant radicals", "man-haters", or "FemiNazis"?

The six statistically significant contributors to sexism in the multiple regression model bear further examination. With racism accounting for a full 40% of the variance in sexism, clearly various forms of group bias can operate in tandem as black feminist (Collins and Bilge 2016) and queer theorists have proposed via the concept of interlocking systems of oppression (Carastathis 2016). Narrating her struggle to write a renewed call for feminist sisterhood, Hooks (1986) exhorted feminists to not abandon the concept despite the persistent strife centered on racial differences in the 1980s American feminist movement (Mitra 2023). Hooks (1986) presented an inclusive vision of feminist praxis across social difference and geographies, with a global sisterhood possible without a need to suppress or erase differences in social location to make it happen. Using data from the American National Study (2020), Nilsson (2023) found a significant positive correlation between gender consciousness in white women and their acknowledgment of racism, arguing that "increased reporting of perceived racism is informed by a greater understanding of oppression overall, heightened motivation to recognize racism due to overlapping group interests, and exposure to mainstream feminism" (p. ii). The findings of Nilsson's study lend support to hooks' stated hope.

While global coalitions remain possible, explicit and implicit bias can get in the way of such potential alliances via hegemonic discourses and a failure to privilege the voices and lived experiences of those from outgroups (e.g., see Dynda 2024 for a discussion of solidarity across sexual orientations and gender identities in a German–Polish collective). This extends to the ecosystemic axis of power of religion. Regarding Islamophobia's strong contribution to the multiple regression equation, Western imperialist, Orientalist, and imperialist feminist imaginaries represent potential impediments to feminist solidarity between non-Muslims and Muslims. These "competing imaginaries" "'form a contested terrain of knowledge production' upon which the lives of Muslim women have been discursively scripted, 'commodified, circulated and uncritically consumed' (Zine et al. 2007, p. 271, cited in Elhinnawy 2023). Some of these narratives "are integral to the idea of 'saving' Muslim women from their "terrorist', misogynist male countrymen' (Mouri and Batmanghelichi 2015, p. 337; Elhinnawy 2023, p. 596)". Further, this rhetoric has been a discursive component of the War on Terror articulated by liberal feminists (and endlessly echoed in Western media) who claim having concern for the rights of Muslim women but may falsely construct them as having little to no agency:

> In the UK, the government gave unconditional support to United States (US) counter-terrorism initiatives (Joly and Wadia 2017), justifying their support by using civilizational narratives about "saving" Muslim women from the oppression of patriarchal Muslim societies. The government implemented. . .hard measures such as heavy-handed policing, surveillance, and covert intelligent gathering (Khan and McMahon 2016, p. 250). . . the government has been accused of dividing communities and failing to address deprivation and marginalization (Abbas and Awan 2016). In France. . . the government insisted on a French model of assimilation. . . [and] became very involved in the organization and institutionalization of Islam to help to build a "French Islam", one that is compatible with French secularism and is immune to radical interpretations. . .transforming Islam *in* France into an Islam *of* France (Mas 2006). This initiative alienated many Muslims on all sides, resulting in a crisis of representation and legitimacy. With these policies in place, many prominent feminists positioned themselves within the rhetoric of "saving" Muslim women in their battle against religious fundamentalism. (Elhinnawy 2023, p. 596)

Beyond the UK and France, mainstream Western feminism has been roundly and justly criticized for its repeated inability to incorporate issues of race and religion in theory and practice, as well as for its tendency to "instrumentalize" the "muted" voice of the Third World Woman to consolidate itself (Elhinnawy 2023; Spivak 1993). It should be noted that "Third World women" and "Muslim women" are by no means monolithic, homogeneous groups (e.g., secular, faith-based, etc.), nor do they need saving, and such conceptions can interfere with solidarity building (Elhinnawy 2023).

