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In Keeping with Family Tradition: American Second-Wave Feminists and the Social Construction of Political Legacies

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.14.1.01

Abstract Through an interpretive lens that borrows from feminist postmodernist perspectives on identity and cognitive sociology, the manuscript utilizes in-depth interview data from 33 women active in the American second-wave feminist movement to explore how aging feminist activists construct their current political identities in relation to the meanings they give to the perceived progressive political identities and actions of their elders. In particular, this study examines the discursive strategies that respondents engage as they link their own feminist consciousness directly or indirectly to feminist, or otherwise progressive, parents and grandparents. Findings reveal three distinct political legacy narratives, namely 1) explicit transmission origin stories; 2) bridge narratives; and 3) paradox plots that add to both the social movement literature on the symbolic dimensions of recruitment, sustainability, and spillover, as well as cognitive sociological literature on the cultural transmission of political capital, in general, and to our understanding of American second-wave activists, more specifically.

Keywords Identity Construction; Political Legacy; Intergenerational Transmission; American Feminism; U.S. Second-Wave Activists; Sociology of Ancestry

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When I was in my elementary school years in the 1970s in the United States, my mother was an activist in what was then called the "battered women's movement" in the suburbs of the northeastern seaboard city of Philadelphia—though I did not know it at the time. A first generation Italian-American woman from a working-class background, she died by the time I was ten after a long and undisclosed battle with cancer, and both the memory of her and her life in the movement was swiftly plucked from our family's collective con-

sciousness. It was not until I went away to college and found my way to women's studies, and to the reproductive rights movement in particular, that my father revealed my mother had been active in the women's movement. This experience of my mother's erasure, individually, and the erasure of women collectively, has profoundly troubled me for over 30 years. As my own life has gone on, I have had countless questions for my mother—mostly in her position as my mother outside the context of American feminist activism—but also as a feminist activist during one of the most transformative periods in U.S. history. If she were still here, what would be her perspective on U.S. feminist politics 50 years out from what was, by many accounts, a tremendously electrifying time?

While I could not know how my own mother, herself, might narrate this story, I became attracted to the idea that I might take some steps to make sure that a part of the story of women in her cohort did not suffer the fate of erasure. Thus began an in-depth interview project to explore how American women who were participants in the historic "second-wave" of U.S. feminist activism from the 1960s to the 1980s—a "wave" marked by mass mobilizations that extended the battles for the basic rights of citizenship launched by 19th and early 20th century "first-wave" American feminists—made sense of the modern victories and setbacks in struggles for gender justice as they entered their later years. As these narratives unfolded, I became particularly interested in the ways in which respondents reflected on their political roots, as well as the ways in which they told their own stories of how mothers, grandmothers, and other relatives impacted their trajectories towards feminist activism. As someone who had no conscious memory of the maternal transmission of political values, capital, or social location in progressive politics, these narratives of women's sense of themselves in relation to politically active and sometimes even feminist elders struck me. They struck me not only in my own personal search for meaning and connection to a mother who was largely disappeared, but because, as an American sociologist, I did not know of any scholarly literature on the ways in which movement actors in the United States narrated their perceptions about the political legacies of their parents and relatives.

As such, in this article, I explore how aging second-wave activists who were part of one of the most consequential movements in U.S. history construct their current identities in relationship to the meanings they give to the perceived progressive political identities and actions of their elders. How do they tell their stories of politicization, and with what call backs to significant family members whom they see as aligned in some way with their own feminist philosophies? In doing so, this research contributes to ongoing feminist and critical theories of the social construction of identity, including political identities, as well as challenges our theoretical understanding of the social processes by which political capital—in this case, the knowledge of, or access to, progressive political movement culture which can later be exchanged for future access to or increased status in movement politics—is simply objectively "handed down" from parents to children in a mechanical, linear, and often oppositional way. Empirically, this exploration adds to the growing body of social movement research that

aims to bridge structural and cultural components of movement participation by focusing on perceptions and emotions of participants overall, and fills a gap in the current social movement literature on the social construction of political legacy, particularly in relation to feminist activists. Finally, this work provides a cultural and political space for aging feminist women, themselves, to co-construct a legacy of the second-wave for future generations of American activists.

Theoretical Framework

In the broadest sense, this project is informed by a sociologically-oriented, feminist, postmodernist perspective on identity that assumes that the particular set of identity categories given to us in any social-historical context, whether gender, sexual, racial, or political identities, are not based on universal, stable, or fixed systems of classification, but variable and always imbued with multiple meanings. Further, since one's sense of self as, say, a gendered or sexual being, or in this case, a "feminist activist," is a dynamic process that is not inevitably tied to any essential attributes or properties of individuals as given by biology or psychology, then these identities must always be "performed" in ongoing and eventually routinized interactions in everyday life (Butler 1990). Additionally, these "performances" at the micro-level of social interaction are tied in complex ways to the macro systems of distribution that rely on the belief in seemingly stable and unchangeable identity categories to justify unequal allocations of income, wealth, political power, access to employment, education, healthcare, and leisure time, among other social goods (Connell 1987).

Equally important for this project, as is true of postmodernist analyses more generally, feminist postmodernists theorize the primacy of "discourse," or the collection of a culture's symbolic communication, whether encoded in written text, be it religious text, pop culture, academic texts, or other systems of signs, such as personal narrative, and "discursive relations," meaning human beings' active engagement with and resistance to discourse, as the engine of power, surveillance, and control in postmodern society (Foucault 1975). To understand and resist these relations of power, postmodernists engage in "deconstruction" of knowledge, or the analytical work of uncovering the political history of a set of ruling ideas as they are situated in institutional and discursive contexts; in other words, as conceptualized by Foucault, deconstruction is a kind of "genealogy" and "archaeology," or a tracing of the origins and a digging up of the hidden roots of various forms of knowledge (Foucault 1978).

