AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEMINIST TRAITS
AND PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Sexism is a significant social problem that deeply affects women's lives, and a large body of research has demonstrated the relationship between discrimination and negative outcomes for women. Feminist consciousness has been suggested as means of challenging these deleterious effects by providing women with a mental framework through which to contextualize and understand this discrimination (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997). Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development has been the most commonly used form of conceptualizing women's feminist consciousness but this theory fails to differentiate between the attributes of feminist self-labeling and acceptance of a feminist worldview. In order to provide a more nuanced understanding of how feminist traits relate to women's empowerment the present study used Downing and Roush's five feminist identity styles as a means of operationalizing different orientations to feminist consciousness. These feminist attitudes and feminist self-identification were explored jointly and separately in their connection with personal empowerment specifically as it is conceptualized in feminist therapy theory. A total of 612 traditional college-age undergraduate women (18 to 25 years old) completed a series of online questionnaires to assess feminist attitudes, feminist self-labeling, and personal empowerment. Results support the idea that there are conceptually distinct aspects of feminist consciousness that can be effectively operationalized by Downing and Roush's five identity styles, that there is a significant difference between each of the identity
styles of both feminist-identified and non-feminist-identified women, and that there are significant discrepancies between the identity style scores of women who do versus do not self-label as feminist. The present data also provide support for previous research which has suggested that there are positive consequents associated with feminist self-labeling and with the recognition of the existence of sexism that stems from holding pro-feminist attitudes, reflecting a noteworthy relationship between feminist consciousness and personal empowerment.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Incidents of sexist discrimination in various forms are a common part of women's lives, carrying the potential for an array of harmful consequences. The search for protective traits that might successfully buffer against these effects has led to the study of feminist consciousness as a cognitive filter by which women might minimize the personal harm inflicted by sexism and establish a sense of empowerment. In this introductory chapter, an overview of the extant research on sexist discrimination and its deleterious effects on women's well-being is presented to provide a context for understanding the need for feminist-based research and practice. The most widely-researched model of feminist identity development (Downing & Roush, 1985) is introduced and discussed, supplying a conceptual framework from which women's feminist consciousness can be empirically examined. A review is offered of the ways in which feminist traits have been conceptualized and studied using this model. The problem of conflating feminist self-identification and feminist attitudes that has long existed in this research literature is addressed. The chapter ends with a rationale for the present study and its basis for modifying the Downing and Roush model of feminist identity by disentangling feminist attitudes and feminist self-identification as separate constructs that may relate in different ways to women's personal empowerment.
Sexism and Its Effects on Women

There is little doubt that sexism remains a significant aspect of women's lived experience, as demonstrated in regular encounters with gender-role stereotyping, sexual objectification, demeaning or derogatory comments, and other gender-based invalidating experiences (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009; Berg, 2006; Moradi & DeBlare, 2010; Sue, 2010; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). These manifestations of sexism are indicative of a sociocultural milieu that denigrates women, with expressions ranging from such subtle instances to more explicit, overtly harmful events. Sexist attitudes have been linked to a variety of damaging experiences for women, including being subjected to such keenly hostile behaviors as workplace discrimination and sexual assault (Goldenhar, Swanson, Hurrell, Ruder, & Deddens, 1998; Masser, Viki, & Power, 2006; Yoder & McDonald, 1998). The pervasiveness of this problem across contexts and time is significant; in one large, diverse sample of women (N = 1,279) 99% of participants indicated that they had experienced at least one incident that they identified as sexist within their lifetime (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997).

Research on sexist discrimination against women has clearly demonstrated that this is a consistent element of women's lives, with most study participants reporting having experienced sexism within their lifetime, in the past year, and even in the past week, as well as being able to freely recall and describe a particular personal experience with sexism when prompted (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). This form of discrimination manifests itself in a range of expressions, including sexist jokes and comments, harassment and unwanted sexual attention, unfair and disrespectful
treatment in the workplace and relationships in general, wage disparities, inequitable access to health care, and gender-based violence and crime (e.g., sexual assault and intimate partner violence) (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper; Belknap, 2006; Landrine & Klonoff, 1997; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson). These experiences of discrimination have been conceptualized in the social sciences literature as fundamentally connected to being female and are rooted in social structures that accord women an inferior status relative to men (Moradi & DeBlaere, 2010). In other words, such incidents and encounters are gender-specific stressors: negative experiences that "happen to women because they are women" (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995, p. 441).

Negative Impact of Sexism on Women's Mental and Physical Health

The tremendous variability of means by which sexism can touch women's lives results in a constant barrage against their physical and mental well-being. The demoralization that results from living in a sexist sociocultural environment and internalizing these messages has significant ramifications for women's health. In the extant research, exposure to sexism has been shown to be "the single best predictor of women's total physical and psychiatric symptoms," including being a more useful predictor than generic stressful life events (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997, p. 73). Studies on this connection between experiences of sexism and mental health have demonstrated that sexist events are frequently linked to general psychological distress (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001; Zucker & Landry, 2007) and continue to account for a significant proportion of distress even when other influences such as daily stressors, socioeconomic status, or age level are taken into account (Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs,
The degree of harm that can be attributed to sexist discrimination is remarkable in and of itself, as with research that has demonstrated a moderately strong relationship between sexism and PTSD with sexist degradation accounting for 20% of the variance in trauma scores (Berg, 2006). A similarly striking result has been found for symptoms of depression, with self-reported experiences with sexism accounting for up to 46% of the variance in women's depression scores as measured by the Beck Depression Inventory (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997). Certain psychiatric symptoms and disorders have been shown to be far more prevalent among women than men, including eating disorders, depression, and anxiety, and that this can be directly linked to experiences with sexism (Fischer & Holz, 2007; Harrington, Crowther, Payne Henrickson, & Mickelson, 2006; Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema & Gigrus, 1994; Striegel-Moore & Cachelin, 2001).

Although there is comparatively less research in general on the ramifications for women's physical health from being subjected to sexist events, evidence links perceived sexism to various problematic health behaviors and physiological symptoms. For example, several studies have demonstrated a link between sexism and health-harming behaviors such as use of alcohol and tobacco, with the authors suggesting that women may engage in these behaviors as a means of managing the psychological distress associated with such experiences (Borrell, et al., 2010; Zucker & Landry, 2007). Research on women's somatic reactions to sexist discrimination have suggested that this can manifest in a variety of ways, including insomnia, nausea, headaches, and

The issue of discrimination and its impact on overall well-being is of even greater significance for women whose identities include membership in other marginalized groups. Social scientists have argued that the "interlocking experience of societal traumas" (Bryant-Davis, Chung, & Tillman, 2009, p. 330) stemming from discrimination against multiple aspects of self is likely to increase the potential for harm. This idea is supported in research on sexist discrimination which has determined that ethnicity is a strong predictor of the likelihood of experiencing sexism (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Landrine & Klonoff, 1997), with a concurrent, intersecting experience of racism and sexism shown in the literature on the lives of Black women (Everett, Hall, & Hamilton-Mason, 2010; Greer, 2011; Keith & Brown, 2010; Moradi & Subich, 2003; Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). A similar blend of sexism and heterosexism can be found in studies on lesbian and bisexual women (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Haines, et al., 2008; Szymanski & Chung, 2003), just as women with disabilities also face distinct challenges stemming from their multiple-minority status (Banks, 2010). This relationship between sexism and other forms of discrimination is important to note because it demonstrates that discrimination of all types has measurable detrimental effects on women regardless of the degree and type of oppression experienced at the intersection of various identities.

The Significance of Feminist Consciousness

The enormous amount of research linking discrimination and negative outcomes for women exhibits the need for strategies and tools that can help to protect against the personal costs of sexism. Feminism and feminist theory has developed out of this
recognition of women's devalued social status and works to challenge the problematic cultural context from which sexism emanates. At the micro level of individual women's lives, the development of feminist consciousness (i.e., a personal awareness of sexism and its effects on women) has been conjectured to be an effective means by which to reduce these detrimental effects by providing a way to understand sexist discrimination and place it in a larger framework of women's oppression (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997). The following review provides a description of feminism and feminist consciousness and discusses the link between feminist consciousness and women's personal empowerment.

The most widely-employed theoretical model for conceptualizing personal feminist consciousness (Downing & Roush, 1985) is presented, including the failure of the model to articulate identity and attitudes as separate aspects of feminist consciousness despite significant evidence supporting their differentiation. The current study has addressed this weakness in the model by providing a more refined approach to exploring the relationship between various aspects of feminist consciousness and positive outcomes for women.

**Defining Feminism and Feminist Consciousness**

Feminism can be difficult to define given that it has continued to evolve throughout its course as a political movement and has over time splintered into a plethora of different perspectives (e.g., liberal, radical, socialist, lesbian, eco-feminist, womanist) that do not necessarily share similar values or beliefs. Regardless of the variability amongst these diverse forms, however, there is an elemental core to the construct of feminism: it is "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks, 2000, p. 1). This simple definition unifies the various factions of feminism and applies to
feminists of all creeds, providing a necessary and fundamental conceptualization for the exploration of broadly-defined feminist issues. It also emphasizes that feminism is, at its most basic level, predicated upon some awareness of discrimination based on sex and/or gender. Guided by this definition, the construct of feminist consciousness would include any traits, values and attitudes held by an individual that acknowledge the existence of sexist discrimination and its power as an inevitable and damaging aspect of all women's lives.

This recognition of the existence of sexism has significance beyond the realm of the abstract in that consciousness of sexist discrimination and the ability to label incidents as such has been implicated as a protective attribute for women. Specifically, sexist or other types of discriminatory events such as racism or heterosexism are theorized to be more psychologically harmful than other forms of stressors because these aggressions are "inherently demeaning, degrading, and highly personal," and focused on "something essential about the self" that is effectively unalterable, making them difficult to dismiss as random, circumstantial, or otherwise meaningless (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995, p. 442). A feminist perspective offers a powerful buffer against the "highly personal" nature of such affronts by shifting the meaning that is attributed to them. Feminist consciousness instead offers women a paradigm by which they can process sexist events and decrease self-blaming attributions for these events (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997). It serves as a cognitive schema through which discrimination against women on the basis of gender alone is understood as endemic to the larger sociocultural context rather than being indicative of personal deficiencies. Examples of support for this buffering effect includes research findings such as those reported by Klonis, Endo, Crosby, and Worell (1997), in
which 81% of their sample reported that feminist identity served as a useful tool (characterized by the authors as a "life raft") in dealing with experiences of sexism. More generally, feminist consciousness has been linked to reduction in women's psychological and behavioral symptoms, decreases in psychological distress, and/or increases in well-being (e.g., Fischer & Holz, 2007; Hurt, et al., 2007; Katz, Swindell, & Farrow, 2004; Peterson, Tantleff-Dunn, & Bedwell, 2006; Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Weitz, 1982; Yakushko, 2007). These findings suggest that greater insight into the nature and composition of women's feminist consciousness has the potential to be deeply useful in mitigating the harmful effects of sexism.

Benefits of Feminist Consciousness

As this review indicates, a robust body of research has been generated in an effort to define clear links between feminist attributes and particular beneficial outcomes for women. Feminist identity, attitudes, and other such traits have been linked to a wide range of variables, suggesting the important role that feminism plays in women's rejection of harmful sexist sociocultural messages and the attendant effect that rejection of these messages can have on well-being. These include more positive attitudes about sexual stimuli (Bay-Cheng & Zucker, 2007), effects on issues related to disordered eating (Green, Scott, Riopel, & Skaggs, 2008; Hurt, et al., 2007; Sabik & Tylka, 2006), positive body attitudes and increased appearance satisfaction (Murnen & Smolak, 2009; Peterson, Tantleff-Dunn, & Bedwell, 2006), increased willingness to confront sexism (Leaper & Arias, 2011), and decreased negative impact of sexism on well-being (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997).
Notably, this link between feminist consciousness and personal benefit has been overtly articulated in feminist approaches to psychotherapy. Based on the premise that feminist consciousness (i.e., raised awareness of the harm caused by sexism) provides women with the ability to recognize and challenge discrimination, feminist therapy theory postulates that building this critical consciousness enables women to avoid personalizing cultural messages and experiences that are intended to devalue them (Enns, 1997; Worell & Remer, 2003). In essence, the behavioral manifestation of feminist consciousness as it is framed in feminist therapy theory is personal empowerment. This conceptualization of empowerment encapsulates how the development of a feminist perspective is thought to encourage well-being in the face of a sexist sociocultural context, by fostering an array of positive gains rather than simply the reduction of distress or other psychological symptoms. It is characterized by a blend of coping skills and a willingness to identify and challenge individual and cultural manifestations of women's oppression. It is the individual quality that fosters resilience and well-being by providing "the knowledge and skills that facilitate effective coping with future situational inequities, discrimination, exclusion, and interpersonal stress" (Worell & Remer, p. 25). It affords strength, self-confidence, ability to assert oneself, and inoculation against the assault of everyday sexism (Worell, 2001).

The Model of Feminist Identity Development and Feminist Identity Attitude Styles

In order to empirically explore feminist consciousness, a model of feminist identity development was created by Nancy Downing and Kristin Roush in 1985. This model centered upon the idea that for women to establish a positive and integrated female identity they first needed to "acknowledge, then struggle with, and repeatedly work
through their feelings about the prejudice and discrimination they experience as women" (p. 695). They proposed that feminist identity development was a five-stage, progressive process in which women began as wholly unaware of sexism, developed recognition of sexist discrimination, and worked through feelings and experiences related to holding a devalued social role to ultimately arrive at an integrated, consolidated and active identity as a feminist. The stages and their defining characteristics include: Passive Acceptance, in which the woman does not acknowledge the existence of sexism; Revelation, during which she first recognizes the reality of sexism and feels angry about her devalued social status; Embeddedness-Emanation, wherein she retreats into women's communities for support and eventually comes to appreciate that complete segregation from men is not possible; Synthesis, during which she works to integrate her positive group identification with other women into her personal identity; and Active Commitment, culminating in the translation of group consciousness and identification into action on behalf of all women.

Over the intervening decades since this model was first proposed it has generated a tremendous amount of research exploring its validity and utility. Operationalization of the model for research purposes has primarily been through the creation of three self-report questionnaires with item content based on the attitudes that would be indicative of each stage of identity development. Studies conducted with these tools have generally substantiated the structure of Downing and Roush's model, both in terms of content and applied utility. For example, the model's hypothesized multiple different ways of experiencing feminist consciousness have been supported by research on the factor structure of the various measures, with psychometric support for either four or five stages (dependent upon the measure and how the instrument's authors conceptualized Downing
and Roush's final stage) (Bargad & Hyde, 1991; Fischer, et al., 2000; Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997; Rickard, 1989). Further support has been shown in studies on the instruments' construct validity, including that stages of feminist identity relate in expected ways to women's self-reported dating behaviors (Rickard, 1989), that variables indicative of the presence of feminist consciousness (e.g., feminist analysis) are associated with later stages (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997), and that involvement in a women's studies class increases feminist identity (Bargad & Hyde, 1991; Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997). Based on this validating research on the three extant measures of feminist identity development, these tools have been consistently used in research to operationalize Downing and Roush's model and articulate it in a manner that permits investigation of its relationship with a range of other variables.

