

**The impact of feminist stereotypes and sexual identity on feminist self-
identification and collective action**

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Abstract

The present study sought to examine the role of sexual identity and exposure to stereotypes of feminism on women's self-identification as a feminist, endorsement of feminist attitudes, and intention to engage in collective action. Participants (N = 312; all women) disclosed their sexual identity as either heterosexual or non-heterosexual (sexual minority) and were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: exposure to positive stereotypes of feminists, to negative stereotypes of feminists, control condition (no exposure to stereotypes). Results showed stark differences between heterosexual and sexual minority women, with sexual minority women scoring significantly higher on self-identification as feminist, feminist attitudes, and collective action intentions. Exposure to positive stereotypes of feminists increased feminist self-identification regardless of sexual identity. Exposure to negative stereotypes reduced self-identification with feminism, and lower identification mediated the path between negative stereotyping and collective action. Implications of these findings for the advancement of women's rights movements are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Stereotypes, feminism, collective action, identification, LGBTQ+

The women's movement remains active in many parts of the world and the relatively recent development of online activism platforms has changed the dynamics of feminist collective action. Women in Britain have made headlines with their campaigns to cut the tax on sanitary products (Coryton, n.d.) and against the unfair pricing of everyday items (Cocozza, 2016). Coryton's Stop Taxing Periods campaign reached over 320,000 supporters and became a global phenomenon, while more recently the Women's March movement has mobilized millions globally to march for a future of equality, justice and compassion (Collectif Georgette Sand, n.d; Emejulu, 2018). Under pressure from these campaigns, and with the social media spotlight focused keenly on their actions, politicians have been forced to engage with gender equality issues (Mason & Nardelli, 2016). These campaigns have galvanized public interest, received substantial support, and promoted grassroots political campaigning, demonstrating the potential impact of contemporary collective action on behalf of women's issues. However, the number of women in Western societies who do not engage in collective action on behalf of women's rights is still high (Eisele & Stake, 2008; Radke, Hornsey, & Barlow, 2016; Scharff, 2010).

When examining predictors of engagement in collective action, the role of social identification is highlighted (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Self-identification with a specific group has been shown to be highly correlated with collective action on behalf of that group (Nelson et al., 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). This has also emerged in the context of feminism, with research suggesting that women are less likely to engage in collective action on behalf of women's issues if they reject a feminist identity (Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Even if women endorse feminist attitudes and show

support for the goals of the feminist movement, feminist self-identification appears to play a singularly important role in engaging women in feminist collective action (Eisele & Stake, 2008; Moradi, Martin, & Brewster, 2012). Developing our understanding of potential barriers preventing women from adopting a feminist identity is crucial for the advancement of social change.

Our research explores the role of stereotypes concerning feminism as a factor that can enhance or hinder identification with the feminist movement and with collective action in support of women's rights. Specifically, we suggest that negative stereotypes hinder women's self-identification as feminist and reduce the likelihood of supporting feminist collective action, whereas positive stereotypes enhance both identification and collective action engagement. Importantly, however, we place our research in the context of women's sexual identity and examine this determining role of stereotypes for both heterosexual and non-heterosexual (sexual minority) women.

Feminist attitudes and feminist identity

A consistent finding for the past twenty years has been that many women endorse a range of feminist attitudes but still choose not to identify as feminist (Breen & Karpinski, 2008; Buschman & Lenart, 1996; Eisele & Stake, 2008; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Redford, Howell, Meijs, & Ratliff, 2018; Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2007; Yoder et al., 2011). Feminist attitudes are typically conceptualized as beliefs in the feminist goal of gender equality in social structures and practices, while feminist identity is a social or collective identity combining the endorsement of feminist attitudes with self-identification as a feminist (Eisele & Stake, 2008). In qualitative research this trend has also emerged, with many women expressing

feminist sentiments immediately after denying a feminist identity, known as the “I’m not a feminist, but” phenomenon (Buschman & Lenart, 1996; Crossley, 2010; Seron, Silbey, Cech, & Rubineau, 2018). Crossley (2010) gives examples of sentences such as “I’m not a feminist, but I support a women’s right to choose” or “I’m not a feminist, but I work to eradicate sexism in whatever ways I can” (p. 126).

That many women appear to be reluctant to assume an overtly feminist identity could have important implications for feminist collective action as, in line with social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), women who self-identify as feminists are more willing to work towards implementing social change collectively (Nelson et al., 2008). A closer look is needed at the reasons behind this unwillingness to identify as feminist.

