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# PERCEPTIONS OF FEMINISM

*Measuring Feminist Attitudes*

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## INTRODUCTION

In our society today, there is not an abundance of self-proclaimed feminists. It is no wonder, since the terms feminism and feminist have many negative connotations. The mainstream media have skewed the true ideas behind feminism and therefore demonized the word. As a result, many people are left in the dark and afraid of what feminism is really all about. It is our belief, as students of sociology, that people do not embrace the ideas of feminism and the term feminist simply because they are ignorant as to what it truly means to be a feminist.

The primary aim of our research was to identify students' attitudes towards feminism and the reasons why they would or would not identify themselves as a feminist. We **hypothesize** that people who have been educated about feminism (excluding stereotypical mass-media *miseducation* about feminism which we believe to be more associated with liberal feminist views) are more likely to consider themselves a feminist. We also hypothesize that radical feminists are more likely to consider themselves a feminist than liberal feminists or people who are conservative. Furthermore, we assert that radical feminists are more educated about feminism than the latter two. A secondary aim of our research was to explore the plethora of reasons why individuals may be reluctant to identify themselves as a feminist- from negative stereotypes associated with the typical feminist to the lack of feminist education.

We expected that students who have been exposed to women's issues in the classroom, in women's studies classes or in other classes focusing on these issues, are more likely to consider themselves feminists. Our own experiences in Introduction to Women's Studies illustrate this case in point. In the beginning of the semester our professor asked us whether we considered ourselves "feminists." We remember looking around the classroom to see how many people were raising their hands. "Are we feminists? we wondered." We couldn't label ourselves feminists without really knowing what feminism was about. Right? But at the end of the semester when our professor asked us again if we considered ourselves feminists, without hesitation almost everyone in the class raised their hand.

It was evident that more students, including ourselves, raised their hands at the end of the semester only after they felt more knowledgeable about feminism. But why wouldn't we entertain the notion of being a feminist at the beginning of the semester? Probably because we had heard that feminists were man-hating women turned lesbian after being 'oppressed' by men their whole life. This stereotype pigeonholes feminists as women who are too radical to be understood and taken seriously.

By accepting the label feminism in society people have to be willing to take on the negative connotations associated with the word. Unfortunately many people are not up for this challenge. Those who are on the other hand must be confident enough in their own attitudes towards feminism to call themselves such especially when they have to defend themselves to all the non-feminists. One way to build confidence is through feminist education.

In order to measure students' attitudes towards feminism, we devised a questionnaire from the Feminist Perspectives Scale (Henley et al. 1998; See *Literature Review*). We conceptualized students feminist self-identification by their answer to the question- do you

consider yourself a feminist? As previously mentioned, we conceptualized students education about feminism by their answer to the questions; have you taken any women's studies classes or other classes that have focused on these issues? To substantiate our hypothesis and the conceptualization of our variables we embarked on a (never-ending) research mission.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Defining Feminism

We understand that feminism is difficult to define because of the many different views within feminism. For our purposes, we used bell hooks' definition of feminism: a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. We used hooks' definition of feminism to guide us in creating and scoring our questionnaire. No one answers the question, 'what is feminism?' more eloquently than bell hooks. Stealing a few words from her latest guidebook to feminism, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, she writes,

Imagine living in a world where there is no domination, where females and males are not alike or even always equal, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos shaping our interaction. Imagine living in a world where we can all be who we are, a world of peace and possibility. Feminist revolution alone will not create such a world; we need to end racism, class elitism, imperialism. But it will make it possible for us to be fully self-actualized females and males able to create beloved community, to live together, realizing our dreams of freedom and justice, living the truth that we are all "created equal." (Introduction, v).

When people talk to hooks about her passion for writing, and her passion for feminist theory, she receives very, very different responses. People understand her as a writer, but as a feminist, that is where the understanding often ends. She writes,

I tend to hear all about the evils of feminism and the bad feminists: how 'they' hate men; how 'they' are all lesbians; how 'they' ... *and the list goes on (added for emphasis)*. When I ask these same folks about the feminist books or magazines they read, when I ask them about the feminist talks they have heard, about the feminist activists they know, they respond by letting me know that everything they know about feminism has come into their lives third hand, that they really have not come close enough to

the feminist movement to know what really happens, what it is really about. Mostly they think feminism is a bunch of angry women who want to be like men. They do not even think of feminism about rights- about women gaining equal rights' (Introduction, vii-viii).

What they do not know is that feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression, a definition hooks first offered in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. This definition states clearly that the problem in our society is sexist thinking, a problem that both women and men are socialized into from birth. Part of the feminist struggle is to bring to light the very subtle forms of sexism. This is a very difficult task, because not everyone believes that sexism exists, even if they understand what it is. Furthermore, some do not support this concept even with adequate awareness of feminist issues.

Each one of us can perpetuate sexist thought, unless we choose to think with a feminist consciousness. Babbie refers to such an awareness of oppression of women and gender differences in society as a **feminist paradigm**. The feminist consciousness-raising group was one of the first places where conversions to feminist thinking occurred. These groups created a space for women to organize, to speak and share their experiences, to analyze sexism and create new ways of interacting with each other and with men. These discussions continued outside of the home, and were made available in printed form, in pamphlets and in newsletters, in order to educate the public about feminism. (hooks, 2000)

The development of women's studies departments in the late 1970's was another way to raise consciousness about feminism. Women learned theory, used it in their writing and academic discourse, and as a lens to critically think about their female experience in the university. Consequently, the women studies classroom replaced the traditional consciousness-raising group. This transition had several consequences that adversely affected the movement. (hooks, 2000)

The women's movement lost its mass based appeal when feminist discussions were limited to the academic world rather than the previous consciousness-raising groups that included women from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, most feminist theory has been written for an academic audience, and not for a younger audience where guidance is sorely needed. Consequently, hooks advocates for a 'feminist studies that is community based. Imagine a mass based feminist movement where folks go door to door passing out literature, taking the time to explain to people what feminism is really about' (hooks 2000: 23).