Within this larger critical field of vision, this project also draws from contemporary social movement scholarship that foregrounds not only the importance of protestors' mental and emotional lives in understanding social movement phenomena, but the importance of identity in mobilizing and sustaining political action and commitments. For at least a hundred years in the United States, scholars studying collective action ignored these dimensions of social movements, assuming that those who protested were immature, psychologically disturbed, irrational, or simply spoiled youth rebelling against authority, most notably their parents, and in any case, certainly not in line with their parents' worldview (Goodwin and Jasper 2009). In the 1980s,

however, social movement scholars shifted from a near total focus on structural forces that precipitated movement mobilization, action, and decline to include cultural factors and the acceptance of approaches that seek to "observe or ask protestors themselves about their perceptions and desire and fantasies, without having a theory of history that predicts in advance what protestors will think and feel" (Goodwin and Jasper 2009:13). In addition, and leaving important critiques of the larger U.S. cultural turn aside, the move allowed for greater attention to the rhetoric activists use to mobilize recruits and stage actions, the strategies of claims-making, and the politics of identity as particular kinds of claims-making tactics (Gamson 1995; Bernstein 1997; Foster 2004).

Finally, and most specifically, this project draws on key insights in cognitive sociology as applied to the sociology of memory and the sociology of ancestry. Eviatar Zerubavel (1997) identifies the importance of "mnemonic traditions," or those "stocks of knowledge" that help construct both the content of what we come to remember as participants in particular social groups, and the process of how we remember it, arguing that the social processes by which human beings construct the past produce and reproduce group boundaries at the same time that they produce and reproduce individuals' very sense of their own identities within and outside these groups. In his more recent analysis of identity and the "genealogical imagination," Zerubavel (2012:10) further argues for a sociological analysis of the processes by which people in communities construct a sense of who counts as their ancestors and relatives, and in doing so, construct a sense of themselves, noting that "[t]he way we construct genealogies…tell just as much about the present as it does about the past." More directly, Zerubavel (2012:24) pays particular attention to the "sociomental" practices of constructing narratives of lineage, origins, and pedigree and suggests that "[a]ncestry and descent play a critical role in the way we structure intergenerational transmission of both material and symbolic forms of capital. We thus inherit not only our ancestors' property but also their social status and reputation." Not surprisingly, then, "one of the most important forms of social identity is being someone's descendent" (Zerubavel 2012:24).

Taken together, these distinct sociological lenses create a helpful prism through which we might better understand how aging second-wave feminist activists in the U.S. socially construct their current political identities by calling—or not—on the legacy of politically progressive elders and with what meaning for the accumulation of their own symbolic capital in social exchanges. That people tell stories about their elders to construct a sense of who they are and where they belong, then and now, is no new insight. Yet, there is no work in the empirical literature in the sociology of identity, the sociology of social movements, or the political science literature that tries to disentangle how this may happen as an identity strategy in the context of political activism generally, or how social actors collectively give meaning to the transmission of political capital in the form of knowledge of, or degrees of membership in, progressive political cultures such that we might begin to think about a "mnemonic tradition" or "genealogical imagination" unique to the construction of progressive political identities.

Literature Review

Thus far, in the U.S. context, it is political scientists and political psychologists who have examined parents' relationships to the political identities of their children. Their approach has largely been quantitative where they have hypothesized causal mechanisms by which parents transmit political ideologies and political party identification to their children with a focus on the relative weight of cohort, life cycle, or socialization effects. Mostly, these studies have tested the strength and longevity of Bandura's social learning model as applied to the acquisition of political behavior (e.g., Jennings and Niemi 1974; Verba, Schlozman, and Burns 2005) or develop new political socialization models (e.g., Beck and Jennings 1991; Sears and Funk 1999; Westholm 1999; McIntosh, Hart, and Youniss 2007), some of which broaden the analysis beyond the family context to examine more macro environmental factors that work to constrain or enable transmission (e.g., Beck and Jennings 1991; Sears and Funk 1999; Verba, Schlozman, and Burns 2005). Included in the latter is the sociological work of Ojeda and Hatemi (2015) which focuses on the importance of children's agency in both perceiving and adopting the political party identification of their parents (see also: McDevitt and Chaffee 2002). Within this body of literature, qualitative studies are extremely rare, as are those studying adult children, and those that have focused on the intergenerational transmission of political ideology to women in the U.S. are now also dated, examining the impact of patriarchal family structures on the transmission of specific personality characteristics and gender role identifications found to be compatible with feminist political orientations (e.g., Acock and Bengston 1978; Kelly and Boutilier 1978; Fowlkes 1992).

If we look to studies of identity in social movement literature, we also find little on the social construction of political identities in relation to activists' interpretation of their elders' political legacies. Even updating the discredited notion that activists become radicalized simply as disaffected youth mobilized in opposition to the conservatism of parents or authority figures, social movement scholars, including those in feminist sociology, have paid little attention to the social construction of intergenerational transmission of political ideologies and capital within the context of contemporary U.S. feminist movements. Instead, there are important examinations of the persistence or decline of the adoption of "feminist" as a political identity among American women (Kamen 1991; Schnittker, Freese, and Powell 2003); studies of the deployment of motherhood as a politicized identity for recruitment and identification within U.S. social movement activism (Capdevila 2000; Reger 2001); as well as a good deal of writing that analyzes the political and philosophical tensions between American "feminist generations," including a well-populated literature on the rise of "third-wave" U.S. feminism and the perspectives of "third-wave" feminist activists (e.g., Dicker and Piepmeier 2003; Gillis, Howie, and Munford 2007; Dean 2009). While feminist activists, themselves, have published anthologies from "inside" the U.S. third-wave that construct "third-wave" identities often in relationship to notions of "foremothers" of the first- and second-waves (Findlen 1995; Walker 1995; Baumgartner and Richards 2000; Hernan-

dez and Rehman 2002; Heywood and Drake 2002), American feminist sociologists have not taken up social scientific analyses of third-wave perspectives, or analyses of generational differences in the activism and ideologies of second- and third-wave participants.

