

University of Northern Colorado

Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC

Master's Theses

Student Work

8-1-2010

"F" word: An exploration of feminist identity in undergraduate students

Emily Michelle Hedstrom-Lieser
University of Northern Colorado

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digscholarship.unco.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Hedstrom-Lieser, Emily Michelle, "'F' word: An exploration of feminist identity in undergraduate students" (2010). *Master's Theses*. 37.
<https://digscholarship.unco.edu/theses/37>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. For more information, please contact Nicole.Webber@unco.edu.

©2010

EMILY MICHELLE HEDSTROM-LIESER

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

THE “F” WORD: AN EXPLORATION OF FEMINIST
IDENTITY IN UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Emily M. Hedstrom-Lieser

College of Humanities and Social Sciences
School of Sociology
Social Science: Applied Sociological Practice

August, 2010

This Thesis by: Emily M. Hedstrom-Lieser

Entitled: *The “F” Word: An Exploration of Feminist Identity in Undergraduate Students*

has been approved as meeting the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in
College of Humanities and Social Sciences in School of Sociology, Program of Social
Science: Applied Sociological Practice

Accepted by the Thesis Committee:

Mark Riddle, Ph.D., Chair

Angela Henderson, Ph.D., Committee Member

Accepted by the Graduate School

Robbyn R. Wacker, Ph.D.
Assistant Vice President for Research
Dean of the Graduate School & International Admissions

ABSTRACT

Hedstrom-Lieser, Emily M. *The “F” Word: An Exploration of Feminist Identity among Undergraduate Students*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2010.

While the majority of women living in the U.S. agree with feminist inspired goals, few claim a feminist identity. This study explored predictors of feminist identification in a sample of 233 undergraduate women at a mid-western university in the Rocky Mountain region. Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify themes, and scales were assembled for use in OLS regression. Significant predictors of feminist identification included believing in the relevance of feminism in contemporary social issues, current exposure to feminism, support for feminist goals and ideals and recognition of women’s differential access to resources. Research findings suggest that current exposure to feminism in the external sphere (e.g. academics, social settings) is more significant than exposure within family experiences. Findings indicate that relating to feminism currently is more significant in predicting a feminist identity than past exposure.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Historical Perspective	
	Contemporary Feminism	
	Research Questions	
II.	REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
III.	METHODOLOGY.....	20
	Sample	
	Pilot	
	Measures	
	Procedure	
IV.	RESULTS.....	24
V.	DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	27
	Significant Predictors of Feminist Identity	
	Implications	
	Limitations	
	Suggestions for Future Research	
	REFERENCES.....	35
	APPENDIX A	
	Informed Consent for Participation in Research.....	40
	APPENDIX B	
	Feminism Survey.....	42

APPENDIX C

Predictors of Feminist Identity Corresponding Items.....	45
--	----

LIST OF TABLES

Table I	Age of Respondents Breakdown.....	21
Table II	Regression Coefficients.....	25

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Women's Rights Movement created an opportunity for discourse and dialogue about oppression, inequality and choice. Women's increased access to resources, the professional world, and reproductive options is a result of struggles faced by women of the past, who used their voices to challenge injustice and exclusion. Despite these advances, women continue to face oppression in contemporary society, with its sexist, racist, homophobic and ageist tendencies. One might imagine contemporary women identifying with feminists of the past, and joining hands to address the oppressive "isms" that remain, but women's roles are complicated by notions of identity politics and difference. Many women are hesitant to claim a feminist identity, and exercise caution in the decision to align with ideology or activism labeled "feminist." Feminism itself remains something of a moving target, characterized by division, separation, and individualism, which hinder the possibility of a cohesive movement.

While some aspects of one's identity are well-formed by the time a student arrives on a college campus, the educational process serves to highlight the political consequences of identity choices, and the development of the "sociological imagination" (named by sociologists, but working in other guises in other disciplines) helps put those

personal choices in a larger context. Why do some women students choose to think of themselves as feminist while others do not?

Is it possible to rally contemporary women college students to engage in social activism related to the women's movement? Can we re-define feminism by understanding how feminist identities come to be? Finally, can an inclusive definition of feminism be created that recognizes and encompasses the differences among us?

The stigma associated with feminism (Olson et al. 2008), as well as the long-standing fragmentation within the Women's Rights Movement based upon race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and other cultural identities, have resulted in "feminisms" which, while standing at some distance from core feminist values, are anathema to modern women. The result is a general agreement with feminist-inspired goals (e.g., access to education), with a concurrent misunderstanding of "feminism" and distancing from all things "feminist." Only (approximately) 25 to 33 percent of women in the United States claim a feminist identity (Huddy, Neely and Lafay 2000). Despite the continued progress within the feminist movement, inclusivity continues to be a problem. More specifically, the different identities of women within the feminist movement, such as those related to race, class, sexual orientation, ability, age, and marital status, are either ignored or held high as banners, which does not further the goals of unity: neither the early feminist practice of (unconsciously) rolling all women into a singular category, nor the postmodern recognition of multiple intersecting identities result in fertile ground for large-scale feminist activity.

Reductionist notions posit a singular, monolithic "woman-ness," while members of marginalized communities advocate a more nuanced, complex, *woman*. Division

within the movement has largely been the result of apprehension and discomfort surrounding fixed definitions of “woman” and “feminist” (Martin 1994). The consequent competition between groups for resources and recognition has made feminism its own worst enemy. Without collective consciousness among feminists, movement efforts have halted, leaving feminist issues on the back burner. Many women and men continue to distance themselves from feminism for various reasons, including stigma, resentment, stereotypes, or even a basic misunderstanding of feminism at its core.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

First-Wave Women's Liberation Movement

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a time in which the first-wave of the Women's Rights Movement was gaining momentum, with early movement efforts only addressing the concerns of an elite few. Suffrage, or gaining the right to vote, was primarily a concern among white, upper class women. As white women were fighting for the right to exercise their voices in the democratic system, so too were black men. Because of the shared goal, white women were able to transcend their gender and black men their race to work alongside one another. However, while white women were fighting for a voice in the public and private spheres, black women were experiencing a very different world—one in which they were only steps away from slavery (1992a). Voting was not the only concern for white women; financial emancipation, reproductive control and choice, and protesting the existing institution of marriage as woman's fate also captured these elite women's imaginations. However, suffrage allowed for two very different positions in the structure to unite—the white woman with race privilege and gender disadvantage, and the black man with gender privilege and racial disadvantage.

Furthermore, the agenda of the white women resulted in frequent instances of racism, classism and homophobia.

Although many white women within the movement were abolitionists, the struggles that white women and black men faced together did not eliminate observable tension as a result of racism and sexism. Schneir (1992:xx) notes, “Suffrage was not won through a consciousness-raising *feminist* struggle, but through a *political* battle, fought on terms defined by men within the male strongholds of the Congress and state legislatures” (emphasis original). In 1868, the fourteenth amendment passed, giving black men the right to vote, demonstrating the immense male privilege allotted even to black men and their ability to work within the male-defined structure more efficiently than women. The support for black male suffrage while at the same time denying women’s right to vote demonstrated the depth of sexism, “a sexism that was at that brief moment in American history greater than their racism” (hooks 1981). As a result, the feminist forces split into two factions, each with its own leadership and focus (Schneir 1992). It was not until 52 years later that the nineteenth amendment passed, giving women the right to vote in 1920. This event was among one of the earliest divisions in the existing unity of the Women’s Rights Movement, igniting subsequent fragmentation (Buechler 1990). Furthermore, after the right to vote was achieved, the movement was “left with no unifying goal” (Taylor 1989:763).

