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PREDICTORS OF A FEMINIST IDENTITY

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Deborah A. Davis

December 1994

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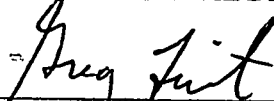
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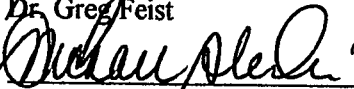
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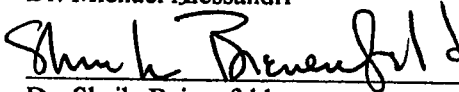
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ABSTRACT

PREDICTORS OF A FEMINIST IDENTITY

by Deborah A. Davis

Some women have been identifying themselves as feminists for many years, and others oppose not only the term, but the views that many of these women hold. This study attempted to examine the differences between these women - feminists and nonfeminists. Subjects were 59 graduate and undergraduate women from San Jose State University. They were given a series of questionnaires, including the Feminist Identity Development Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the N.E.O. Personality Inventory, the BEM Sex-Role Inventory, and a demographics questionnaire. The results showed that a liberal political affiliation was the most significant predictor of a feminist identity, followed by openness to experience.

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Predictors of a Feminist Identity

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Running head: FEMINIST IDENTITY

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Abstract

Some women have been identifying themselves as feminists for many years, and others oppose not only the term, but the views that many of these women hold. This study attempted to examine the differences between these women - feminists and nonfeminists. Subjects were 59 graduate and undergraduate women from San Jose State University. They were given a series of questionnaires, including the Feminist Identity Development Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the N.E.O. Personality Inventory, the BEM Sex-Role Inventory, and a demographics questionnaire. The results showed that a liberal political affiliation was the most significant predictor of a feminist identity, followed by openness to experience.

Predictors of a Feminist Identity

Within the past 15 years, more and more research has been conducted on women's issues, in particular, on feminism. Many aspects of feminism have been studied individually by different authors, and yet, little attempt has been made to look at the overall distinction between feminists and non-feminists. Two main areas of research include measurement and personality. Measures have been developed to assess attitudes toward feminism (Smith, Ferree, & Miller, 1975). And measures such as the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) (Bargad & Hyde, 1991) and Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WAIS) (Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992) have been developed to estimate levels or the degree of a feminist identity for women. Models of feminist identity development also have been designed to explain the process of becoming a feminist (Downing & Roush, 1985).

The effects a feminist identity have on personality characteristics such as self-esteem (Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992; Leavy & Adams, 1986; Prager, 1982), independence and affiliation (McClain, 1978), and sex-role attitudes (Royse & Clawson, 1988; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1992) have also been explored. Berryman-Fink and Verderber (1985) looked at stereotypes of feminists and found that feminists are seen as " ... aggressive, extroverted, active, forceful, ambitious, independent, career oriented active, strong, nonconforming, motivated, dominant, and assertive ..." (p. 53), behaviors that have traditionally been considered masculine. However, even with this increasing body of research, no studies have been conducted that look at the whole picture concerning what variables influence one to develop a feminist identity. Stated another way, what exactly leads one to become a feminist?

The purpose of the present study was to determine what factors influence a woman to become and identify herself as a feminist, as well as to distinguish feminists from nonfeminists. This research attempted to examine whether descriptions of feminists are accurate, or simply stereotypes. Does family background, personality type, self-esteem, or education influence who self-identifies as a feminist and who does not?

Much of the past research has been done with women involved in the second wave (the Women's Movement of the '60s) of feminism. Now that we are in the third wave of feminism (Faludi, 1991), a broader look at women who are feminists is important. The purpose of the present study was to examine this issue and to identify what factors, if any, are predictors of a feminist identity for women in the '90s.

Review of Literature

Feminist Identity Development in Women

Downing and Roush (1985) developed a five stage model of feminist identity development in women. The five stages are: Passive Acceptance, Revelation, Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment. Their model is based on Cross' theory (1978) and is based on the assumption that "...women who live in contemporary society must first acknowledge, then struggle with, and repeatedly work through their feelings about the prejudice and discrimination they experience as women in order to achieve authentic and positive feminist identity" (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 695).

Stage I: Passive Acceptance. In the first stage, Downing and Roush (1985) describe the woman as either "... unaware of, or denying individual, institutional, and cultural prejudice and discrimination against her." However, at the end of this stage, an

awareness occurs. "This readiness helps facilitate the transition into the Revelation stage and may be related to higher levels of ego development and/or self-esteem" (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 698).