There is a small handful of feminist empirical work that crosses the boundaries of history, literary criticism, and sociology that examines the political identity construction of American second-wave activists in relation to elders. Ruth Rosen (2006) is among those feminist historians who have chronicled the rise of the modern U.S. feminist movement, and in doing so, documents the identity crises among predominantly White, economically-privileged, and well-educated young women of the 1960s who came into feminist activism in opposition to what they perceived to be the suffocating and unfulfilling lives of their oppressed mothers. In addition, Astrid Henry (2004) has extensively studied the metaphors of family and generation, and particularly mother-daughter tropes in U.S. second- and third-wave feminist movements. With some notable exceptions, Henry, a literary critic, focuses on the rhetorical use of language of family, generation, feminist historical figures, and "waves" of feminist movements themselves, as "mothers" and "grandmothers," in the construction of what we could call an American feminist collective memory. While Henry's work attends to the intergenerational transmission of political capital, in the main, her work does not examine how feminist women in the United States call on the actual elders, as opposed to metaphorical ones, in their own lives and families as they narrate their political trajectories. Moreover, Henry's sources of data are the writings of prominent American feminist leaders and not rank-and-file feminist activists, as is the case in this project. Finally, sociologist Beth Schneider (1988), while problematizing the concept of political generation as gendered, references the work of feminist sociologist Alice Rossi whose own 1982 work interviewing activist women at the historic 1977 Houston Conference in the southwestern state of Texas found call backs to progressive mothers and grandmothers as activists documented their paths into feminist politics. Published nearly 30 years ago, Schneider's work urged future researchers to further investigate these kinds of feminist genealogical linkages. Yet, to date, there appears to be not much sociological work that has done so.

Methods

In picking up the baton to explore how aging second-wave activists in the U.S. narrate their political legacies, I rely on data collected as part of a larger qualitative study examining a range of dimensions characteristic of a kind of shared political consciousness among aging feminist activists in the U.S. (see: Foster 2015). The project utilizes 33 in-depth, semi-structured interviews of women who identified as radical, womanist, feminist, a women's rights activist or otherwise as a woman committed to women's freedom, and active in some strand of the American women's movement from the 1960s to the 1980s in a way that was sustained, including women who were regular volunteers of womanist/feminist organizations or networks, members of nationalist liberation organizations or networks, regular participants in direct actions, women's initiatives, consciousness-raising groups, feminist

collectives or radical community institutions, or volunteer providers of direct service from womanist/feminist perspectives, among other forms of political work. Respondents were initially recruited into the study through convenience sampling of contacts in my own feminist activist networks, followed by a snowball sampling strategy. Almost half in the sample were from the greater New York City area, another 40 percent from the San Francisco Bay area, and the remaining 10 percent from other regions of the U.S. The median age was 68. Five women were not White, and of those, two were Black women, two Latinas, and one women who identified as "mixed ancestry." Approximately 30 percent identified as ethnically Jewish women. Just over 25 percent identified as lesbians at the time of the interview. The majority grew up in the middle-classes; almost all had at least some college, with two-thirds holding advanced degrees; and almost three-quarters held careers in the professions for some or most of their working lives. Half were retired or on disability, almost all remained active in some kind of feminist issue work, and about half did so through social movement organizations. Most activists engaged in more than one kind of strategy, though some were singularly or primarily focused on one general kind of engagement, such as consciousness-raising work, or building an alternative women's culture, or working within the established political structure to bring about legislative change.

The majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in women's homes, their offices, coffee houses, or libraries. One quarter of the interviews were conducted over the phone, and one over email due to the constraints of international travel. In-person and phone interviews ranged anywhere from an hour to five hours, with the average length being approximately two hours. The interview questions were open-ended and included, among others, questions about their experiences in the women's movement; their memories of how they first became engaged in the feminist movement; what they thought was possible for the women's movement to achieve in their lifetime; their recollections of their early years of radicalization, and their sense of the ways in which, for them, the meaning of feminism has changed or not over time. Additionally, I asked participants to reflect back and share their characterizations of their families of origin and the extent to which their elders were politicized themselves. I did not ask direct questions about their perceptions of the impact of elders' political engagement or political views on their own paths to feminist activism, but rather allowed those assessments to emerge organically. All interviews were recorded with a hand-held digital recording device, transcribed by professional transcriptionists, coded manually using a quasi-grounded theory method of qualitative data analysis, and pseudonyms were assigned to all respondents to protect their privacy. In analyzing the interview data, I took sociologist Lynn Davidman's (2000) assertion that accounts of the past are neither the actual experiences of the respondents, nor accurate accounts of others, but instead are the respondents' interpretation of these events and people. Likewise, I approached the interview data with the understanding that the interviews, themselves, were social interactions whereby the interviewer and interviewee, together, constructed a sense of ourselves in relation to

each other, and to our communities, as we engaged in them, and so, too, as I make sense of them here.

Findings

There were a range of themes that emerged in the interviews that confirm what social scientists already know about women's involvement in the U.S. second-wave. Not surprisingly given previous research in history and sociology on women's paths into the movement (see: Freeman 1973; Rosen 2006), for almost all participants, they recall their introduction to the women's movement in ways that evoke the psychological and emotional impact of the "moral shocks" of sexism (Goodwin and Jasper 2009). Also not unexpected, many participants found their way to the movement as a result of changing consciousness after participation in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement or Third World Liberation or New Left—a process that social movement scholars call "movement spillover." For sure, some respondents discussed their fears of turning into their mothers, women whom they felt were trapped in the 1950s cult of domesticity, or who sought to break from the authority of patriarchal fathers and family arrangements at a time of national youth rebellion and uprising—also a common explanation in social movement literature. Yet, while all these forces were at play to some degree in the narratives shared by the participants, what is not well-documented in the social movement literature is the extent to which feminist movement participants, themselves, attribute their eventual participation in the movement not in opposition to parents, but as an outcome of their early political socialization by close elders. In fact, overall, half of the women in my sample perceive their development of a feminist consciousness directly or indirectly linked to feminist or otherwise progressive parents and elders along a continuum of political engagement. Among those, three kinds of political capital narratives emerged that I explore below. First, for some women, their narratives of their early lives and their paths towards radicalization deployed stories of direct links to mothers and grandmothers who were active in feminist politics, or a kind of "explicit transmission origin story." The second narrative trajectory, which was the modal narrative strategy used by activists in this study, relied on what I call "bridge narratives" of parents or elders who were significant in their politicization of the respondents in their progressive politics, though not feminist politics, per se. Finally, in the third, activists shared a kind of implicit transmission narrative that I call a "paradox plot." Here, respondents construct their current feminist political identity by calling on elders who were simultaneously apolitical, but also exhibited personal qualities that respondents could deploy as evidence of roots of their own radicalization.