Second-Wave Women’s Rights Movement

The English translation of Simone De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in 1953, as well as the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, marked a turning point in the Women’s Rights Movement, contributing to second-wave feminism. Women

in the U.S. began to re-identify and re-evaluate the systemic oppression and their role as women in society. These literary works were a catalyst for consciousness-raising sessions, one goal of which was to lead women to the realization that they were not alone in their struggle. Individual and private “psychological distress,” as it was frequently labeled, was subjected to scrutiny within these groups, and women became increasingly aware that their personal distress was shared, related to power differentials, and rooted in the patriarchal structure (De Beauvoir 1989; Friedan 2001). As a result, women became gender conscious in new ways, fueling second-wave feminism in the 1960s.

The second-wave of the Women’s Rights Movement marked notable advancements in social change, as it was an historical time of political and social resistance. The Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum, shedding light on the social institutions of racism and classism. Simultaneously members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community were making waves in the Gay Rights Movement. These concurrent movements complicated notions of “feminism,” as did the various cultural identities with which one could affiliate. The definition of “woman” became increasingly convoluted, calling attention to the unstated assumption of “white, middle or upper class, heterosexual woman” hidden within the concept of *women* by which the movement was defined (Poster 1995; Schneir 1994). As a result of activism within various groups, complicating notions of what is “woman” emerged. Essentialist ideas about “woman-ness” did not recognize multiple cultural identities, forcing women to choose one category with which they would identify. As essentialist notions of “woman-ness” (a uni-dimensional view of woman) became increasingly more evident, so too did

the resistance from “other woman” categories who felt they did not fit within the limiting scope of “woman” (Martin 1994).

CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM

Several researchers have noted that the majority of women in the U.S. support at least some or all of the goals of feminism, though few identify as feminist (approximately one quarter to one third) (Huddy et al. 2000). Furthermore, research suggests that 75 percent of women believe that women’s status has improved in the past twenty-five years (Boxer 1997). Due to the stigma attached to feminist stereotypes and a lack of understanding of feminism, women and men distance themselves from embracing feminist identity, believing that we are beyond “feminism” or that “feminist” ideology no longer applies. Meanwhile, in the contemporary moment, women make less than 80 percent of their male counterparts’ wages, have unequal access to health care, and are overrepresented below the poverty line, all of which demonstrate a continued need for feminism.

Many scholars have explored the notion of the “third-wave” (Jacob and Licona 2005; Kinser 2004; Lotz 2003), specifically through an historical perspective of movement tension. According to Jacob and Licona (2005), consistent with the second-wave, visibility of feminism within the larger social context continues to be of the woman who is white, middle class and most likely heterosexual, suggesting that not only are we not beyond “feminism” itself, we still remain within a space of movement tension and separation based upon identity politics.

While the need for progress in these areas remains, social pressure discourages the recruitment of new activists. Faludi (1991) noted patterns of social regression in the

feminist movement as a result of the negative stigma associated with feminism, the belief that “feminism” no longer applies, and falsely blaming feminism for larger social problems. The resulting negative attitudes towards feminism and feminist identification have enabled a decrease in collective action, further contributing to the stagnation of the Women’s Rights Movement. Researchers have noted that feminist identification predicts collectivism and collective action (Duncan 1999; Henderson-King and Stewart 1999; Liss et al. 2001; Liss, Crawford and Popp 2004; Nelson et al. 2008; Olson et al. 2008; Reid and Purcell 2004; Williams and Wittig 1997; Zucker 2004), but fewer people willing to identify with feminism likely means fewer people to engage in the struggle against sexism.

The common belief that we are beyond “feminism,” as well as the apparently decreasing rates of feminist identification, demonstrates a need for a greater understanding of how attitudes toward feminism discourage or encourage feminist identification. In addition, it is necessary to understand the role exposure has in attitude development toward feminism and what life experiences disable or enable a feminist identity. The purpose of this study was to explore individual attitudes about, as well as exposure to, feminism, while examining what contributes to a feminist identity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Q1 What effect does exposure to feminism have on individuals’ attitudes toward feminist ideals?
- Q2 What effect do attitudes have on feminist identity?
- Q3 What effect does exposure to feminism have on feminist identity, independent of feminist ideals?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Identification with Feminism (or feminist collective action) continues to be highly stigmatized. Women fear being associated with the various negative stereotypes assigned to feminists. This fear is fueled by the negative feminist typification reinforced by both women and men in the dominant culture and surrounding subcultures, which use negatively associated images and messages of feminists and feminism (Olson et al. 2008). Olson draws from Susan Douglas (1995) to detail these images and messages. According to Douglas (1995:62), commonly held stereotypes about feminists personify them as “shrill, overly aggressive, man-hating, ball-busting, selfish, hairy, extremist, deliberately unattractive women with absolutely no sense of humor who see sexism at every turn.” While young women’s exposure to the liberalizing forces of education (which brings attention to patriarchy’s hidden dynamics) could be expected to result in college women choosing a feminist identity, exposure to negative feminist images and messages may serve to counteract those activist-creating experiences at this stage of life, just at the time when many are deciding whether to claim or denounce a feminist identity.

Olson et al. (2008) interviewed women and men regarding their attitudes and opinions of feminists (questions included, “What is the stereotypical image of a feminist?” “Do you engage in feminist behavior?” and “What thoughts or opinions do

you have about feminists that we haven't brought up?"), and subsequently identified and analyzed "embracing" versus "denouncing" language. Findings indicate that participants responded in four distinct ways: 1) embracing, 2) denouncing, 3) reframing, and 4) resisting (Olson et al. 2008). The use of denouncing language (expressed acceptance of ideals and identity while rejecting the feminist label) and reframing language (reflected positions that accepted the principle of equal rights from the second-wave, but rejected a more specific feminist identity as well as a feminist label) demonstrate the degree to which the negative images and stereotypes complicate notions of what it means to be a feminist among women. According to Olson et al. (2008), denouncing language included belief in feminism itself, while rejecting the limiting feminist label. Conversely, reframing language includes a demonstrated acceptance of women's rights, but a rejection of feminism and feminist identity. "Rejecting" feminist identification maintains distance between the self and feminism, but allows acceptance of feminist-inspired ideals and principles (Liss et al. 2004; Olson et al. 2008; Purnell 2006). In addition, research findings provide an indication of the significance of the larger social structure, including social and political atmospheres, in identity construction. The study supports previous research findings that delineate the impact of a patriarchal society on identity development. Specifically, a patriarchal structure can silence individuals who claim a feminist identity and resist mainstream ideologies, while encouraging negative feminist ascriptions (Olson et al. 2008; Rakow and Wackwitz 2004).