Negative stereotypes and reluctance to self-identify as feminist

Research has investigated the discrepancy between largely positive feminist attitudes among women and the lack of identification as a feminist (Breen & Karpinski, 2008). A common finding is that negative stereotypes are often pervasive when discussing the terms “feminist” and “feminism”. The word feminist has been found to carry connotations such as “man-hating”, “militant”, “stubborn”, “angry”, “anti-male”, “aggressive”, “lesbian”, “anti-mother”, “physically and sexually unattractive” and “radical extremists”(Breen & Karpinski, 2008; Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000; Liss, O’Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001; Rudman & Fairchild, 2007; Szymanski, 2004; Twenge & Zucker, 1999). Such a highly stigmatized, extremist and negative notion of feminism may discourage women from assuming a feminist identity as this identity can threaten their image as rational and agreeable people (Quinn & Radtke, 2006; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010).

There does, however, appear to be some duality in stereotypes of feminism. Researchers have also found positive stereotypes relating to feminists, with feminist women described as “competent”, “independent”, “intelligent”, “knowledgeable”, “strong” and “assertive” (Roy et al., 2007; Twenge & Zucker, 1999). Breen and Karpinski (2008) found that, despite not wanting to identify as feminists themselves, women demonstrated positive implicit and explicit associations toward feminists. The authors commented upon the perplexing nature of this finding; social identity theory suggests that people should be willing to identify with a positively evaluated group as it can contribute to positive self-regard. Yet despite the fact that feminist women in the study were generally evaluated positively, the majority of women participants were reluctant to self-identify as feminist (Breen & Karpinski, 2008).

Twenge and Zucker (1999) suggested that the misperception of others’ attitudes towards feminism may have led to women rejecting a feminist identity; even though studies have revealed that women’s stereotypes of feminists are generally positive, they assume *others* evaluate feminists negatively (Ramsey et al., 2007; Roy et al., 2007). In particular, it has been found that some women believed that men do not like feminists (Alexander & Ryan, 1997; Anastasopoulos and Desmarais, 2015). Interestingly, Ramsey et al. (2007) acknowledged this trend for women believing others hold negative stereotypes, but predicted that self-identified feminists would be more likely than non-feminists to assume that others consider feminists in a positive light. Contrary to their hypothesis, findings showed that among their sample *all* women, regardless of their feminist identification, believed that others viewed feminists in a negative light (Ramsey et al., 2007). It seems that, despite empirical evidence suggesting otherwise,

most women are still under the impression that others hold negative opinions of feminists.

The above finding may be linked to the common belief that feminists dislike men; working on behalf of women is often reinterpreted as working against men (Anastasopoulos & Desmarais, 2015). In several studies, participants have described feminists as “man-hating lesbians” or women in search of reverse discrimination (Ogletree, Diaz, & Padilla, 2017; Ramsey et al., 2007). What is more, Yoder et al., (2011) noted that some women “continue to equate feminism with heterosexual disharmony” (p. 10). As a consequence, a woman’s decision to openly and publicly identify as a feminist can be socially isolating. When students were asked to evaluate certain social situations, Anastasopoulos and Desmarais (2015) found that women who called themselves feminists were at risk of being the targets of prejudice and discrimination.

There is a strong basis for the idea that overwhelmingly negative stereotypes of feminists play a key role in preventing many women from identifying as feminist. Roy et al. (2007) investigated stereotypes of feminists and found that women exposed to explicitly positive feminist stereotypes were twice as likely to self-identify as feminists than others who had been primed with negative feminist stereotypes or were in a control group. As predicted by the “I’m not a feminist, but” phenomenon (Buschman & Lenart, 1996; Crossley, 2010), exposure to positive stereotypes did not significantly alter women’s feminist attitudes, likely because most women already endorsed liberal feminist attitudes and were not affected by the experimental manipulation. However, interesting results emerged with respect to self-identification; not only did Roy et al. (2007) find that the positive stereotype condition led to significantly higher self-

identification as feminist, but the women in the control and negative stereotype conditions were equally unlikely to self-identify as feminist. While there is evidence that positive stereotypes of feminists exist, negative stereotypes of feminists could be so prevalent that negative priming does not have an effect on women self-identifying as feminists; Roy et al., (2007) suggested that negative stereotypes of feminists were the “status quo” (p. 153).

Feminist collective action

Wright, Taylor and Moghaddam (1990) suggest that “a group member engages in collective action any time that he or she is acting as a representative of the group and where the action is directed at improving the conditions of the group as a whole” (p. 995). As discussed previously, self-identification with a group has been shown to be highly correlated with collective action (Nelson et al., 2008; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Stürmer and Simon (2004) found that identification with a social movement organization is a greater predictor of collective action than simply identifying with a disadvantaged group. The suggestion here is that a *politicized* identity compels people to engage in forms of collective action. According to this, it is important for women to assume the political identity “feminist”, as identification with “women” may not be sufficient motivation to participate in collective action. Yoder et al. (2011) agreed with this notion, arguing that collective change will occur only when women self-identify as feminist and embrace the collective in-group and its feminist activism.