"Raised on Righteous Indignation": Explicit Transmission Origin Stories

Although not the modal pattern in the interviews, several respondents narrated their political legacies in direct relation to their mother or grandmother's explicit involvement in U.S. feminist movements in such a way that respondents articulated a kind of political cultural capital they inherited as a result of their ancestry. For example, Tricia, a 62-year-old Latina who teaches at a community college in

Northern California, is also the daughter of a late, well-known feminist socialist activist put under FBI surveillance for her radical political activities, and traces her own commitment back to her mother's deep involvement in the movement. "Raised on righteous indignation," she says, "I got my grounding from my mom…I was raised to challenge…I remember her taking me in a sleeping bag as a baby and she would put me in the back of the meeting room and they would have whatever lecture they would have and then she would wake me up and take me home…So, it was really in the food I ate, the air I breathed." Tricia goes on to recall a particularly defining moment in her early teenage years when she vividly remembers her mother arranging for her to speak at an abortion rights rally:

> An "aha" moment for me was when my mom was fighting for *Roe vs. Wade* [the U.S. Supreme Court 1973 ruling that decriminalized abortion] and I remember there were many, many meetings with women and she encouraged me and I was very young. I was like a young teen and she encouraged me to go to the podium and to talk about my support around that and it's so, I remember thinking, as a child, I can't even call myself a young adult…well, yes, I support a woman's right to her, to, I mean, this is my body…And there was a moment there of… me being acknowledged as a young woman saying, "This is my body!"

Tricia also shares her clear sense that her mother "wanted to raise me in a way that really spoke to feminism and all the best things of feminism and raising a strong daughter," including direct involvement in Tricia's own budding activism:

> [W]hen I was in high school…we were demonstrating to be able to wear pants. [My mom] would help me. I created leaflets…and she would help me create these. So they raided my locker at school, and took all my flyers and they called my mother in and she was very proud. So, me and my little activist self with my mom's support…even though it was a very difficult…time.

Ultimately, Tricia, more than any other respondent, articulates her perception of a direct transmission between her feminist mother's activism and her own, as well as her belief that this kind of legacy is more widely shared:

> She was a walking historian…and she had a wonderful library of books by and about women internationally, globally. I loved to talk to her about…women's issues, and I did grow up and teach women's studies and I could always go back to the oracle because she was so well-read…My mom gave me opportunities… and gave me…the power of my body, and gave me… the ability to question, she gave me foundations and that they can't take away from me even though…the government broke my mom in terms of everything that was done around her and to her…I think that the legacy is that, when our mom's or elder women embody that struggle…that in one way or another, we get it; you know, we breathe it in and we get it.

Though without quite the same level of perception of direct lineage, Debra, a 65-year-old White woman, retired from a career as a chemistry-trained corporate lawyer, but active in National Organization for Women [NOW] politics in the U.S. Northeast, explains her political identity in relation to a politically active feminist grandmother:

> My mother would tell me stories [about my grandmother who was a suffragist]…My mother knew Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter, Harriet Blackwell, very well. She lived with her family for a while…I think I just always knew these stories with my grandmother. In her papers, there is a note that one of the Pankhursts was coming to the country, and would my grandmother show her around…And there was a big fight in [The National Women's Party]…My grandmother was on the losing side. According to her, if Alice Paul had done her right, we would have the Equal Rights Amendment. You kind of have to know my grandmother. Very Victorian woman. I think she wore stockings and a girdle every day of her life…When they were having a fight [at the NWP], grandmother was leaving the office and there was some fears they might smuggle papers out. Apparently, and I have no idea whether this is true or not, Alice Paul said to her, "Are you taking anything?" and my grandmother just said, "Search me." And, of course, Alice Paul didn't, and, of course, my grandmother had the papers stuck right in her girdle…So that's what I grew up with.

These kinds of narratives of "explicit transmission" of feminist values and family histories that explicitly link respondents to both the second- and the first-wave of feminist mass mobilization in the United States emerge in the interviews as political identity "origin stories" that can carry political capital for activists in the current period as they negotiate who they are in the present.

"I Don't Think She Would Call Herself a Feminist, But": Constructing Bridge Legacies

While these explicit transmission narratives were compelling, most women in the sample did not have such narratives of mothers, grandmothers, or other elders who were active in explicitly feminist political struggles. This is not surprising perhaps given, among other factors, the span of time between the mass mobilization of the first- and second-wave feminist movements in the United States. Instead, the most common discursive strategy, one used by approximately a third of the interviewees, involved the construction of "bridge" narratives that linked respondents' understandings of their elders' progressive political activity, though not feminist movement engagement, and their own lives in the women's movement, past or present. Among these kinds of "bridge" narratives were stories of respondents' mothers who were perceived by their daughters as feminist women, but for whom "feminist" was not an identity that their mothers would have claimed themselves. For example, Miriam, now a lawyer and healthcare advocate living in the American Midwest, but raised on the east coast in a middle-class White family, describes the ways in which both her parents were participants in progressive political activism during her childhood, and links their actions to her feminist movement participation. She explains, "My mother made me involved politically. My mother took me to the Chase Manhattan Bank to picket in [an affluent town on] Long Island [in New York State] because of Apartheid. [She] was on Dr. King's march and took me on my first anti-war march. My mother was always doing stuff." Miriam also credits her father, also a lawyer, as well as the overall political climate of the era, when she says:

> My father dabbled in some civil rights stuff pro bono…but did a lot of appellate work. He was a lawyer's lawyer, wrote a lot of briefs...I have a picture of

> my father with Dr. King…My parents hosted a dinner for Dr. King in 1965…I mean, I sort of grew up in that environment and, you know, was involved in anti-war stuff and civil rights stuff in high school.

For example, Ellen, a 60-year-old White, heterosexually married policy researcher, also from the American Midwest and now living in the San Francisco Bay Area, and formerly a member of a feminist socialist party and radical woman's collective talks about the impact of her novelist mom, who she says did not identify as a feminist nor was active in feminist movements, was published by The Feminist Press:

> My mother was a writer and she won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1935 when she was very young… it's actually been republished by The Feminist Press. She was somewhat on the kind of fringes of the communist party and socialist party and she would do things and they were kind of cultivating her because of her at the time being well-known. She did articles that…covered strikes…I think she had the basic sense that women should have these greater opportunities and I think that her relationship with my father was somewhat unusual in the sense that she had this career that he respected, and that was like a bit already unusual in a sense. [As I got older,] I would talk to her about feminism and I would think that she had a fundamental appreciation for it, but I am not sure if she saw herself as feminist, even though I think she was very flattered that The Feminist Press wanted to [publish her work].