Rates of feminist identification have remained stable and low, with approximately one quarter to one third of American women adopting the label, despite increased support for women's rights and feminist ideological principles (Huddy et al. 2000; Reid and

Purcell 2004). Furthermore, researchers have noted the media's role in contributing to the belief that feminism is "dead" through images that encourage a belief that we are in a "post-feminist" state (Aronson 2003). The fragmentation of the second-wave Women's Rights Movement has further complicated notions of feminism, leading to convoluted definitions of what it means to be a feminist. The result is problematic for female psyches in that a heightened consciousness regarding the plight of women is clouded by a false belief in a state of equality, which is characterized by false consciousness. Additional research findings indicate that women in college are strong supporters of feminist ideals, however are reluctant to claim a feminist identity because of a belief that women can be successful as individuals rather than as a group (Renzetti 1987).

As a new generation of feminists has emerged, significant distinctions have been identified in what academia refers to as "third-wave" feminism (Archer Mann and Huffman 2005; Lotz 2003). According to Archer Mann and Huffman (2005), the intent of the second-wave movement was to unify and create a sense of *we-ness*. However, reminiscent of the first- and second-waves, the "third-wave" continued to address issues and concerns specific to the white, upper-middle class, heterosexual woman and has been criticized for its lack of inclusion and marginalization of the "other." Fragmentation continues to reinforce conflict and confusion about what it means to be a feminist. Moreover, various theoretical and philosophical approaches to understanding and addressing gender inequality, such as liberal feminism, Marxist/socialist feminism, radical feminism, womanism, and multicultural feminism, contribute to the lack of an inclusive definition of feminism and feminist activism (Archer Mann and Huffman 2005; Purnell 2006). Scholars have suggested that while it is necessary to engage in discourse

surrounding the various feminist theoretical approaches and perspectives, these discussions are frequently cut short by the confusion and contradiction in the multiple understandings of third-wave feminism (Lotz 2003). Although “third-wave feminism is said to explicably embrace hybridity, contradiction, and multiple identities (particularly ‘connections between racial, sexual and gender identities’),” historical notions of feminism continue to complicate an inclusive atmosphere (Aronson 2003:905).

In an effort to gain a better understanding of feminism and feminist identity in the contemporary moment, scholars have attempted to create operational definitions of feminism by identifying its primary components. Reid and Purcell (2004) define feminism consistently with Gurin (1985) and Duncan (1999) as “politicized gender consciousness which is characterized by the following elements: a) a sense of interdependence and shared fate with other women, b) recognition of women’s relatively low status and power compared to men, c) attribution of power differentials to illegitimate sources, such as institutionalized sexism, and d) an orientation toward collective action to improve women’s position in society” (Reid and Purcell 2004:749-750). Additionally, they posit that gender consciousness is not alone sufficient for feminist identification. In addition to politicized gender consciousness, individuals must hold positive (or at least not hold negative) opinions and views toward the “feminist” social group (Duncan 1999; Gurin 1985; Henderson-King and Stewart 1999; Reid and Purcell 2004; Williams and Wittig 1997).

Academia remains the primary site for increased gender consciousness, and the opportunity to engage in discourse and dialogue surrounding feminism and its ideological principles. Several studies have suggested that women, exposed to feminism through

coursework in college or through various social networks, later claim a stronger feminist identity (Duncan 1999; Henderson-King and Stewart 1999; Williams and Wittig 1997). Furthermore, the success of second-wave feminism has been linked to its strong institutional base in academia, particularly in Women's Studies programs (Aronson 2003). Despite the success of grounding feminism in the academic context, the movement has received significant backlash from various social outlets. Specifically, this is observable in the common belief that feminism is dead (Faludi 1991). According to Sigel (1996), feminism has been marked by ambivalence, wherein women commonly believe that feminists have taken movement efforts and women's liberation 'too far.' She proposes that, as a result, feminism has been harmful to the overall relationship with men (Sigel 1996).

Previous research has addressed changes in feminist consciousness as a result of exposure through Women's Studies coursework at the college level (Henderson-King and Stewart 1999). However, research had not addressed the specific ways in which coursework enables heightened feminist consciousness. Reid and Purcell (2004) proposed that as feminist exposure increases, a politicized gender consciousness concurrently increases, mediating the relationship between exposure and identification. Furthermore, life experiences outside of the classroom (social exposure to feminists) affect personal knowledge of feminism, leading to a heightened gender consciousness (Williams and Wittig 1997). Williams and Wittig (1997) found that respondents with more previous feminist exposure reported stronger feminist identities than did respondents with less previous exposure to feminism. Although research findings support a positive correlation between previous exposure to feminism and a self-proclaimed feminist identity, the

psychological pathways through which exposure facilitates self-identification remain unclear. Research findings from Reid and Purcell (2004) support their hypothesis that attitudes pertinent to politicized gender consciousness mediate the relationship between feminist exposure and feminist identification. Particularly, strength of feminist identity was predicted by past feminist exposure, which was associated with an increased sense of the common fate of women, as well as less-negative evaluations of feminists. To address racial and ethnic differences in claiming a feminist identity, researchers focused efforts on examining attitudes toward feminists as opposed to willingness to identify as feminist (Reid and Purcell 2004).

Henderson-King and Stewart (1999) assessed changes in feminist consciousness as a result of increased exposure through Women's Studies coursework at the college level. Researchers have conceptualized feminist consciousness as including "self-identification (as a feminist), holding feminist beliefs and values, having a variety of emotional responses (e.g., anger at sexism, pride in women), and bringing a feminist analysis to a variety of contexts" (Henderson-King and Stewart 1999:391). Research findings suggest that Women's Studies coursework during the undergraduate college experience strengthens feminist identity in college women (Bargad and Hyde 1991; Henderson-King and Stewart 1999). To determine the effectiveness of Women's Studies courses on women's feminist consciousness, Henderson-King and Stewart (1999) examined feminist consciousness at the beginning and end of the semester in two groups of students, one that completed an Introduction to Women's Studies course and one that did not take the course but expressed interest in taking an Introduction to Women's Studies course.

Researchers hypothesized that feminist consciousness would increase throughout the semester for female participants who took the course, particularly in terms of increased feminist political beliefs, greater sensitivity to sexism, a stronger feminist identification, and generally, would experience more positive feelings toward a feminist social group (Henderson-King and Stewart 1999). To control for variation between target courses and instructors, researchers selected introductory courses that had no significant variation in content or instructor. Results were consistent with the researchers' hypothesis, indicating a strong positive correlation between Women's Studies coursework and heightened feminist consciousness, supporting previous findings that suggest a positive correlation between exposure to feminism and feminist identity development (Bargad and Hyde 1991; Reid and Purcell 2004; Williams and Wittig 1997). Women's Studies course curriculum typically presents feminist ideological principles, though philosophical or theoretical orientation may vary. Furthermore, students are frequently encouraged to relate the structural information to their personal lives, which also contributes to a heightened awareness of gender and structural inequality (Macalister 1999).