As feminism has historically been known as a "women's movement", as well as a social justice movement, calling out gender bias and calling for equity and equality of opportunity (such as equal pay for equal work), it is no surprise that gender, conspiracy mentality, and RWA were additional significant contributors to sexism in the equation. Those who score higher on conspiracy mentality view social and political activists and outgroups targeted by specific theories (see Biddlestone et al. 2020) with distrust and suspicion and as threats to their identity (Federico et al. 2018), and right-wing authoritarians tend to view social progressives and many outgroups (immigrants, refugees, members of the LGBTQIA+ communities, and, yes, feminists) as striving for "special rights", as "troublemakers", and as sources of cultural contamination and degeneracy, "polluting" and undermining traditional values and discourses of heteronormativity and "old school" gender socialization.

Finally, the fact that the variable of gender attained the smallest Beta coefficient in the regression equation perhaps intimates support for bell hooks' hope that difference in location (in this case, research participants who identified as male versus female) need

not be eradicated to feel, and to form, feminist solidarities. Wiley et al. (2024) posited that "Members of advantaged groups can play a role in addressing discrimination and inequality" (p. 1). However, Wiley et al. (2024) found that "women evaluated a man who attended a rally to support gender equality less positively and were less willing to work with him for gender equality if he denied his male privilege. . . advantaged group allies who deny their group-based privilege diminish their potential contributions to movements for equality" (p. 1). This highlights the importance of potential allies, including males, acknowledging privilege and power to successfully forge alliances across difference via active engagement of "core principles of feminist support—striving for equality and trust, the crafting of safe spaces, and sharing experiences" (Bäckström Olofsson and Goicolea 2024, p. 1).

In Study 1, the high negative correlations of CTDS with sexism and racism were striking, indicating critical thinking dispositions' strong inverse relationship with and contributions to sexist and racist attitudes, beliefs, and values. Another interesting finding was that sexism, racism, and critical thinking dispositions did not correlate significantly with education or income, suggesting that the measures for these constructs were not subject to educational or socioeconomic bias. In addition, while much of the literature suggests that higher education increases tolerance and ameliorates the effects of gender bias and negative stereotyping (Adman and Gschwind 2023; Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Rivera-Garrido 2022; Taghizadeh and Adman 2022), the lack of a relationship between education and sexism, racism, and critical thinking dispositions in Study 2 spurred my speculation that the *type of education* one acquires in high school and college might determine whether or not one will experience reductions in bias and prejudice. Education that takes the form of technical sciences or vocational training would most likely not challenge one's long-standing assumptions and predispositions. Education that stresses *critical thinking skills* has as its raison d'etre the questioning of socially constructed knowledge in a way that would open space to re-examine all sorts of socially preconceived notions.

Further, the conceptualization of critical thinking in this article falls in line with Dewey's (1933) vision of "reflective thought", which he felt was the ideal goal of higher education though it is not always achieved. In this article, critical thinking dispositions were operationalized not in terms of specific skills but a person's *willingness* to self-reflect, to engage ideas and information, and to persevere in the assessment and re-assessment of views, whether they are others' *or their own*. Thus, training that encourages a more open, curious *stance* to the examination and evaluation of information and the perspectives and views of others might lead to significant improvements in the application of specific critical thinking skill sets. This is a crucial capacity if one is to challenge one's own biases and prejudices, and Study 2 highlighted the critical role that critical thinking dispositions can play in attenuating both sexism and racism.

5. Implications of Studies 1 and 2

The construct of critical thinking is not the preserve of a specific *place* but is instead informed by socio-political histories of knowledge production in Western institutions as a defining feature of higher education (Curzon-Hobson 2003; Danvers 2018). Thinking critically has become a premier learning outcome "materializing in government policy, university mission statements, module handbooks, assessment briefs and marking criteria" (Danvers 2018, p. 548). It is often defined in terms of specific skill sets, and various hegemons promulgate notions of which specific skills are valued and deemed crucial "for success". Similarly, the defining of a "women's rights movement", and feminist theory, is also not the preserve of one specific place, and the unilateral imposition of such definitions (e.g., by a funding agency, government geopolitical region, First-Wave feminists and feminists from the Global North, etc.) can be problematic, a source of contention and resistance, and indeed division (Connell 2015; Das 2017). Western feminists may fail to consider nuances when developing and promulgating narratives around "gender equality", "feminism", and "empowerment". As Khan (2020) wrote:

> Words can mean utterly different things to women in different countries and, indeed, within each country. There are words that are not even translatable in many languages outside English. . . the movement for equality is anything but equal around the world. [T]he insistence of Western practitioners that inequalities among men and women cannot be addressed without the existence of "gender analytical frameworks", is based on the need to create an order out of the chaos that the developing world presents to them. . . doing so however. . . ignores the nuances that define such chaos, such as the fact that it is not just patriarchy that subjugates women in many countries, but also the class barriers *between women*. . . We do not have Western feminists and academics to thank for our desire for equality or our means to pursue it. We have our own history of sacrifice.