One additional, noteworthy aspect of attempts to validate this model has been that the stages, while conceptually distinct, have not been supported in the research as following a linear, developmental progression as initially proposed (Hyde, 2002; Moradi & Subich, 2002a). Because of this, researchers typically have chosen instead to conceptualize the dynamic of feminist consciousness as defined by this theory not as stages but in terms of identity styles – i.e., as qualitatively different ways of experiencing feminist consciousness (Downing Hansen, 2002; Hyde, 2002; Sabik & Tylka, 2006). Although this idea of developmental "stages" has not been borne out in the research literature, the approach of conceptualizing feminist attitudes as an assortment of several different styles rather than as a dichotomous trait (i.e., either feminist or not) provides a useful framework for exploring the intricacy of feminist consciousness. The current project has further cultivated the Downing and Roush model, providing greater clarity on
the relationship between these identity styles and self-identification as aspects of feminist consciousness, as well as the differential contribution of these elements to women's empowerment.

Feminist Self-Identification

The model of feminist identity development presented by Downing and Roush (1985) incorporates into its basic premise that the more advanced, integrated feminist identity attitude styles are characterized in part by the adoption of a feminist social identity into a woman's self-definition. This assumption, however, is contradicted by the extant research on feminist self-identification and women's willingness to accept this label. Specifically, even as self-labeling as feminist has been shown in the research literature to be consistently linked with the presence of feminist consciousness, it is not always the case that women exhibiting feminist consciousness identify as feminist. The following section provides an introduction to the available research on feminist self-identification as a trait that is distinct from other individual-level feminist attributes, discusses its relationship to feminist consciousness, and addresses the implication of this limitation of the Downing and Roush model for research on the value of feminist consciousness for women.

Self-labeling as feminist has been consistently linked to variables indicative of feminist consciousness such as acceptance of the importance of collective action on behalf of women, a liberal political stance, positive perceptions of feminists, approval toward nontraditional gender roles for women, favorable opinion of the feminist movement, a sense of common fate with other women, and recognition of the existence of sexism (Cowan, Mestlin, & Masek, 1992; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994, 1997;
Leaper & Arias, 2011; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Liss & Erchull, 2010; Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001; Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997; Reid & Purcell, 2004; Williams & Wittig, 1997; Zucker, 2004). The range of studies that have addressed willingness to self-label using an array of feminist attitude and value-related variables have demonstrated consistent support for the validity of this trait as a means of assessing the presence of feminist consciousness as well as the degree to which it is an integral part of a woman's social identity.

Although this body of research has effectively linked feminist self-labeling and feminist consciousness, there is a large subset of the literature that strongly demonstrates why these should not be conflated as they currently are in the Downing and Roush model. Years of research on feminism as a social movement have demonstrated that negative stereotypes (e.g., feminists are unattractive, masculine-appearing, man-hating, bitter, lesbian, radical, and extremist) are firmly entrenched in our collective social consciousness (Alexander & Ryan, 1997; Goldberg, Gottesdiener, & Abramson, 1975; Houvouras & Carter, 2008; Quinn & Radtke, 2006). These stereotypes often lead women who hold feminist attitudes to disavow this identity by couching their views in the ubiquitous phrase, "I'm not a feminist, but…" A plethora of studies have shown, time and again, that women may hold some form of feminist consciousness but refuse the label (e.g., Alexander & Ryan; Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000; Buschman & Lenart, 1996; Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001; Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997; Renzetti, 1987; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006). This disconnect has been linked with the influence of stereotypes, either those endorsed by women themselves or out of concern that others will view them in the shadow of these biased images (Crossley, 2010;
Haddock & Zanna, 1994; Liss, Hoffner, & Crawford, 2000; Ramsey, et al., 2007; Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2007; Suter & Toller, 2006; Twenge & Zucker, 1999). Given these findings, it is clear that self-labeling is an important aspect of understanding women's feminist consciousness in that it reflects a link with this social identity, but it is not an accurate predictor if used in isolation. The influence of these sociocultural factors on whether or not the label is claimed makes it imperative that self-identification is not the sole means of measuring feminist consciousness. Moreover, it demonstrates that self-identification ought not to be assumed to be an inevitable consequent of the presence of feminist attitudes.

Subsuming both self-identification and feminist attitudes under the construct of "identity" (as unfortunately is the case with the Downing and Roush model) clouds understanding of feminist consciousness and its relationship to other variables. It has only been recently that researchers have begun to articulate the difference between holding pro-feminist attitudes and claiming the feminist label as part of one's self-definition (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). The implication of this is that contemporary examinations of feminist consciousness must establish and examine these as two separate and distinct constructs. The current study has added greater precision to empirical investigations of feminist consciousness, particularly in regards to expanded and improved applications of Downing and Roush's model, by disentangling these concepts. This was accomplished through exploration of the relationship between attitudes and self-labeling as well as examination of the unique and joint contributions of these traits to personal empowerment (chosen as a variable to signal the buffering effect against sexism that feminist consciousness is believed to provide).
Summary and Purpose of the Study

Sexism is a significant social problem that deeply affects women's lives. It can take more overt or vicious forms such as job discrimination or sexual violence, or be as mundane as consistently being subjected to stereotyping and objectification (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Regardless of how it manifests, there is a significant body of research demonstrating its negative effect on women. Feminism and feminist consciousness has been suggested as means of challenging these negative effects by providing women with a mental framework through which to process and contextualize discrimination, thereby externalizing attributions of blame (Landrine & Klonoff). Research on individual-level feminist traits has exhibited a link between feminist consciousness and a host of benefits for women's well-being, broadly defined (e.g., Yakushko, 2007). These findings reveal a connection between feminism and general positive outcomes for women that is reflective of the feminist therapy-based construct of personal empowerment. This construction promotes the practical application of coping skills in response to accurately perceived stressors and discriminatory experiences, informed by a raised awareness of sexism (Worell & Remer, 2003).

Operationalizing the construct of feminist consciousness to capture the relationship between feminism and women's personal empowerment has proven to be challenging, however. Downing and Roush's (1985) five-stage model of feminist identity development was created to conceptualize women's individual-level orientation to feminist consciousness. This model presumes the co-occurring presence of pro-feminist attitudes and self-identification in a gradually more integrated development. However, neither the developmental aspect of this model nor the subsumed construct of self-
identification as part of later stages have been supported in the research literature. It has been only recently that researchers have begun to differentiate between feminist self-identification and pro-feminist attitudes in studies of feminist traits as individual difference variables (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). The recognition of the distinction between these attributes establishes the need to assess attitudes and self-identification as different elements of feminist consciousness, particularly in further efforts to refine the Downing and Roush model.

The aim of the present study was to expand the extant literature on the possible benefit that feminist consciousness provides for women by first providing greater clarity on the differentiation between pro-feminist attitudes and a feminist social identity. The link between these distinct feminist traits and empowerment was explored in an effort to further articulate how feminist consciousness relates to women's well-being as operationalized in feminist therapy theory. Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development has been the most commonly used form of conceptualizing women's feminist consciousness, but this theory fails to differentiate between the attributes of feminist self-labeling and acceptance of a feminist worldview. Rather than conflating feminist self-identification and feminist attitudes as has typically been the case in past research, this study examined the relationship between these two individual-level feminist attributes and their connection with personal empowerment specifically as it is conceptualized in feminist therapy theory. The elements of feminist attitudes and self-identification were explored jointly and separately in their connection with personal empowerment to clarify the utility of the Downing and Roush model and provide a more nuanced understanding of how different traits indicative of the presence of feminist
consciousness relate to empowerment. The exploration of these attributes was addressed via the following questions:

1. Do women report significant differences between their degree of endorsement of each of the feminist identity attitude styles?
2. Does feminist self-identification relate differently to each of the feminist identity attitude styles? If so, how do they relate differently?
3. Is there a significant difference between the self-reported levels of personal empowerment of women who do versus do not self-identify as feminist?
4. How do feminist self-identification and feminist identity attitude style scores relate (separately and jointly) to personal empowerment?

Clarifying Definitions of Core Constructs

_Feminist consciousness:_ traits, attitudes and values that contain some level of awareness of sexist discrimination and its influence on women's lives. It forms the basis for one manifestation of a politicized gender identity for women, focused on challenging sexist exploitation. The idea of a feminist schema that serves as a protective factor against the harmful effects of sexism by externalizing attributions of blame (as suggested by Landrine & Klonoff, 1997) presumes the presence of some degree of feminist consciousness.

_Feminist identity:_ a construct in the research on feminist consciousness that includes a woman's commitment to feminist principles and/or her claiming of feminism as an aspect of her self-definition. Until relatively recently this construct has been used to encompass both pro-feminist attitudes and feminist self-identification despite evidence that these are separate traits (e.g., Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010).
Feminist identity attitude styles: the five stages of Downing and Roush's model of feminist identity development, but without any implied developmental component. Each of the original stages reflects a particular orientation to feminist consciousness that becomes an "attitude style" when the model is no longer considered in terms of a structured progression or presumed self-identification with the label. Feminist identity attitude styles are intended to reflect feminist consciousness, with one stage (Passive Acceptance) suggesting a lack of such consciousness and the other four stages indicating degrees or types of feminist consciousness (see Table 1). Identity attitude styles are separate from feminist self-identification and the literature suggests that certain styles that were originally theorized to include a feminist social identity may or may not actually reflect such an identity or the presence of feminist consciousness in younger cohorts of women (e.g., Erchull, et al., 2009). The present study uses these attitude styles as a means of characterizing women's feminist schema and its expression of a feminist politicized gender identity.

Feminist self-identification: a woman's claimed affiliation with the label of "feminist"; ownership of a feminist social identity. Self-identification is an independent construct from attitudes, values or behaviors, such that it is possible to self-identify without having feminist consciousness or to deny identification while holding a degree of feminist consciousness (e.g., Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). The present study uses overt self-identification as one means of indicating the presence of feminist consciousness.

Personal empowerment: based in Empowerment Feminist Therapy, this construct reflects a feminist-informed blend of positive coping skills, resilience, and willingness to identify and challenge individual and cultural manifestations of oppression (e.g., positive

Table 1
*Downing and Roush's Stages of Feminist Identity Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive Acceptance</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
<th>Embeddedness-Emanation</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Active Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approval of traditional gender roles; failure to recognize or acknowledge the existence of sexism</td>
<td>Awareness of sexism leading to questioning of self; feelings of anger and guilt; negative or suspicious attitude toward men</td>
<td>Seeking connection with other women; affirming positive new female identity; cautious interactions with men</td>
<td>Establishing an authentic and positive feminist identity; integration of individual and group identities</td>
<td>Consolidation of feminist identity; commitment to action to help dismantle sexism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 699.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the empirical literature related to women's feminist consciousness and the associated traits and outcome variables that have been connected with it. This includes an overview of the research using the Downing and Roush feminist identity development model, a summary of prior research on feminist self-identification, and a discussion on the implication of conflating pro-feminist attitudes and a feminist social identity as is the case with Downing and Roush's conceptualization. This research is addressed in relation to the literature which suggests that feminist consciousness serves to foster women's personal empowerment, highlighting the importance of distinguishing between identity and attitudes. A final body of research is presented that addresses feminist consciousness in contemporary cohorts of young women and the association between personal empowerment and feminist traits for this particular demographic group. The rationale for the present study is also provided, including the research questions and hypotheses.

The Model of Feminist Identity Development

In recognition of the complexity of feminist consciousness and the need to more accurately characterize individual differences related to feminism, Nancy Downing and Kristin Roush created a model of feminist identity development and presented it to the
counseling psychology community in 1985. At the basis of their model was the idea that healthy and integrated female identity development necessitated recognition of sexism, coming to terms with what it means for women to hold a devalued position in society, and embracing a positive sense of self as an active agent of social change against this devaluation. As Downing later explained, the model is intended to address women's own personal definition of womanhood as well as the process of developing and integrating into the self-concept a politicized gender identity based on recognition of sexism (Downing Hansen, 2002). Framing women's experience in this way led Downing and Roush to base their model upon an existing paradigm of affirming identity development for another marginalized group: Cross' model of positive Black identity development (1971). Other influences on the model were the authors' own clinical and personal experiences and the available research literature of the time on topics such as sex role transcendence and gender consciousness (Downing Hansen).

Downing and Roush's model draws most heavily from Cross' paradigm, sharing its use of five stages of identity development as well as mirroring the defining quality of each stage. The stages, listed here in ascending order as they were originally conceptualized, include: Passive Acceptance, which characterizes women who are in denial about or oblivious to "the individual, institutional, and cultural prejudice and discrimination" against women (p. 698); Revelation, in which the woman begins to question her role and participation in the patriarchal system with accompanying feelings of anger and guilt; Embeddedness-Emanation, which involves adopting a woman-centric perspective focused on "sisterhood" and shared connection with other women; Synthesis, during which women are able to integrate their valuing of their femaleness with their own
positive personal self-concept; and Active Commitment, which translates the consolidated identity into action (Downing & Roush, 1985). They indicated in their initial presentation of the model that it was intended as a means to effectively conceptualize the complexity of feminist consciousness and facilitate developmentally-appropriate consciousness raising interventions at both the personal and societal levels.

As described, the developmental nature of Downing and Roush's original model was meant to articulate the gradual process of rejecting internalized sexist messages and integrating into the self a positive sense of what it means to be female in a patriarchal culture. However, as Hyde notes in her review of the model, the lack of longitudinal research to test the validity of this ostensibly developmental process means that "we are not even close to having proper evidence of stages" (2002, p. 107). An additional challenge to the developmental element of the model is the finding that the stages are not always most highly correlated with those adjacent, which calls into question the linear nature of the model (Moradi & Subich, 2002b). In her later clarification and defense of their theory, Downing suggested that these problematic results may not reflect a deficiency in the underlying premise but rather that they are indicative of the "dynamic" and "fluid" nature of feminist identity as lived experience (Downing Hansen, 2002, p. 89). As a consequence of this fluidity and lack of evidence for linear development, researchers have instead suggested conceptualizing the five stages as identity *styles* that reflect different aspects of feminist consciousness and not a developmental process per se (Downing Hansen, 2002; Hyde, 2002; Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Even with the removal of the progressive aspect and reformulating the model as comprised of "styles" or "dimensions" of feminist consciousness reflected by
endorsement of particular attitudes, this approach retains its utility as a more complex basis for characterizing women's perception of sexism and its relevance to their own life and sense of self than simply whether or not they choose to identify with the feminist label.