Ellen goes on to relay her awareness that her own views transpired at least in some measure in the context of her parents' politicized environment, which she says

> had an enormous effect on our family. I think I grew up with a somewhat different sense of what were the opportunities for women. I remember in sixth grade or something and I guess we were supposed to debate something and I took the position that women should be president. And I have no idea—I mean, why did I think that? I am not completely sure, but obviously there was something sort of there.

Ruth, a White, Jewish, and practicing therapist in a suburb of New York City, who was once deeply involved in feminist collective living and an early reproductive justice activist and women's culture worker, shares a bridge narrative with similar contours as Ellen and explains:

> My mother was a feminist born in 1908. And she was a feminist in the 20s and 30s, I guess. She was very politically active, but that wasn't the form of her feminism. I think her feminism took more social and cultural forms, such as refusing to let men pay for her in the 20s. And she was an artist. One of the earliest paintings she sold was a self-portrait that was right after the publication of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. She named her portrait, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*, and just that statement, the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman*, had a, you know, a bit of an in-your-face quality. She was, in general, radical in many different ways.

At the same time, Ruth's father, who was a nationally-known American criminologist, "was the head of the union at the secretariat, which he helped or-

ganize…for everybody from the janitors up through the secretary general during [anti-communist U.S. Senator Joseph] McCarthy. He and all the leadership were fired…and he could no longer work because his work had all been government work. So he went to work in his family business, and we fled the country."

Julia, straight, married, White woman in her late 60s who works as a school psychologist for kids with special needs, said:

> My mom was very active. [She ran a gift store] and was an artist and did backdrops for museums. And she would go by the Indian reservations...And buy their stuff and sell it in the store...She'd let kids sweep the store, and, you know, trade for a present for mom. Stuff like that. So she's very community minded...She liked to call herself a humanist. So we always liked to think that. Because it includes feminism. And I say that because that's kind of how I mostly identify myself.

Julia also describes how her father "was in the socialist liberal party, some of it was based on workers' rights, and the equal rights for people; social justice issues…so I spent a lot of time when my father was up in the city with a lot of left wing socialists." Similarly, Christine, a 78-year-old White lesbian also from the Midwestern region of the U.S., and semi-retired photographer and oral historian who lives in an assisted living community in the San Francisco Bay Area, and was a member of the influential Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) once jailed for her civil rights activism, credits her own passion for justice to her humanist and politically active mother who, while maintaining a conservative position around gender norms, wrote for a liberal religious newspaper and worked successfully to integrate women into the ministry. She says of her mother:

> She was how I first learned feminism. Absolutely. And she was a major leader in the different Unitarian churches. She was like the first chairman of the board of the Unitarian Church who was a woman, and she went on to be an organizer for the district of Unitarian Churches. And even earlier than that, when I was like in about sixth grade, she was a member of the United World Federalists which supported the United Nations. And at one point there was a newspaper article in the [Midwestern U.S. city] newspaper that was basically calling her a communist for—and this was in the 50s—for supporting the United Nations and for being a member of the United World Federalists. And that was scary.

Christine goes on to say that, unlike her father, her mother was "an activist liberal" and "so she was always for interracial stuff, racial justice…And she also raised me with very positive statements about Jewish people." She says, too, that her mother connected her social justice through art, which is her current relationship to activism:

> Well, my mother was an artist. Her brother was a famous artist. Their father did a lot of photographing of us. So art, you know, I grew up with a lot of art in my house and the visual, yeah, the visual arts was highly regarded and highly valued in my family. So to see a way that you could use visual art and have it

> be a part of fighting for justice, wow, that was irresistible. And then, you see, by the time I learned photography and we're in the early 70s, I've been an activist for ten years and I'm tired of going to meetings. And I figured out that I could be a part of the movement and make a significant contribution and not have to go to so many meetings. Well, I took pictures of my roommates—that was one of the first…Just photographing women was radical.

Aside from explicit links to feminist mothers, or otherwise progressively politically engaged elders, a good portion of the sample of women narrate links to families where parents "would not call themselves feminists, but" where humanist values were prominent, even if elders were not politically active, per se. Here, adult children tell of mothers or fathers who, at least in a general sense, expressed some threads of a liberal political philosophy such that the daughters would say it instilled in them an early sense of their own, and of women's, essential value. For example, Sylvia describes herself as from a "working-class family…steel family, working to middle-class. My father was the first one who boot strapped out of the working-class, his dad had been a coal miner. Although mother, I think was a feminist in her own way, she never gave into my dad, who…would get enraged about things and…go raging around the house." When Sylvia got kicked out of the Girl Scouts for being a non-compliant girl, "[m]y mother was so mad, so she said, well, we will start our troop, and it was a troop for girls who wanted to do things…not for girls who wanted to sit around and listen to somebody, you know, to talk about sewing." Sylvia also narrates the role of her liberal feminist father and his impact on her own liberal feminist orientation:

> I remember my dad saying [to his friend,] "My daughter is just as good as a boy," and I am thinking to myself, "Just as good as a boy," I am just as good as a boy. The fact that he had to defend being as good as a boy was one thing. And the second thing I realized…I spent…the next 20, 30 years of my life being as good as a boy, that I was going to live up to that expectation of my dad, so I would be as good as a boy. And I think that was a huge influence and the fact that my father and mother allowed me…but encouraged me to do boy kind of activities…And I think that's part of what gave me this idea as a woman I can do anything I want…I think that's what [feminism is] really about…being as good as a man, and my dad, I think what my dad said to his friend was right…having as good a life as a man, and…being able to enjoy life and not being held back by being a woman.