Secondly, many women used the title of 'feminist' to enhance their economic status without committing to a feminist politic. hooks claims that 'the dismantling of consciousness-raising groups all but erased the notion that one had to learn about feminism and make an informed choice about embracing feminist politic to become a feminist advocate' (hooks 2000: 10).

Thirdly, the notion that women needed to tackle internalized sexism also lost appeal. 'Females of all ages acted as though concern for or rage at male domination or gender equality was all that was needed to make one a 'feminist.' Without confronting internalized sexism women who picked up the feminist banner often betrayed the cause in their interactions with other women' (hooks, 2000: 10-11). And finally, lifestyle feminism, the idea that any woman, regardless of her political beliefs could be a feminist, has undermined feminist politics. hooks asserts that once there is a commitment to end sexism for everyone, consciousness-raising groups will resume their original importance.

Therefore, it is our belief that misunderstanding of the definition of feminism (a movement that advocates anti-sexism rather than anti-maleism) stems from a lack of the public's education. This is due in part to changes in the shape and direction of the

movement, to unclear definitions of feminism among people in the movement, and to negative information offered by the patriarchal mass media. (hooks, 2000)

### **Psychological Measures of Feminism**

Many instruments have been used in the past to measure attitudes towards women and women's issues. The Attitudes Towards Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1972, 1979; and others) has been one of the most widely used scales. But it does not go without its problems. According to Henley et al. (1998), it may under- or mis-represent the variety of feminist perspectives, by favoring a more liberal perspective. Attempting to avoid the errors of previous measures of attitudes towards women, Henley et al. developed a reliable and valid scale that systematically accounts for the diversity of feminist attitudes among ethnically diverse women and men, non-student and student populations.

The Feminist Perspectives Scale includes five feminist perspectives (sub-scales): liberal, cultural, socialist, women of color, and radical feminists in addition to conservatism. Lizz, Hoffner and Crawford (2000: 280-281) summarized these perspectives as follows:

#### *Conservatism*

'This scale assesses the belief that gender roles should remain traditional and that men should remain dominant while women should remain in the home.'

#### *Liberal Feminist*

'This scale assesses the belief that men and women are equal and essentially the same and that individuals should be able to make personal choices free of government control.'

#### *Cultural Feminist*

'This scale assesses the belief that society should move toward an acceptance and appreciation of 'feminine' values. Cultural feminism tends to stress the differences between men and women and holds that women have the potential to bring peace, kindness, and caring values to social structures.'

### *Socialist Feminist*

'This scale assesses the belief that sexism, class oppression, and racism are inseparable and reinforce one another. Socialist feminism grows out of socialist political philosophy and is influenced by radical feminism.'

### *Women of Color Feminist (Womanist)*

'This scale assesses that belief that poverty, racism, and ethnocentrism are equally as problematic as sexism. Womanism points to the multiple forms of oppression experienced by women of color and advocates for the specific concerns of women of color.'

### *Radical Feminist*

'This scale assesses the belief that women are fundamentally oppressed by men, and that women's oppression serves as the model for all other forms of oppression.'

The Feminist Perspectives Scale (FPS1) was initially a pool of 306 items, which was tested on 117 respondents. The items were selected and meet Babbie's four criteria for **item selection**: (1) **face validity** (2) **uni-dimensionality** (3) **general dimension** and (4) **amount of variance**. The first step in the development of their item pool was to create a list of topics from books and other literature on women's issues. These 17 topics are listed in Table 1. For each topic, a position statement was written from each theoretical feminist perspective. Three additional items were then written to support the position statement, resulting in a total of 306 items [17 topics x 6 theoretical feminist perspectives x 3 items (2 attitudinal and 1 behavioral)]. Each of the attitudinal items was accompanied by a seven-point scale- from 'strongly,' 'moderately,' and 'somewhat' disagree to 'undecided' to 'somewhat,' 'moderately,' and 'strongly' agree.

Henley et al. tested the initial item pool to **examine empirical relationships** between the items and to **validate** the items they selected. The respondents were also asked to critique the questionnaire and mark any item they had difficulty understanding.

**Analysis of the items** (one of Babbie's steps in index validation) indicated that (1) item-subscale correlations were quite high (0.88- 0.94 except for Liberal feminist) and were in the expected directions (2) the five feminist subscales had positive correlations with each other and with 'Femscore' (the sum of the five subscales excluding conservatism). The highest correlations were between Radical feminist and Socialist feminist subscales. However, these scores were somewhat high for the desired levels of item independence. They took these results into consideration when they made a less inter-correlated, shorter scale (Feminist Perspective Scale 2; FPS2) and (3) correlations of the subscales with demographic data gave some indication of the scales ability to differentiate by feminist perspective. (Henley et al.: 1998)

Henley et al. conducted an additional study to test the **reliability** and **validity** of a shorter sixty-item version (FPS2) of the initial Feminist Perspective Scale. They chose ten items from the six perspectives but made sure that all of the initial seventeen topics were represented with at least one statement. This is the model that we also used to select items for our questionnaire. (*See Methods*).