Since its inception, Downing and Roush's model has been used extensively in the study of feminist identity and traits. Initial operationalization and support of the theory was provided through the development of three instruments. Each of these has sought to explore the model through self-report questionnaires on which participants rate their level of agreement with statements that reflect attitudes indicative of each of the five stages. The first of these tools, the Feminist Identity Scale (FIS; Rickard, 1989), measures only the first four stages of the model as its author argued that because Active Commitment was a behavioral manifestation of Synthesis it did not warrant separate assessment. A second instrument developed as a means to assess feminist identity, the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS; Bargad & Hyde, 1991), has also served to operationalize and support the Downing and Roush model; it includes all of the five proposed stages. The last instrument, the Feminist Identity Composite (FIC; Fischer, et al., 2000), was developed through analysis of FIS and FIDS psychometrics in an effort to create an instrument that addressed the individual measures' respective structural weaknesses; it also assesses each of the model's five stages.

Foundational research with all of these instruments has been supportive of the underlying model. For the FIS, the author reported in its initial presentation that the four stage subscales demonstrated ascending positive correlations between adjacent stages, had solid internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values reported as exceeding .85 for all
scales), and the scale significantly differentiated between groups of students (e.g., Right to Life versus the National Organization for Women) in a manner consistent with the model such that conservative groups had higher Passive Acceptance scores and lower Revelation, Embeddedness or Synthesis scores (Rickard, 1990). Similarly for the FIDS, the authors reported in their initial description of the measure that it adhered to a five-factor structure consistent with the model and had subscale internal consistency Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .65 to .85 (Bargad & Hyde, 1991). The construct validity of this tool was demonstrated in both qualitative and quantitative results of a study in which students in women's studies classes showed positive change in feminist self-identification in response to course participation (Bargad & Hyde). The FIC, as a composite instrument created from the FIS and FIS, also exhibited a five-factor structure that adhered to the model (Fischer, et al., 2000). This instrument's authors reported that they succeeded in creating a measure that improved upon its component sources, including subscale internal consistency alpha coefficients that were greater than those from the originating measures (ranging from .71 to .86) and strong support for its convergent and discriminant validity (Fischer, et al.). Additional research on the psychometrics of all of the three measures found that the discriminant and convergent validity of each tool was generally supportive of the model as related to self-esteem, perception of sexist events, and preference for a male or female therapist (Moradi & Subich, 2002b). Taken in conjunction, results on these measures offer a fundamental level of support for Downing and Roush's theory of differing orientations to feminist attitudes and facilitate the use of their paradigm in further research. Of the three instruments created to assess the model, the Feminist Identity Composite is the measure
most widely used and recommended for assessing feminist identity style (Erchull, et al., 2009).

A number of studies have used these tools to examine the construct validity of the model, including research by Rickard (1989) using the FIS to examine college women's self-reported dating behaviors (N = 63). Using sub-groups of women who scored highest in Passive Acceptance, Revelation and Synthesis for maximum clarity of differentiation (n = 21 for each group), she found that women categorized as being in the Passive Acceptance stage reported engaging in more traditional dating behaviors (e.g., allowing male partners to take a more dominant role by paying for meals or initiating physical contact) and Synthesis stage women reported less traditional behaviors. Another study that examined the properties of the FIS and FIDS demonstrated the construct validity of the model using a sample of female undergraduate students enrolled in women's studies or general psychology classes (N = 198, primarily [65.2%] identified as White with a mean age of 19) (Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997). These authors found that women's studies students had greater progression in feminist identity style over the semester as compared with general psychology students, as well as that feminist identity style status significantly differentiated between general psychology students who were versus were not interested in taking a women's studies class in the future such that interested students had higher scores in more integrated feminist identity styles.

Other research has supported the validity of Downing and Roush's model by exploring predictors and correlates of feminist identity style. Henderson-King and Stewart (1997) used a sample of undergraduate women (N = 234; 75% identified as White with a mean age of 19) to explore various traits associated with each stage. They
found that Passive Acceptance was significantly predicted in a negative direction by feelings about feminists and feminist analysis, and in a positive direction by feelings about men; Revelation was predicted in a positive direction by power discontent, sensitivity to sexism, and feelings about feminists, and in a negative direction by feelings about men; Embeddedness-Emanation was predicted in a positive direction by feelings about feminists and sensitivity to sexism, and in a negative direction by feelings about men; and Synthesis was positively predicted by feelings about feminists and feminist analysis. Another study provided support for the validity of the model via its utility in predicting feminist social identity; a sample of female undergraduate students (N = 233, approximately 80% self-identified as Caucasian) was assessed on a range of variables related to feminist identity and values (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001). These authors found that women's degree of feminist self-identification (rated on a 7-point scale) was independently predicted in part by endorsement of Revelation and Embeddedness-Emanation items, as well as that self-identified feminists were more likely to endorse Synthesis items and less likely to agree with Passive Acceptance items.

Research of this sort has consistently demonstrated the construct validity of Downing and Roush's model and laid the groundwork for its use in applied research on feminist attributes. The theory has subsequently been employed as the primary means of conceptualizing feminist identity in the counseling psychology literature, leading to a sizeable body of related research. The expanse of studies using this model over its first 15+ years was explored and synthesized by Moradi, Subich and Phillips (2002b) in a critical review of the empirical literature, which determined (in very broad terms) that the research was generally supportive of the model and its utility, but also cautioned that
methodological concerns (e.g., questionable psychometrics of measures, minimal application to diverse populations) limited its full endorsement. Some of the major conclusions drawn from their review included that available data on the instruments used in operationalizing the model indicated somewhat precarious reliability and validity; that the research to that point suggested the validity of the model for "relatively privileged women" (i.e., participants were often young, White university students; p. 20); that the small amount of work examining the relationship between feminist identity and eating disordered behavior was "mostly consistent with expectations" (p. 22), but that methodological issues hampered stronger conclusions; and that studies using the model to assess heterosexual interactions supported its validity but again with methodologically-based caveats.

This amalgamation of the results of empirical work conducted with the model as of 2002 (Moradi, Subich, & Phillips, 2002b) has provided cautious encouragement for its sustained use over the next decade. Research employing Downing and Roush's theory has continued to explore feminist identity style in relation to a range of other traits and experiences, often with a focus on variables related to women's well-being. For example, Moradi and Subich (2002b) used a sample of women drawn from a university community (N = 187, 106 undergraduates and 85 employees of the university; 80% of the sample identified as White) in a test of the relationship between feminist identity styles, experiences with sexism, and psychological distress. The authors conducted a path analysis to explore the link between these variables, finding that sexist events and feminist identity style scores accounted for 18% of the variance above and beyond the covariates of age, socioeconomic status, and socially desirable responding. Additional
exploration of the moderating effects of each of the feminist identity styles determined that while Revelation and Embeddedness-Emanation were related to greater distress, only Passive Acceptance interacting with recent sexist events was a uniquely predictive moderator, accounting for 1% of the variance after accounting for main effects and covariates. This relationship with sexist events and distress was significantly stronger for higher endorsement of Passive Acceptance than lower endorsement of these items. In their discussion of these results, the authors state that these findings support the link between denial of discrimination and psychological distress resulting from experiences with sexism, but also note that the other forms of identity indicative of feminist consciousness (i.e., all post-PA styles) did not seem to provide a protective function against distress. They concluded that while these data imply some tentative support of feminist identity style as an important moderator in the relationship between experiences with sexism and women's psychological distress, the method prohibits causal conclusions about these relationships and further research is needed. As an interesting corollary to these results, another recent study drew upon a sample of heterosexual female college students (N = 274, 84% identified as White) to explore the relationship between internalized misogyny, sexist events, and psychological distress as related to a Passive Acceptance identity style (Szymanski, Gupta, Carr, & Stewart, 2009). Taking just the Passive Acceptance items from the FIDS to assess this particular trait, these researchers found that PA was significantly correlated with internalized misogyny; furthermore, a significant interaction was found in which women who reported more exposure to sexist events and more internalized misogyny exhibited more psychological distress. These authors asserted that these results are consistent with those of Moradi and Subich (2002b)
in the link between a dearth of feminist consciousness and women's psychological distress.

Further support for the importance of Passive Acceptance as a factor in understanding women's well-being was found in a study of the links between feminist identity styles and women's expectations for romantic relationships (Yoder, Perry, & Saal, 2007). The responses of women drawn from a college setting (N = 165, 73% identified as White and 19% as African American) to a measure of feminist identity styles and various relationship-related attitudes were examined via bivariate correlations, with results indicating that Passive Acceptance was significantly negatively related to overall sexual assertiveness, initiation of sexual activity, insistence on safer sex practices, egalitarian role expectations for intimate partnerships, and a number of egalitarian role-related subdomains such as division of household labor, childcare, and authority within the relationship. More inconsistent relationships were found between other styles of feminist identity and these same outcomes, including that no other style was significantly related to sexual assertiveness scores and that sporadic significant relationships were found in the expected direction between egalitarian role-related variables and the styles of Synthesis and Active Commitment. As Yoder and her colleagues explain, these results suggest that while "there is something good for women" that comes from feminist consciousness, the more consistent and significant pattern is that "there is something bad coming from passively accepting or denying sexism" (p. 371). One additional study that supports this consequence of limited feminist consciousness used a sample of non-heterosexual women (N = 227, 82% of which identified as lesbian, 15% as bisexual and 3% as not sure; 85% identified as White) drawn from academic listservs on lesbian issues...
to explore internalized heterosexism (Szymanski, 2004). From the range of feminist traits that were examined, only Passive Acceptance, Revelation, Embeddedness-Emanation (negatively related) and one additional variable unrelated to identity were found to account for unique variance in internalized heterosexism, suggesting that limited feminist consciousness, distress about newly recognized sexism, and an inadequate sense of connection with other women and women's culture impedes identity development as a sexual minority. Regardless of the similarity amongst these studies' outcomes, however, it is again important to note that the research on this relationship between feminist consciousness and these other variables is correlational and cannot assess directionality of the links uncovered. Despite this overarching limitation, the results of these studies do effectively signal the importance of feminist consciousness when interrogating the role that sexism plays in women's lives and identity formation.

Another study from within this branch of the research used a more diverse sample of university women (N = 244; 57% identified as European American, 13% as African American, 11% as Latina, 8% as Asian American, 7% as bi/multiracial, and 4% as Native American) to address the relationship between feminist identity styles, psychological well-being and gender role orientation (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006). In this study, repeated hierarchical regression analyses were used; the authors reported that feminist identity style variables accounted for 24% or 10% of the variance in psychological well-being (dependent upon whether it was entered in the step before or after gender-role orientation), indicating that it did account for unique outcome variance. Another regression analysis in which both of these variables were entered simultaneously found that lower scores on Revelation and higher scores on Active Commitment
predicted greater well-being. As the authors explained, higher scores on more "advanced" feminist identity styles were related to higher reported levels of overall psychological well-being, just as higher scores on "less developed" styles reported lower levels of well-being. While these findings appear to be consistent with Downing and Roush's model, these results were also nonexperimental and therefore unable to establish causal links.

An additional study that has examined issues related to the psychological effects of endorsing feminist attitudes was conducted by Fischer and Good (2004) using yet another sample of female undergraduate college students (N = 191, 90% identified as White). In this study the researchers examined the relationship between feminist identity style, anger, and psychological distress using a series of partial correlations and path analysis. Examining the relationships between feminist identity styles and psychological distress, the results indicated that Revelation was associated with greater distress on nine of the ten outcome variables (including domains such as depression, anxiety, hostility, and alienation); Synthesis was negatively related to interpersonal sensitivity, hostility, and phobic anxiety; Passive Acceptance was associated with phobic anxiety in the opposite direction; neither Embeddedness-Emanation or Active Commitment were found to be significantly correlated with any of the distress domains. Results from the path analysis determined that all nine of the links found between Revelation and distress were moderated by anger. The authors argued that these results are in fact consistent with Downing and Roush's model, in that women whose principal orientation to feminist consciousness is the Revelation identity style are in the midst of being confronted with constant distressing examples of sexist discrimination that are new to their awareness and
they have not yet developed the defenses needed to buffer against the effects of these experiences. It is important to note, however, that this study was impacted by the same limitations endemic to similar studies: measurement concerns, limited generalizability because of the racially homogenous sample, and use of correlational analyses that prevent the drawing of directional links.

One final, more particular area related to women's well-being that has been addressed in the recent research using Downing and Roush's model is the link between feminist identity styles and disordered eating behaviors. Two studies on disordered eating and feminist identity styles have been conducted in the years since Moradi and her colleagues presented their comprehensive summary of the research (Moradi, Subich, & Phillips, 2002b). In the most recent of these, Passive Acceptance and Active Commitment styles of feminist identity (assessed using only these items from the FIDS) were studied as predictors of eating disorder diagnostic status in a sample of undergraduate women (N = 339, 92.6% identified as Caucasian) (Green, Scott, Riopel, & Skaggs, 2008). The authors hypothesized that eating disorder subtype and symptomatology are understudied elements of this form of pathology that would provide greater predictive strength when exploring the relationship between disordered eating and feminist identity styles. They used hierarchical regression analyses to test hypotheses; findings included that these two styles of feminist identity (selected to represent presence of feminist consciousness in a dichotomous manner) did not serve as significant predictors of disordered eating behavior even after controlling for diagnostic subtype or extent of symptoms. However, they also found that Active Commitment was a significant predictor of diagnostic status when the subtype was not controlled, which they
interpreted as evidence that diagnostic subtype of eating disorder may be a heretofore
unexplored moderator variable that could account for failure of previous studies to find a
clear link between feminist identity styles and disordered eating behaviors.

In the other recent study on this topic, a sample of female college students (N = 256, 77% identified as European American, 10.5% African American and 6.6% Asian American) was studied regarding feminist identity styles and whether these moderated the relationship between exposure to sexist events and disordered eating (Sabik & Tylka, 2006). Using hierarchical moderated regression, the researchers determined that Passive Acceptance, Revelation and Embeddedness-Emanation did not moderate this relationship; Synthesis was found to be a significant moderator such that it positively predicted disordered eating for women who scored low on this style as related to both recent and lifetime sexist events, and similar results were found between these variables and scores on Active Commitment such that it also positively predicted disordered eating for women who scored low on this style. The authors suggested that these results demonstrate the protective nature of these identity styles in that "women high in these styles may be able to contextualize sexist events and not internalize the blame for these events by engaging in maladaptive eating" (p. 83); this idea is highly consistent with Landrine and Klonoff's (1997) suggestion of feminist identity as a cognitive buffer against sexism-induced distress.