Stage II: Revelation. This stage is "... precipitated by one, or a series of crises or contradictions that the woman can no longer ignore or deny" (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 698). Downing and Roush describe the transition into the Revelation stage as either sudden or, more commonly, gradual and difficult. They make the important point that it may be the absence of highly publicized, significant events relevant to women that has contributed to the difficulty of this transition. It is in this stage that women experience feelings of anger and rage.

Stage III: Embeddedness-Emanation. This phase is described as extremely difficult because "... women are so integrally involved in the dominant culture [men] through marriage, work, and children that it is difficult for them to withdraw and to find and embed themselves in a 'female is beautiful' subculture" (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 699). Development of gender consciousness is so troublesome because as Gurin (cited in Downing and Roush, 1985, p. 700) put it, "... women are the mothers, wives, lovers, sisters and daughters of men. There is no other subordinate group that has such an intimate relationship with the dominant group." However, this interconnection with the dominant culture may make the transition to the latter part of the stage, emanation, easier. During emanation women become more open to alternate viewpoints and adapt a more relativistic rather than dualistic perspective. That is, all (or most) men are not seen as negative and all women as positive, which is a characteristic of the previous stage, revelation.

Stage IV: Synthesis. In this stage, women value the positive aspects of being female and are able to integrate these qualities into a positive self-concept. Women in this stage are described as able to "... evaluate men on an individual, rather than stereotypic, basis" (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 702).

Stage V: Active Commitment. This stage involves the "... translation of the newly developed consolidated identity into meaningful effective action" (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 702). However, the authors note that few women truly evolve to the active commitment stage, and that most women who are dedicated to working for women's rights may actually be functioning out of needs from earlier stages, particularly Revelation and Embeddedness-Emanation. This usually occurs when the woman's skills are insufficient to respond to stressful situations in her life.

Based on Downing and Roush's (1985) five stage model, Bargad and Hyde (1991) developed a measure of feminist development. The Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) was originally developed to investigate the effects of women's studies courses on female students' feminist identity development. Bargad and Hyde (1991) had 328 female students enrolled in one of three women's studies courses take the FIDS. Of the 328 women Bargad and Hyde tested, 167 completed the retest at midsemester and 184 completed the FIDS after the course, providing the data for the evaluation of the effects of the women's studies courses on the student's feminist identity development. They found a significant difference from pre- to post-test with stronger disagreement with the Stage I items, and greater agreement with the Stage II, III, and V items. They also found that all the women felt the course had a profound impact on their thinking. "Almost all of the women commented that the course as a whole contributed to their resulting conception of

themselves as feminists, that is, not the lectures or discussions or readings alone, but the course taken as a whole" (Bargad & Hyde, 1991, p. 193).

Self-Esteem

Several researchers have examined self-esteem in different groups of women. Bliss (1987) examined the relationship between feminist attitudes of parents and the sex-role attitudes and self-esteem of their children. She hypothesized that parental attitudes would affect their children's sex-role attitudes the most and that feminist beliefs in parents would be positively related to their children's self-esteem. She found that children of feminist mothers had higher self-esteem scores than children of traditional mothers. Bliss also found positive results for the relationship between mothers' feminist attitudes and their child's sex-role attitudes. A significant correlation did not exist between both parents' combined feminist score and self-esteem scores of their children. However, there was a positive correlation between fathers' feminist scores and the child's self-esteem.

Furthermore, Prager (1982) looked at the identity status and self-esteem in undergraduate college women. She determined identity status from interview questions on sexual values, occupational goals, and religious and political ideology. A self report measure of self-esteem, the Texas Social Behavior Inventory (Helmreich, Stapp, & Ervin, 1974), was used to measure self-esteem. Her research showed that having a sense of identity enhanced self-esteem in women.

Gruber and Bjorn (1988) found that a positive route to feminist orientation among women autoworkers was through work rewards and positive self-esteem. Gruber and Bjorn stated that any job that gives a woman job competence and a positive self-image will likely foster a feminist consciousness. However, they believe that the development of this

consciousness may require negative experiences to make these women active. Ossana, Helms, and Leonard's (1992) findings data suggested that, "... increased self-esteem among undergraduate women was related to their coming to terms with their identity as women and internalizing positive feelings about themselves because they are women" (p. 406).

Leavy and Adams (1986) found that feminist beliefs did not correlate positively with self-esteem among lesbians. Rather, it was found that being in a lesbian relationship was a stronger predictor of self-esteem than whether or not feminist beliefs were held. The authors believe that the lack of a relationship between feminism and self-esteem may be the result of measurement problems. They explain that these results may be due to the large percentage of high scores of the respondents' feminism scores.