A body of research has explored this link between identification with being “feminist” and engagement in collective action on behalf of women’s rights (Liss et al., 2001; Liss & Erchull, 2010; Redford, Howell, Meijs & Ratliff, 2018; Szymanski, 2004;

Yoder et al., 2011; Weis, Redford, Zucker, & Ratliff, 2018; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Yoder et al. (2011) noted that women who adopted a feminist identity participated in significantly more feminist activities than women who rejected it. Similarly, women who self-identified as feminists were found to be more likely to recognize the existence of sexism in society, more inclined to view the current gender system as unjust and to hold the opinion that women should work together in order to bring about change in society (Liss & Erchull, 2010). More recently, Redford, Howell, Meijs and Ratliff (2018) used prototype theory to explore this link and found that more positive implicit prototypes led to greater feminist self-identification. This contributed to both greater willingness to engage in feminist behaviours and greater feminist behaviour, measured by a task involving allocation of money to different charities. This supports Yoder et al.'s (2011) suggestion that the success of future collective action depends on women embracing and identifying with feminists.

Drawing on Van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) discussion of predictors of collective action, Radke et al. (2016) explored barriers that may prevent women from engaging in feminist collective action. The authors noted the possible effects of women having positive intergroup contact with men, in line with research that has shown that such contact can reduce group-based identification, perceptions of injustice and consequently collective action among a disadvantaged group (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012). Radke et al. (2016) argued that romantic contact may not only be a form of positive intergroup contact, but may also provide an additional barrier to women engaging in collective action as it can lead to intrasexual competition instead of intrasexual solidarity among women. That this theory is not applicable to women who do not have heterosexual romantic relationships is particularly interesting, as this could

mean that sexual minority women are more likely to identify as feminist and engage in collective action on behalf of women.

Women's sexuality and feminism

Research suggests that some women are more comfortable with a feminist identity and more engaged in feminist activism; notably this is the case with non-heterosexual or sexual minority women (Liss & Erchull, 2010; Syzmanski & Chung, 2003). As with DeBlaere et al. (2013), the term sexual minority women is used here to be inclusive of multiple self-identifications of non-heterosexual orientation present within experimental samples. One explanation for this is that feminists are often stereotyped as lesbian (Breen & Karpinski, 2008; Rudman & Fairchild, 2007). This stereotype may negatively affect heterosexual women's willingness to self-identify as feminist but may not have the same impact on sexual minority women. A number of researchers have observed this widespread assumption about feminists and noted that it appears to be part of a negative evaluation of feminist women (Anastosopoulos & Desmarais, 2015; Liss et al., 2001; Ramsey et al., 2007; Twenge & Zucker, 1999). In Rudman and Fairchild's (2007) research, the association between feminists and lesbians was also linked to attractiveness; participants rated plain women as more likely to be feminists compared to pretty women. The authors found that this negative stereotype was fully explained by beliefs that less attractive women are more likely to be lesbians.

Further to this, Liss et al. (2001) found that believing feminists are lesbians was related to refusing to adopt a feminist identity. They suggested that homophobia among heterosexual women could be a contributing factor to the reluctance to self-identify as feminist. Crossley (2010) noted that heterosexual participants willingly assumed the

position that lesbians are the bearers of feminist culture and drew on stereotypes of feminists as “bra burning” and “man hating” in order to distance themselves from feminism (p. 129). Crossley (2010) suggested that this distancing could take place as a result of an aversion to or fear of lesbianism. This ties into SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) whereby people strive for and benefit from positive social identities associated with their membership groups but are reluctant to identify with a (stigmatized) outgroup. In line with this, the negative stereotypes and stigma around lesbianism may cause reluctance to identify with feminism in some heterosexual women. If heterosexual women are keen to distance themselves from sexual minorities and some also believe that men disapprove of feminists, this could be a reason for heterosexual women in particular to be less likely to identify explicitly as feminist (Alexander & Ryan, 1997; Anastosopoulos & Desmarais, 2015; Liss et al., 2001).

Researchers have investigated the link between feminism and sexual minority identities, finding that feminist women are considerably more likely to be sexual minority women than non-feminists (Liss & Erchull, 2010; Szymanski & Chung, 2003). One suggestion for the disparity in feminist self-identification between heterosexual women and sexual minority women is that sexual minorities often exhibit more liberal attitudes (Roy et al., 2007). However, there may be more complex reasons for this tendency towards dual identification as both sexual minority *and* feminist than simply endorsing liberal attitudes. Szymanski (2004) looked at internalized heterosexism, that is sexual minority women’s internalization of negative attitudes stemming from societal norms. Szymanski (2004) suggested that the link between self-identification as sexual minority and self-identification as feminist is noteworthy; feminism may serve as a resource for coping with society’s heterosexism, providing women with the chance to

evaluate the institution of heterosexuality. Feminist activism can create opportunities to evaluate critically society's oppressive systems, particularly those linked to gender inequality, as well as providing the possibility to interact with other likeminded and self-affirming sexual minority women (DeBlaere et al., 2013; Szymanski, 2004).