Dabrowski (1985) administered surveys to undergraduate and graduate students that were enrolled in a Women's Studies course and those that were not enrolled in a Women's Studies course. The purpose of the study was to explore the "assumption that there is a relationship between positive attitudes toward feminists and exposure to university courses on feminism" (Dabrowski 1985:79). Results indicate that there are factors both within and outside of the academic setting that may promote positive attitudes toward feminism. Furthermore, findings suggest that having formal feminist

education is only one of the avenues to raise feminist consciousness and promote positive views of feminism.

In an exploration of predictors of pro-feminist orientation, Williams and Wittig (1997) asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “I am not a feminist, but I support feminist goals,” as well as willingness to self-proclaim a feminist identity in social environments. In addition, they examined the following: support for feminist goals and ideological principles, positive evaluation of feminists, belief in and support for collective action (including the Women’s Rights Movement), recognition of discrimination against women, and exposure to feminism and feminist thought. Researchers further hypothesized that women would be more likely to score higher than men on all of the above listed feminist identifiers. Williams and Wittig (1997) used the Morgan (1996) Liberal Feminist Attitude and Ideology Scale (LFAIS) to measure support for feminist goals, as well as collective action. Findings indicate that 63 percent of respondents were in support of feminist goals but did not self-identify as feminist, while 25 percent identified as feminists (Williams and Wittig 1997). Findings are consistent with previous research, which suggests that approximately 25-33 percent of American women adopt the label “feminist” (Huddy et al. 2000). Furthermore, there continues to be a significant level of stigma in adopting the feminist label as part of one’s identity (Olson et. al. 2008; Purnell 2006; Williams and Wittig 1997). Much of the stigma associated with feminism is a result of associating feminists with common negative stereotypes (Purnell 2006), such as man-hating women responsible for increased divorce rates and the demise of the traditional family (Olson et al. 2008). According to Williams and Wittig (1997), evaluation of feminists is significant in determining one’s willingness to identify

with feminism, particularly because of the fear associated with the negative connotations assigned to feminists.

Researchers explored a sixth predictor of feminist identity, in addition to the five predictors proposed by Williams and Wittig (1997). The sixth predictor, recognition of discrimination against women, was not found to be a significant predictor of feminist identification (Myaskovsky and Wittig 1997). Additionally, consistent with previous research, findings indicate a significant discrepancy in those that agree with feminist goals but will not publicly identify as feminist. Results also suggest that a large majority of college women support specific goals of feminism.

Individuals who claim a feminist identity not only risk being associated with the negative stereotypes associated with feminism, they also risk social marginalization. Zucker (2004) explored the significance of age in disavowing or claiming feminist identity in women. Findings indicate that involvement in feminism is much higher for women who came of age during or after the second wave feminist movement. The older women in the sample were not only less likely to adopt the feminist label, but also were less likely to “experience favorable conditions for feminism” (Zucker 2004:431). In addition, results indicate that exposure to feminism through various avenues is related to feminist identity.

Identifying common predictors is a foundation in determining what creates and sustains a feminist identity. Downing and Roush (1985) propose that women go through multiple stages of feminist identification and collective action (Downing and Roush 1985; Liss et al. 2001). The first stage is passive acceptance, in which individuals accept and believe in traditional roles and ascribe to the idea that men are superior. Next is the

revelation stage, which is characterized by open questioning of self and roles. In this stage, all, or most, men are perceived as negative. Thirdly, women pass through the embeddedness-emanation stage, which is identified by connectedness with other women and an affirmation and strengthening of the newfound feminist identity. The penultimate stage is synthesis, wherein the development of an authentic and positive feminist identity is developed and women are able to transcend traditional roles while evaluating men on an individual basis. The final stage is active commitment, in which a consolidation of feminist identity occurs, and a true commitment to meaningful action to create a non-sexist world emerges. Contrary to their hypothesis, predicting that feminist identification would be greatest in the synthesis stage of development, research findings suggest that feminist self-identification is greatest in the revelation and embeddedness stages (the stages in which women immerse themselves in communities of select other women) (Liss et al. 2001; Liss et al. 2004).

Using the Rickard (1989) Feminist Identity Scale and the Henley et al. (1998) Feminist Perspective Scale, Liss et al. (2004) assessed feminist self-labeling, collective behaviors, life experiences and gender collectivity in female undergraduate students. Research indicated that both life experiences with feminist exposure and identification with liberal feminism were positively correlated with collective activism (Liss et al. 2004; Nelson et al. 2008).

Due to recruitment methods (participants were obtained from psychology courses at two liberal arts colleges), Nelson et al. (2008) found an unusually high rate of feminist self-identification in the research sample than the general population. Overall, participants reported positive views of feminism and feminists as a social group.

Additional research findings indicate that life experiences (including exposure to feminism) predicted feminist beliefs, which in turn predicted feminist self-identification. Feminist self-identification, in turn, predicted participation in collective action (Duncan 1999; Nelson et al. 2008). In addition to positive previous feminist life experiences predicting a feminist identity, Nelson et al. (2008) found that positive feminist life experiences will also predict collective action.

The purpose of identifying connections between feminist identity and social collective action is to gain a deeper understanding of the contribution of a feminist identity to participation in activities that promote social change. Additionally, this assists understanding the ways in which reluctance to claim a feminist identity either disables activism or enables participation in non-activist groups. However, as outlined previously, the stigma associated with feminism creates conflict in those who might otherwise claim a feminist identity, which may in turn promote non-activist group participation (Aronson 2003; Lotz 2003; Olson et al. 2008; Purnell 2006). As previous research suggests, feminist identity predicts collective action. Therefore, the stigma attached to feminism is problematic for feminist activism, as stigma perpetuates the conflict surroundings one's decision to claim or denounce a feminist identity.

Significant connections have been made between exposure and feminist identity, attitudes toward feminists as a social group and feminist identity, and feminist identity and collective action. Current research has identified the effects of exposure to feminism on feminist identity (both previous and current). Subsequent research has identified links between attitudes toward feminism and feminist identity, as well as feminist identity as a predictor of collective action. The purpose of this study was to explore previous/past

feminist exposure, current exposure, as well attitudes toward feminism as predictors of feminist identity in undergraduate students at the University of Northern Colorado.

Furthermore, this study examines identifiers of variables that have been noted in previous research findings.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the predictors of feminist identity in college students at the University of Northern Colorado, including exposure to and attitudes toward feminist goals. The research design is a survey-based, quantitative study that regresses current attitudes toward feminism and feminist identity on measures of exposure to feminism (both previous and current), the nature of exposure to feminism itself (positive or negative), and exposure to feminist ideological principles or scenarios that would be aligned with these ideological principles.

SAMPLE

A total of 307 undergraduate students currently attending the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) were surveyed. Male respondents were dropped from data analysis. Additional respondents were dropped from data analysis due to missing data. Of the remaining 233 surveys, the median age of respondents was 20 years old. Just under three quarters of respondents were under the age of 21. Age of respondents is delineated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Age of Respondents Breakdown

Age	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
18	41	17.8	17.8
19	73	31.7	49.6
20	50	21.7	71.3
21	28	12.2	83.5
22	15	6.5	90
23	10	4.3	94.3
24+	13	1.3	100
Missing			
Total	233		

The sample consisted of students enrolled in and attending courses at UNC.