Based on the above research findings, it is hypothesized that feminists will have higher self-esteem than non-feminists. That is, women who score higher on the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) will also have higher scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE).

Race

Lottes and Kuriloff (1992) looked at the effects of gender, race, religion, and political orientation on sex role ideology, with attitudes toward feminism as one area. Attitudes toward feminism were measured by the Attitudes Toward Feminism Scale (Smith, Feree, & Miller, 1975). Contrary to their hypothesis, no significant race differences in attitudes toward feminism were found. In addition, Bailey, Silver, and Oliver (1990) examined black and white students' attitudes toward women's rights. The authors found no significant differences between the two groups and feel this may be

because as minorities become assimilated, they begin to develop the attitudes of the majority community.

However, Chow (1987) stated that women of color find racism and classism to be more immediate problems and therefore their development of a feminist consciousness will be limited. She stated that these women have been socialized to accept their restricted roles as women and that since the feminist movement was not attacking race and class problems in the 60s and 70s, the movement was not of central concern to them.

Despite the conflicting results of these studies, this author feels that because much of the feminist movement has focused on white, middle class women, many other ethnic/racial groups cannot identify as readily with the movement. It has been taken into consideration that although the FIDS may not be a direct measure of women identifying with the feminist movement, it may, however, be an indirect measure. Hypothesis 2: white women will have higher scores on the FIDS than women of color.

Androgyny

Bem (1974) developed an instrument that identifies, "... sex-typed individuals on the basis of their self-concepts or self-ratings of their personal attributes" (p. 606). She described an androgynous person as having a wide range of both masculine and feminine behaviors and the ability to function effectively in different situations. Because women with feminist identities are often in situations in which women were not previously seen, for example, as CEO of a large computer company, it is crucial that they are able to communicate and work effectively with both men and women, and in different situations. Androgynous individuals also have different personality characteristics from sex-typed individuals. For example, Ramanaiah and Detwiler (1992) hypothesized that the

personalities of androgynous individuals would be different from those of other sex-role groups. They examined the relationship between androgyny, using the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, and five dimensions of personality, using the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI). Their hypothesis was supported, and the results showed that androgynous individuals scored significantly lower on the Neuroticism scale and significantly higher on the Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness scales than the undifferentiated, feminine-typed and masculine-typed individuals. Hypothesis 3: feminists will be more androgynous, that is, women who score higher on the FIDS will also have less sex-typed scores on the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI).

Personality

McClain (1978) looked at the personality differences between feminists and nonfeminists. The two aspects of personality that McClain was interested in were independence and affiliation. He found that, "... feminists and non-feminists can be differentiated on the basis of their independence and affiliation needs" (p.435). For example, feminists scored higher on the assertiveness, liberalism, aggression, mistrust, and dominance measures, and lower on the warmth and positive perception of others measures. Crowley-Long and Long (1992) asked feminist women what their view of a 'psychologically fully functioning woman' was. The most common attributes listed were related to self-sufficiency: self-directed, independent, assertive, powerful, and financially independent. Interpersonal aspects also were mentioned widely: social, kind, caring, nurturing, giving, and contributes to others. Cognitive and occupational characteristics, self-image, physical health, emotional, and political awareness were also seen as being important for the fully functioning woman. Hypothesis 4: Based on the findings of the

above studies, it is hypothesized that feminists will have higher scores on the NEO-PI for the domains Openness and Conscientiousness, and lower scores for the domain of Neuroticism. However, contradictory to Ramanaiah and Detwiler's (1992) findings, I hypothesize that, due to their awareness of a sexist society and negative experiences with this, feminists will have lower scores for the domain of Agreeableness.

Political Differences

Cowan, Mestlin, and Masek (1992) looked at political beliefs and attitudes about feminism and its relationship to self-labeling as a feminist. Participants' political preference was measured and ranged from *radical right* to *radical left*. Their results showed that more liberal participants labelled themselves as feminists. Henley and Pincus (1978) examined the relationship between subjects' sexist attitudes and their political orientation. A scale measuring negative and stereotyped attitudes toward women was used to assess *sexism*. Political affiliation ranged from left-of-center to right-of-center. Results showed that higher sexism scores were correlated with subjects who approached the conservative end of the political spectrum. Finally, Lottes and Kuriloff (1992) assessed the relationship between students' attitudes toward feminism, using the Attitudes Toward Feminism Scale, and their political orientation, ranging from *quite conservative* to *quite liberal*. In contrast to other studies looking at this relationship, Lottes and Kuriloff did not find a significant difference between politically conservative and liberal women for attitudes toward feminism. Hypothesis 5: there will be a significant positive correlation between feminists and a liberal political orientation, with the more liberal orientation being the higher value.