In summary, Downing and Roush's model of feminist identity development has remained the most well-known and widely-used means of conceptualizing individual-level feminist consciousness since it was first presented in 1985. Despite a lack of empirical support for the developmental aspect of the theory, it has provided a far more
nuanced approach to assessing the existence of feminist consciousness than is possible with a simple dichotomous variable (i.e., whether or not a woman identifies as feminist). It has served to operationalize feminist attitudes (the five identity styles) as indicative of qualitatively different aspects of feminist consciousness. Although previous research has not painted an entirely straightforward picture of the impact of feminist identity styles on women's psychological functioning or well-being (i.e., studies demonstrating the negative effects of less sexism-conscious identity styles often have not also indicated corresponding positive effects of more "advanced" styles, nor have studies finding positive effects of more integrated, sexism-cognizant styles consistently implicated a deleterious relationship between symptoms and less integrated styles), the theme emerging from this literature remains one in which feminist forms of politicized gender consciousness are useful in buffering the harmful sequelae of sexism. Although Downing and Roush's paradigm has contributed immeasurably to this research through their operationalization of feminist consciousness, it is hindered by the failure to distinguish between feminist attitudes and a feminist social identity.

Feminist Self-Identification as a Distinct Trait

Despite its demonstrated utility, the conflating of feminist attitudes and feminist identity that occurs in the Downing and Roush model is a significant limitation. This conceptualization of feminist consciousness is problematic given the significant body of research demonstrating support for the idea that feminist consciousness is not a unitary construct but rather that it encompasses the separate elements of attitudes and social identity. The following section examines the range of research on feminist self-identification as a distinct trait and the data which support the need to consider this as a
separate (albeit related) construct in the study of women's feminist consciousness. The extant research articulating the split between labeling and identity is addressed, including factors that have been found to contribute to women's willingness to claim the label. These results are then explored in light of the complexity of feminist consciousness that they imply, with a brief summary of what this suggests for future research.

Within the broad expanse of research on feminist consciousness, there is perhaps one singularly consistent finding: self-identification as feminist is not equivalent to holding feminist attitudes, values and/or beliefs. Examples of this difference abound in the research literature, as in a study on the attitudes of college women toward gender-related issues and the women's movement (N = 398) in which the researcher found that the majority of the women expressed sentiments supportive of feminism but were markedly reluctant to claim the label (Renzetti, 1987). Specifically, the majority of this sample expressed agreement or strong agreement with statements such as, "Many women who do the same work as their male colleagues earn substantially less money" (79.5%) and "Men tend to discriminate against women in hiring, firing, and promotion" (61.0%) as well as disagreement or strong disagreement with statements such as, "Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men" (93.8%) and "Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers" (92.9%). Despite these trends, however, only 27.3% of the women in this research were willing to call themselves feminists, nearly half did not, and 23.4% were undecided. A similar finding was described in another study of undergraduate female students (N = 229), with the authors reporting that approximately half of their sample indicated support for "most to all of the goals of the feminist movement," but more than
half of the sample was also "reluctant" to label themselves as feminist (Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997, p. 880).

A more recent qualitative study with a sample of Protestant Christian and Muslim women in the Midwestern United States (N = 14; ages 25 to 43 with a mean age of 33) determined that "the majority of the women identified equality and women's rights as important to them, but only half of the participants identified themselves as feminists" (Ali, Mahmood, Moel, Hudson, & Leathers, 2008, p. 45). One study characterized this split as "covert" feminism – i.e., agreement with the ideals but distancing oneself from the label (Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000). This study, which used undergraduate students (N = 276, n = 181 for women; age range for the entire sample was 17 to 47 with a mean of 21), demonstrated that 76.4% of the women sampled expressed some to entire agreement with the objectives of the feminist movement but did not claim the label; by contrast, only 16.6% characterized themselves to some degree using the feminist label. Yet another study which exhibits the attitudes/label split used a small sample of undergraduates at Temple University (N = 60, n = 42 for women; the sample was predominantly White with a mean age of approximately 21) to explore the meaning participants attached to the label (Breen & Karpinski, 2008). Although reported tests of the statistical significance of their data were limited to between-sex comparisons, the authors described that female participants endorsed feminist values at higher rates than they claimed the label, and noted that, "like nearly all of the previous studies conducted examining the relationship between feminist identification and endorsement of feminist attitudes, we found a disavowal of the label among those who reported feminist attitudes" (Breen & Karpinski, p. 307).
Demonstrating the Influence of Attitudes on Identity

One aspect of these studies that reflects the complicated relationship between feminist self-labeling and values is shown in the distinctions that arise when women are allowed to articulate their feminist social identification as a continuous rather than dichotomous variable. Specifically, the ability to qualify one's identity as "sort of" feminist has an impact on whether or not the label is claimed. For example, one study on feminist traits (using a sample of female undergraduates, N = 215; mean age was 18 and 85% of the sample was White) assessed feminist self-identification by having participants rate themselves on a seven-point scale (from "anti-feminist" at 1 to "very feminist" at 7) (Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004). Distribution of responses in this sample did reflect use of the full range of the scale, with most participants at the midrange (reported distribution: 1 = 0.9%, 2 = 12.7%, 3 = 51.4%, 4 = 23.6%, 5 = 5.7%, 6 = 5.2%, 7 = 0.5%).

In another interesting instance of this phenomenon, researchers employed both means of measurement to explore predictors and correlates of women's feminist social identity. Using a sample of female undergraduate students at the University of Connecticut (N = 233; primarily self-identified as Caucasian with a mean age of 18), they asked participants whether or not they identified as feminist using a forced-choice item (yes or no) as well as by rating themselves on the same seven-point scale (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001). The range of the subset of women who did accept the label was between 3 and 7 (specific distribution for women who did endorse the label: 3 = 8.3%, 4 = 19.4%, 5 = 33.3%, 6 = 33.3%, and 7 = 2.8%) and the range for women who did not was between 1 and 5 (distribution for this group: 1 = 2.2%, 2 = 15.2%, 3 = 57.6%, 4 = 23.7%, and 5 = 0.6%). These results exhibit the significant overlap between these
groups when attitudes are considered conjointly with label as part of the process of accepting a feminist identity. In addition, the larger implication is that the decision as to whether or not a woman adopts the label is connected with but not entirely dependent upon her endorsement of feminist values. These results make clear that a more complex conceptualization of feminist consciousness is needed; one in which self-labeling and attitudes are allowed to vary independently of one another.

As a means of further articulating this well-supported distinction between identification and attitudes, a significant body of research has outlined a number of predictive or correlated variables associated with feminist self-labeling. For example, it appears that rejection of negative stereotypes is a necessary but not sufficient step in endorsing a feminist social identity, with disavowal of stereotypes about feminism consistently linked with willingness to self-identify (Houvouras & Carter, 2008; Leaper & Arias, 2011; Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2007). Research which has exhibited a link between exposure to feminism and increased willingness to self-identify also implicates the role of such stereotypes in inhibiting the development of women's feminist consciousness (Bargad & Hyde, 1991; Eisele & Stake, 2008; Leaper & Arias; Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997; Reid & Purcell, 2004; Williams & Wittig, 1997). In a similar vein, several studies have demonstrated that a positive impression of the feminist movement is integral in accepting this identity (Cowan, Mestlin, & Masek, 1992; Duncan, 2010; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997; Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001; Myaskovsky & Wittig; Williams & Wittig). Other consistently significant variables include an overtly politicized gender consciousness in which women's devalued role in society was recognized to some extent (Duncan; Leaper & Arias; Liss, O'Connor,
Morosky, & Crawford) and involvement in activism and collective action on behalf of women (Duncan; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford; Nelson, et al., 2008; Williams & Wittig; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011; Zucker, 2004). This assortment of attributes is reflective of the relationship between self-labeling and feminist consciousness in that they all reveal some level of openness to feminist values and an awareness of sexist discrimination. In other words, this research supports the idea that "[t]o adopt this identity… is indicative that one does posses some level of feminist consciousness" (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994, p. 513). However, as the data on the quite common split between values and label indicates, the inverse is not always true.

In summary, the extant research on feminism has demonstrated that valid empirical evaluation of women's personal feminist traits is complicated by external factors that interact in a manner that challenges researchers' attempts to accurately define individual feminist consciousness. Stereotypes and other cultural narratives about feminism factor into this endeavor, exacerbating the divide between women's acceptance of feminist attitudes and their willingness to claim the label. The resultant effect is a common finding of "fence-sitters" (Aronson, 2003) or "precarious feminists" (Buschman & Lenart, 1996), i.e., women who fall somewhere on the continuum of endorsing feminist values yet express an ambivalent relationship with the feminist label. The extent to which these sociocultural influences shape (and hamper) women's development of a feminist social identity is remarkable, and this branch of the research literature provides additional evidence that feminist consciousness is a complex construct for which acceptance of the label is only one aspect. Thus, there are two fundamental conclusions to be drawn. First, that feminist self-labeling is a particular aspect of politicized gender
consciousness which must be assessed independently from feminist attitudes in order that one is not inadvertently (and inaccurately) subsumed by the other. Second, that feminist consciousness is a complex construct and research on feminist attributes must exhibit appreciation for this multifaceted quality through use of more sophisticated approaches to how it is operationalized.

The Benefits of Feminist Consciousness for Women's Empowerment

Despite a lack of absolute clarity or simplicity in the relationship between feminist attributes and other variables that have been examined in the extant research literature, it appears that there is some sort of positive link between feminist consciousness and beneficial outcomes for women. Particularly as this relates to experiences with sexist discrimination and other gender-influenced constructs (e.g., body image, relationship expectations, etc.), ownership of feminist traits are commonly found to have benefits for women's well-being. The current body of research and theory cumulatively suggests that greater feminist consciousness does protect against the deleterious effects of discrimination and lead to personal empowerment by way of increasing women's social awareness, self-efficacy and resilience. However, recent research on feminism indicates that this effect may be mitigated by certain sociocultural factors. The following section provides an overview of some additional research on the empirically-supported benefits of feminist attributes and briefly addresses the construct of group consciousness and its articulation of social identity salience as a protective quality. A final portion introduces the most recent research on feminist identity style and personal empowerment, including information on those sociocultural influences that may reduce
the utility of the Downing and Roush model as a means of conceptualizing younger women's feminist consciousness and empowerment.

The theme that has emerged from much of the research that has been discussed in this review is that feminist consciousness does, in some form or fashion, have individual-level benefits for women. Examples of this are found in studies such as those that demonstrated that non-feminist-identified women report lower expectations for egalitarian balance of roles in their relationships and lower sexual assertiveness (Yoder, Perry, & Saal, 2007) as well as that non-feminist women are more likely than feminists to embrace the traditional gender-based sexual double standard and that feminist women are more likely than non-feminists to report positive affective responses to sexual cues (Bay-Cheng & Zucker, 2007). Feminist attitudes have also been linked to other positive and protective attributes such as decreased internalized heterosexism in lesbian women (Szymanski & Chung, 2003). A number of additional studies have exhibited the benefit of feminist traits for women, including areas that impact well-being, disordered eating and body image, and willingness to confront sexism.

For example, in one interesting study that explored the personal benefits of feminism, a large sample of women (N = 691, age range 18-83 with a mean age of 40, 89% identified as White) was surveyed online about feminist attitudes and its impact on their lives (Yakushko, 2007). The author used a hierarchical clustering technique to sort participants into three groups: women with feminist values (n = 163), women with moderate values (n = 324) and women with traditional values (n = 204) and performed a between-subjects analysis of covariance to assess differences regarding psychological well-being variables such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive
relationships, purpose in life, self-acceptance, and satisfaction with life. The author concluded that women with traditional values may experience less well-being than women with some level of feminist consciousness, as demonstrated in the results that women with feminist values had significantly higher total well-being scores than women with traditional values, as well as that women in the traditional values cluster had lower scores as compared with the other two clusters on measures of autonomy, personal growth, and sense of purpose in life. Also notable was that no significant difference between the groups was found on the measures of environmental mastery, positive relationships, self-acceptance, or general life satisfaction. These findings suggest that feminist attitudes promote an active sense of agency in women that encourages growth and psychological well-being.

A more specific application of the benefit of feminist consciousness for women is found in studies that address the link between these attitudes and the behaviors and beliefs that are implicated in disordered eating. Several studies have explored this relationship, including one that builds upon the general association with wellness by examining the connection between feminist traits and variables such as self-esteem, depression, and maladaptive eating-related attitudes. In this study, a sample of female participants (N = 282, mean age of 25, 82% identified as Caucasian) were recruited from higher education settings and online academic listservs to complete an online survey that assessed feminist attributes and associated clinical outcomes (Hurt, et al., 2007). These researchers used structural equation modeling to test a model in which clinical outcome variables were indirectly predicted by a feminist social identity through intervening variables related to conformity to restrictive expectations for women. They uncovered a
somewhat more complex model that supported their original framework with several additional pathways; results indicated that feminist traits as well as appearance-related variables served as distal predictors of maladaptive eating attitudes, depressive symptoms, and lower self-esteem after passing through the proximal predictors of appearance surveillance and body shame. The authors argued that this supports the relevance of feminist traits for clinical outcome variables while also explaining the occasional inconsistencies in the research literature (i.e., needing to take intervening variables into account when exploring the relationship between feminist consciousness and clinical outcomes).

In a further exploration of the benefit of feminism for women's eating-related attitudes, a recent experimental study examined the impact of exposure to feminist ideology on body image. The authors recruited a sample of undergraduate women (N = 154, mean age of 20, approximately 65% of the sample identified as White, 18% as Latina, and 10% as African-American) who were randomly assigned to one of three groups: a feminist theory intervention on body image, a psychoeducational intervention on body image, and a control group (Peterson, Tantleff-Dunn, & Bedwell, 2006). Significant results included that participants in the feminist theory intervention group were more likely than those in the other two groups to increase in feminist self-identification and in satisfaction with physical appearance. Furthermore, the authors found that increases in feminist identification significantly correlated with positive changes in body image. This study is relatively unique in its use of an experimental design, providing more support for the idea that it is feminist-specific consciousness raising that benefits women rather than just raised awareness of body image problems.
and the etiology of eating disorders. Feminist consciousness is implicated as a cognitive paradigm by which women can diffuse harmful cultural messages about body image, demonstrating the role that feminist traits may hold in women's empowerment and highlighting the importance of such direct investigation of the relationship between them.