DeBlaere et al. (2013) argued that collective action could be an important mechanism for sexual minority individuals to counter oppression and enhance women's status in society.

The present study

Previous research has shown the importance of self-identification as feminist for women's participation in feminist collective action, but thus far the role of stereotypes regarding feminism on both feminist ideology and intention to engage in collective action on behalf of women's rights has not been explored (Yoder et al., 2011).

Extending the research by Roy et al. (2007), the aim of this study is to explore whether being exposed to positive feminist stereotypes would not only increase self-identification as feminist, as previously observed, but also make women more likely to engage in collective action on behalf of women's issues. Endorsement of feminist attitudes is also measured to explore the potential discrepancy between feminist identification and attitudes.

In addition, this study extends the literature by exploring the effect of positive and negative stereotypes regarding feminists not only on heterosexual but also sexual minority women. Furthermore, the role of sexual identity on feminist self-identification and engagement in feminist collective action is examined. While researchers have found that sexual minority women are more likely to be feminist than heterosexual women, to

our knowledge this is the first time that sexual identity is identified as a predictor of engagement in feminist collective action (Liss & Erchull, 2010). We suggest that women outside of the heterosexual matrix are more likely to identify as feminist and more inclined to engage in feminist collective action. Furthermore, we predict that stereotypes that can impede feminist identification will not affect sexual minority women to the same extent as heterosexual women.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are based on a replication of Roy et al.'s (2007) study, while hypotheses 3 and 4 explore the novel suggestions of this research.

Specifically, the hypotheses are:

1. Exposure to positive stereotypes of feminists will increase self-identification as feminist.
2. Exposure to positive stereotypes of feminists will not affect endorsement of feminist attitudes in women.
3. Exposure to positive stereotypes of feminists will increase intention to engage in feminist collective action.
4. Sexual minority women will be more likely to endorse feminist attitudes, identify as feminist and engage in feminist collective action than heterosexual women, regardless of the experimental manipulation.

Method

Participants and design

From a sample of 321, two participants did not disclose their sexual identity and a further three participants did not complete the dependent measures; these cases were excluded from the analyses. Four participants were identified as extreme outliers and

were also excluded from the analyses. The final sample consisted of 312 women (all assigned female at birth or female-identifying), of whom 162 (52%) self-identified as heterosexual and 150 (48%) as non-heterosexual, i.e. sexual minority. Ages of participants ranged from 18 to 75 with most participants being in the age range of 18-24 (41.4%). Of the 304 participants who disclosed their ethnicity, the largest ethnic group was White British (62.2%). Details regarding the ethnic background in the sample can be found in Table 1.

The study employed a between subjects 3 (stereotype condition: positive vs. negative vs. control) x 2 (sexual identity: heterosexual vs. sexual minority) design.

Procedure

Participants were invited via social media announcements in June and July 2016 to complete online a study (approximately 10 minutes long) on “attitudes and social identities for women”. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ+) groups were targeted on Facebook in order to obtain roughly equal numbers of heterosexual and sexual minority participants, but there was no mention that sexuality formed a part of the study. As part of the announcement, participants were encouraged to share the link to the study. After agreeing to the initial consent page, participants were randomly assigned to read one of three paragraphs, which constituted our manipulation of feminist stereotypes (see Appendix A). One paragraph contained positive stereotypes of feminists, one contained negative stereotypes and a final control paragraph was about a topic unrelated to feminism (the great monarch butterfly migration). The positive and negative stereotype paragraphs were taken from Roy et al. (2007) and all three paragraphs were of a similar length. Roy et al. (2007) gathered

positive and negative adjectives from previous research into stereotypes about feminists and created different versions of a paragraph about the goals of the feminist movement with a description of a typical feminist woman. Adjectives included strong, independent, intelligent, confident, assertive (positive paragraph) and overbearing, angry, anti-male, stubborn and aggressive (negative paragraph) (Roy et al., 2007). The topic of monarch butterfly migration in the control paragraph was chosen as an issue that contained no references or links to feminists or gender. After reading the paragraph, all participants completed manipulation checks and the dependent measures, and were asked if they identify as “heterosexual or straight” or “non-straight or sexual minority (includes lesbian, bisexual, queer, same-gender loving, questioning and any other 'non-heterosexual' identities)”.

Dependent Measures

Self-identification as a feminist. While many studies use single-item measures to assess whether participants consider themselves to be feminist, in this study the 4-item Self-Identification as a Feminist scale (SIF; Szymanski, 2004) was used to provide more reliable information on participants’ feminist identification. Single-item measures simply ask participants if they consider themselves to be feminists and lack reliability and validity support (Szymanski, 2004). The SIF scale, on the other hand, contains items that cover a broader range of identification, looking at both private and public identification as a feminist, along with the importance of the beliefs and values of feminism and the goals of the feminist movement. A 7-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree); a higher score indicated stronger self-identification with being ‘feminist’ ($\alpha = .92$ in this study).