Method

Subjects

Fifty-nine female students from San Jose State University were volunteer participants in the present study. Of the 59 subjects, the majority had at least two years college education. The mean age of the subjects was 27.00 with a standard deviation of 10.92. The majority of subjects were either Catholic or did not affiliate with any of the religions listed in the questionnaire. Fifty-one subjects identified themselves as heterosexual. Two subjects identified themselves as homosexual, while the remaining subjects chose not to respond. Sixty-one percent of the subjects identified themselves as feminists, while 39% did not identify themselves as feminists. In addition, Table 1 shows the ethnicity and political orientation of the subjects.

Measures

Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS). Bargad and Hyde's (1991) FIDS was used to assess subjects' level of feminist identity development. The 39-item scale was scored on a 5-point Likert format with self-descriptive statements in which subjects expressed the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with an item by circling the number corresponding to the appropriate word(s). An example of an item is, "I think that men and women had it better in the 1950s when married women were housewives and their husbands supported them." The items were scored by grouping them into the five stages of feminist identity development and computing the total for each stage. A high

Table 1

Ethnicity and Political Orientation of Subjects

Variable	%
<u>Ethnicity</u>	
African American	6
American Indian	0
Asian	20
Hispanic	13
White	51
Other	11
<u>Political Orientation</u>	
Quite conservative	6
Fairly conservative	7
Middle of the road	40
Fairly liberal	24
Quite liberal	22

score for Stage V was interpreted to mean that the woman was currently at Stage V, Active Commitment, whereas a high score for Stage I, meant that she was currently in the Passive Acceptance stage. Reliability of the FIDS was assessed during the development of the measure and only items with a test-retest reliability greater than .60 were retained. Factor 1 had a reliability alpha coefficient of .80, factor 2 yielded .85, factor 3 of .82, factor 4 of .75, and factor 5 of .65. The final scale consisted of 39 items. Items did not correlate with social desirability. No convergent validity data were mentioned in the Bargad and Hyde paper.

Short Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). The Short BSRI (Bem, 1974) is a self-report instrument in which respondents indicated on a 7-point scale how well each of 30 attributes described themselves. Ten of the attributes reflect the culture's definition of masculinity and ten reflect its definition of femininity, with the remaining attributes used as fillers. An example of a masculine characteristic was "independent," whereas, a feminine characteristic was "sympathetic." Subjects' masculinity and femininity scores were totalled separately and subtracted from each other in order to form an "androgyny" score based on past norms. In the present study, women who scored high in femininity and low in masculinity were defined as sex-typed, whereas if women who scored high in masculinity and low in femininity, were defined as androgynous or cross-sex-typed. Women who scored low on both masculinity and femininity were defined as undifferentiated. The four-week test-retest reliability for the Short BSRI was $r = .85$ for femininity and $r = .91$ for masculinity (Bem, 1974). Internal consistency proved to be highly reliable as well, $r = .84$ for femininity and $r = .86$ for masculinity (Bem, 1974).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The RSE is a 10-item inventory in which respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements, assessing a general favorable or unfavorable global self-attitude. For example, "I take a positive attitude toward myself." One measure of construct validity found that self-esteem negatively correlated with depression and anxiety, and positively correlated with peer group reputation. The two-week test-retest reliability was $r = .85$ and $r = .88$. In addition, the RSE has acceptable convergent and discriminant validity with other measures (Rosenberg, 1979).

N.E.O. Personality Inventory (NEO-PI). Costa and McCrae's (1985) NEO-PI is a measure of the five major dimensions of normal adult personality. Neuroticism (N) assesses adjustment versus emotional instability, and includes the facets: anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability. Extraversion (E) measures the quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction and need for stimulation, and includes the facets: warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, and excitement-seeking. Openness (O) examines proactive seeking and appreciation of experience for its own sake, and includes the facets: fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values. Agreeableness (A) assesses the quality of interpersonal orientation ranging from compassion to antagonism. Finally, Conscientiousness (C) looks at the degree of organization, persistence, and motivation in goal-directed behavior. The measure is a 181-item, self-administered test answered on a five-point Likert scale. An example of one of the O-items is, "I believe that loyalty to one's ideals and principles is more important than 'open-mindedness.'" The internal consistencies for the facets of the NEO-PI range from

.60 to .86 (McCrae & Costa, 1983a). The domains of N, E, and O are all highly reliable. The retest reliabilities for the scales range from .66 to .92 for facets, and from .86 to .91 for the domain scales. No retest data are available for the Agreeableness and Conscientiousness scales. Studies concerning internal, convergent and divergent validity show that the NEO-PI is a valid measure (Costa & McCrae, 1985).