One final recent piece of research that examined the link between feminism and disordered eating-related attitudes utilized meta-analysis to draw conclusions about the strength of the association between these variables. Using a sample of 26 studies, all addressing the relationship between feminist traits and various body-related attitudes, the researchers found a marked amount of heterogeneity amongst the collected results as well as small effect sizes (Murnen & Smolak, 2009). However, statistically significant relationships were found between feminist attributes and each of the other variables, including attitudes about the body, drive for thinness, and scores on measures of disordered eating. The researchers concluded that these results support the idea that a feminist worldview offers protection against internalizing harmful social messages about weight, appearance and self-worth by providing women with critical consciousness.

As the results of these studies suggest, the benefits of feminist consciousness may be due to the way in which it affects women's perception and interpretation of their experiences rather than serving as something protective in and of itself. This idea is further supported in the myriad studies that demonstrate a clear link between feminist consciousness and support for action against sexism, suggesting that feminism is a way of viewing the world that fosters a particular critical and dynamic response. For example, recent research has shown that feminist self-identification is a significant variable in whether or not women choose to confront sexism (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009) and
that women with a publicly declared feminist social identity are more likely to have positive appraisals of confronting sexist discrimination (Leaper & Arias, 2011). Similarly, several studies have shown that raising women's awareness of gender-based discrimination (in other words, promoting feminist consciousness) leads to more support for action against discrimination (Garcia, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Ellemers, 2010), changes their perception of their experiences, and encourages collective action on behalf of women as a group (Becker & Swim, 2011). These results are consistent with the body of research that has repeatedly recognized a feminist social identity as a significant predictor of feminist activism (Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011; Zucker, 2004). Thus, it appears that feminist consciousness provides not only the means of recognizing that certain experiences and cultural messages are damaging to all women, but also the impetus to take action against such sexist discrimination.

In a similar vein, the beneficial aspect of feminist consciousness is also demonstrated in studies that have found a link between feminist traits and forms of prosocial coping, including both engaging in collective action and seeking social support in response to experiences with discrimination (Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Moradi & Funderburk, 2006). Such active responses to discrimination have been shown to be related to positive qualities for women such as increased sense of competence, self-esteem and empowerment (Gervais, Hillard, & Vescio, 2010) and a decreased sense of helplessness (Foster, 2000). These effects suggest that a feminist perspective provides women with a mechanism by which they can reduce the personal consequences of sexism and promote positive coping strategies. As suggested by Landrine and Klonoff, feminism offers a "schema for understanding sexism as par for the course in a patriarchal society"
(1997, p. 118) and subsequently shifts self-focused attributions for sexist experiences to externally-focused ones. An example of research that supports this idea can be found in a qualitative study which sampled 75 feminist-identified women working in academic settings (average age 48, 95% identified as White) (Klonis, Endo, Crosby, & Worell, 1997). The majority of these women (78% of the sample) characterized feminism as a coping device against sexist discrimination, including many for whom "feminist philosophies appeared to provide them with a context for understanding their lives" (Klonis, Endo, Crosby, & Worell, p. 340).

This cumulative body of findings on the benefits of feminist traits can be understood in light of social identity theory, which suggests that the strength of a person's identification with a particular group changes the way in which events are interpreted from the individual to the collective level (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Evidence suggests that there are benefits to holding this stronger group-level identification, including that it buffers the harmful impact of social discrimination by reducing self-directed anger caused by negative interpersonal feedback (Hansen & Sassenberg, 2006). Hansen and Sassenberg note that it is the importance of the group identity to the individual's self-definition that drives the buffering effect, centered upon the cognitive component of social identification. These results support the value of strong group identification in buffering against the harmful personal effects of discrimination, and this strong identification combined with group consciousness (i.e., attaching a politicized meaning to group membership) would imbue an additional level of meaning to these externalized interpretations so that personal experiences are also interpreted as reflective of a larger system of social inequality. Given that feminism is a form of politicized group
consciousness by its very nature (predicated on awareness of sexism), stronger identification with this social group should increase both group-level attributions and the political salience of such attributions, supporting Landrine and Klonoff's (1997) suggestion that feminism is protective to the individual through ownership of a "feminist schema" that alters the meaning of discriminatory events and deflects self-focused negative interpretations. It is significant to note that it is social identification with feminists (and its attendant group consciousness) that seems to generate individual-level benefits, rather than just identification with the social group women (Bartky, 1977; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994).

**Personal Empowerment and Egalitarian Individualism**

Throughout feminist-informed research and theory, an implicit assumption exists that women's empowerment is contingent upon the development of this politicized consciousness that recognizes the power of sexism on women's lives. The essential belief, clearly reflected in Downing and Roush's model in particular, is that failure to perceive sexism as a macro-level social problem results in women's acceptance of roles, attitudes, values, and beliefs that are restrictive at best and actively harmful at worst. However, research on feminist-related issues suggests that women's sense of their own personal empowerment is not necessarily connected to a politicized consciousness, particularly for younger cohorts of women. The following section reviews literature that addresses young women's tendency to reject a feminist social identity while simultaneously embracing feminist-based values from which they derive a sense of personal empowerment. This distinction is addressed in terms of its salience for the present research, including the importance of distinguishing between attitudes and
identity when investigating the potential benefits that feminist consciousness may provide for young women.

In considering the significance of feminism for individual women's lives, some fairly recent studies have indicated that broad sociocultural changes have shifted what it means for women to claim this label (e.g., Houvouras & Carter, 2008; Peltola, Milkie, & Presser, 2004). Researchers have proposed that feminism no longer has the same cultural connotations that it once did, arguing that liberal feminist values (i.e., a basic belief in gender equality) are now commonplace (Schnittker, Freese, & Powell, 2003) and an "omnipresent ideology" among younger generations (Liss, Hoffner, & Crawford, 2000, p. 282). Evidence of this can be found in studies that demonstrate that both men and women now often endorse liberal feminist values, indicating that support for gender equality has become prevalent and normative in modern American culture rather than something that is seen as connected with a particular social identity or politicized perspective (Breen & Karpinski, 2008; Houvouras & Carter; Liss, Hoffner, & Crawford). The consequence of this cultural shift is that widespread belief in women's equality is taken for granted and assumed to be so self-apparent that there is no need for collective action against sexism.

The corollary of resistance to collective action is belief in the primacy of the individual and focus on personal choice. This micro-level orientation accounts for findings such as national polling results that while 50% of people sampled believe that feminism is still relevant, only 25% of women believe that it is relevant to them personally (Huddy, Neely, & Lafay, 2000). In a culture that emphasizes personal choice, feminism as a social identity morphs into "lifestyle feminism" (hooks, 2000, p. 5) that is
stripped of its political meaning, does not challenge existing structures of power, and in which gender equality is assumed without taking on any associated political position. This view translates to an acceptance of feminist values for oneself and one's personal choices, but does not carry any responsibility to work for others' equality (Quinn & Radtke, 2006). In such an individualistic context, values associated with feminism are adopted because of their personal benefit, whereas feminism as a social identity is rejected as the purview of "pathetic females" (Rich, 2005, p. 501) who are unable to achieve on their own merits and must draw upon this collective identity in order to succeed.

This worldview wherein feminist values are divorced from politicized consciousness can account for much of the research findings in which women whose principles are ostensibly feminist nevertheless fail to identify with the movement. Feminism is reflected in these women's personal attitudes, behavior and choices, but not as a part of a social identity that would suggest connection with a larger group consciousness (e.g., Bay-Cheng & Zucker, 2007; Crossley, 2010; Quinn & Radtke, 2006). This translates to a sort of self-reliant individualism in which personal choice is experienced as empowerment (Rich, 2005). In the "post-feminist" American culture in which gender inequality is widely believed to be eradicated, this self-reliant individualism appears to be a universally-accepted orientation, regardless of whether or not women identify as feminist (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001). This has led some researchers to conclude that "everyone feels empowered" (Liss & Erchull, 2010, p. 85) and question the utility of traditional conceptualizations of feminism in understanding the personal empowerment of contemporary cohorts of young women.
The idea of personal empowerment being disconnected from this sort of political empowerment has been well-supported in recent research on feminist identity development. In her work on this subject, Miriam Liss has suggested that our current cultural context encourages young women to take up liberal feminist values without having to accept a politicized identity or recognize the existence of gender-based discrimination whatsoever. In researching feminist social identity and collective action, she and her colleagues found that in their sample of female undergraduate students (mean age of 18), most participants highly endorsed items on the Synthesis subscale of the Feminist Identity Scale even though the large majority did not consider themselves to be feminists (Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004). This is significant in that the Synthesis identity style was conceived by Downing and Roush as the penultimate stage in developed feminist consciousness (as well as the highest "stage" measured by the FIS instrument). The model predicts that women strongly endorsing these items would be receptive to a feminist social identity and its associated group consciousness, but this disconnect led the researchers to speculate that for modern young women high Synthesis scores do not reflect feminist consciousness per se but rather "increased self-efficacy and a sense of competence related to sociocultural changes in attitudes toward women and to increased opportunities for women" (Liss, Crawford, & Popp, p. 778).

Other studies that have uncovered similar results include a recent work on feminist identity style and psychological well-being that used the Feminist Identity Composite with a sample of undergraduate women; these authors found that 76% of their participants scored highest on the Synthesis subscale, but for the entire sample only 11% reported that they "definitely" considered themselves feminist and 20% identified as
"probably" feminist (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006). This apparent detachment of Synthesis style traits from feminist social identity (and its associated group consciousness) was also demonstrated in an interesting manner in a study with New Zealander female college students. This research examined the relationship between strategies used to enhance self-concept and connection with social identities and found that while Embeddedness-Emanation and Active Commitment styles were associated with group-oriented strategies (as would be expected based on how these styles are conceptualized), Passive Acceptance and Synthesis were associated with individual-oriented approaches (Ng, Dunne, & Cataldo, 1995).

The most recent demonstration of this trend was found in Liss and Erchull's (2010) study that explicitly explored the link between feminist identity style and social identification as feminist. These researchers recruited a large sample of women between the ages of 18 and 25 (N = 653; 86% identified as White) comprised of both undergraduate college students and visitors to feminist websites in order to examine variables related to Synthesis style scores. Using linear regression analyses to determine the utility of the Synthesis style in differentiating between women who do versus do not self-label, the researchers found that addition of Synthesis scores to the model did not enhance prediction of feminist self-labeling above and beyond the effect of age. A parallel analysis was also done for prediction of Synthesis scores in which feminist self-labeling was entered at the same step where Synthesis had been included in the previous model; self-identification was not found to contribute unique variance to Synthesis scores. The authors report that although Passive Acceptance and Active Commitment were uniquely associated with feminist self-labeling throughout each step of the analyses,
Synthesis was clearly not related to self-labeling. They conclude that Synthesis scores, as measured by currently available tools, do not seem to reflect feminist consciousness (specifically, awareness of gender-based discrimination against women) for current cohorts of young women but rather a more personalized, apolitical sense of empowerment. This result strongly suggests that the Downing and Roush model of feminist identity needs to be reexamined for its continued relevance to young women, particularly as part of ongoing efforts to articulate the connection between feminist consciousness and its personal benefit in buffering against sexism.

In their discussion of these findings, the authors question whether or not modern young women begin in a state of Passive Acceptance as suggested in Downing and Roush's model, or rather that the default position is for young women to "feel as though they have infinite opportunities but [remain] unaware of continued gender discrimination" (Liss & Erchull, 2010, p. 94). These recent studies imply that shifts in the culture have made egalitarian individualism (a concept concisely summarized in this quote) into a common mindset in which young women experience a sense of personal empowerment devoid of politicized gender consciousness. Beyond calling into question whether or not women's empowerment necessitates a political component, these studies also question the basic structure of Downing and Roush's theory of feminist identity style as applied to contemporary cohorts of young women.

This issue was explored directly in another recent study, the stated purpose of which was to address the developmental nature of the model and whether or not its utility varies between generations of women. Employing another sample of undergraduate women as well as women recruited from online sources (N = 217; n = 150 for younger
women [ages 18 to 25] and n = 67 for older women [ages 40 to 78], 86% of the total sample identified as White), the researchers compared women based on whether or not they reported having experienced prior "stages" of the Downing and Roush model (Erchull, et al., 2009). They found that regardless of feminist self-identification or age group, participants almost universally reported high Synthesis scores (lowest mean score = 4.17 on a 5-point scale). In addition, comparison of younger feminist and non-feminist women who scored high on Synthesis using chi square tests for independence found no significant difference between these groups in having any prior experience with other identity styles. Notably, the authors reported that less than 40% of younger feminists with high Synthesis scores reported having been through any prior stage of the model. The conclusions that these authors drew from this work were congruent with those derived from other recent research. Specifically, that the developmental nature of the Downing and Roush model is even more questionable for modern young women than has already been indicated in past research, and that young women's endorsement of Synthesis subscale items should not necessarily be construed to reflect feminist consciousness and/or identity.

Based on the extant research it seems most likely that this trend of young women endorsing high Synthesis scores reflects a depoliticized form of personal empowerment wherein power is perceived as entirely personal and no group consciousness of discrimination against women exists. This position stands in direct contrast with a feminist understanding of personal empowerment, in which this trait is predicated at least in part upon an awareness of sexism which provides protection against its harmful effects in a way that is not possible for women who lack this group-level social identification.
For young women who lack feminist consciousness, empowerment appears to be associated with an egalitarian individualistic social orientation and a belief in a meritocracy in which both success and failure is achieved solely through one's own efforts rather than being affected by any sort of systemic privilege or oppression (Martinez, Paterna, Roux, & Falomir, 2010; Rich, 2005; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). From this individual-focused orientation, empowerment is indicative of a personal sense of capacity to affect change on the external environment as demonstrated in positive self-esteem, self-efficacy, and a belief in one's relative personal power. There is a considerable amount of overlap between these traits and the way in which personal empowerment is conceptualized in a feminist framework, including the salience of self-esteem and perception of personal control (Worell & Remer, 2003, p. 26). However, the distinction between a feminist view of empowerment and its non-feminist counterpart is recognition of contextual influences on personal experience and an analysis of systems of power (Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1998; Worell & Remer). In feminist understandings of empowerment, there is no means by which personal power can be divorced from the political realities in which it exists.