Likewise, Sarah, a middle-class, White, lesbian lawyer from the New York City area who now works in the employment protections field, though formerly very active in women's music culture and activism, narrates the influence of her mother this way:

> It's funny, my mother would tell me stories about being active in this girls' club because they had the Boys' Club and Girls' Clubs when she was growing up. She grew up in [an urban, working-class suburb of New York City,] and I grew up on a farm, and so was strong in that sense, very strong personality. But, I don't think she would call herself a feminist, per se, but saw women's value. [Her daughters] were sort of like the first generation to go to college.

These narratives are akin to those shared by Sofia, a Latina from a working-class immigrant back-

ground who rose to national power within the liberal feminist wings of the movement and eventually transitioned to a long career in a powerful government post advocating for women's rights nationally and globally, who talks about the legacy of her dad as a liberal school teacher who also owned a bookshop and wrote for a [liberal] newspaper. Consequently, Sofia now understands her own trajectory as that of a kid who grew up surrounded by intellectuals with progressive ideas. In the same way, Sharon, a 62-year-old White lesbian in the computer science field, originally from a working-class family in the Midwest, and with a long history in liberal feminist politics in the Midwestern state where she now lives, narrates the influence of her father who "was…in the unions. He was a union bricklayer. So I was always up to date on union activities and why unions were a good thing to have for workers and things like that."

Unlike the family stories shared by activists sharing direct transmission narratives, then, respondents here could not call on knowledge of elders with explicit ties to feminist movements or feminist identities, but nonetheless came to understand their own political identities as descendant from the progressive politics of both mothers, as well as fathers, and also grandparents in some cases. Among these "bridge legacy" stories are those that rely on recollections of clear political engagement with civil rights, labor, or third world liberation politics, as well as those that rely on recollections of more general humanist values that shaped elders' worldviews, even in the absence of political activism.

"Caught Between Independence, Feminism, and Traditionalism": Narrating Legacies of Paradox

Finally, a third narrative strategy involved the invocation of a legacy of paradox, or "paradox plots," where respondents characterized their mothers and other women elders as women who inhabited characteristically subordinate, apolitical, or even anti-feminist positions, but simultaneously conveyed some message of strength or resilience that daughters connected to their own paths to feminism. Angie, a single, straight, White woman from California with years in the corporate management positions and with a history in liberal feminist activism, shares a narrative about her mother's paradoxical qualities of strength and subordination when she says:

> I had been raised by a woman who was caught between independence, feminism, and traditionalism—there's no other way to say that…with very mixed messages. And my mother came from dirt, poor, fifth out of 11 Irish, not Catholic, but…women did all the work, you know, traditional household, and grandma scrubbed the floors in the bank during the depression to feed eleven and grandpa worked in the steel factory, and my mother did everything and saw her brothers get all kinds of perks and freedoms she didn't.

Angie goes on to say that although she thought of her mother as a rebel, her maternal grandparents considered her mother

> a fallen woman because she insisted on…and having some advantages of being able to move and send some money home instead of staying there until she

> got married…and so it was it, her wits and her looks and her independence that got her the life she wanted when she married my father who moved her out into a brand new suburb in the 50s. My mother had [said to me that] I want you to go to college. So, the first message was you're really, really, really smart, but never let a man know that because they don't like it...[and] my mother's idea of a great part-time job if you're going to have kids was to be a school teacher. You would be a stewardess for five years, then you become a school teacher and you're off with your kids in the summer.

Similarly, Barbara, a straight, Jewish professor from the middle-class in a Northeastern U.S. city who was active in early mobilizations of consciousness-raising book groups, says:

> It's hard to explain, but [my mother] was political and not political. I can remember there were people down the street from us that I knew who taught at the university and she talked about people being "pink." And one day some guys came to our door to ask about them…and political movements and I remember my mother dummying up about everything and saying nothing and something about being "pink." She was a 1950s housewife, but she was very politically savvy and very interested in politics.

Then there is Toni, also a professor, and a straight, African-American woman living in the New York City area with years of experience in anti-racist feminist community organizing, who says,

> So my mom and her sister, Aunt Joyce, my feminist aunt as I called her, raised all of us sort of together. Whenever Aunt Joyce would move, Momma would move so we could be near her. Even though my mother was the elder. So she was sort of like a model for me. I saw all the talent and stuff she had very young. They had no political analysis of what that meant, they had no political analysis of—all I just knew, I didn't feel right…Working hard, not making hardly any money, with no protections or anything like that because, you know, domestics were not included in social security until the late 60s. But, you know, we were always cool. We weren't hungry. We always had nice, clean clothes.

Finally, there is Cara, another professor, this time a White lesbian woman teaching in California and from the working-classes of San Francisco, who turns to her history as a daughter of a single mother as the start of her interest in politics. She narrates how her Italian mother, married to an Irish police officer who was a batterer, lost everything in divorce proceedings that also forced her mother back into a difficult labor market:

> The things [my mother] articulated about…I wouldn't have articulated as feminist until I went to college. My mom was always supportive. She never articulated the word feminist, but she didn't say she wasn't one, which is important. In a way, my mother was way progressive than the other women. I think she was a reader. Always wanted an education, but was never able to get one.

In contrast to the previous direction transmission and bridge themes, the tenor of the family legacy threads shared here is one of paradox as respondents understand their elders as clearly constrained

by, or perhaps even sympathetic to, patriarchal norms, beliefs, and values, but also as ancestors who possessed other qualities or experiences that respondents construct as consistent with their own identities as feminist activists.

Discussion

The recollections shared by aging American second-wave activists suggest three distinct kinds of genealogical narratives that have both empirical and theoretical implications for sociologists interested in the social construction of memory and identity more broadly, and the intergenerational transmission of political legacy more specifically. At the most fundamental level, the respondents deploy explicit transmission origin stories, bridge legacy narratives, and implicit transmission paradox plots in ways that could be understood as an element or strategy of political identity performance. As I have described above, the narratives of explicit transmission of political capital are such that respondents make use of memory and perception of elders that had overt and direct ties to feminist movement politics, and do so in such a way that these recollections help contribute to a sense of feminist political capital for daughters and granddaughters in the current period, and assist in the social construction of in-group membership over the course of generations. Narratives of "bridging" are ones that respondents called on to connect their own experiences in U.S. feminist movements to the political activism of elders that was not expressly feminist, but nonetheless was recounted as offering a pathway or a bridge from one time, place, and political context to another in a way that made ideological sense for adult daughters and granddaughters. Finally, "paradox plots" are those narratives that rely on discursive efforts that call on recollections of elders' political or social life to construct a legacy borne of elders whom respondents understood to be apolitical, or even anti-feminist, yet at the same time somehow among the bearers of an implicit or indirect spark for their descendants' later feminist activism.