Miriam Liss, Carolyn Hoffner, and Mary Crawford conducted a research study with the aim of answering the question, "what does a woman mean when she says 'I am a feminist.'" (Liss et al. 2000: 282). They asked 71 female college students to complete the Feminist Perspective Scale (Henley et al.) twice, from their own perspective and from the perspective of a 'typical' feminist.

Their results showed that women who answered yes to the question 'do you consider yourself a feminist' had stronger beliefs than those who answered 'no' on all of the subscales except cultural feminism. The respondents' answer to whether or not they were feminists was strongly dependent upon their knowledge about feminism. They found that non-

feminists demonstrated a lower awareness of the meaning of feminism than did feminists. (Liss et al. 2000: 282)

Regardless of the fact that feminists more accurately answered the questionnaire from a “feminist perspective,” both feminists and non-feminists perceived that a typical feminist is more radical or extreme than they are. (Liss et al. 2000: 282). Although this article was discovered later in our research this concept was the basis for our hypothesis.

Liss et al. concluded that feminism is generally misunderstood, in that people perceive feminism only to include the radical aspects rather than the breadth of perspectives it encompasses. This misconception lends itself to the discrepancy between the respondent’s feminist perspective and their perception of a typical feminist.

In addition, Liss et al. found that most people embrace feminist beliefs whether or not they embrace the label feminist. They reported that, “liberal feminism is an omnipresent ideology and that conservatism is a minority ideology among female college students” (Liss et al. 2000: 282). Both of these conclusions are reflected in our study as well.

### **Feminism- Why Not?**

Recent data supports the idea that feminists are construed negatively. In Sarah Riley’s work entitled “Maintaining Power: Male Constructions of ‘Feminists’ and ‘Feminist Values,’” in *Feminism and Psychology*, she points out how, despite the inclusion of more feminist values into modern society, the terms are still viewed negatively. Riley’s research included interviewing several dozen men in Scotland who seemed to oppose ‘feminism’ in order to support the tradition of ‘masculinity’. The work concluded with Riley’s claim that these men cannot dispute ‘feminist’ changes in their culture; however, they do not acknowledge these to be the work of feminists in an attempt to weaken further progress and discredit feminists’

responsibility for these efforts. This study supports our hypothesis because it implies that there is a negative connotation with feminism. Therefore, without education, people without radical feminist views, would be reluctant to call themselves feminists.

Aboud, Burn, and Moyles (2000) conducted another recent study, regarding the applications of social identity theory to feminist consciousness and activism. These researchers proved that understanding a feminist identity affects the possibility of self-identifying as feminists. This study questioned 276 college students about their gender self-esteem, feminist attitudes and ideology, and their self-perception of feminism. It was concluded that women who hold the belief that females are socially devalued, are less likely to announce their feminist views. Respondents were much more likely to agree with feminist ideas than to identify themselves as feminists.

Men were more likely to promote a backlash against feminism by supporting the belief that men are more socially valued; therefore, there was a significantly smaller portion of males that considered themselves even slightly feminist. Participants responded negatively to the term 'feminism' compared to 'women's movement,' which clearly demonstrates that the word feminism has negative connotations linked with it. Aboud et al. suggested that those who wish to increase women's support for feminism should not only educate the public about feminism, but also approach the topic with an emphasis on the female status as an oppressed group. Yet, those who believed women to be devalued were less likely to be feminist. Once again, this study, supports the idea that there is not a positive association with feminism.

A final relevant reference is Rebecca Lafleur's dissertation, *Perceiving and Managing Feminist Identity: An Exploration of Stigma Management*. Her dissertation relates to our study by affirming the reluctance of the general population to consider themselves feminists. She

discusses how identifying as a feminist can alter how others will view a person. A study was conducted in order to prove that feminist identity is stigmatized and that this influences how feminists identify themselves. A survey of over 1,100 college student participants was used in this study. She concluded that being viewed as a feminist included negative images, such as being less attractive, more radical, more biased and illogical than a non-feminist. Lafleur proved that while many students are feminists, they do not often reveal this identity because of the negative label that is associated with it. She noted that feminist students are more likely to respond to feminism through violating gender roles and confronting sexist behavior than verbalizing their feminist viewpoint.

## CAUSALITY

According to Babbie, 'measurement involves careful and deliberate observations for the purpose of describing objects and events in terms of the attributes composing a variable.'

**Variables** are logical groupings of **attributes** or characters that describe an object.

**Causation** is an essential issue to consider when identifying **independent** and **dependent variables**. Students' attitude towards feminism is our independent variable, while feminist self-identification and have taken women's studies classes are the dependent variables. Causation is the idea that attributes on one variable is expected to cause or encourage attributes on another variable. Babbie identifies three criteria for **nomothetic causality**, which are as follows:

- (1) **Correlation**- variables must be correlated
- (2) **Time order is important**- the cause takes place before the presumed effect. It is often difficult to decide which variable comes first but we reason that general

orientations are likely to cause specific opinions. Close observation and data analyses can in fact reveal the direction of the relationship.

(3) **Non-spurious**- the effect cannot be explained by a third variable.