Feminist attitudes. The short version of the Liberal Feminist Attitude and Ideology scale (LFAIS; Morgan, 1996) was used to measure identification with the goals of feminism. The LFAIS contained 10 items and was adapted slightly to ensure relevance for a predominantly British sample, with items such as “Women in the U.K. are treated as second-class citizens” and “Women should be considered as seriously as men as candidates for roles such as Prime Minister”. Each item was rated on a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A high score on this scale indicated agreement with liberal feminist attitudes and ideology ($\alpha = .76$ in this study).

Collective action. Feminist collective action was operationalized with a version of Stake, Roades, Rose, Ellis and West’s (1994) checklist of participants’ intention to engage in eight behaviors. The checklist comprised of eight items and was adapted to include online engagement, including items such as “I intend to sign a petition (in person or online) in support of women’s rights and gender equality” and “I intend to talk with others (in person or online) to influence their attitudes about women’s rights issues”. Participants indicated their intention to engage in these different types of feminist activism with a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 6 (definitely). A higher score indicated higher intention to engage in collective action on behalf of women’s issues ($\alpha = .94$ in this study).

Manipulation checks. Participants who read one of the paragraphs about feminists completed two manipulation check items after responding to the dependent measures. As with Roy et al. (2007), in order to confirm that participants recognized that they read a paragraph containing either positive or negative stereotypes about feminists, they were presented with the following questions: “To what extent did the paragraph you read

portray feminists in a positive manner?” (0 = not at all positive to 4 = very positive) and “To what extent did the paragraph you read portray feminists in a negative manner?” (0 = not at all negative to 4 = very negative).

Results

Manipulation Checks

Independent t-tests were conducted on the manipulation check items. Both manipulation checks demonstrated a significant main effect of the stereotype condition. Participants who were assigned to read the positive stereotype paragraph indicated that the paragraph portrayed feminists as significantly more positive ($M = 3.13$) and as significantly less negative ($M = 1.28$) than did participants in the negative stereotype paragraph condition ($M = .46$ and 3.63 respectively), $t(207) = 22.32$, and $t(182.51) = -19.67$ respectively, $p < .001$ for both. Therefore, the manipulation successfully portrayed positive and negative stereotypes regarding feminists.

Main analysis

Means and standard deviations of the dependent variables can be found in Table 2. Two-way ANOVAs were run to examine the effects of the stereotype condition and sexual identity on SIF, LFAIS and collective action. There was a significant effect of stereotype condition on SIF, $F(2, 306) = 5.826$, $p = .003$, partial $\eta^2 = .037$. Tukey HSD tests showed that participants in the positive stereotype condition expressed higher SIF ($M = 6.06$) than participants in the negative stereotype condition ($M = 5.43$), $p = .028$, and than participants in the control condition ($M = 5.65$), $p = .029$. There was also a main effect of sexual identity on SIF, $F(1, 306) = 140.950$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .290$. Heterosexual women self-identified as feminist less ($M = 3.03$) than sexual minority

women ($M = 4.40$). The interaction effect was not significant, $F(2, 306) = 1.684$, $p = .187$, partial $\eta^2 = .011$.

There was no significant effect of stereotype condition on LFAIS, $F(2, 304) = .272$, $p = .762$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$. There was, however, a main effect of sexual identity on LFAIS, $F(1, 304) = 109.919$, $p < .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .266$; sexual minority women scored higher ($M = 6.41$) than heterosexual women ($M = 5.67$). The interaction effect of condition and sexual identity was not significant, $F(2, 304) = 1.335$, $p = .265$, partial $\eta^2 = .009$.

We also tested the effect of condition and sexual identity on collective action. There was no statistically significant effect of stereotype condition on the variable, but the effect approached significance, $F(2, 306) = 2.782$, $p = .063$, partial $\eta^2 = .018$. Tukey HSD tests indicated that participants in the positive stereotype condition expressed higher support for collective action ($M = 3.94$) than participants in the negative stereotype condition ($M = 3.56$), $p < .001$, and than participants in the control condition ($M = 5.56$), $p = .030$. There was also a main effect of sexual identity on collective action, $F(1, 306) = 120.621$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .283$. Heterosexual women scored lower ($M = 5.00$) than sexual minority women ($M = 6.47$). The interaction effect was not significant, $F(2, 306) = .789$, $p = .455$, partial $\eta^2 = .005$.