Empirically, these three family history narratives make two major contributions. First, these findings confirm previous social movement scholarship that has rejected assumptions that those who protested were immature, psychologically disturbed, irrational people, or entitled youth raging against elders, both significant and generalized ones. For sure, the dominant narrative in U.S. feminist movement history, and arguably in the popular culture, is that American women found their way to feminist mobilizations clearly in opposition to their parents' conservative political ideologies and life choices, including their parents' treatment of them as girl children. To be clear, this is a narrative I do not dispute. However, the accounts of one's lineage explored here indicated that in the "early making" of feminist activists, it seems that an equally plausible route to feminist activism is in the attempt to create a line to, and not just diverge from, the larger values and beliefs of one's parents and grandparents. For example, as we have seen, unlike the findings in the literature on the deployment of mother-daughter generational tropes in the writings of prominent U.S. feminist activists of the second- and third- wave, activists in this study did not narrate the political legacies they inherited from their actual mothers, grandmothers, and elders in metaphorical or abstract terms, or as

generalized others, but as significant others who are called on in ways that are deeply personal and simultaneously connect women to a larger tradition of feminist struggle. Here, I do not mean to imply that activists who make use of generational tropes are in some way less genuine in their construction of movement ties, as respondents here are engaging in the discursive arts as well, but of a different kind, and ones that have been largely missing in the scholarly literature in feminist and social movement studies.

Second, and more generally, these findings also help contribute the weight of empirical evidence for cognitive sociological investigations of what cognitive sociologists might call the phenomenon of "mnemonic genealogical traditions" (Zerubavel 2012). If, indeed, the dominant narrative of the transmission of American feminist politics, even in the study of intergenerational tropes, has been that the daughters reject their mothers and other elders to forge a new set of identities in opposition, then the social processes of "remembering together," or the collective practices of calling up the past, that have been foregrounded in our scholarship have focused on a taken-for-granted reality of "genealogical discontinuity" (Zerubavel 2012), with little empirical data on practices of continuity. Yet, here, respondents discursively tie their current social locations as feminist movement actors to the orientations of the mothers, grandmothers, and progressive elders, albeit in various ways with explicit transmission origin stories, bridge narratives, and paradox plots, each evidence of the ways in which individuals actively construct a sense of affiliation with, and not break from, familial groups that lend a sense of belonging and perhaps even political capital.

As these empirical contributions suggest, the narratives also help develop key concepts in both social movement theory and cognitive sociological theory. First, in social movement theory in particular, "[p]rotest is no longer seen as a compensation for some lack, but part of an effort to impose cognitive meaning on the world, to forge a personal collective identity, to define and pursue collective interests, and to create or reinforce affective bonds with others" (Goodwin and Jasper 2009:58). Subsequently, along with work that now theorizes how these mechanisms work in relation to the process of initial movement recruitment, these findings suggest that we might also begin to explore these same processes in relation to movement participation not only over the life course of activists engaged for the long haul, but also in the context of identity construction for activists who have long since exited the movement and search for ways to make sense of themselves and their contributions years later. For example, in the social movement literature, notions of "movement spillover" (see: Goodwin and Jasper 2009) and the processes by which initial participation in one movement crosses over into participation in another could be extended to our understanding of the ways in which intergenerational transmission of political values can also transcend singular movements. As previous literature and my own research here confirms, many second-wave feminist activists, particularly those in socialist and radical streams of the movement, first became politicized during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and Third World liberationist movements. Yet, in their call backs to politicized

and not-so politicized elders, respondents suggest that not only does political engagement "spillover" from generation to the next as adult children make sense of their parents' and grandparents' political commitments, but engagement in distinct movements can "spillover" into new movements in subsequent generations as well, as in the case of the respondents whose elders were actively involved in radical labor politics.

In addition, social movement theorists have also paid close attention to what they have called "biographical availability" in the social movement recruitment process, meaning the extent to which the demands of individuals' work and family and related obligations make them more or less able to devote the time and energy into social movement activity (McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam 1986). The findings here suggest we might expand this concept of biographical availability to include the symbolic realm whereby movement participants construct a sense of their own biography as one made possible by the biographies of their parents' or other elders. As I have described, this discursive biographical influence of elders can be narrated along a "continuum of genealogical availability" that makes possible, if not activists' own direct participation, although it may at times, but instead a kind of political identity in the present that we might imagine could also give meaning to their actions and sustain their participation in the future.

Related to this reconceptualization of the notion of biographical availability, second-wave activists I studied narrate political legacies in ways that also speak to Goodwin and Jasper's (2009) analysis of the importance of the subjective and affective dimensions of social networks and social ties for the building and sustaining of social movements. While previous scholars, such as Freeman (1973) in her groundbreaking study of the origin of the women's movement and D'Emilio (1983) in his equally significant examination of the gay liberation movement, paved the way for explorations of the role of networks and social ties to the extent that they serve as the locus of recruitment and communication, Goodwin and Jasper (2009:12) argue that "emotions…are the real life blood of networks: people respond to the information they receive through networks because of the affective ties to those in the network." Given this, it is reasonable to also suggest that social movements expand and are sustained not just across time, but also across generations as activists call on affective ties as they enter movements, justify their continuance movement activity, cope with movement fatigue, or search for purpose in their political commitments past and present.

Moreover, in the same way that network theorists teach us that direct personal contacts to social movement actors are critical as they "allow organizers and potential participants to 'align' their 'frames,' to achieve a common definition of a social problem and a common prescription for solving it" (Goodwin and Jasper 2009:56), I might argue that the narratives here are useful in that they shed light on the ways in which social movement actors make use of a sort of "retro frame analysis" to align their current identities with political actors in the past in ways that give meaning to their experiences, and, in this case, to engage in identity work that further extends the life of the movement in the symbolic or

cultural realm. Consequently, as social movement scholars continue to theorize and consider the role of social networks and the extent to which access to networks, within a movement and across movements, can lead to movement participation, these narratives here beg the question about how we can think more broadly about affective ties and movement participation and identity. As Goodwin and Jasper (2009:56) put it, the social movement focus on networks is not mutually exclusive from analysis of culture and identity as networks are "important *because* of the cultural meanings they transmit."