The Significance of Distinguishing Pro-Feminist Attitudes from Feminist Social Identification

The tendency in extant research – particularly that which uses the Downing and Roush model of feminist identity – to conflate feminist attitudes and feminist self-identification is a common problem that has consequences for studying the relationship between feminist traits and women's empowerment. Research has only just begun to address this concern by actively separating these attributes and exploring their
independent contributions to relevant outcome variables. For example, one recent study quite explicitly addressed the gap between feminist attitudes and identity by suggesting that there is a distinctive difference between women who are "feminist-minded" (i.e., hold feminist values) while either accepting or denying the feminist label (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010, p. 1896). These researchers make note of a point that is often lost in studies in which attitudes and identity are merged: support for gender equality and a negative orientation toward feminism and/or feminists are not mutually exclusive. They argue that this oft-overlooked distinction masks the cultural trend of neoliberal egalitarian individualism in which personally beneficial feminist attitudes are endorsed but there is no identification with feminism because of the collective orientation (and action) that it requires. In order to explore this issue in more detail, Zucker and Bay-Cheng used a sample of female college students (N = 276, mean age of 19; 69% identified as White, 12% as Asian-American, 6% as multiracial, 5% as Middle Eastern, 4% as African-American, and 4% as Latina) and assessed various values as connected with feminist identification. They grouped participants into the three categories of feminists, non-labelers, and non-feminists and used this distinction as the independent variable in a MANOVA; results indicated no significant differences between feminists, non-labelers and non-feminists in values such as prioritization of achievement, power, or security. Scores of non-labelers on values such as appreciation of social justice, conformity, and traditionality were not significantly different from non-feminists, but these two groups were different from feminists in that feminists more strongly endorsed social justice and less strongly endorsed conformity and traditionality. The authors concluded that these results indicate a clear distinction between women who are feminist-identified and
women who are not, such that the non-labelers are markedly similar to non-feminists across multiple value domains – including adherence to social norms, lower valuing of social justice, support of social hierarchies, and belief in meritocracy. In addition to giving credence to the idea that egalitarian individualism may be at the root of many studies in which women endorse feminist values but not the label, this research makes very clear that differentiating between these two attributes is an essential step in studying feminist consciousness.

Another very recent study also took on the attitude/labeling distinction by exploring the relationships between feminist self-labeling, feminist attitudes, women's well-being, egalitarianism, and activism (Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011). Using a sample of primarily first- and second-year female college students (N = 220; 96% of the sample was under 25 years old and 85% identified as White), these researchers sought to address the paucity of current empirical literature that clearly articulates the relationship between feminist attitudes and a feminist social identity. Noteworthy findings included that amount of collective action was significantly different between feminist self-labelers and non-labelers (defined for this study as a dichotomous yes/no choice), with feminist-identified women reporting more activism than their non-labeling counterparts. However, no significant differences emerged between labelers and non-labelers on measures of well-being or expectations for egalitarian relationships. Furthermore, analyses that combined labeling and attitudes provided no additional explanatory value than did labeling alone, finding the same effect of significant prediction of collective action and no relationship between these attributes and well-being or egalitarian expectations. The authors conclude that women's decision whether or not to claim the
feminist label is an important one, and note that further research on the relationship between feminist traits and outcome variables should consider self-identification as a significant, separate element of feminist consciousness.

These studies highlight the importance of the attitudes/identity split in studying feminist traits, and juxtaposing this work with the recent trend in which young women are prone to endorse high Synthesis scores without taking on the feminist label generates questions about how these individual-level feminist attributes relate to the issue of empowerment. Just as there are few published studies that address feminist attitudes and identity as separate constructs, there are only a small number of studies to date that have explored the relationship between feminist traits and the feminist-specific construct of empowerment (or similarly grounded variables). One study that has begun this exploration used a sample of undergraduate women (N = 276; mean age of 20.6, 70% identified as European American, 14.5% as Latina, 6.5% as African American, and 3.5% as Asian American) in a review of the relationship between body image perceptions, eating-related attitudes, feminist identity style, and empowerment (Peterson, Grippo, & Tantleff-Dunn, 2008). Results indicated that empowerment scores, specifically scores on the power/powerlessness subscale of their measure, were significantly related to the disordered eating and body image outcome variables. Furthermore, empowerment subscale scores were correlated more often and with more significance to the outcome variables than were feminist identity style scores (measured using the Feminist Identity Composite). When Active Commitment scores were entered into hierarchical multiple regression analyses (selected because this was the only identity style found to be significantly correlated with body image subscale scores), they accounted for no unique
variance above and beyond that accounted for by the empowerment subscale of self-esteem. These results suggest the importance of focusing on empowerment as a means of challenging sexist cultural messages that negatively impact women's well-being. They also make clear that far more work is needed on articulating the relationship between empowerment and feminist attributes, as the empowerment measure used in this study was not feminist-derived – instead focusing on empowerment in a gender-neutral manner, with no implied politicized component. The measure also demonstrated strong correlations between most of its five subscales and the five feminist identity styles, ranging from two significant subscale correlations with Passive Acceptance to five significant correlations with Synthesis.

Although this research represents a significant contribution to our understanding of feminist attributes and empowerment, it also lacks inclusion of feminist self-identification as a true measure of social identity rather than simply the presence of feminist attitudes that are measured by the Feminist Identity Composite. It also fails to establish the distinction between empowerment that is focused on individual perception of power (e.g., self-efficacy, holding an internal locus of control, perception of control over the future) versus empowerment that stems from group consciousness and its attendant ability to deflect demoralizing experiences from individual-level to group-level attributions. As other studies have shown, the distinction between the personal empowerment that comes from holding an egalitarian-individualist orientation and the politicized empowerment that stems from feminist consciousness is significant for our understanding of outcomes associated with women's well-being (e.g., Bay-Cheng & Zucker, 2007; Fischer & Holz, 2007; Yoder, Perry, & Saal, 2007).
One final recent piece of research has also added to the exploration of the split between feminist attitudes and identity and how these contribute to positive traits for women that may be indicative of personal empowerment. Using a sample of undergraduate students enrolled in women's and gender studies courses at six different universities (N = 435, including 78 men; median age of 21 years, with approximately 75% of the sample identifying as European American, 10% as African American, 5% as Asian American, and 3% as Latino/a), the authors compared pre-test (beginning of the semester) and post-test (end of the semester) scores of students in these courses on a number of feminist-focused measures (Eisele & Stake, 2008). Using MANOVA and follow-up ANOVA analyses, results included that all outcome variables (feminist attitudes, self-identification, and measures of self-efficacy) increased significantly from pre- to post-testing, and that while men had significantly higher pre-test self-efficacy scores compared to their female counterparts this difference was no longer significant at post-test. Furthermore, post-test scores showed women reporting significantly higher empowerment scores than men. The authors also used a series of regression analyses to explore relationships between feminist attitudes, social identity, and self-efficacy at both pre-test and post-test. They reported that at pre-test feminist attitudes significantly predicted scores on feminist self-identification, self-efficacy, and feminist activism; feminist self-identification also predicted self-efficacy scores and feminist activism. Comparable analyses conducted on post-test data demonstrated findings that are consistent with other literature on feminist traits (e.g., change in feminist attitudes predicted change in openness to a feminist social identity; change in feminist self-labeling predicted change in feminist activism) but failed to demonstrate a significant link
between change in feminist self-identification or attitudes with change in self-efficacy. However, change in feminist attitudes as well as in feminist self-identity did significantly predict scores on a measure of empowerment that was specifically focused on response to the course content (asking participants to rate how the class made them feel regarding six descriptors: assertive, strong, self-reliant, empowered, inspired, and willing to take a stand; Eisele & Stake, p. 236).

Eisele and Stake (2008) articulate in the discussion of their results that while feminist attitudes appear to be both directly and indirectly connected with self-efficacy, this seems to be contingent upon ownership of a feminist social identity. They also suggest that it is not surprising that changes in feminist traits were related to empowerment scores but not self-efficacy, given that self-efficacy is an individualistic attribute whereas empowerment could ostensibly reflect an increase in group identification that logically flows from enhanced feminist attitudes and identity. These findings represent a very important contribution to our ongoing attempts to delineate the distinction between feminist attitudes and identity as they relate to women's empowerment, particularly in that they explored how a form of feminist intervention (participation in a women's and gender studies course) influenced feminist traits, self-efficacy and empowerment. Despite this strength, the study suffers from not having used Downing and Roush's model or associated measures to gauge any of the feminist-related variables (instead using portions of the Liberal Feminist Attitudes and Ideology Scale to assess attitudes), which restricts the degree to which it can be connected with other literature on feminist identity styles. It also has the limitation of having used measures of personal empowerment that were not feminist-based, including the self-efficacy-focused
Performance Self-Esteem Scale and a six-item assessment of empowerment that tapped into affect (i.e., "this class made me feel…") rather than attitudes and behaviors indicative of personal empowerment. Nevertheless, this study provides a strong example of the direction in which modern research on feminist consciousness and positive outcomes for women is headed through its focus on more clearly defined feminist traits and the concept of personal empowerment.

Summary and Rationale

The present body of research on individual-level feminist traits suggests that there is some form of benefit that women derive from feminist consciousness. It is difficult, however, to establish any sort of unambiguous link because of the challenges related to operationalizing and measuring feminist consciousness. The Downing and Roush (1985) model of feminist identity development has provided a means of assessing feminist consciousness via a set of five attitude "styles," allowing for greater sophistication in exploring women's feminist traits rather than just dichotomously labeling the individual as either feminist or not. Downing and Roush's conceptualization of feminist consciousness presumes co-occurrence of feminist attitudes and identity. Failing to differentiate between these two attributes suggests a limitation of the model, given that one major and consistent theme in the research is the distinction between feminist self-labeling and pro-feminist attitudes. This body of work on the frequency with which feminist attitudes and a feminist social identity diverge attests that feminist consciousness is not a unitary construct.

Unfortunately, in much of the extant research that examines the relationship between feminist consciousness and other variables, this discrepancy has not been taken
into account. This reflects a limitation of the current research base, implying the need to explore feminist consciousness in a more nuanced manner by teasing apart the connection between various feminist attributes and any potential benefits that these might hold for women's individual welfare and personal empowerment. One such direction includes separate examination of feminist identity styles (i.e., attitudes reflective of different aspects of feminist consciousness) and self-identification in view of the fact that research has firmly established that these are not synonymous and thus may have differing implications for possible benefits. Because of this, we must consider how either (separately) and both (jointly) may contribute to beneficial outcomes for women. The extant literature rarely engages in a simultaneous examination of this sort using both feminist attitudes and feminist self-identity.

In addition to these conclusions, a further limitation of the existing research is the way in which the potential benefit of feminist consciousness is often assessed. Past studies have typically explored specific outcome variables (e.g., body-related attitudes), generalized psychological distress, or overall well-being. A new path for research on the benefits of feminist consciousness would be to consider potential positive outcomes not just as a reduction in specific symptoms or problems or as an improvement in an undifferentiated construction of well-being but rather as personal empowerment. This conceptualization would be consistent with the assumed effect of feminist consciousness as it has been articulated in feminist theory. The extant literature generally fails to use outcome measures that are empowerment-related and/or based in a feminist paradigm, which would seem to be a more fitting means of capturing an accurate reflection of how feminist consciousness manifests itself in increased adaptive attitudes and behaviors.
The current project dealt with these gaps in the literature by employing a more complex construction of feminist consciousness than has been typically applied in prior studies by building upon the framework described in the Downing and Roush model. This approach modified the Downing and Roush model by separating the assessment of feminist self-labeling from the measurement of feminist identity styles. Assessing feminist consciousness in this manner provided a basis to gauge the relationship between ownership of a feminist social identity, feminist attitudes, and personal empowerment. This was accomplished by directly exploring the link between feminist traits and individual benefit by using an outcome measure that was developed specifically to address personal empowerment associated with raised feminist consciousness.

The present study has augmented the current literature base in a number of ways. First, it helps to expand the utility of Downing and Roush's model by further clarifying the relationship amongst the identity styles articulated by the theory and the connection between these styles and feminist self-identification. Second, it contributes to the burgeoning literature on if and how the Downing and Roush theory of feminist identity development is valid for the current cohort of young women. Third, it adds to the broader literature that explores the route by which various traits of a pro-feminist orientation connect with positive attributes and outcomes for women. Fourth, it helps to shift the focus in this present line of inquiry away from specific positive buffering effects or generalized well-being to a strength-based and feminist theory-derived outcome variable (personal empowerment). Fifth, the use of a feminist therapy-derived outcome measure helps to reconnect this line of research back to the feminist therapy literature from which the idea of feminism as a practicable route to women's empowerment was
first articulated. Sixth, it provides additional psychometric support for a relatively new
instrument (the Personal Progress Scale – Revised, derived from the Empowerment
Model of feminist therapy) and further expand its utility beyond use as a therapy
assessment tool.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In light of the relationships between feminist self-labeling, feminist identity
attitude styles and beneficial outcomes for women that have been explored and
demonstrated in the existing research, several questions were identified for investigation
the present study:

1. Do women in the current cohort of traditional college-age individuals report
   significant differences in their endorsement of attitudes indicative of particular
   feminist identity styles (as conceptualized using Downing and Roush's five
   stages of feminist identity)?

   Associated hypothesis: Consistent with Downing and Roush's
   conceptualization of the stages as qualitatively distinct ways of experiencing
   feminist consciousness, women will exhibit significant differences in their
   endorsement of attitudes associated with each of the five styles.

2. How does feminist self-identification relate to different forms of feminist
   consciousness (as conceptualized via the five Downing and Roush feminist
   identity attitude styles)?

   Associated hypothesis: Contrary to the original Downing and Roush model but
   consistent with recent research on younger cohorts of women, there will not
be a significant relationship between feminist identity attitude styles and willingness to self-identify as feminist.

3. Is there a significant difference between the levels of personal empowerment (as operationalized by the Empowerment Model of feminist therapy) of women who do versus do not self-identify as feminist?

*Associated hypothesis:* As suggested by the extant research on feminist self-labeling, women who do endorse a feminist social identity will report significantly higher levels of personal empowerment than those who do not accept the label.

4. How do feminist self-identification and feminist identity attitude style scores relate (separately and jointly) to personal empowerment?

*Associated hypothesis:* As indicated in recent research on variables reflecting the benefits of feminist consciousness, feminist self-identification and feminist identity attitude style scores will both be significantly related to personal empowerment. For the identity attitude style scores, this relationship will be in a negative direction for Passive Acceptance and Revelation and in a positive direction for Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis and Active Commitment.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter provides a description of the participants, measures, procedures and analyses employed for the present study. Details are offered on the process used for recruiting participants, psychometric and descriptive information on the measures, and the procedures that were utilized for collecting data. In the final portion of this chapter the research hypotheses and the statistical analyses used to address them are explained.

Participants

Participants were women enrolled as college students at the University of Akron and the University of Southern Indiana. The sample was restricted to cisgender women and female-identified transgender individuals between the ages of 18 and 25. The rationale for selecting this population (women of this age range) includes that most of the extant literature from which this study was developed employs similar samples (e.g., Erchull, et al., 2009; Leaper & Arias, 2011; Liss & Erchull, 2010; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011), making it easier to create connections and draw inferences between data obtained in this study and the present literature base. In addition, the research questions for the present study include an exploration of the applicability of the Downing and Roush model for a younger cohort of women, necessitating that the age of participants be restricted in this manner.
The resultant sample was comprised of 612 women, 321 of whom self-identified as feminist and 291 of whom did not. A larger proportion of the participants drawn from The University of Akron self-identified as feminist (n = 405; 237 feminist-identified) as compared with their peers at the University of Southern Indiana (n = 207; 84 feminist-identified). This discrepancy is most likely due to the fact that more of the Akron participants reported that they were recruited from their current enrollment in a Women's Studies or Gender Studies course (44.8% of the participants from this site) versus their counterparts drawn from the University of Southern Indiana (25.6% of these participants).