Mediation analysis

Following the results above, we tested whether SIF mediates the relationship between stereotyping and collective action (for both sexual minority and heterosexual women) using PROCESS for SPSS, Model 4. The predictor variable of stereotyping was dummy-coded as 0 for the positive and 1 for the negative condition. The results

revealed that negative stereotyping reduced SIF ($b = -.63, SE = .19, p = .001$), while SIF predicted intentions to engage in feminist collective action ($b = .72, SE = .04, p < .001$). Bootstrapping estimates (based on 5,000 bootstrap samples) showed that the indirect effect was significant [$b = -.45, SE_{boot} = .14$; 95% CI: $-.73, -.19$]. In other words, reduced levels of identification with feminism mediated the path between negative stereotyping and collective action intentions.

Discussion

This research examined the effect of positive and negative stereotypes on identification with feminism, feminist attitudes and support for collective action among heterosexual and sexual minority (i.e. non-heterosexual) women. Sexual minority women were predicted to score higher than heterosexual women on all the dependent measures, regardless of the experimental manipulation. The results supported this, demonstrating that sexual minority women were more likely to self-identify as feminist and to endorse feminist attitudes as well as being more likely to engage in future feminist collective action. Exposure to positive stereotypes increased feminist self-identification and, marginally, intentions to engage in collective action in support of women's issues. Mediation results indicated that negative stereotypes reduced feminist self-identification, which then led to reduced support for collective action. This is in line with research that highlights social identity as a key predictor of collective action (Nelson et al., 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). In the specific context of women's rights, a feminist social identity may influence women's engagement in collective action which is aimed at improving the situation of the ingroup (Friedman & Leaper, 2010). Therefore, any obstacle preventing women from self-identification as feminist, such as negative stereotypes, could be reducing the

number of women willing to engage in collective action and therefore hindering the progress of the women's movement.

Unlike Roy et al. (2007), who used a single-item measure of feminist self-identification, a multi-item measure of feminist self-identification (SIF) was used in this study to provide a more nuanced interpretation of feminist identity. As with Roy et al. (2007), there appeared to be little difference between the negative and control conditions, suggesting that negative stereotypes of feminists may remain the "status quo" for heterosexual women. As predicted in our hypotheses, and in line with Roy et al.'s (2007) findings, these negative stereotypes of feminism did not significantly affect women's feminist attitudes. However, it appears that still, approximately 10 years on from Roy et al.'s (2007) study, prevailing negative stereotypes may be hindering feminist self-identification. Alternatively, these results can be interpreted in another, more positive light; rather than negative stereotypes *hindering* women's feminist self-identification and motivation to engage in collective action, it seems that positive stereotypes could be required specifically to *increase* engagement.

There are naturally some limitations in this study. As with most psychological research, these findings would benefit from replication; using an opportunity sample does not ensure that the sample was representative of women of different ages, races and ethnicities. There is a recurring perception that feminism is often thought to be only for white, middle-class women (Burn et al., 2000; Scharff, 2010). This study has contributed to a body of literature predominantly describing the attitudes and identities of white, middle-class, university-educated women, as these women did form the majority of our participants. However, this study draws on a more diverse sample than most of research previously conducted in this field, where participants were often

college-age women in the US (Roy et al., 2007; Yoder et al., 2011; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Scharff (2010) acknowledged in her qualitative research that the disidentification with feminism observed in the US has been similarly present in international samples. It is valuable also to have quantitative research in support of this finding.

A second limitation relates to the longevity of the results; it can only be concluded that self-identification as feminist and, less strongly, intention to engage in collective action were affected immediately after exposure to the manipulation. We are unable to know if the effects of the positive stereotypes, for example, will carry on into the future for these women, if they will continue to self-identify as feminist or if they will actually engage in feminist collective action. It is important that future research employs longitudinal designs that will allow a better indication of whether exposure to positive stereotypes can have a significant and long-lasting effect on women's feminist self-identification and their engagement in collective action. It is also important to note that the conclusions made here about collective action can only be tentative as this study measured intention to engage in collective action and not actual participation. Future research would benefit from not only measuring the effects of stereotypes longitudinally, but also including behavioral measures of actual participation in collective action.

In addition, one could argue that the manipulations used in this research could be confounded with social desirability; the positive paragraph condition is more socially desirable than the negative. However, our research investigated explicit attitudes and stereotypes that are widely acknowledged and have been found to exist in a range of different samples. Understanding whether or not these stereotypes impact women's

attitudes, identities and behaviors is of key concern as women are largely aware that these stereotypes exist. Although it is difficult to reduce social desirability bias in this form of research, we argue that understanding the impact of widely acknowledged positive and negative stereotypes is essential. Furthermore, the robust findings of differences between heterosexual and sexual minority women are less likely to have been influenced by social desirability.