It is difficult to say that attitudes towards feminism nomothetically cause students' self-identification as a feminist because many other variables might also cause this presumed effect. For example, we recognize that education may have an effect on students' attitudes, and thus we have tested for this relationship in our qualitative research.

## OPERATIONALIZATION

To test our hypothesis, we conducted both quantitative and qualitative research by way of a survey and focus group respectively. We devised a questionnaire to survey attitudes towards feminism and also held a focus group to discuss theories associated with our hypothesis.

### Survey Construction

There are several advantages to administering a survey that made this method the most appropriate one to measure our hypothesis. The advantages of such a method include the ability to generalize about large populations as well as the ability to obtain results quickly and easily. On the other hand, it is possible that the close-ended question portion of the survey misrepresented the true feelings of respondents. A more important drawback to the survey method; however, is that answers may not be representative of real life situations, which is what Babbie refers to as artificiality.

In order to measure our independent variable, we constructed a twenty-item **index** from Henley et al. FPS2. We then chose an item with the highest item-subscale correlation (as reported in Henley et al.'s Study 2) for each of the six feminist subscales: conservatism, liberal, cultural, socialist, womanist, and radical feminists. (See Table 2) The rest of the items

were chosen in order to cover the 17 topics. Every topic was covered with at least one item and each of the five feminist perspectives and conservatism had between 3-4 items represented. See Table 1.

Topic	Feminist Perspectives Associated with Item Numbers on Measurement of Social Attitudes Test					
	Conservative	Liberal	Radical	Socialist	Cultural	Woman of Color
(Aspects of importance to feminists)						
Appearance						
Battering of Women						18
Childcare	1			13		12
Employment/ Equal Opportunity	1		11			4
Leadership/ Assertiveness	9					
Marriage/Family	1	5				
Origins of oppression			14	2, 13, 15		
Political Involvement			20			
Pornography		10				
Prostitution						
Rape					3	
Religion					17	
Reproduction/ Reproductive rights				15	16	
Romantic love				2		
Gender roles	1	19	14			
Sexist Language			8, 14			
Sexual Orientation	6	12				

Table 2: SAMPLE ITEMS FROM THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES SCALE with the highest item-subscale correlations as reported by Henley et al. Study 2.	
Subscale	Sample Item on Questionnaire
Conservative	Women should not be assertive like men because they are the natural leaders on earth.
Liberal Feminist	Homosexuality is not a moral issue, but rather a question of liberty and freedom of expression.
Cultural Feminist	Rape is best stopped by replacing the current male-orientated culture of violence with an alternative culture based on more gentle, womanly qualities.
Socialist Feminist	It is the capitalist system that forces women to be responsible for childcare.
Women of Color	Women of color are oppressed by White standards of beauty.
Radical Feminist	The workplace is organized around men's physical, economic, and sexual oppression of women.

Table 3: INDEX SCORING			
Subscales	Number of Items N = 20	Range of Index Scores	
		Minimum**	Maximum
Conservative	3	3	12
Liberal	4	4	16
Cultural	3	3	12
Socialist	3	3	12
Womanist	3	3	12
Radical	4	4	16
<b>* Total Femscore</b>		17	68

\* Femscore is a composite score of all the feminist perspectives not including conservatism.

\*\* Few scores fell below the minimum if respondent chose 'uncertain (0)' often.

Our survey successfully adheres to Babbie's guidelines for survey construction. The items were clearly stated and have been critiqued by respondents in Henley et al.'s FPS Study 1. Statements were in the positive direction, relatively short in length, and systematically randomized (i.e. not grouped by subscale). All statements were spread out and uncluttered on the questionnaire.

Our survey was composed of **close-ended** statements and questions and **open-ended** questions. Each of the close-ended statements and questions was **exhaustive** and

**mutually exclusive.** The **quantitative statements** were item numbers 1-20. Beside each of the statements the respondent was asked to check a box whether they 'Strongly Disagree,' 'Disagree,' 'Agree,' 'Strongly Agree,' or are 'Uncertain' about the following statements. Respondents were asked to fill out this part of the questionnaire before the qualitative questions.

The **qualitative questions** revealed the respondents' gender, year at Lehigh, whether or not they have taken women's studies classes or any other classes that have focused on women's issues. Four questions were **open ended**: (1) what is your age and (2) do you consider yourself a feminist, why or why not? The two other open-ended questions were **contingency questions**: (3) how many women's studies classes have you taken and (4) how many other classes have you taken that have focused on women's issues. These questions were intended for those respondents who answered yes to the preceding question.

The qualitative questions were also administered on a separate sheet so that the respondent would not know we were asking the question: do you consider yourself a feminist, until after they had completed the 20 item version of the Feminist Perspective Scale. If the respondents knew we were studying their feminist views, we believe that they may have answered the other items differently in order to appear a certain way. For example, if they were not sure if they considered themselves a feminist, they may have tried to answer the questions as they thought a feminist would. If however, the respondents wanted to know the purpose of our study we provided that information upon request after they filled out the questionnaire.

### **Index Scoring**

Each of the 20 attitudinal items was assigned a score from 0-4 as follows:

- 0= uncertain
- 1= strongly disagree
- 2= disagree
- 3= agree
- 4= strongly agree

Each of these scores, excluding answers to the three conservative items were added together to get a composite score called Femscore, which has a range from 17- 68 (See Table 3). One respondent could answer all 17 items with strongly disagree yielding a minimum score of 17 (17 items x 1 point) and yet another could answer all 17 items as strongly agree giving a maximum score of 68 (17 items x 4 points).