Demographics Questionnaire. Basic information concerning subjects' gender, ethnicity, religious and political affiliations, sexual orientation, age, type of community she grew up in, education, number of years in the workforce, and whether the subject considered herself to be a feminist was obtained using a demographic questionnaire constructed for this study.

Procedure

Professors were contacted and a request was made to make a brief announcement at the beginning of a class period to recruit female students as subjects. One hundred packets of questionnaires were distributed to female students in English, women's studies, and chemistry classes. A brief announcement was given in classes stating that the purpose of the research was to examine how personality factors relate to political and social attitudes in women. Female students who were interested in participating were given a packet containing a consent form (see Appendix A), five questionnaires, and an envelope that could be mailed from on campus. The volunteers were given two weeks to return the information. All information that could be identified with subjects remained confidential and anonymous. Approximately one month later, a debriefing statement (see Appendix B) was sent to the professors to give to students who participated in the research.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for self-esteem, androgyny, personality, and feminist identity development. All of the means for the five personality domains are close to the normal range (Costa & McCrae, 1985). Norms for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were not reported, so comparisons against the norms cannot be made. Bargad and Hyde's (1991) norms are also reported in Table 2, however they did not report standard deviations. The FIDS means for the present sample were all within the normal range. The androgyny mean for the present sample was -6.7 which was different, but within one standard deviation from the Bem's (1974) norm of 6.3.

Zero-order Correlations

The FIDS was intended to be a linear measure with each stage being independent of all the others. However, when performing correlations on the stages I found that this was not the case, and that in fact many of the stages are strongly correlated with other stages. For instance, Stages II and III correlate at .63. Table 3 summarizes the intercorrelations of the five stages of the FIDS.

Zero-order Pearson product correlations were also performed to test the original hypotheses regarding the following variables and their relationship with feminist identity: self-esteem, androgyny, personality, political orientation, and religious affiliation. I predicted that women who scored high on the FIDS would have high self-esteem. However, the correlation between Active Commitment (the highest stage of development) and self-esteem was not significant ($r = .21$). Unexpectedly, the correlation between Passive Acceptance (Stage I) and self-esteem was significant ($r = .36$, $N = 49$, $p < .05$),

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Self-esteem, Androgyny, Personality, and Feminist Identity Development.

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Self-esteem	17.16	4.97
Androgyny	-6.70	11.39
Personality		
Neuroticism	103.22	22.60
Extraversion	126.42	17.11
Openness	126.86	17.76
Agreeableness	47.60	6.79
Conscientiousness	60.29	6.76
Feminist Identity Development		
Stage I	2.13	.65
Stage II	3.47	.67
Stage III	3.99	.72
Stage IV	3.88	.59
Stage V	3.54	.62

Table 2 continued on next page.

Table 2 (continued)

Bargad and Hyde's (1991) Norms

Stage I	2.00
Stage II	3.25
Stage III	3.13
Stage IV	3.86
Stage V	3.52

Table 3

Intercorrelations of the Five Stages of the FIDS.

Stage	I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.
I. Passive Acceptance					
II. Revelation	-0.19				
III. Embeddedness	-0.30	0.63***			
IV. Synthesis	0.21	-0.41**	-0.41**		
V. Active Commitment	-0.47***	0.47***	0.48***	-0.10	

Note: $N = 48$; * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

meaning that high scorers on Passive Acceptance, Stage I, had higher self-esteem.

It was hypothesized that women who scored higher on the FIDS would be more politically liberal, with higher values coded as more liberal. The correlation between political orientation and Active Commitment (Stage V) was significant ($r = .44$, $N = 48$, $p < .01$), as was the correlation between political orientation and Revelation (Stage II) ($r = .38$, $N = 49$, $p < .01$). The correlation between political orientation and Passive Acceptance (Stage I) was negative and significant ($r = -.56$, $N = 49$, $p < .001$).