Participants were recruited from upper- and lower-division Women's Studies, Sociology and Anthropology courses. Liberal arts disciplines were selected for this study because they had increased odds of offering courses in which exposure to feminism and feminist ideological principles would be more likely to occur. More specifically, the purpose of using these courses was to determine whether academic avenues of current exposure to feminism are a predictor of feminist identity.

PILOT

Approximately 20 undergraduate students at the University of Northern Colorado were asked to participate in the pilot study. Participants were asked to fill out the Feminism Survey, and provide any feedback that would be beneficial in finalizing the instrument. Students gave suggestions for modifications, which reduced redundancy of questions, improved question wording, and resulted in improved layout of the paper form. The survey was modified based upon participant suggestions.

MEASURES

Instrument

A Likert-style quantitative instrument of 53 items was used to measure attitudes toward feminism and feminist ideals, previous and current exposure to feminism, and feminist identification. Items were adopted from Singleton and Christiansen (1977), the Liberal Feminist Attitude and Ideology Scale (Morgan 1996), the Social Identity-Specific Collectivism (SISCOL) (Reid 2004), Reid and Purcell (2004), and the Gender Attitudes Survey (Johnson, Johnson and Scheuble N.d.).

Attitudes toward Feminism

Items assessing attitudes toward feminism include questions about the Women's Rights Movement ("The Women's Rights Movement is still relevant to today's social concerns"), gender equality ("Women and men should have access to the same job opportunities" "Women in the United States are treated as second class citizens" and "Gender Equality is a worthwhile goal"), and ideological principles of feminism ("It is okay for a woman to keep her original name after getting married" "I am pro-choice when it comes to abortion" and "Women should be able to make choices freely without being restricted by their gender").

Exposure to Feminism

Exposure items included past experiences in one's family ("My mother did not take my father's last name" "Growing up, I only played with 'gender appropriate' toys" "My mother is/was a feminist" and "My mother worked outside of the home"), current experiences within social settings ("I could name 2 individuals who consider themselves feminists" "I prefer to spend my free time with other feminists" and "Members of my

social group consider themselves feminists”), and experiences with systemic sexism (“I have witnessed gender discrimination in the workplace” and “Women in the United States are treated as second class citizens”).

Feminist Identification

The final set of questions assessed feminist identity or identification, including willingness to identify as a feminist to others (“I would call myself a feminist in the presence of others”), importance of feminism (“Being a feminist is central to who I am”), and self-identification (“I consider myself a feminist”).

PROCEDURE

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Northern Colorado, the researcher obtained permission from professors and instructors currently teaching Women’s Studies, Sociology, and Anthropology courses to recruit classroom participants for the study. The researcher attended classes on various days in the academic week, taking place at differing times (morning and afternoon) to administer the “Feminism Survey” to students. Participants were informed that the research was intended to gain a better understanding of feminism at the University of Northern Colorado. They were informed that their surveys were anonymous and confidential, that their participation was voluntary and not linked in any way to their academic course, and that they could discontinue participation at any time. Students were also given informed consent containing all pertinent information regarding the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Exploratory factor analysis was applied to the (53) items on the survey using SPSS. Six factors emerged, accounting for 95% of the variance, and they corresponded (generally) to the logic used in creating or choosing the items¹. Questions with factor loading coefficients less than 0.7 in absolute value were removed, and confirmatory factor analysis was applied to the remaining (25) items. Cronbach's alpha was in excess of 0.7 for each factor, except for the feminist identity scale, which had an alpha of 0.49.

The Cronbach's alphas for scales should be greater than 0.7. This seemed like yet another opportunity to note that there are competing views of what a feminist identity entails. While not mathematically "pure," the questions in the scale represent elements of traditional feminist thought. This project is about contemporary female college students' ambivalence toward feminism, so it seemed as though it would be better to use this imperfect indication of feminist identity than none at all.

The imperfection of the dependent variable suggested that the use of a simple additive scale based on the items might not provide adequate fit to the data. Principal component scores provide optimally-scaled representations of the factors, which take into

¹ Questions about exposure to feminism, initially conceived as a single construct, broke into two factors over the issue of the observation taking place inside or outside the family.

account each subject's response and the variance each item contributes to its corresponding factor. Principal component scores for each subject were computed using SPSS for each of the six factors. The dependent variable, feminist identity, was then regressed on the five independent factors ("a belief in the current relevance of feminism," "support for feminist ideals," "recognition of women's differential access to resources," "previous exposure within the family," and "current external exposure." The adjusted R^2 for the equation was 0.74. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression Coefficients

	B	SE	Beta
Constant	-.11	.03	
Current Relevance	.35	.04	.36*
Feminist Ideals	.20	.04	.20*
Resource Access	.10	.04	.10*
Exposure: Current/External	.52	.04	.52*
Exposure: Family	.03	.04	.03

* $p < 0.01$

As indicated by the table, the largest single effect on feminist identity comes from exposure to feminist ideas from sources external to the family. The effect of exposure to these ideas within the family was not statistically significant. The second most important predictor of claiming a feminist identity is a belief that feminism is currently relevant in society. Women who agreed that feminism continues to be applicable to contemporary social issues were more likely to identify with feminism.

A third significant predictor of feminist identification is a belief in feminist ideals. Specifically, women who agreed with feminist inspired goals and ideological principles

were more likely to claim a feminist identity. The fourth and final predictor of feminist identity in undergraduate college students is recognizing that women have differential access to resources (e.g. access to jobs, education and childcare).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate predictors of feminist identity in undergraduate college students at the University of Northern Colorado. Findings were consistent with previous research findings, which suggest that individuals holding positive attitudes toward feminism and feminist ideals are more likely to identify with feminism (Williams and Wittig 1997). Additionally, findings from this study support previous research findings, which indicate that current exposure to feminism is a predictor of feminist identity in undergraduate college students. Specifically, individuals who completed coursework in Women's Studies, and had a positive experience, are more likely to identify with feminism and feminist ideals (Bargad and Hyde 1991; Duncan 1999; Henderson-King and Stewart 1999; Macalister 1999).

The significance of these variables in predicting feminist identification suggests that, at least in this college population, there are commonalities among feminists, including perceptions about current relevance of feminism, a belief in feminist ideals, and agreement with access to resources for women, and current exposure to feminism.

SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF FEMINIST IDENTITY

Current Exposure to Feminism

Consistent with previous research findings, current exposure was found to be a significant predictor of feminist self-identification. Reid and Purcell (2004) found that as exposure to feminism increases, so too does a politicized gender consciousness. Additionally, as social exposure increases, personal knowledge of feminism also increases, further enabling a heightened gender consciousness (Williams and Wittig 1997). Results from this study suggest that current exposure (both social and academic) is positively correlated with feminist identity in undergraduate students. Additional research assessed exposure through life experiences associated with feminism. Research measures addressed exposure through reading feminist literature, enrollment in a women's studies course, interpersonal relationships, and belonging to any women's groups or organizations (Reid and Purcell 2004). In support of previous research findings, this study found that current life experiences, as well as within the academic context, predict feminist identification. Specifically, this study found that knowing individuals who identify as feminist, associating with others that consider themselves feminist, social activity, witnessing discrimination within professional realms, and women's studies coursework were more likely to identify as feminist than those that have little to no exposure in these social contexts.