The majority of participants reported their racial identity as White/European Origin (81.9%), with smaller portions of the sample identifying as being African American/Black/African Origin (7.7%) or Bi-racial/Multi-racial (3.6%). Most participants indicated that they identify as heterosexual (88.9%), able-bodied (94.8%), and of Christian faith (51.1% nondenominational Christian; 15.7% Catholic; 4.7% other Christian denomination). The majority of participants indicated that they are early in their college career (32.1% first-years; 24.5% sophomores) and the most frequently reported academic major was psychology (24.6%). A summary of demographic data is presented in Table 2.

Using G*Power 3 statistical software (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), a power analysis was calculated prior to data collection in order to estimate the minimum number of participants needed for the current sample. This estimate was based upon requirements for a two-way (2x5) ANOVA with the anticipation of exploring the interaction as well as main effects. Hypothesizing a medium effect size at $p = .05$
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>94.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>No response/prefer not to answer</td>
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<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious/spiritual identity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian (nondenominational)</td>
<td>51.1</td>
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<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Christian denomination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agnostic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsure/undecided</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response/prefer not to answer</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>38</td>
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</table>

(continued)
Table 2 (continued)
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>% of sample</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
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<td>Academic standing</td>
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<tr>
<td>First year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
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<td>117</td>
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<tr>
<td>Super senior</td>
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<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate student</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreported/other</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic majors (most frequently reported)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology/biochemistry</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social work</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early childhood education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Double majors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undecided/undeclared</td>
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<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreported</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: N = 612.

(informed by effect sizes reported in similar recent multivariate research studies, e.g. Liss & Erchull, 2010; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011), achieving a power level of .80 required a total sample size of at least 200 participants.

Measures

Several measures were identified for use in the present study as a means of assessing participants’ feminist traits and perception of their personal empowerment.

Single-Item Feminist Self-Identity Measure

Feminist self-labeling was assessed with a single, forced-choice dichotomous (yes/no) response to the statement, “I consider myself to be a feminist” (Liss, O’Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001). Use of this forced-choice item is congruent with typical
practice in assessing feminist identity in the extant literature (e.g., Erchull, et al., 2009; Haines, et al., 2008; Liss & Erchull, 2010; Nelson, et al., 2008; Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2007), based on the idea that "feminist self-labeling is best conceived as a binary choice that either links, or does not link, a woman to feminists as a social group" (Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011, p. 15). Agreement with this statement was used to classify women as endorsing a feminist self-ascribed label whereas disagreement led to classification as rejecting the feminist label.

**Feminist Identity Attitude Style Measures**

For the purposes of assessing feminist identity attitude styles, participants were asked to complete two measures. The first of these is the Feminist Identity Composite (FIC; Fischer, et al., 2000), which is the instrument most widely used and recommended for assessing feminist identity style (Erchull, et al., 2009). This scale is based upon Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development and is comprised of items intended to reflect attitudes corresponding with each of the five identity styles. It was derived from the content of two earlier measures, the Feminist Identity Development Scale and the Feminist Identity Scale, which Fischer and colleagues combined to create a tool with stronger psychometric properties.

The FIC is a 33-item measure on which participants are asked to respond to a series of statements, rating their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with "neither agree nor disagree" at the midpoint) with higher scores indicating greater agreement. Each item is associated with a single identity style, which cumulatively form individual subscales for each style and allows for scores to be derived for each of Downing and Roush's theorized "stages." The Passive
Acceptance subscale contains seven items, including statements such as, "I like being a traditional female." The Revelation subscale is comprised of eight items such as, "Gradually, I am beginning to see just how sexist society really is." There are four items on the Embeddedness-Emanation subscale, focusing on statements such as, "I am very interested in women's studies." The Synthesis subscale contains five items, including, "I am proud to be a competent woman." The final subscale, Active Commitment, is composed of nine items, such as, "I want to work to improve women's status." The subscales have demonstrated solid internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .71 to .86 during the initial scale development (Fischer, et al., 2000) and from .73 to .84 in a different study comparing the psychometrics of various feminist identity measures (Moradi & Subich, 2002a). Support for validity of this instrument was reported by Fischer and colleagues (2000), who utilized factor analyses to determine that the scale corresponds to a five-factor structure that accounted for 36% of the total variance and closely resembles Downing and Roush's (1985) model. This same research also demonstrated the convergent and discriminant validity of the FIC with results that included statistically significant relationships in the predicted directions between FIC scales and constructs such as ego identity development, perception of sexist discrimination, and involvement in women's organizations.

The second measure employed to assess women's feminist identity attitude style was an abridged version of the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS; Bargad & Hyde, 1991), a questionnaire developed to operationalize Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development and one of the tools that was used to create the Feminist Identity Composite. Selected items from the FIDS were utilized rather than
administering the tool as it was originally structured in order to avoid duplicating use of the items that had been incorporated into the FIC. All remaining content from the FIDS that was not part of the FIC was included in the present study, resulting in a contribution of an additional 26 items used to assess women's feminist identity attitude styles. The FIDS items were added in order to augment scale content from the FIC that was deemed too limited to allow for sufficient variability among participants' scores (i.e., four items on the FIC Embeddedness-Emanation scale and five items on the Synthesis scale). This measure was selected as the best means of addressing this limitation because it is the only other currently available measure that assesses all five of Downing and Roush's proposed stages; the other measure from which the FIC is derived (the Feminist Identity Scale; Rickard, 1989) does not include items for Active Commitment (Moradi & Subich, 2002a).

Items from the Feminist Identity Development Scale are identical in structure and similar in content to those described for the Feminist Identity Composite, including use of the five-point Likert scale in which higher scores indicate greater agreement with statements reflecting attitudes indicative of a particular stage. The incorporated items include six for the Passive Acceptance subscale (sample item: "I do not want to have equal status with men"), seven for the Revelation subscale (e.g., "I am angry that I've let men take advantage of me"), seven for the Embeddedness-Emanation subscale (e.g., "Being a part of a women's community is important to me"), five for the Synthesis subscale (e.g., "I evaluate men as individuals, not as members of a group of oppressors"), and one for the Active Commitment scale ("I have a lifelong commitment to working for social, economic, and political equality for women"). On the full FIDS (all of which item
content was employed in the present study), each subscale has demonstrated good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .65 to .85 reported during scale development (Bargad & Hyde, 1991). Other researchers have found estimates of internal consistency for the scales ranging from .51 to .81 (Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997) and from .52 to .79 (Moradi & Subich, 2002a). Support for the discriminant and convergent validity of the FIDS has been shown in studies that have found minimal association between the scales and social desirability (Gerstmann & Kramer) as well as correlations in the expected direction as relates to experiences with sexism (specifically, small or nonsignificant with Passive Acceptance scores, highest affiliation with Revelation scores, and significant for Embeddedness-Emanation and Active Commitment scores; Moradi & Subich, 2002a).

Items from the Feminist Identity Composite and the abridged version of the Feminist Identity Development Scale were aggregated to create a single score for all participants on each of the five attitude styles. Thus, total item count for each scale was 13 for Passive Acceptance, 15 for Revelation, 11 for Embeddedness-Emanation, 10 for Synthesis, and 10 for Active Commitment. Due to the unequal item count, average scores for each attitude style were calculated for each participant using the summed total of all items for that scale. These mean scores allowed for comparison across the five scales and were used in all subsequent analyses of feminist identity attitude style.

**Personal Empowerment Measure**

For this research personal empowerment was assessed by the Personal Progress Scale – Revised (PPS-R). This instrument was developed out of an initial version of the Personal Progress Scale, modifying it to improve its psychometric properties and increase
its sensitivity to diversity and intersecting identities (Johnson, Worell, & Chandler, 2005). Both the initial and revised versions of the scale were created expressly for the purpose of assessing empowerment as conceptualized in feminist therapy, drawing upon the Empowerment Model developed by Judith Worell and Pamela Remer (2003) with its four foundational principles and ten attendant outcomes. These outcomes include positive self-evaluation, favorable comfort-distress ratio, gender- and culture-role awareness, personal control/self-efficacy, self-nurturance, problem-solving skills, assertiveness, resource access, gender and cultural flexibility, and social activism (Worell & Remer, p. 26) The PPS-R is a unique tool in that it is intended to assess these effects of empowerment-based interventions with women rather than assessing symptoms, reduction in specific target behaviors, or generalized well-being (Johnson, Worell, & Chandler).

The PPS-R is comprised of 28 items, each of which is self-rated by the respondent on a seven-point Likert-type scale from 1 ("almost never") to 7 ("almost always") with a midpoint of 4 ("sometimes true"). The range of possible total scores on the scale is 28 to 196 with higher scores reflecting a greater degree of personal empowerment. Items include statements such as, "I have equal relationships with important others in my life" and, "I feel prepared to deal with the discrimination I experience in today's society," as well as an equal number of reverse-scored items such as, "When making decisions about my life, I do not trust my own experience." The instructions direct the respondent to "answer each question in terms of any aspects of your personal identity that are important to you as a woman," making this aspect of identity particularly salient while responding to the scale.
Because this measure is relatively new, there is not yet an extensive body of research supporting its use but the data that are available to date do indicate good reliability and validity. One study of residents of battered women's shelters using the scale demonstrated solid internal consistency (α = .84; Wright, Perez, & Johnson, 2010), and a similar result (α = .85) was found for a study of undergraduate women seeking services at their university's counseling center (Moradi & Funderburk, 2006). These are congruent with the internal consistency data (α = .88) reported in the initial presentation of the scale (Johnson, Worell, & Chandler, 2005). This same preliminary research by Johnson and colleagues (2005) demonstrated good construct validity, such that the PPS-R exhibited significant positive correlations with measures of elements of well-being (including autonomy, \( r = .65, p = .01 \); self-acceptance, \( r = .74, p = .01 \); and total well-being, \( r = .81, p = .01 \)) and significant negative correlations with a measure of symptom severity (\( r = -.65, p = .01 \)) as well as serving as a useful outcome variable in differentiating between women in abusive relationships who did versus did not meet diagnostic criteria for PTSD. An additional exploration from this same research examined the construct validity of the PPS-R using principle components factor analysis, which reflected seven factors (accounting for 58.43% of the variance) that each corresponded with one or more Empowerment Model principles, encompassing nine of the ten outcomes (omitting favorable comfort-distress ratio; Johnson, Worell, & Chandler). However, given the brevity of the scale and the high intercorrelation between factors, the scale's authors concluded that it should be used to obtain a single total score for the umbrella construct of personal empowerment rather than yielding any sort of subscale scores.
Procedure

Participants were recruited from the student population at The University of Akron and the University of Southern Indiana, drawing upon students enrolled in psychology or women's studies courses during the Spring 2012 semester. Students who were enrolled in psychology courses were informed of the study and invited to participate via the online research participant pool management system at their university (HPR at the University of Akron and SONA at the University of Southern Indiana), through which their attendance was recorded and they were offered credit for their participation in the study. Instructors in Women's Studies/Gender Studies who were teaching courses at either institution at the time of data collection were contacted directly via email and asked to invite their students to participate in the research. Instructors in these courses took on the responsibility of informing their students about the project and providing them with the URL to the online study. A number of these instructors offered their students course-related benefits for participation in the research; comparable alternatives were suggested by the researcher for those students who did not want or were not eligible to participate (e.g., brief online health screenings offered by the university) and administration of these course benefits was managed by the individual instructor.

Regardless of the method of recruitment, students who wished to participate were directed to a secure website (hosted by Survey Monkey) where they were offered additional information on the study, asked to provide informed consent, and instructed to respond to an online administration of the questionnaires. Measures were administered in the same order for all participants, progressing from the Personal Progress Scale – Revised to the Feminist Identity Composite to the Feminist Identity Development Scale.
and concluding with the demographic questionnaire. This administration order was maintained in order to allow participants to respond to the PPS-R items without any potential influence derived from inadvertent cuing of feminist schemas by items on the FIC or FIDS. Upon completing the measures, participants were thanked for their time and offered the opportunity to enter a random drawing for a $25 gift card to a popular online retailer.

Hypotheses and Analyses

1. Consistent with Downing and Roush's model of feminist identity development and its conceptualization of the "stages" as qualitatively distinct ways of experiencing feminist consciousness, women will exhibit significant differences (p = .05) in their endorsement of attitudes associated with each of the five styles. This hypothesis was tested as a main effect of identity attitude style in a mixed-design 2 (yes or no self-identification) by 5 (Passive Acceptance, Revelation, Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, Active Commitment) ANOVA with one between-subjects variable (self-identification) and one within-subjects variable (identity attitude styles). The within-subjects variable of identity attitude style was conceptualized as a repeated-measures design wherein each style represented a categorical level or condition of this variable; aggregated attitude rating scores from the FIC and FIDS for each individual style served as the dependent variable for its particular condition in the design. The analysis was followed by post hoc pairwise comparisons as indicated.

2. Contrary to the original Downing and Roush model but consistent with recent research on younger cohorts of women, there will not be a significant relationship
(p > .05) between feminist identity attitude styles and willingness to self-identify as feminist. This hypothesis was evaluated as an interaction effect in the same 2 x 5 mixed-design ANOVA as was used to test the first hypothesis. Post hoc exploration of simple effects was addressed through use of one-way within-subjects ANOVA with repeated measures to allow for pairwise comparisons within identity attitude styles based on feminist-self identification as well as independent samples \(t\)-tests to compare mean identity attitude style scores between feminist-identified and non-feminist-identified women.

3. As suggested by the extant research on feminist self-labeling, women who do endorse a feminist social identity will report significantly higher levels of personal empowerment (p = .05) than those who do not accept the label. This hypothesis was assessed by an independent samples \(t\)-test.

4. As indicated in recent research on variables reflecting the benefits of feminist consciousness, feminist self-identification and feminist identity attitude style scores will be significantly related (p = .05) to personal empowerment (in a negative direction for Passive Acceptance and Revelation, and in a positive direction for Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment). In addition, both self-identification and the individual identity attitude styles will contribute unique predictive variance in personal empowerment scores. This hypothesis was explored using bivariate correlations and hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis with self-identification and the identity attitude styles as predictors of personal empowerment.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This chapter discusses screening of the data, descriptive statistics, and results of the tests of the hypotheses. Data screening included management of missing data, analysis of outliers and assessment of normality. The descriptive statistics include information on means and standard deviations for each variable as well as internal reliability estimates for the measures used. Tests of the hypotheses are presented in terms of the \( t \)-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis.