Thirdly, it was hypothesized that women who score higher on the FIDS would have higher scores on the NEO-PI for the domains of Openness and Conscientiousness, and lower scores for the domains of Neuroticism and Agreeableness. The correlation between Openness to experience and Active Commitment (Stage V) was positive and significant ($r = .40$, $N = 48$, $p < .01$). However, the correlation between Active Commitment (Stage V) and Conscientiousness was not significant. Unexpectedly, the correlation between Passive Acceptance (Stage I) and Neuroticism was significant ($r = .34$, $N = 49$, $p < .05$) as well as the correlation between Passive Acceptance and Conscientiousness, which was negative and significant ($r = -.30$, $N = 49$, $p < .05$). The correlation between Passive Acceptance (Stage I) and Agreeableness was not significant. All correlations are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Zero-order Pearson Product Correlations for Self-esteem, Personality, Political Orientation

	<u>Variable</u>				
<u>Feminist Identity</u>	<u>Political Orientation</u>	<u>Conscientiousness</u>	<u>Openness to Experience</u>	<u>Passive Acceptance</u>	<u>Neuroticism</u>
Passive Acceptance	-0.56***	-0.30*	-0.45**		0.34*
Revelation	0.38**	-0.01	0.11	-0.19	0.35*
Embeddedness	0.35*	-0.14	-0.06	-0.30	0.10
Active Commitment	0.44**	0.25	0.40**	-0.47***	0.08
Self Esteem	-0.10	-0.45**	-0.26	0.36*	0.64***

Note: N = 49; * p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

ANOVA

Another way to examine the relationship between the FIDS and demographic variables is with ANOVA. It was predicted that white women would have higher scores on the FIDS than women of color. Therefore, a planned comparison was performed on Synthesis (Stage IV) by ethnicity. The mean for whites was 20.3, while the average for all the other ethnic groups was 17.9 ($t(50) = -3.37, p < .001$). A post-hoc comparison was also significant that averaged the mean for Hispanics and whites ($M = 20.7$) and compared them to the average of the remaining three groups ($M = 16.7$) ($t(50) = -4.93, p < .001$).

Furthermore, it was predicted that feminists would be more androgynous, that is, women who scored higher on the FIDS would have less sex-typed scores on the BSRI. A planned comparison was performed on Active Commitment (Stage V) by androgyny. Androgyny was compared to the other three groups combined (undifferentiated, feminine, masculine) the FIDS was the dependent variable. However, the results were not significant ($F < 1$). Yet, a more specific post-hoc comparison on Active Commitment by androgyny (contrasting only the feminine and the and masculine groups) was significant. The mean for feminine was 26.33, while the mean for masculine was 30.71 ($t(52) = -2.43, p < .05$).

Multiple Regression

Lastly, simultaneous multiple regression analyses were performed on the data in order to determine the influence of each variable relative to the others. The best index of relative strength of prediction is the squared semi-partial (sr^2) coefficient. This tells us the amount of variance a variable explains once all other predictor variables are held constant (see Table 5). The three predictor variables were: self-esteem, openness, and political

orientation and the outcome variable was the subjects' score on the FIDS. Political orientation was the strongest predictor. This can be seen by $\Delta r^2 = .087$, meaning that political orientation explained almost 9% of the variance once all other variables were held constant. Openness also explained 4% of the unique variance in the FIDS. Overall, the three predictor variables accounted for 21% of the total variance in feminist identity.

Discussion

As predicted, results show that a liberal political affiliation was a significant predictor of feminist identity, as was openness to experience and high self-esteem. That is, a woman who is politically liberal and open to new experiences will tend to have a high level of feminist identity. In addition, self-esteem was a predictor, but only for low levels of feminist identity, that is, women with high Passive Acceptance scores also had high self-esteem.

Prager (1982) found that college women who had a sense of identity had enhanced self-esteem. Ossana, Helms, and Leonard (1992) suggested that college women will feel better about themselves and have higher self-esteem if they internalize positive feelings about themselves as women. Hypothesis 1, that feminists would have higher self-esteem than non-feminists, was not supported. In fact, the opposite held true. Women who scored high in Passive Acceptance also had high self-esteem, however with all other stages there was no relationship between feminist identity and self-esteem. One possible explanation for the lack of significant results is that since having a strong feminist identity is not necessarily a positive attribute in this society, having any identity, except a feminist

Table 5

Predictors of a Feminist Identity: Simultaneous Multiple Regression

Variable	r	sr ²	t	R ²	F
Self-esteem	-.206	.012	< 1		
Openness	.327	.037	1.54		
Political Orientation	.372	.087	2.40 *		
All Variables				.21	4.41 **