Current Relevance of Feminism

Respondents who believed that feminism is relevant in the contemporary moment were more likely to claim a feminist identity than students perceiving feminism to be no longer applicable to contemporary social issues. These findings suggest that those who

claim a feminist identity see a need for continued progress toward feminist goals that have not yet been achieved, specifically, social concerns, gender inequality, violence against women, sexual harassment and the success of feminism. Conversely, individuals who see no current need for feminism or feminist activism may be more inclined to think that issues of gender inequality no longer affect women and men in the present moment. This perspective may be a result of common misconceptions that we are beyond the need for feminism (i.e., gender equality has been achieved) or that feminism is to blame for the breakdown of the traditional nuclear family, or the cause of many of our contemporary social issues, as feminists have taken women's rights "too far" (Faludi 1991; Sigel 1996).

Support for Feminist Ideals

Like previous research findings (Williams and Wittig 1997), students who held a belief in feminist ideals were more likely to identify as feminist. Specifically, respondents that agreed with pro-feminist statements addressing access to job opportunities, freedom of decision making despite gender, reproductive and sexual choices, women in leadership positions, as well as women's influence on American politics, were more likely to identify as feminist. Participants were also asked to provide responses to questions about group belonging and collective action, which included sharing a bond with other women, having a lot in common with other women, and participating in women's rights social group. Those that agreed with statements addressing the above stated issues were also more likely to identify as feminist.

Access to Resources

Recognition of women's differential access to resources was found to be another significant predictor of feminist identity in undergraduate students. Students who agreed

with statements about women's access to child care, men's access versus women's access, and women in contemporary society still being treated as second class citizens were more likely to identify with feminism than those who disagreed.

Family Exposure

Exposure to feminism within family experiences was not found to be a significant predictor of feminist identity, suggesting that experiences earlier in life are not significant, whereas experiences in the current moment are. Previous research (Reid and Purcell 2004; Williams and Wittig 1997) evaluated the strength of feminist identity as a result of previous exposure to feminism. Findings indicate that respondents with more previous exposure to feminism reported stronger feminist identities than did respondents with less exposure to feminism. Although exposure was found to be a predictor of feminist identification, previous research did not specifically address the family's role alone in terms of general family experiences, as well as gender identity construction, as predictors of feminist identity. Rather, research addressed exposure to feminists or feminism within the family (e.g. having individuals in immediate or extended family who identify as feminist) (Reid and Purcell 2004). Furthermore, previous research addressed past exposure to feminism through evaluation of personal, social and course exposure (e.g. familiarity with feminism and friends and family identify as feminist) (Williams and Wittig 1997). This study included items about gender specific behaviors (wearing "gender appropriate" clothing, playing with "gender appropriate" toys and enrolling in "gender specific" electives during school) while previous research did not. Moreover this study asked about life experiences within the family by evaluating traditional versus non-traditional family roles and circumstances.

IMPLICATIONS

Students within the higher education setting, specifically those that are new to the academic experience, enter the college environment with ideas and beliefs consistent with life experiences thus far. Often times, these beliefs are shaped by social influences from the family or peer groups. Despite the role of previous experiences shaping one's identity, experiences within higher education may play a more important role in integrating and synthesizing one's cultural identities, which may be consistent or inconsistent with previous exposure.

Results from this study suggest that feminism must be relevant in the current moment for undergraduate students, and that positive exposure within a contemporary context can encourage feminist identification. Because past exposure was not found to be a significant predictor of feminist identification among students, mentors within the higher education setting can pull from students' current life experiences to encourage heightened gender consciousness. Because students who identified as feminist were more likely to recognize women's differential access to resources while believing that feminism has relevance in critically analyzing contemporary social issues, results can be applied to encourage students who do not identify as feminist to see feminism at the core of these issues. For example, women's access to formal educational (i.e. college) is a feminist issue. Most (if not all) students would agree that women should have access to education. However, those students would most likely not equate this to a feminist issue. We can encourage students who are in our academic classrooms and collegiate social groups to see feminism at the core of their access to higher education. Consequently, using tangible examples about how feminism is interwoven into the fabric of social

instructions in which students are immersed may advance positive views of feminism and feminists.

Through a greater understanding of feminism, students may begin to see feminism within the larger social context. For example, if a student witnesses gender discrimination within the personal or professional spheres, rather than ignoring it or seeing it as an individual problem, they may identify it as part of institutionalized sexism, thereby making it a feminist issue. Through orienting students toward feminism by using what they know, we can encourage positive associations of feminism and feminists.

In addition to engaging positive views of feminists through issues, we can encourage feminist identification among those that align with pro-feminist goals without claiming a feminist identity due to stigma. Previous research findings indicate that many individuals orient themselves toward pro-feminist ideals or goals (belief in access to resources for women, belief in choice, etc.) however, do not identify as feminist (Huddy et al. 2000; Olson et al. 2008; Williams and Wittig 1997; Zucker 2004), suggesting that while many believe in “equal rights,” they do not believe in feminism.

Findings support the notion that continuing to support exposure to feminism within academic contexts may enable heightened gender consciousness, which may encourage collective action among undergraduate students. Additionally, although family exposure itself is not significant in predicting feminist identification, we can use previous experiences as tools to engage dialogue about contemporary issues. For example, traditional experiences within a student’s family history (e.g. mom stayed home, father breadwinner) can be used to as an avenue to engage theoretical ideas such as the “mommy track” and the “resume gap.”

Feminist identification itself is not important for the sake of increasing feminist identities in women. Feminist identification is important in re-aligning movement efforts for women's choice and freedom. While women in contemporary society are still treated as second-class citizens, women within the Women's Rights Movement have been marginalized as "other." Because the college environment has been a space for collective action in the past, we can utilize academia, both in the classroom as well as social groups, to encourage inclusion by redefining feminism. Additionally, encouraging positive views of feminism and feminists may enable students to remove activism from the privileged walls of academia and into the communities that are also affected by the social issues plaguing feminists in the present moment.

LIMITATIONS

The instrument used in this research was developed using items from other research designs. The majority of questions addressed attitudes that can be classified as "liberal feminist" rather than other theoretical feminist approaches (e.g. radical or Marxist feminism). Additionally, because the instrument was created for this study, additional administration and analysis of the survey is necessary to determine reliability. Finally, this study did not have a diverse sample, as the majority of participants were white and under the age of 21.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research specifically explored predictors of claiming a feminist identity among students within a higher education setting. Future research could address lack of exposure to feminism as a predictor of distancing oneself from feminism and feminist ideological principles. Specifically, what actively discourages feminist identification as

opposed to just not identifying as feminist? Additionally, this research study evaluated the relationship between previous exposure to feminism within the family and pro-feminist orientation. Continued research is needed to determine if negative or no exposure (e.g. traditional family experiences) to feminism discourages feminist identification. Furthermore, future research may seek to explore specific accounts of why individuals at the college level denounce a feminist identity while adhering to feminist inspired goals or principles.