Indeed, it is the meanings that people give to the past that is at the heart of a cognitive sociological approach to history, biography, and memory, and it would be these meanings, and the social practices of constructing these meanings of ancestral legacy, that would be most interesting to cognitive sociologists in any treatment of intergenerational transmission of political identities, and arguably the most theoretically important contribution of the findings here. Again, as Zerubavel (2012: 24) articulates, the social practices of constructing narratives of lineage, origins, and pedigree remind us that "[a]ncestry and descent play a critical role in the way we structure intergenerational transmission of both material and symbolic forms of capital. We thus inherit not only our ancestors' property but also their social status and reputation." In this way, the political legacy narratives of second-wave activists in this study fundamentally challenge theoretical notions that the social processes by which political capital, as well as orientations and identities, are simply "handed down" objectively from parents to children in a linear or calculative way via causal mechanisms that can be quantified rather than actively co-constructed by younger generations in symbolic interactions, imagined or otherwise, with their elders. Although it is true that recent scholarship in sociology (see: Ojeda and Hatemi 2015) has revitalized a conversation in political communication studies about long-standing assumptions of linearity by examining the agency that children have in interpreting the political party affiliations of their parents, the work falls outside the bounds of an interpretive framework that could illuminate precise discursive strategies that adult children use to create their own genealogical realities. Yet, these narratives here encourage us to think about whether there are patterned ways in which activists "perform" their political identities as aging feminist activists through, at least, the three distinct biographical narratives I have mapped out here. If so, these findings can further articulate Zerubavel's concept of biographical continuity itself, beyond whatever empirical contributions the narratives might indicate.

Ultimately, the findings here push our thinking about what kinds of identity strategies might be constitutive of the symbolic dimensions of political capital transmission, and political reproduction more generally. These empirical and theoretical contributions together reveal the possibility that there might exist a set of patterned, and ideal typical (Weber 1947) discursive practices of constructing biographical continuity whereby not only "oppositional narratives," but also explicit transmission origin stories, bridge legacies, and paradox plots are among important identity strategies that political activists call on to sustain themselves, and, by extension, social

movements. More specifically, we can understand these types of political capital constructions as positioned along a continuum of elder's social distance from the political movement affiliation of adult children, as perceived by the adult children themselves. In this way, the "oppositional narratives" already well-documented in the literature exist on one end of the continuum and are characterized by perceptions that one's elders' political ideology or engagement ran counter to their own political philosophy such that they were spurred on to resist their elders' worldview in their own political activism. On the other end of the continuum are "explicit transmission narratives" characterized by perceptions that one's elders' political ideologies, as well as political engagement were instead largely consistent with their own social movement participation. In between these ideal poles are "bridge narratives" and "paradox plots" characterized by the extent to which respondents perceived their elders' political commitments approached overt feminist movement engagement. "Bridge narratives" are those narratives that convey political capital by suggesting that elders' had a clear affinity with, but were not overtly committed to, the political movement goals of the adult children, while "paradox plots" convey political capital by suggesting that even despite the indicators that elders may have been indifferent to, or perhaps even in opposition to feminist movement goals, elders' possessed qualities that adult children consider consistent with their own political identity as they understand it in their later years.

At the same time, these contributions should be evaluated through the lens of the limits of the research design. As is characteristic of the constraints of qualitative research more broadly, the findings generated here can only be generalized to the larger population of American second-wave activists with extreme caution and qualification. In addition, while the sample population included variations on the demographic variables of age, social class, and racial-ethnic, religious, and sexual identity, the range of variation was not wide enough for a meaningful analysis of the extent to which the intersections of structural inequalities, and women's lived experiences negotiating multiple identities, may shape the social construction of political legacies for the women interviewed here. In this regard, the findings should be interpreted with careful consideration, and might be best understand as disproportionately reflective of the discursive practices of predominantly White, working- and middle-class American women.

Conclusion

Throughout this work, I have explored how aging second-wave feminist activists in the U.S. socially construct a sense of their elders' feminist political legacies, including the transmission of feminist political capital, in such a way that we might begin to think about a "mnemonic tradition" or "genealogical imagination" unique to the construction of identity for this cohort of feminist activists in particular, and perhaps applicable to the construction of political identities more broadly. By identifying three distinct practices of biographical continuity, namely, the deployment of explicit transmission origin stories, bridge narratives, and paradox plots, this exploration adds to the growing body of empirical work in social movement research that aims to bridge structural and cultural components of movement participation

by focusing on perceptions and emotions of participants, in this case, the perceptions of a generation of feminist activists who have yet to be fully studied in this stage of their life course, and extends our theoretical understanding of important social movement concepts, such as movement spillover, biographical availability, and frame analysis. This work also fills important empirical and theoretical gaps in our understanding of the discursive practices that are constitutive of memory and identity in the case of political activism. Importantly, not only are we offered a window into the use of these practices by women in a particular social-historical movement context that has yet to be explored by cognitive sociology, but the narratives can point the way towards a better understanding of how political actors call on elders for political capital, encouraging us not only to think differently about the direction of transmission of political legacy, but the kinds of distinct identity practices that move beyond assumptions that activists inevitably develop their sense of their political selves in opposition to those elders. Future research might continue to explore a wider range of identity practices of continuity and discontinuity in the context of political legacy and capital within this cohort of feminist activists, broadening the lens to examine these processes with greater complexity than I have been able to do so here, particularly with respect to the dynamics of race, class, sexuality, and age, as well as across movements to better understand the generalizability of these patterns. As it stands, I have nonetheless also endeavored to provide a cultural and political space for aging American feminist women themselves to co-construct a legacy of the second-wave for future generations of activists, and in doing so, give meaning, myself, to some shared history constructed through a search for my own pedigree.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Sarah McGrail for her research assistance, as well as Diditi Mitra, Jennifer Myhre, Eviatar Zerubavel, and *QSR* anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this manuscript.

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