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

identity, would enhance self-esteem. Berryman-Fink and Verderber (1985) examined stereotypes of feminists and found that characteristics attributed to feminists included aggressiveness, extroversion, forcefulness, nonconforming, dominant, and assertiveness. It is difficult to say how possible it is for women who are studying sexism and the history of the oppression of women (Women's Studies subjects) and women who are studying a historically predominately male field (chemistry subjects) to develop a positive feminist identity and as a result high self-esteem. It is possible that the subjects in this study were like many women in this country who internalize negative feelings about themselves, creating low self-esteem (Steinem, 1992).

Hypothesis 2, that white women would have higher scores on the FIDS than women of color was supported for Stage IV, but not for Stage V. Since most of the subjects in this study were white women (51 %) it is difficult to generalize from these results. It was found that white women in the Synthesis stage scored higher than all other ethnic groups of women in the Synthesis stage. It was also found that when white women and Hispanic women were combined into one group, and compared to the remaining ethnic groups combined, these women scored higher on the Synthesis stage. Chow's (1987) findings were consistent with the significant findings of this study. She stated that the more immediate problems of women of color take precedence over issues concerning the feminist movement. However, this is inconsistent with Hispanic women's higher Synthesis scores. No differences were found between ethnic backgrounds for women in the Active Commitment stage. The present findings are consistent with those of Bailey, Silver, and Olivers (1990) demonstrated that black and white students' attitudes toward women's rights were very similar because they have assimilated with the majority

community. It seems logical that the present findings would be mixed based on the limited number of ethnically diverse subjects.

Hypothesis 3, that women who scored higher on the FIDS would have less sex-typed scores on the BSRI also had mixed results. When comparing the androgyny group to the undifferentiated, feminine, and masculine groups combined, those women who scored highest on the FIDS (Active Commitment) were not more androgynous than the other groups. But when comparing feminine and masculine scores, high FIDS women had higher masculine scores. However, this is not the direct finding that was expected, but it is an indirect finding in that, these women were more androgynous only in the sense that they had higher masculine scores. These results may be consistent with Bem's theory that androgynous individuals have the ability to be effective in a variety of situations because they have a wide range of both feminine and masculine characteristics.

Hypothesis 4 was that feminists would have higher scores on the NEO-PI for the domains Openness and Conscientiousness, and lower scores for the domain of Neuroticism and Agreeableness. Again, this hypothesis was supported only in part. Those women scoring high on the Active Commitment Stage did have higher scores on Openness to experience. In addition, the women who scored high on the Passive Acceptance Stage scored higher on Neuroticism. Both of these findings are consistent with past research by Ramanaiah and Detwiler (1992). They found that androgynous individuals scored significantly lower on Neuroticism and higher on Openness, which is similar to the present results, since it was found that women in Stage V were more masculine. However, women high in Stage V did not score higher on Conscientiousness, nor did the women high in Stage I score higher on Agreeableness. Costa and McCrae

(1985) state that the conscientiousness domain, "Assesses the individual's degree of organization, persistence, and motivation in goal-directed behavior." Some of the characteristics of High Conscientiousness Scorers are organized, reliable, hard-working, self-disciplined and ambitious; whereas, Low Conscientiousness Scorers are aimless, unreliable, careless, and weak-willed. The Agreeableness domain, "Assesses the quality of one's interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion to antagonism in thoughts, feelings and actions." Characteristics of High Agreeableness Scorers are soft-hearted, good-natured, trusting, helpful, and straightforward; however, Low Agreeableness Scorers are cynical, rude, suspicious, and uncooperative.

Hypothesis 5 was that women who scored high on the FIDS would have a more liberal political orientation. This hypothesis was strongly supported, that is, women in Stage V on the FIDS scored high on political orientation, with the more liberal orientation being the higher value. The results are consistent with past findings from Cowan, Mestlin, and Masek (1992) who found that subjects who labelled themselves feminists were more liberal politically. It was also found in this study that women high in Stage I and II had a more liberal political orientation, which is consistent with Lottes and Kuriloff's (1992) findings. They found no significant differences between politically conservative and liberal women in feminists. The majority of college students tend to be politically liberal; and therefore, it is not surprising that women in both the low and high stages of the FIDS had more liberal political orientations.