Finally, research has addressed the “I’m not a feminist...but,” phenomenon and found that individuals may not identify with feminism because of the stigma and stereotypes about feminism, or even because of a belief that we have moved beyond feminism. Research could explore those individuals who do not claim a feminist identity because of knowledge about historical movement exclusions, and recognition that “feminism” as it has been defined does not include their cultural identifications. What would those individuals discuss regarding agreeing with feminist inspired goals but not aligning with a feminist identity because of the lack of an inclusive definition of feminism?

REFERENCES

- Archer Mann, Susan and Douglas J. Huffman. 2005. "The Decentering of Second-wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave." *Science & Society* 69(1):56-91.
- Aronson, Pamela. 2003. "Feminists or 'Postfeminists'? Young Women's Attitudes toward Feminism and Gender Relations." *Gender & Society* 17(6):903-922.
- Bargad, Adena and Janet S. Hyde. 1991. "Women's Studies: A Study of Feminist Identity Development in Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 15(2):181-201.
- Boxer, Sarah. 1997. "One Casualty of the Women's Rights Movement: Feminism." *New York Times* 14 December. Retrieved June 21, 2010. (<http://www.nytimes.com/1997/12/14/weekinreview/ideas-trends-one-casualty-of-the-women-s-movement-feminism.html?scp=1&sq=sarah%20boxer%20feminism%201997&st=cse>).
- Buechler, Steven M. 1990. *Women's Movements in the United States: Woman Suffrage, Equal Rights, and Beyond*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Dabrowski, Irene. 1985. "Liberating the 'Deviant' Feminist Image Through Education." *Social Behavior and Personality* 13(1):73-81.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. 1989. *The Second Sex*. Edited by H. M. Parshley. New York, NY: Random House.
- Douglas, Susan. 1995. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*. New York, NY: Random House.

- Downing, Nancy. E. and Kristin L. Roush. 1985. "From Passive Acceptance to Active Commitment: A Model of Feminist Identity Development for Women." *Counseling Psychologist* 13(4):695-709.
- Duncan, Lauren E. 1999. "Motivation for Collective Action: Group Consciousness as Mediator of Personality, Life Experiences, and Women's Rights Activism." *Political Psychology* 20(3):611-635.
- Faludi, Susan. 1991. *Backlash: The Undeclared War on American Women*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Friedan, Betty. 2001. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Gurin, Patricia. 1985. "Women's Gender Consciousness." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 49(2):143-163.
- Henderson-King, Donna and Abigail J. Stewart 1999. "Educational Experiences and Shifts in Group Consciousness: Studying Women." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 25(3):390-399.
- Henley, Nancy, M., Karen Meng, Delores O'Brien, William J. McCarthy and Robert J. Sockloskie. (1998). "Developing a Scale to Measure the Diversity of Feminist Attitudes." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 22(3):317-348.
- hooks, bell. (1981). *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Huddy, Leonie, Francis K. Neely and Marilyn R. Lafay. 2000. "The Polls—Trends: Support for the Women's Movement." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64(3):309-350.

- Jacob, Krista and Adela C. Licona. 2005. "Writing the Waves: A Dialogue on the Tools, Tactics, and Tensions of Feminisms and Feminist Practices Over Time and Place." *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 17(1):197-205.
- Johnson, Katherine M., David R. Johnson and Laurie K. Scheuble. N.d. "Measuring Gender Attitudes: A Comparison of Scales in National Surveys." *Department of Sociology: Pennsylvania State University*.
- Kinser, Amber E. 2004. "Negotiating Spaces For/Through Third-Wave Feminism." *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 16(3):124-153.
- Liss, Miriam, Mary Crawford and Danielle Popp. 2004. "Predictors and Correlates of Collective Action." *Sex Roles* 50(11/12):771-779.
- Liss, Miriam, Christy O'Connor, Elena Morosky and Mary Crawford. 2001. "What Makes a Feminist: Predictors and correlates of feminist social identity in college women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 25(2):124-133.
- Lotz, Amanda D. 2003. "Communicating Third-Wave Feminism and New Social Movements: Challenges for the Next Century of Feminist Endeavor." *Women and Language* 26(1):2-9.
- Macalister, Heather E. 1999. "Women's Studies Classes and their Influence on Student Development." *Adolescence* 34(134):283-292.
- Martin, Jane R. 1994. "Methodological Essentialism, False Difference, and Other Dangerous Traps." *Signs* 19(3):630-657.
- Morgan, Betsy L. (1996). "Putting the Feminism into Feminism Scales: Introduction of a Liberal Feminist Attitude and Ideology Scale (LFAIS)." *Sex Roles* 34(5/6):359-390.

- Myaskovsky, Larissa and Michele A. Wittig. 1997. "Predictors of Feminist Social Identity Among College Women." *Sex Roles* 37(11/12):861-883.
- Nelson, Jaclyn A., Miriam Liss, Mindy J. Erchull, Molly M. Hurt, Laura R. Ramsey, Dixie L. Turner and Megan E. Haines (2008). "Identity in Action: Predictors of Feminist Self-Identification and Collective Action." *Sex Roles* 58(9/10):721-728.
- Olson, Loreen N., Tina A. Coffelt, Eileen Berlin Ray, Jill Rudd, Renée Botta, George Ray and Jenifer E. Kopfman. 2008. "'I'm all for equal rights, but don't call me a feminist': Identity Dilemmas in Young Adults' Discursive Representations of Being a Feminist." *Women's Studies in Communication* 31(1):104-132.
- Poster, Winifred R. 1995. "The Challenges and Promises of Class and Racial Diversity in the Women's Movement: A Study of Two Women's Organizations." *Gender and Society* 9(6):659-679.
- Purnell, LaTayna M. 2006. "I Think I am a Feminist: A Study of Feminist Identity Development on Undergraduate College Women." Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Philosophy, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.
- Rakow, Lana F. and Laura A. Wackwitz. (Eds.) 2004. *Feminist Communication Theory: Selections in Context*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press.
- Reid, Anne. 2004. "Social Identity-Specific Collectivism (SISCOL) and Group Behavior." *Self and Identity* 3(4):310-320.
- Reid, Anne and Nuala Purcell. 2004. "Pathways to Feminist Identification." *Sex Roles* 50(11/12):759-769.
- Renzetti, Claire M. 1987. "New Wave or Second Stage? Attitudes of College Women Toward Feminism." *Sex Roles* 16(5/6):265-277.