The West and Global North should become aware of and sensitive to their tendency to define what things are (e.g., feminist theory) and what goals are "important" *for* the Global South (see Das 2017; Desai 2020; Khan 2020; Lemay 2023) and make efforts to refrain from doing that. Lemay (2023), for example, calls for disrupting hierarchies via processes of mutual accountability and attentiveness to power structures, but concedes that this too can be complex:

> transnational solidarity can be and ought to be complemented by explicit commitments to resisting global injustices. Because of the pressure for financial stability and survival, not all activists feel compelled to clearly express their needs when asked to do so by partnering organizations that offer funding. As a result, I worry that a unidimensional and uncritical understanding of solidarity, that does not attend to existing power structures, inadvertently contributes to the depoliticization of feminist solidarity movements. Efforts to disrupt hierarchies must. . .be put into context. For instance, a reader may raise the objection that these unequal power relationships would be dismantled if the organizations I described were to adopt a fully grassroots structure. This structural change may enable these organizations to set their own agendas, which is desirable, as it would allow them to exit the double bind between responding to the funding imperative and fighting for social change. The issue here. . .is feasibility: an organization cannot easily exit the power structures that permit their survival. (2023, p. 11)

Feminist theorists and activists provide numerous case studies about the reasons for division for feminist solidarities of a transnational nature (for vivid vignettes depicting this phenomenon, see Campbell 2023; Diez and Bossio 2023; Elhinnawy 2023; Mohanty 2003). Of course, hegemonic and asymmetrical practices occur within the same country, university, organization, or village where education, race, sex, or class (see Pálmadóttir et al. 2023) confer greater power and privilege to some over others. Desai (2020) posed an important question: how do epistemological foundations constrain the possibilities for understanding contemporary feminist struggles and solidarities? Desai posited that feminist solidarity demands the overcoming of "spatial and hierarchal dichotomies that are inherent in North–South or global–local divides" (Ruppert et al. 2020, p. 332). Desai highlights anti-hierarchical, collective practices as well as discourses supporting feminist movement political imaginaries from the South Asian feminist network (SANGAT) (see Desai 2020 for constructive, instructive cases of collective struggle to grapple with "epistemologies of solidarity").

Hoping to elude the pitfalls of competing ideas of what constitute specific critical thinking skill sets, I sought to tap the higher-order, latent construct of dispositions, proclivities, and capacities that make the application of "critical thinking skills"—however they are defined and specified—not only possible but much more likely across multiple real-world scenarios (in the classroom, at the job, in one's personal life, etc.). Therefore, instruction on critical thinking dispositions at a higher level of abstraction, both across educational levels and disciplinary areas, seems particularly appropriate and well advised, as per a meta-analysis conducted by Abrami et al. (2015). Regarding the 341 effect sizes

drawn from studies using standardized measures of critical thinking, Abrami et al. (2015) concluded that

> there are effective strategies for teaching. . .CT dispositions, at all educational levels and across all disciplinary areas. Notably, the opportunity for dialogue, the exposure of students to authentic or situated problems and examples, and mentoring had positive effects on CT skills. (p. 275)

The burgeoning literature supports the assertion that critical thinking can be learned (Halpern and Dunn 2021; Ren et al. 2020). Holmes et al. (2015) found that students who received CT instruction demonstrated "significant and sustained improvement in students' critical thinking behavior" (p. 11199). Butler et al. (2012) found in a study of 137 adults and university students that those who scored higher on critical thinking experienced fewer negative life events stemming from poor judgment or flawed personal decisions, arguing that people who develop better critical thinking skills and dispositions may have healthier, less stressful lives. So, critical thinking dispositions and skills training can be effective and have positive sequelae, making such training worthy of investment. In addition, a study of 244 community adults and college students, Butler et al. (2017) administered assessments of CT, intelligence, and an inventory of real-life events. While critical thinking scores and intelligence scores predicted individuals' preferred outcomes on the inventory of real-life events, critical thinking was a *stronger* predictor.