In this study sexual minority women of many different identities were clustered together into a single category. While this is not uncommon in research, reducing different sexual identities down into one group and comparing them to women who identify as heterosexual resulted in a less nuanced understanding of the topic (DeBlaere et al., 2013; Friedman & Leaper, 2010). The results here may have ignored meaningful differences among lesbian, bisexual, queer, same-gender loving or questioning women's experiences. Although there is still little research into these distinctions, some have highlighted the importance of acknowledging the areas of convergence and divergence in the experiences of different sexual minority individuals (Freidman & Leaper, 2010). Certain differences have already been demonstrated, with lesbian/queer women reporting stronger ties to the LGBTQ+ community and scoring higher in LGBTQ+ collective action than bisexual women (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Galupo, 2007). For some women significant consideration goes into choosing a sexual identity and where possible researchers should take these different identities into account (Diamond, 2008). A more detailed understanding of different sexual identities among women could only be positive for those trying to grasp what motivates women to self-identify as feminist and engage in feminist collective action.

It would be interesting for future research to investigate whether the stereotypes discussed in previous studies on this topic, and that also formed the basis of Roy et al.'s (2007) manipulation, are still prevalent. As the LGBTQ+ rights movement continues to exact change in Western societies and educate people on LGBTQ+ issues, it would be sensible to assume that these stereotypes are slowly but consistently becoming less robust. That said, other stereotypes appear to be firmly established in society, such as that of feminists as “bra-burning” (Breen & Karpinski, 2008; Crossley, 2010). This myth persists, despite it being widely acknowledged in feminist literature that no bras were ever burnt at the 1968 Women’s Liberation demonstration in New Jersey, where the first instance of this was reported in the media (Crossley, 2010; Hinds & Stacey, 2001). All in all, it would be beneficial to understand exactly how the words “feminist” and “feminism” are being interpreted in modern society.

This study has highlighted the differences between sexual minority and heterosexual women. Future research should address the question of *why* sexual minority women are generally more likely to self-identify as feminist, hold more feminist attitudes and engage in feminist collective action than heterosexual women. Indeed, Liss and Erchull (2010) found that only 4.4% of sexual minority participants in their study rejected a feminist identity. While there has been some conjecture from scholars about the reasons behind these differences, little empirical research has been conducted to explore this (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Roy et al., 2007). Friedman and Leaper (2010) suggested that, by adopting the two frequently stigmatized identities of “feminist” and “sexual minority”, and engaging in collective action on behalf of these groups, women may feel that they are able to “do something” about group level discrimination. Friedman and Leaper (2010) noted that sexual minority women experience both sexism and

heterosexism and may consequently be more aware of societal inequalities and the need for activism. If sexual minority women are members of LGBTQ+ organizations and identify themselves as activists for the LGBTQ+ cause, they may be more willing to extend their activist identity to engaging in collective action on behalf of women's rights. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research is required to explore these ideas and gain a better understanding of sexual minority women's relationship with feminism and feminist stereotypes.

Further and more up-to-date research into what opinions men hold of feminists and feminism would be particularly useful. For a truly insightful and productive discussion of gender equality and feminism, it is essential to include men in the conversation. Future research should consider delving deeper into men's attitudes towards feminism and their perceptions of feminist stereotypes. Anderson et al. (2009) noted that popular media depict feminism as an identity dependent on active hostility towards men, yet their study suggested otherwise, with feminists reporting lower levels of hostility toward men than non-feminists. It would be intriguing to explore whether public opinion still clings onto the myth of feminists as man-hating. Without careful interventions that raise awareness, results such as those in Anderson et al.'s (2009) study can do little to elicit change in societal beliefs and stereotypes.

The findings of this study demonstrate the importance and potential impact of a concerted effort to promote positive stereotypes of feminists and they also point to the importance of further research to test interventions that tackle stereotypes. In school-based research, interventions that require participants to think of counter-stereotypes have proven successful in both changing negative stereotypes and compelling students to stereotype less, while studies have also found that mental imagery can play a key role

in the moderation of implicit and explicit stereotyping (Gołowska & Crisp, 2013; Stathi, Tsantila, & Crisp, 2012; Vezzali, Capozza, Giovannini, & Stathi, 2012).

Strategies deriving from such research on counter-stereotypes and prejudice reduction could be tested in relation to feminism and feminist identities. Through this, it could be possible to establish methods that effectively target the negative effects of stereotypes, or that work to challenge and dissolve them.

Our results also highlight the disparity between heterosexual and sexual minority women in this field of research. There are unanswered questions about the nature of feminist stereotypes and precisely why some women are more likely to embrace a feminist identity than others, but the significant differences between heterosexual and sexual minority women here are stark. Developing our understanding of these differences could help us to answer some of the questions about women's engagement in feminism and, consequently, collective action. This may be key to the ongoing development of women's rights.