Table 3 also gives the number of items in the questionnaire offered for each subscale. For example, three items on the questionnaire- item numbers 1, 6 and 9 (as follows) represented the conservative perspective.

1. Man's first responsibility is to obtain economic success, while his wife should care for the family needs.
6. Homosexuals need to be rehabilitated into normal members of society.
9. Women should not be assertive like men because men are the natural leaders on earth.

Refer to Table 1 to see which item numbers are associated with which feminist perspective.

A composite score was calculated for each feminist perspective as well and then correlated with Femscore in order to examine the extent to which Femscore actually predicted responses to the 17 items it comprised. Item analysis (or **internal validation**) is the first step in **index validation**. (See Results)

## METHODS

### Respondents

We used a **cross-sectional study**, a study that involves making observations at one time of a specific population or phenomenon. We drew conclusions from Lehigh University

students (**population**), making our **unit of analysis** the individual. Also, we selected or **sampled** forty students from the overall Lehigh student population. 24 students were female (60% of sample) and 16 students were male (40% of sample). The age distribution was between 18 and 26 years of age. 21 year olds were the most frequently occurring age group (or mode). 19 respondents were seniors (47.5% of the sample). Divided by year, there were 2 freshmen (5%), 6 sophomores (15%), 3 juniors (7.5%), 3 fifth year seniors (7.5%) and 7 graduate students (17.5%).

Of our respondent's surveyed, 12 had taken women's studies classes (30%), while the remaining 28 (70%) had not taken a women's studies class. More specifically, of the 12 who had taken women's studies classes, 9 (22.5%) had taken one women's studies class, 2 (5%) had taken 2 women's studies classes, and 1 (2.5%) had taken 3 women's studies classes. Additionally, 16 (40%) of the respondent's had taken other classes that focused on women's issues, while 24 (60%) had not. More specifically, of the 16 who had taken a class with women's issues as a focus, 9 (22.5%) took 1 class, 5 (12.5%) took 2 classes, and 2 (5%) took 3 classes.

And finally, 9 (22.5%) of our respondents claimed to be feminists, while more than half of our sample, 21 (52.5%) did not define themselves as such. The remaining 10 (25%) respondents, however, were undecided as to whether or not they considered themselves feminists.

### Sampling Method

The respondents were collected by a **non-probability sampling** method known as **reliance on available subjects**. Non-probability is a type of sampling method that involves sampling a population in some way not suggested by probability theory. This technique is often used

when it is nearly impossible to have an exhaustive list of the population under study. Reliance on available subjects is a method used out of convenience to the researcher and does not control for the representativeness of a sample. Although this sampling manner is known to be very limiting and is not favored by most, as pointed out by Babbie, we implemented it due to the nature of our research. Also, we were not trying to examine the student population as a whole or a specific **subgroup**. Instead, we were trying to get a general feel for how individuals' backgrounds influence their opinions and attitudes towards feminist concepts and language. Therefore, we presume that the **non-systematic** technique for surveying grants itself variety in the individuals examined. Thus, our surveys were distributed in various areas throughout the campus in common areas such as Linderman and Fairchild Martindale Libraries.

### **Ethical Issues**

In addition, our study of feminism does not involve any controversial ethical practices. Our survey, or mode of obtaining answers to our survey questions, does not conflict with any of the five "Ethical Issues in Research" established by the **Institutional Review Board (IRB)**. A respondent's decision to fill out our survey was completely (1) voluntary and (2) did not harm them either physically or psychologically. We did not ask for any identification information from the subjects, thereby maintaining (3) confidentiality. Furthermore, we did not (4) deceive subjects in any way, and explained the basic purpose of our study willingly after they complete the survey.

The last issue with which the IRB is concerned has to do with (5) reporting both positive and negative effects of studies. We reported all of the results exactly as they were obtained, and thus this issue, again, is compliant with our research project. Lastly, we did

not conduct our survey on the internet and therefore, do not need to obtain permission from the IRB. In effect, our project did not conflict with any of the IRB's ethical issues.

## QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

**Quantitative analysis** is the 'technique by which researchers convert data to a numerical form and subject it to statistical analyses.' We created a **codebook** or 'a document that describes the locations of variables and lists the assignments of coded to the attributes composing those variables.' The codebook demonstrates how we have quantified all of our questionnaire data. The format we used is as follows:

- (1) VARIABLE NAME (type of variable)
- (2) Variable Definition
- (3) Numerical label (1-)= Attributes composing a variable

### Variables in Codebook

GENDER (nominal)  
What is your gender?  
1= female  
2= male

AGE (ordinal)  
What is your age?  
(open-ended)

YEAR (ordinal)  
What is your academic year at Lehigh?  
1= freshman                      4= senior  
2= sophomore                    5= fifth year senior  
3= junior                         6= graduate student

WSCCLASS (nominal)  
Have you taken any women's studies classes?  
1= yes  
2= no

    If yes,

        NUWSCLS (ordinal)  
        How many women's studies classes have you taken?  
        0= no  
        (open-ended)

OTHERCL (nominal)  
Have you taken any other classes with a focus on women's issues?  
1= yes  
2= no

If yes,  
NUOTRCL (ordinal)  
0 = no  
(open-ended)

FEMINIST (nominal)  
Do you consider yourself a feminist?  
1 = yes  
2 = no  
3 = don't know  
Why or Why not?  
(open-ended)