More specific to the focus of the current article, the results of Study 2 corroborate those of Oliver et al. (2023) who found that critical thinking dispositions, and need for closure, were significant predictors of sexism in a study of 719 Spanish high school students. Oliver et al. (2023) stated their results demonstrated that cognitive variables accounted for more variance in sexist attitudes that personality variables, consistent with the literature in showing the relevance of sex and the need for cognitive closure, extending it by including the critical thinking disposition. In conclusion, being male and having a high need for cognitive closure and a low critical thinking disposition are predictive of more sexist attitudes (p. 1662).

Why should the reader (and educators) care about sexist views and attitudes? Dosil et al. (2020) demonstrated a strong connection between sexism and teenage dating violence and victimization. Oliver et al. (2023) concluded that anti-sexism interventions should include strategies for fostering the critical thinking disposition or reducing the need for cognitive closure by training in the ability to cope with cognitive uncertainty. Indeed, enhancing the dispositional and skill dimensions of critical thinking in students has been flagged as an essential education goal. . . a position this study supports by highlighting the relationship between critical thinking and sexism (p. 1662).

These are some avenues educators and feminist activists can explore in their attempts to challenge gender and racial biases.

6. Limitations and Future Studies

One limitation is the use of cross-sectional data, which meant that claims of causation could not be made with this data set. Another limitation is the use of the Qualtrics platform to acquire the study sample. While the set of quotas ensured that participants were representative of many important U.S. demographic variables, it was a nonrandom convenience sample. In addition, it is possible that shared method variance (i.e., the use of self-reporting to measure the study's variables) may have contributed to the strong associations observed between the CTDS and other major study variables. To better differentiate the effects of personality and cognition on sexism, structural equation modeling with factors such as critical thinking dispositions, openness, and need for closure could be conducted. The results of such studies could guide the creation of intervention programs to reduce sexist attitudes among students. While accounting for a full 60% of the variance of sexism is an accomplishment in and of itself, the mapping out of the moderating and mediating roles of these and other variables would also represent a worthy endeavor.

7. Conclusions

Under the banner of a "feminism for the 99%" (Arruzza et al. 2019, cited in Choi et al. 2023), transnational movements have materialized locally in intricate ways, where they inspire difficult negotiations among different groups and but must respond to historically specific cultural, political, and social practices, bringing to the fore the many fault lines that sustain global power. While feminism is arguably one of the most globalized social movements, its materialization in particular contexts can both open up new visions and practices for building collective solidarity, as it can lay bare the multiple fissures and fragmentations that sustain hierarchical political societies (Choi et al. 2023, p. 565).

This study sought to identify some sources of fissure and fragmentation in the building of feminist solidarities, as well as variables and resources that might facilitate the overcoming of biases and outgroup prejudices. Hierarchization and bias—for example, ingroup favoritism, sexism, and racism—may be products of social life and social identity, and while education can serve to ameliorate such biases in some cases, the specific type of education is at issue, and inclusion of a critical thinking disposition component would likely be crucial to effectively challenge bias. As Enloe pointed out, because there are "so many dynamics in our societal experiences and our organizational lives encourage selfish aspirations, personal anxieties, narrow identities and historic mistrust, creating any cross-group sustainable solidarity requires active *curiosity*, extended listening, creative empathy. . . Each of these solidarity-building acts can feel awkward, tiring and even risky" (p. 728). This quotation regarding acts of solidarity building refers to central components of critical thinking dispositions: curiosity, listening (i.e., remaining present and resisting the urgent need for closure), and empathy or the capacity to perspective-take (the motivation to engage new views, perspectives, and information). Critical thinking dispositions may be factors and resources that facilitate epistemologies of solidarity, permitting persons to do the hard work of communicating across social locations and potential divisions in the effort to create more inclusive, equitable, feminist solidarities.

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