The most significant limitation of this study was the FIDS measure. The individual stages of the measure are not as unidimensional as previously thought. In fact, conceptually, the stages should exist on a continuum, with Stage I and V being negatively

correlated. However, Passive Acceptance (Stage I) correlated with Active Commitment (Stage V), Stage II correlated with Stages III, IV, and V, and Stage III correlated with Stage IV and V. As a result, many of the predicted outcomes were the opposite of what was hypothesized. A possible explanation for the significant correlations between the lower stages of feminist identity development with several of the predictor variables is the way the FIDS is designed. Bargad and Hyde (1991) used the FIDS simply to determine whether women's studies courses had an effect on feminist identity development. However, since the present study attempted to examine how a feminist identity developed, perhaps the FIDS was too simple a measure. The FEM scale (Smith, Ferree, & Miller, 1975) is another scale that measures attitudes toward feminism, however, the questions are a bit out-dated. Therefore, future research should examine more closely how the FIDS can be adjusted to be more accurate and effective, or perhaps develop a new measure that is more up to date with the '90s.

It is possible that with a larger and more politically and racially diverse group of women stronger effects could have been found and quite possibly the results would have come out differently. Although an attempt was made to include a diverse group of subjects, this study was predominately white, college educated, heterosexual, and politically middle of the road women. Therefore, it should be recognized that these results are not generalizable to all women, rather, only to the type of woman similar to the subjects of the present study.

Future research should attempt to use a more diverse group of women, that is, women of various races, economic backgrounds, religious affiliations and sexual and political orientations. In addition, a broader range of questions, including interviews,

concerning family and social background, would help to get a broader view of what exactly predicts a feminist identity development. In particular, the present study suggests that political orientation and openness to experience are especially strong predictors of feminist identity, and therefore future research should focus on these variables in an attempt to understand the psychology behind feminist identity.

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Appendix A

Agreement to Participate in Research

Responsible Investigator: Deborah Davis

Title of Protocol: Personality and It's Relationship to Attitudes in Women

I have been asked to participate in a research study investigating how personality factors relate to political and social attitudes in women.

I understand that:

1. I will be asked to complete a few questionnaires concerning personality and my attitudes on certain political and social ideas.
2. No risks, either physiological or psychological in nature are anticipated as a result of participation in this study.
3. There are no discernible benefits to me personally as a result of this study.
4. The results of this study may be published, but any information from this study that can be identified with me will remain confidential and anonymous.
5. Any questions about my participation in this research may be addressed to Deborah Davis (408) 292-9854 or Dr. Greg Feist (408) 924-5643. Complaints about the research may be presented to the Psychology Department Chair, Ken Nishita (408) 924-5600. Questions or complaints about the research, subjects' rights or research-related injury may be presented to Serena Stanford, Ph.D., Associate Vice President of Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.
6. My consent is given voluntarily without being coerced. I may refuse to participate in the study or in any part of the study. If I decide to participate in the study, I am free to withdraw at any time without prejudice to my relations with San Jose State University.
7. I have received a copy of this consent form for my file.
8. I may refuse to answer any question that I do not feel comfortable answering.

I HAVE MADE A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. MY COMPLETION OF THE ENCLOSED QUESTIONNAIRES INDICATES THAT I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED AND THAT I HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE.

Appendix B
Debriefing Statement

Dear Student,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in my study on college women and their political and social attitudes. In the past 15 years, more and more research has been conducted on women's issues, in particular, on feminism. Many aspects of feminism have been studied individually, however, little attempt has been made to look at the overall distinction between feminists and non-feminists. In my study, I was specifically looking at what factors are predictors of a feminist identity, as well as what distinguishes feminists from nonfeminists.

You were given a packet with several questionnaires to complete. These included a questionnaire to assess your level of feminist identity development, a questionnaire to assess self-esteem, one to assess different aspects of personality (emotional instability, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness), as well as a questionnaire inquiring basic demographic information.

Of the 56 women that participated, close to 60% had at least some college education. The mean age of the subjects was 27 years. The majority of subjects were either Catholic or did not affiliate with a particular religion. Ninety-three percent of the subject identified as heterosexual. The majority of subjects were white or Asian and politically identified as middle of the road or fairly liberal. Sixty-one percent of the subjects identified as feminists, while 39% did not. The results showed that a liberal political affiliation was the most significant predictor of a feminist identity, followed by openness to experience and high self-esteem. That is, a woman who is politically liberal, open to new experiences and has high self-esteem tend to have a high level of feminist identity.

Thank you again for your participation,

DEBORAH DAVIS