## RESULTS

The primary goal of analysis was to correlate the dependent variables- the six subscales with the independent variables- self-identification of feminism (i.e. do you consider yourself a feminist?) and have you taken women's studies courses. The secondary goal was to correlate the dependent variable self-identification of feminism with the independent variables- gender, age, and academic year. We expected positive correlations between all of these variables in accordance with the results of Henley et al.'s 60-item version of the Feminist Perspective Scale 2. Results from our 20- item version of FPS2 are as follows:

### Subscale Statistics

**Means and standard deviations** were calculated for all subscales. Babbie defines the mean as an average computed by summing the values of several observations and dividing by the number of observations. While the mean is used to calculate an average, standard deviation is useful in locating the amount of variability in a set of data. In order to determine which perspective respondents were more strongly associated with, it was necessary to adjust the means to account for the variance in possible maximum scores. We did so by multiplying the means for Conservative; Cultural, Socialist Feminists; and Women of Color by 3 and Liberal and Radical Feminists by 4. Results indicated that most respondents were Liberal Feminists,

followed by Radical Feminists, Women of Color, Cultural Feminists, Socialist Feminists and last but not least Conservative folks.

**Table 4: Reliabilities, Means and Standard Deviation Subscale Scores**

Sample; N= 40

<i>Subscale</i>	Cronbach's Standardized Item Alpha Coefficient	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Possible Maximum
Conservative	0.31	4.22	1.21	3	12
Liberal Feminist	0.40	11.1	2.85	4	16
Cultural Feminist	0.53	5.15	2.25	1	12
Socialist Feminist	-0.11	4.70	1.86	1	12
Women of Color	0.29	6.03	2.12	1	12
Radical Feminist	0.71	8.43	3.09	2	16
<i>Composite Subscale</i> Femscore	0.69	35.4	7.67	15	68

### Reliability

Reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same results each time. The reliability of the individual subscales was determined by an internal consistency measure called Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Alphas were calculated for each subscale by intercorrelating the items that comprise each subscale. For example, item numbers 1, 6, and 9 which when added together are the conservative perspective, were correlated with one another to yield an alpha of 0.31. Alphas were calculated for each of the feminist perspectives following the above mentioned example and are summarized in Table 4. In addition, 17 items that when added together are Femscore were also correlated with one another to yield an alpha of 0.69.

Of the six subscales, the Radical Feminist subscale had the highest alpha coefficient, and the Socialist subscale had the lowest. The negative alpha for Socialist feminists may be explained by the very the low mean scores (1.18, 1.28, 2.25) for q2, q13, q15, respectively

(i.e. most respondents either strongly disagreed or were uncertain about these statements). Femscore was also a reliable measure giving an alpha,  $r = .69$ .

### **Subscale Intercorrelations**

A bivariate correlation, an analysis of two variables simultaneously, was run on each of the six subscales and Femscore giving an  $r = 0.72$  and Pearson correlation coefficients as described in Table 5. To various degrees each of the five subscales excluding conservatism had positive correlations with each other and with Femscore. The highest Pearson correlation coefficients were Radical Feminist with Femscore ( $0.807, p < 0.01$ ) followed by Socialist, Liberal and Cultural Feminists with Femscore ( $0.638, 0.629, 0.453$  respectively,  $p < 0.01$ ). Socialist Feminists were most highly correlated with Radical Feminists ( $0.434, p < 0.01$ ) followed by Socialist and Radical Feminists with Women of Color ( $0.432$  and  $0.414$ , respectively,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The Conservative subscale was correlated negatively with Women of Color and Liberal Feminist ( $-0.032$  and  $-0.088$ , respectively). Although conservatism did not yield all negative correlations as expected they were the lowest correlation coefficients when compared to the other subscales.

The reliability and subscale intercorrelation results indicated that our composite measure, Femscore validated our subscales, with the exception of conservatism. In effect, Femscore predicted responses to the five subscales and actually measured what it was intended to.

Table 5: Subscale and Femscore Intercorrelations (Sample; N= 40)

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>LF</i>	<i>CU</i>	<i>SF</i>	<i>WC</i>	<i>RF</i>	<i>Femscore</i>
Conservative	-.088	.016	.157	-.032	.084	.034
Liberal Feminist		.189	.233	-.009	.365*	.629**
Cultural Feminist			.048	.037	.168	.453**
Socialist Feminist				.432**	.434**	.638**
Women of Color					.414**	.555**
Radical Feminist						.807**

*Note:* LF= Liberal Feminist, CU= Cultural Feminist, SF= Socialist Feminist, WC= Women of Color, RF= Radical Feminist.

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the concept it is intended to measure. Each subscale was separately correlated with nominal variables ‘do you consider yourself a feminist?’ and ‘have you taken any women’s studies classes?’

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) summary was run in which self-identification as a feminist was the independent variable (yes, no, don’t know) and the five feminist perspectives and conservatism were the dependent variables. Means for feminist and non-feminist respondents are reported in Table 6. Slightly more than half of the respondents did not consider themselves a feminist. 9 respondents (22.5% of sample) were feminists, 21 (52.5%) were not feminists and 10 (25 %) did not know.