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Table 1. Distribution of ethnicity in the sample

		Percent %
Ethnicity	White British	62.2
	White – any other White background	20.7
	Asian or Asian British-Indian	3.6
	Mixed – White and Asian	3.3
	White Irish	3.3
	Chinese	1.6
	Mixed – White and Black African	1
	Mixed – any other mixed background	1
	Any other ethnic group	1
	Black or Black British-African	.7
	Arab	.3
	Asian or Asian British-Pakistani	.3
	Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi	.3
	Asian or Asian British-any other Asian background	.3
	Black or Black British-Caribbean	.3
		.3

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for SIF, LFAIS and collective action as a function of stereotyping and sexual identity.

Condition	Sexuality	SIF Mean (SD)	LFAIS	Collective action
Positive stereotyping	Heterosexual	5.43 (1.33)	5.70 (.66)	3.29 (1.04)
	Sexual Minority	6.65 (.73)	6.44 (.52)	4.54 (1.15)
	TOTAL	6.06 (1.21)	6.09 (.06)	3.94 (1.26)
Negative stereotyping	Heterosexual	4.70 (1.52)	5.57 (.83)	2.81 (1.01)
	Sexual Minority	6.30 (1.00)	6.44 (.50)	4.46 (1.20)
	TOTAL	5.43 (1.52)	5.98 (.82)	3.56 (1.37)
Control (no stereotyping)	Heterosexual	4.94 (1.29)	5.74 (.62)	3.03 (1.00)
	Sexual Minority	6.46 (.73)	6.33 (.42)	4.17 (.97)
	TOTAL	5.65 (1.31)	6.01 (.61)	3.56 (1.13)

Note. SIF and LFAIS were measured on a 1-7 scale; Collective action was measured on a 1-6 scale.

Appendix

Paragraphs for experimental manipulation (Paragraph 1: positive stereotyping;

Paragraph 2: negative stereotyping; Paragraph 3: control condition)

Paragraph 1

Opinions on the Feminist Movement

The feminist movement is very beneficial for all women and men. The main goal of the feminist movement is to eliminate sexism in our society. It is a movement that promotes equality in our society. People who are active in the movement seek to rid our community of discrimination in schools, in the workplace and all parts of society. In reality there is a great deal of discrimination in our society. Feminists recognize this discrimination and take a stand to end it.

Most people who identify as feminists are women. These women are strong, independent women who recognize the injustices in our society and try to fix them. Feminist women are intelligent people who are very knowledgeable about current issues and the world around them. They are often active in their communities and work to promote positive change. They might do this by volunteering at an organization that seeks to end violence against women, or by educating people about the sexism that is present in our society. Feminist women are confident and assertive. They are not afraid to confront the inequalities that exist in our society.

from: Roy, R. E., Weibust, K. S., & Miller, C. T. (2007). Effects of stereotypes about feminists on feminist self-identification. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 31(2), 146-156.

Paragraph 2

Opinions on the Feminist Movement

The feminist movement is very harmful for all women and men. The main goal of the feminist movement is to point out why men are bad and why women are better than men. It is a movement that promotes inequality in our society. People who are active in the movement seek out what they think are examples of discrimination in school, the workplace, and all aspects of society. In reality, this discrimination does not really exist. Feminists are hypersensitive to discrimination even when it is not actually there.

Most people who identify as feminists are women. These women are overbearing, stubborn women who complain about what they think are injustices in our society.

Feminist women are angry people who are very opinionated about current issues and the world around them. They are often anti-male, and work to show others why men are bad. They might do this by claiming that they have been discriminated against at work, or by holding a protest where they complain about men. Feminist women are demanding and aggressive. They are not afraid to say why they are better than men.

from: Roy, R. E., Weibust, K. S., & Miller, C. T. (2007). Effects of stereotypes about feminists on feminist self-identification. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 31(2), 146-156.

Paragraph 3

Great monarch butterfly migration mystery solved

Scientists have built a model circuit that solves the mystery of one of nature's most famous journeys - the great migration of monarch butterflies from Canada to Mexico. Monarchs are the only insects to migrate such a vast distance. So, by teaming up with biologists, mathematicians set out to recreate the internal compass they use to navigate on that journey. Lead researcher Prof Eli Shlizerman, from the University of Washington, explained that, as a mathematician, he wants to know how neurobiological systems are wired and what rules we can learn from them. "Monarch butterflies [complete their journey] in such an optimal, predetermined way," he told BBC News.

"They end up in a particular location in Central Mexico after two months of flight, saving energy and only using a few cues." Prof Shlizerman worked with biologist colleagues, including Steven Reppert at the University of Massachusetts, to record directly from neurons in the butterflies' antennae and eyes. "We identified that the input cues depend entirely on the Sun," explained Prof Shlizerman. "One is the horizontal position of the Sun and the other is keeping the time of day. This gives [the insects] an internal Sun compass for travelling southerly throughout the day." Having worked out the inputs for this internal compass, Prof Shlizerman then created a model system to simulate it. Prof Shlizerman said that one of his team's goals was to build a robotic monarch butterfly that could follow the insects and track their entire migration.

from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science_and_environment