- Rickard, Kathryn M. (1989). "The Relationship of Self Monitored Dating Behavior to Feminist Identity on the Feminist Identity Scale." *Sex Roles* 20(3/4):213-226.
- Schneir, Miriam. 1992. *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- . 1994. *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Sigel, Roberta A. 1996. *Ambition and Accommodation: How Women View Gender Relations*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Singleton Jr., Royce and John B. Christiansen. 1977. "The Construct Validation of a Shortform Attitudes Toward Feminism Scale." *Sociology & Social Research* 61(3):294-303.
- Taylor, Verta. 1989. "Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance." *American Sociological Review* 54(5):761-775.
- Williams, Rachel and Michele A. Wittig. 1997. "I'm Not a Feminist But...": Factors Contributing to the Discrepancy Between Pro-Feminist Orientation and Feminist Social Identity." *Sex Roles* 37(11/12):885-904.
- Zucker, Alyssa N. 2004. "Disavowing Social Identities: What it Means When Women Say, 'I'm Not a Feminist, But...'" *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 28(4):423-435.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH FEMINISM SURVEY

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: An Exploration of Feminism

Researcher: Emily Hedstrom-Lieser, Applied Sociological Practice, Department of Sociology

Phone Number: e-mail:

Research Advisor: Mark Riddle, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

Phone Number: (970) 351-2374 e-mail: mark.riddle@unco.edu

I am conducting research in an effort to gain a better understanding of feminism at the University of Northern Colorado. As a participant in this research, you will be asked to complete a Feminism Survey. These will be given to you during your regularly scheduled class sometime during the course of the semester. The questionnaire will require you to answer questions about feminism. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

This survey will ask you to fill out your age and gender. Please do not provide your name on the survey. Survey responses will be anonymous. Surveys will be kept confidential. Only the researcher, research advisor and committee will have access to completed surveys. All original surveys will be locked in a secure cabinet located in Candelaria Hall 2040. Risks to the participant are minimal. Participation will not be linked to your performance or grade in the course.

Participation is voluntary and uncompensated. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above information, and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please complete the Feminism Survey if you would like to participate in this research. By completing the survey, you give us permission for your participation. You may keep this form for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

Best Regards,

Emily Hedstrom-Lieser
Applied Sociological Practice
Department of Sociology
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

APPENDIX B
FEMINISM SURVEY

Feminism Survey

[Appendix B]

This survey is designed to gain a better understanding of feminism at the University of Northern Colorado. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may discontinue participation at any time.

Please do not place your name anywhere on this survey.

Survey responses will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation in this study.

Please fill in the bubble corresponding with the answer that most closely fits your position on the statement below.

(SA) Strongly Agree (A) Agree (N) Neutral (D) Disagree and (SD) Strongly Disagree

Age 18 19 20 21 22 23 24+
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Gender M F T
☐ ☐ ☐

	SA	A	N	D	SD		SA	A	N	D	SD
1. The Women's Rights Movement is still relevant to today's social concerns.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	16. My mother did not take my father's last name.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I could name 2 individuals who consider themselves feminists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	17. Growing up, I only played with "gender appropriate" toys.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Women and men should have access to the same job opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	18. I have witnessed gender discrimination in the workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I would be insulted if someone called me a feminist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	19. It is okay for a woman to keep her original name after getting married.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. My mother was the disciplinarian of my family.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	20. My father was the primary wage earner of the home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Men have more choices available than women.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	21. In junior high, I sometimes violated gender rules for clothing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. In junior high school, I took "gender appropriate" electives (i.e. wood shop for boys, home ec. for girls).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	22. I would call myself a feminist, or pro-feminist male, in the presence of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Gender inequality is bigger than treating people fairly in our own lives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	23. I am pro-choice when it comes to abortion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Women in the United States are treated as second-class citizens.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	24. I support legislation that protects women's rights.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Child care should be an employee benefit provided by the employer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	25. Child care should be government supported.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Violence against women is an issue that deserves more attention.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	26. I prefer to spend my free time with other feminists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. My mother is a college graduate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	27. I consider myself religious.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I would participate in a women's rights social group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	28. Growing up, my parents had stereotypical roles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. My father was the primary care provider for the children in my family.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	29. Gender equality is a worthwhile goal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Women should be able to make choices freely without being restricted by their gender.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	30. My peers often made fun of me for my gender inappropriate dress (baggy pants for girls, tight jeans for boys).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	SA	A	N	D	SD		SA	A	N	D	SD
31. Although women can be good leaders, men make better leaders.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	41. I consider myself a feminist or pro-feminist male.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. My mother is/was a feminist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	42. I consider myself spiritual.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. What happens to women in society has an impact on my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	43. My father had final say in all big decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Members of my social group consider themselves feminists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	44. Sexual harassment is a current issue in the workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. Women should have more influence on American politics than they currently have.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	45. My mother worked outside of the home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. Being a feminist is central to who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	46. How many Women's Studies courses have you taken at UNC or elsewhere?	0	1	2	3	4+
37. Feminism is stigmatizing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	47. My experience in Women's Studies classes has been positive.	SA	A	N	D	SD
38. A woman with many sexual partners is automatically a "slut."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	48. Being a feminist is an important reflection of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. I feel a common bond with other feminists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	49. The success of feminists as a group is more important than my own personal success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. I would be interested in joining a feminist club or organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>						

FOR WOMEN ONLY:

	SA	A	N	D	SD
50. Things that are true of my life as a woman are true for most women.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51. I feel that I need to compete with other women for attention from men.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52. Being female means that I have a lot in common with other women.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53. Women share a bond with other women that is stronger than their bond with men.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX C

PREDICTORS OF FEMINIST IDENTITY
CORRESPONDING ITEMS

PREDICTORS OF FEMINIST IDENTITY CORRESPONDING FEMINISM SURVEY ITEMS

CURRENT EXPOSURE TO FEMINISM

The following items addressing current exposure to feminism on the Feminism Survey predicted feminist identity:

- 34. Members of my social group consider themselves feminists.
- 26. I prefer to spend my free time with other feminists.
- 2. I could name 2 individuals who consider themselves feminists.
- 18. I have witnessed gender discrimination in the workplace.
- 27. I consider myself religious.

CURRENT RELEVANCE OF FEMINISM

The following items addressing the current relevance of feminism on the Feminism Survey predicted feminist identity:

- 1. The Women's Rights Movement is still relevant to today's social concerns.
- 29. Gender equality is a worthwhile goal.
- 49. The success of feminists as a group is more important than my own personal success.
- 4. I would be insulted if someone called me a feminist.

SUPPORT FOR FEMINIST IDEALS

The following items addressing support for feminist ideals on the Feminism Survey predicted feminist identity:

- 31. Although women can be good leaders, men make better leaders.
- 3. Women and men should have access to the same job opportunities.

- 19. It is okay for a woman to keep her original name after getting married.
- 23. I am pro-choice when it comes to abortion.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

The following items addressing women's access to resources on the Feminism Survey predicted feminist identity:

- 9. Women in the United States are treated as second-class citizens.
- 6. Men have more choices available to them than women.
- 10. Child care should be an employee benefit provided by the employer.

FAMILY EXPOSURE

The following items addressing support for feminist ideals on the Feminism Survey were not predictors of feminist identity:

- 45. My mother worked outside of the home.
- 28. Growing up, my parents had stereotypical roles.
- 14. My father was the primary care provider for the children in my family.

FEMINIST IDENTITY

The following were dependent variable items on the Feminism Survey addressing feminist identity:

- 22. I would call myself a feminist, or pro-feminist male, in the presence of others.
- 36. Being a feminist is central to who I am.
- 39. I feel a common bond with other feminists.
- 40. I would be interested in joining a feminist club or organization.
- 41. I consider myself a feminist or pro-feminist male.
- 48. Being a feminist is an important reflection of who I am.