**Table 6: Mean Subscales Scores by Feminist Self-Identification**

<i>Self- Identification as a Feminist</i>					
<i>Subscales of Feminist Perspectives Scale</i>	Yes N= 9	No N= 21	Don't know N= 10	F	p
Conservative	4.00	4.19	4.5	.411	.666
Liberal Feminist	12.22	10.71	10.9	.908	.412
Cultural Feminist	5.89	5.05	4.7	.697	.504
Socialist Feminist	5.11	4.62	4.5	.288	.752
Women of Color	6.56	5.9	5.8	.360	.700
Radical Feminist	11.0*	7.76*	7.5*	4.869	.013 p < .01
Femscore	40.78✓	34.05✓	33.4	3.208	.052 p ~ .05

*Note:* Means with an \*. are significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) as determined by the post hoc Tukey tests. Means with a ✓. are approaching significance ( $p \sim .05$ ) as determined by the post hoc Tukey tests.

Significant univariate effects were found for Radical Feminist,  $F = 4.869$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and Femscore,  $F = 3.208$ ,  $p$  approaching 0.05. Post- hoc Tukey tests ( $p < 0.01$ ) indicated that respondents who self-identified as feminists and have a strong radical feminist association were significantly different from those who did not self identify as feminists and those who did not know if they were feminists. Respondents who have strong radical feminist associations but who answered ‘no,’ (non-feminists) were significantly different from those who answered ‘yes’ (feminists) but not those who answered ‘don’t know’. Also the respondents in this subscale who did not know if they were feminists were different,  $p < 0.05$  from feminists but not non-feminists.

Post-hoc Tukey tests revealed that Femscore was approaching significance at the  $p < 0.05$  level. Respondents who were feminists were different from non-feminists and from those who do not know. But non-feminist respondents are only different from feminists not those who do not know. Also those respondents who do not know if they are feminists are only different from feminists, not non-feminists.

Table 7: Means for Women's Studies Classes

<i>Subscales of Feminist Perspectives Scale</i>	<i>Have You Taken Any Women's Studies Classes?</i>		Total N= 40	F	P
	Yes N= 12	No N= 28			
Conservative	3.92	4.36	4.22	1.119	.297
Liberal Feminist	11.08	11.11	11.1	.001	.981
Cultural Feminist	4.92	5.25	5.15	.181	.673
Socialist Feminist	5.33	4.43	4.70	2.049	.160
Women of Color	7.5	5.39	6.03	10.294	.003**
Radical Feminist	10.25	7.64	8.43	6.895	.012**
Femscore	39.08	33.82	35.4	4.292	.045*

Note: \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Another analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run in which 'have you taken any women's studies classes' was the independent variable (yes, no) and the five feminist perspectives and conservatism were the dependent variables. Means for women's studies classes are reported in Table 7. 70% of the sample (28 respondents) had not taken any women's studies classes. The other 12 respondents (30% of sample) had taken between 1 and 3 women's studies classes.

Significant univariate effects were found for Women of Color,  $F = 10.294$ ,  $p$  approaching 0.001, Radical Feminist,  $F = 6.895$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and Femscore,  $F = 4.292$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

As proposed by our hypothesis the most significant correlations were found to be that of radical feminism and self-identification as a feminist *and* radical feminism and taking women's studies classes.

Table 8: Means for Classes with Women's Issues

<i>Subscales of Feminist Perspectives Scale</i>	<i>Have You Taken Classes That Had a Focus on Women's Issues?</i>		Total N= 40	F	P
	Yes N= 16	No N= 24			
Conservative	4.5	4.04	4.22	1.394	.245
Liberal Feminist	11.63	10.75	11.1	.900	.349
Cultural Feminist	5.06	5.21	5.15	.039	.0844
Socialist Feminist	5.13	4.42	4.70	1.412	.242
Women of Color	5.69	6.25	6.03	.671	.418
Radical Feminist	8.75	8.23	8.43	.290	.593
Femscore	36.25	34.83	35.4	.322	.574

This ANOVA analysis was performed again, this time using 'have you taken any other classes that focused on women's issues?' as the independent variable. 24 respondents (60% of the sample) had never taken such as course and 16 respondents (40% of the sample) had taken between 1-3 classes. As you can see, a greater percentage of our sample took classes with a focus on some women's issues (40%) than women studies classes (30%). However this variable proved not to be significant when analyzed. Results of the means for classes with women's issues are reported in Table 8.

We also correlated all demographic variables- "gender," "age," and "academic year"- with the dependent variable, "do you consider yourself a feminist?," using cross-tabulations. A cross-tab analysis was run in which "gender" was the independent variable, and the respondent's answers (either "yes," "no," or "don't know") to "do you consider yourself a feminist?" were the dependent variable. Although the results were not statistically significant ( $r=4.054$ ,  $p= 0.132$ ), it was most likely due to our cells not containing the minimum expected count (3.60) and there was a noticeable difference in answers between genders.

Eight females (20.0% of both males and females) claimed to be a feminist, but only one male did.

A second cross-tab analysis was run with “age” as the independent variable and the answers to “do you consider yourself a feminist?” as the dependent variable. The results of this cross-tab ( $r = 18.070$ ,  $p = 0.204$ ), again were not significant due possibly due to the fact that 23 cells (95.8%) did not meet the expected minimum cell count (0.23). Because almost half of our respondents (47.5%) were in the 21-year old age group, and only 1% was in each of the 18, 25, and 26-year old age groups, comparisons between age groups were not possible.

A third cross-tab analysis was run with “academic year” as the independent variable and respondent’s answers to “do you consider yourself a feminist?” as the dependent variable. The results of this cross-tab test were slightly more substantial than the cross-tabs run with age as the dependent variable but were still statistically insignificant ( $r = 15.983$ ,  $p = 0.100$ ) because 94.4 % of our cells were below the minimum expected count (.45). Contrary to our expectations, however, the number of self-proclaimed feminists is not positively correlated with academic year. In fact, there are *more* self-proclaimed feminists in the freshman and sophomore academic years. All of the freshman (5% of total respondents) answered “yes” to the question “do you consider yourself a feminist?” while only 1 of the 7 graduate students answered “yes.” Furthermore, more juniors (5% of total respondents), answered “yes” than did fifth year seniors— of which all (7.5%)— answered “no.”

## QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The **qualitative analysis** aspect of our project, which is a method for examining social research data without converting them to a numerical format, was a **focus group**. We decided to lead a focus group because it was a good way of obtaining real life information, it

had flexibility, high face validity, quick results, and it did not incur any additional costs to our research. On the other hand, we recognized that there were disadvantages to hosting a focus group, including difficulty in interpreting data, discussions arising that did not pertain to the topic of feminism, and organizing a meeting time.

Participants of this focus group were not systematically chosen, and thus did not represent any meaningful population. Instead, we selected students who not only considered themselves feminists, but who also were quite knowledgeable about feminism. Our group met with six female students, who fit the above description, in order to obtain insightful responses regarding questions about feminism. Prior to the discussion, we created the following list of questions:

1. Describe your path to feminism.
2. Have you taken women studies classes, if so, how many?
3. Why did you take these classes?
4. Did they influence your beliefs about feminism?
5. What problems, if any, are associated with the term feminism?
6. What can be done to improve the stereotype of feminism?

We received numerous different responses from the participants pertaining to the first question. All of the participants of the focus group had taken or were currently enrolled in a women's studies class. Part of the group mentioned that they have always been involved in women's rights and feminism; however, learning more about these topics in college strengthened and affirmed their beliefs. Others had no prior knowledge about feminism until they came to Lehigh and thought a women's studies class would be interesting. Both groups agreed that the women's studies classes taken at Lehigh had positive effects on their life paths to becoming feminists. They all agreed that such classes definitely influenced the views they hold today.

In addition, it was agreed upon that there is a negative connotation associated with the word feminism, which creates a resistance for self-identifying as a feminist. This negative connotation stems from the actual word femininity, which portrays a 'feminine' (for females) implication. People with the proper knowledge about feminism understand that this term is more synonymous with the word egalitarian. The group offered suggestions of how to go about correcting this misunderstanding of the term. They believed that without education, feminism would continue to stand for women's rights and dismiss the inclusion of men. Consequently, we discussed whether to change the term itself in order to engage more people in the concept through more education. Most people did not agree that altering the name would be beneficial because of the meaningful history associated with the term. Other suggestions to improve the stereotype of feminism included educating society about feminism starting at an early age, as well as promoting public, rather than a solely academic, awareness.

Therefore, the information gathered during our focus group supported our hypothesis. The group confirmed that there is a negative association with the term feminism, making people reluctant to call themselves feminist. Many supported the concept that they although they held some feminist beliefs, initially they did not label themselves feminist because they had the preconceived notion that a *real* feminist had to be more radical. Furthermore, it was made apparent that women's studies classes do offer greater insight into feminism by portraying it positively with the correct facts.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall our research asserted our proposed hypothesis. Our research also supported previous research conducted on this topic and proved existing scales and methods to be

reliable and valid. Most respondents scored significantly enough on one of the fem. subscales to be considered associated with such, regardless of whether or not they acknowledge these labels.

Offering the category of “don’t know” permitted many hesitant respondents to select a definitive answer while at the same time remaining noncommittal. The likely alternative would have been to select “no” (Liss et al. 2000: 283).

By examining the final qualitative question of our survey we were able to draw many conclusions, all of which supported our hypothesis and previous speculations. Although there were a variety of responses, there was much consistency and similarity throughout. For those that selected “no” & “don’t know”, the most often written response to ‘why or why not’ was that the participant did not know the meaning of the word “feminist”. Several said they agreed with some feminist ideas but did not subscribe to all of them, indicating that they thought a feminist had to be radical. In fact several other respondents wrote that feminists are too extreme or could only be women. These answers simply represent ignorance to the true meanings of feminism. For the most part, those that said they were feminist explained this answer by saying they believed women and men should be treated equally in all aspects of life and were opposed to discrimination of any one group of people over another. These individuals also tended to score the highest on the radical subscale.

Another interesting point we would like to make is the inconsistency with the cultural subscale. Typically people who score high on other scales score low on the cultural scale. From review of preexisting literature it came to our attention that most feminists do not endorse this category of feminism. Instead non-feminists create this category, as what they believe true feminists would believe. This tends to be the case because non-feminists believe that feminists focus on gender differences (and woman superiority) when in fact the

emphasis is on gender equality. Therefore the cultural subscale remains a disputed issue within feminism. (Liss et al. 2000: 283)

In a society and world dominated by men and patriarchal principles, feminism allows us to see that there are alternatives to the status quo. Feminism so boldly claims that women are people too-people deserving of equal opportunities and respect. Feminism even reaches beyond the gender realm and seeks to establish equality for all those oppressed, be it by sex, race, socio-economic status, religion, etc. Through education we can teach others and ourselves the dangers and immorality that comes with oppression, and what it is feminism truly stands for. If we implement feminist beliefs into practice all people would live more meaningful lives, including men. After all, no one is free if others are oppressed.

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