Data Screening

From the initial group of 730 respondents, 114 participants were removed from the final data set. This includes 56 individuals who did not respond to any questionnaire items after completing the informed consent page, 24 women whose data were not included due to missing substantial or essential item content (e.g., failing to complete an entire questionnaire; not reporting feminist self-identification status, etc.), 23 women whose responses were judged to be invalid (defined here as having provided the same response to all items of at least one whole questionnaire), and 15 women who identified themselves as being outside of the 18 to 25 age cohort (reported ages for these women ranged from 26 to 39). Screening of the resultant data set indicated that less than 5% of data points were missing; no pattern was present in the missing data. Remaining
participants demonstrated very little missing item content, with a total of no more than four identity attitude items (maximum of two omitted items per scale) and no more than five Personal Progress Scale – Revised (PPS-R) items missing for each participant. Because all participants' total identity attitude style scores were computed based on their average response to scale content, no adjustment was made for missing data on these items. Imputation of missing PPS-R items was completed using personal mean substitution with scores rounded to the nearest whole number.

After the issue of missing data was addressed, the data were screened for outliers. Using the guideline provided by Tabachnick and Fidel (2007), outliers were defined as those data points falling more than three standard deviations away from the mean. Review of item responses identified 13 total data points exceeding this criterion: two from the Passive Acceptance scores for non-feminist-identified women, one from the Revelation scores for feminist-identified women, four from the Embeddedness-Emanation scores for non-feminist-identified women, four from the Synthesis scale (two for feminist-identified women and two for non-feminist-identified), and two from the Active Commitment scores for non-feminist-identified women. No outliers were found in responses to the Personal Progress Scale – Revised. Initial exploration of the data with all scores included indicated some effect on skewness and kurtosis of the relative distributions. Based on recommendations offered by Tabachnick and Fidel, the extreme scores were fixed by modifying them to correspond to the next closest non-outlier score (e.g., the two outlying scores on the Passive Acceptance scale were fixed from 1.08 and 1.31 to 1.38; the two outlying scores on the Active Commitment scale were changed from 1.70 to 1.90).
Assessment of the normality of the data was accomplished through use of skewness and kurtosis data, histograms, and Q-Q plots. Fixing of outlier scores reduced initial concerns about some slight non-normality in the data, placing all skewness and kurtosis statistics within an acceptable range. Most distributions demonstrated some negative skew (ranging from -.44 to -.02); three demonstrated slight positive skew (all below .23; std error = .14 for both feminist-identified and non-identified samples). Kurtosis scores for the attitude identity style scores (separated by feminist-self identification) demonstrated five with a leptokurtic distribution (ranging .03 -.58) and five with a platykurtic distribution (ranging -.16 to -.78; std error = .27 for the feminist-identified sample and .29 for the non-feminist-identified). Similar results were found for the skewness and kurtosis statistics of Personal Progress Scale – Revised scores. Examination of histograms and Q-Q plots supported that all data distributions were within acceptable limits of normality.

Descriptive Statistics

After data screening was completed, the mean, standard deviation, and internal consistency reliability coefficient was calculated for each measure (see Table 3). On the Passive Acceptance scale, feminist-identified women reported a lower mean score ($X = 2.39; SD = .67$) than non-feminist women ($X = 2.94; SD = .53$). Feminist-identified women reported a higher mean score on the Revelation scale ($X = 3.11; SD = .52$) as compared with non-feminists ($X = 2.65; SD = .60$). A similar pattern of difference was found between feminist-identified and non-feminist women on the Embeddedness-Emanation scale, with feminist women reporting higher mean scores ($X = 3.38; SD = .55$) than non-feminists ($X = 2.87; SD = .47$). Reported means scores on the Synthesis scale
Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations and Internal Reliability Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Progress Scale – Revised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>141.29</td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>143.16</td>
<td>18.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-feminists</td>
<td>139.24</td>
<td>18.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-feminists</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-feminists</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness-Emanation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-feminists</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-feminists</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminists</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-feminists</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = 321 for feminists; n = 291 for non-feminists.

were also higher for feminist-identified women ($X = 4.05; SD = .39$) as compared with non-feminist women ($X = 3.86; SD = .38$). On the final scale, Active Commitment, feminist-identified women again reported higher mean scores ($X = 3.89; SD = .55$) than non-feminist women ($X = 3.33; SD = .51$). On the Personal Progress Scale – Revised (PPS-R), feminist-identified women reported higher mean scores ($X = 143.16; SD = 18.45$) as compared with their non-feminist counterparts ($X = 139.24; SD = 18.37$).
Estimates of internal consistency reliability were calculated using coefficient alpha; internal consistency for each measure was good, including each of the scales from the aggregated feminist identity attitude measure (PA = .85, REV = .85, EE = .80, SYN = .67, AC = .85) as well as the PPS-R (α = .85). These results are congruent with those reported in prior research using these measures.

Hypothesis Testing

Four hypotheses were generated for exploration in the current study, based on the extant research on Downing and Roush's model of feminist identity development.

Hypothesis 1

Consistent with Downing and Roush's model of feminist identity development and its conceptualization of the five "stages" of feminist identity as qualitatively distinct ways of experiencing feminist consciousness, it was hypothesized that women would exhibit significant differences in their endorsement of attitudes associated with each of the five styles. This hypothesis was tested as a main effect of identity attitude style in a mixed-design 2 (yes or no self-identification) by 5 (Passive Acceptance, Revelation, Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, Active Commitment) ANOVA with one between-subjects variable (self-identification) and one within-subjects variable (identity attitude styles). The Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied to this analysis to adjust for violation of the assumption of sphericity. The main effect of identity attitude style was found to be significant, $F (2.70, 1648.33) = 662.88$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .521$. Pairwise comparisons of individual identity attitude styles indicated that the mean score for each style was significantly different from all other style means, $p < .001$; see Table 4 for
additional details. These results suggest that Downing and Roush's five identity styles are conceptually distinct, providing support for hypothesis one.

**Hypothesis 2**

Contrary to the original Downing and Roush model but consistent with recent research on younger cohorts of women, it was hypothesized that there would not be a significant relationship between feminist identity attitude styles and willingness to self-identify as feminist. This hypothesis was evaluated as an interaction effect in the same 2 x 5 mixed-design ANOVA as was used to test the first hypothesis, again applying the Greenhouse-Geisser correction to all analyses to adjust for violation of the assumption of sphericity. The analysis indicated a significant interaction between self-identification and identity attitude styles, \( F(2.70, 1648.33) = 122.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .168 \). Tests for simple effects showed a significant difference between identity attitude styles for feminist-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity attitude styles</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA – REV</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – EE</td>
<td>-.46*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – SYN</td>
<td>-.129*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – AC</td>
<td>-.95*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – EE</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – SYN</td>
<td>-1.072*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – AC</td>
<td>-.73*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE – SYN</td>
<td>-.83*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE – AC</td>
<td>-.45*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYN – AC</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 612. PA = Passive Acceptance; REV = Revelation; EE = Embeddedness-Emanation; SYN = Synthesis; AC = Active Commitment. *p < .001. Bonferroni adjustment was applied to account for familywise error rate.*
identified women, \(F(2.45, 780.27) = 482.31, p < .001, \eta^2 = .602\). Pairwise comparisons of identity attitude style scores for women who self-label as feminist indicated significant differences between means for each of the styles, \(p < .001\); see Table 5 for details.

Similarly, a significant difference was also found between the mean identity attitude style scores for women who do not self-identify as feminist, \(F(2.92, 847.47) = 295.18, p < .001, \eta^2 = .504\). Pairwise comparisons of mean identity attitude style scores of non-feminist-identified women also demonstrated significant differences between most styles, \(p < .001\), with the exception of the difference between scores for Passive Acceptance and Embeddedness-Emanation, which did not achieve significance. See Table 6 for details on these comparisons.

Independent samples \(t\)-tests were completed on mean identity attitude style scores between feminist-identified and non-feminist identified women. Initial review of the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity attitude styles</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Cohen's (d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA – REV</td>
<td>-.72*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – EE</td>
<td>-.98*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – SYN</td>
<td>-1.65*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – AC</td>
<td>-1.50*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – EE</td>
<td>-.26*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – SYN</td>
<td>-.93*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – AC</td>
<td>-.78*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE – SYN</td>
<td>-.67*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE – AC</td>
<td>-.52*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYN – AC</td>
<td>.156*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 321. PA = Passive Acceptance; REV = Revelation; EE = Embeddedness-Emanation; SYN = Synthesis; AC = Active Commitment. *\(p < .001\). Bonferroni adjustment was applied to account for familywise error rate.
Table 6

Pairwise Comparisons of Non-Feminist Mean Identity Attitude Style Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity attitude styles</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA – REV</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – EE</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – SYN</td>
<td>-.93*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA – AC</td>
<td>-.40*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – EE</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – SYN</td>
<td>-1.21*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV – AC</td>
<td>-.62*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE – SYN</td>
<td>-.99*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE – AC</td>
<td>-.46*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYN – AC</td>
<td>.53*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 291. PA = Passive Acceptance; REV = Revelation; EE = Embeddedness-Emanation; SYN = Synthesis; AC = Active Commitment. *p < .001. Bonferroni adjustment was applied to account for familywise error rate.

using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances indicated some violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance amongst the style scores (p < .05 for PA, REV and EE; ns for SYN and AC). Despite this finding, results based on the assumption of equal variance are reported. This decision was made in order to avoid transforming scores on only the portion of the identity attitude style score data that demonstrated unequal variance, as this would preclude interpretation of between-style comparisons of these transformed versus untransformed scores. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) suggest that when such contrasts are needed it is permissible to use untransformed data that violate this assumption if alpha levels are adjusted to be more stringent (i.e., from .05 to .01). For the present data, all contrasts were significant, df = 610, p < .001 (see Table 7). Differences in mean scores were in the expected direction, such that Passive Acceptance scores were higher among non-feminist women and scores for all other identity attitude style scores were
Table 7
Independent-Samples t-tests for Feminists’ and Non-Feminists’ Identity Style Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity attitude style</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive Acceptance</td>
<td>-.54</td>
<td>-11.02*</td>
<td>-.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>10.15*</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness-Emanation</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>12.04*</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>5.96*</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Commitment</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>12.89*</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = 321 for feminists; n = 291 for non-feminists. Equal variances assumed. *p < .001.

higher among feminist-identified women. These results suggest that there is a significant relationship between feminist self-identification and identity attitude style scores for the current cohort of traditional college-age women, failing to support hypothesis two.

Hypothesis 3

As suggested by the extant research on feminist self-labeling, it was hypothesized that women who do endorse a feminist social identity would report significantly higher levels of personal empowerment than those who do not accept the label. This hypothesis was assessed by an independent samples t-test comparing responses to the Personal Progress Scale – Revised. Data met the assumption of homogeneity of variance as assessed by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances; results with equality of variance assumed are reported. The analysis revealed a small but significant difference between the two groups, t (610) = 2.6, p < .01, Cohen's d = .21. These results supported the hypothesis, with feminist-identified women self-reporting higher average PPS-R scores (X = 143.16, SD = 18.45) as compared with the scores of non-feminist-identified women (X = 139.23, SD = 18.37).
Hypothesis 4

As indicated in recent research on variables reflecting the benefits of feminist consciousness, it was hypothesized that feminist self-identification and feminist identity attitude style scores would both be significantly related to personal empowerment and would both contribute unique predictive variance in personal empowerment scores. This hypothesis was explored using both bivariate correlation and hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis with self-identification and identity attitude styles as predictors of personal empowerment. The bivariate correlations indicated that personal empowerment scores were significantly related in the predicted direction to four of the identity attitude scales. Specifically, a significant negative relationship was found between personal empowerment and the variables of Passive Acceptance ($r = -.21, p < .001$) and Revelation ($r = -.22, p < .001$). Personal empowerment scores were found to share a positive correlation with Synthesis ($r = .38, p < .001$) and Active Commitment ($r = .32, p < .001$). Embeddedness-Emanation was found not to be significantly related to personal empowerment scores ($r = .08, ns$). Additional information on correlations between the individual identity attitude styles can be found in Table 8.

This hypothesis predicted that willingness to self-label as feminist would contribute unique predictive variance in personal empowerment scores, as well as that the identity attitude styles would provide additional prediction of personal empowerment above and beyond self-labeling. The covariate of self-labeling was entered first into the hierarchical multiple regression model; the model was significant, $F(1, 610) = 6.93, p < .01, R^2 = .01$, with self-labeling serving as a significant positive predictor of personal empowerment ($\beta = -.11, p < .01$). The five identity attitude styles were entered
Table 8
Correlations (Pearson’s r) between Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. PPS-R total score</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.38*</td>
<td>.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Passive Acceptance</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-.26*</td>
<td>-.37*</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
<td>-.53*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Revelation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>.52*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Embeddedness-Emanation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.65*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Synthesis</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Active Commitment</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 612. PPS-R = Personal Progress Scale – Revised. * p < .001. All ps two-tailed.

simultaneously in the second block, resulting in one style providing significant negative prediction of empowerment scores (Revelation; β = -.40, p < .001) and two styles providing significant positive prediction, Synthesis (β = .21, p < .001) and Active Commitment (β = .40, p < .001). This total model was significant, \( F(5, 605) = 51.56, p < .001, R^2 = .31 \), with the addition of the identity attitude styles accounting for approximately 29% more variance than self-labeling alone (\( \Delta R^2 = .295, p < .001 \)), suggesting that the identity attitude styles are of greater utility than feminist self-labeling in predicting personal empowerment. In addition, the second model indicated that inclusion of the identity attitude styles into the regression equation removed any unique predictive variance provided by self-labeling (β = -.03, ns; see Table 9). These results suggest that although there is a significant relationship between self-labeling and personal empowerment, any predictive variance provided by self-labeling is subsumed by that offered by Synthesis, Active Commitment, and Revelation scores.
Table 9

*Multiple Regression Analysis for Self-Labeling and Identity Attitude Style Predicting Personal Empowerment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$ B</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta F$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-labeling</td>
<td>-3.92</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.01*</td>
<td>.01*</td>
<td>6.93*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-labeling</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>51.56**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Acceptance</td>
<td>-1.40</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>-12.26</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness-Emanation</td>
<td>-2.10</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Commitment</td>
<td>12.43</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 612$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$. All $p$s two-tailed.
CHAPTER V  
DISCUSSION

The extant research on feminism and its relevance for women's lives suggests that there are benefits associated with feminist consciousness (e.g., Yakushko, 2007), and Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development has provided one means of conceptualizing and operationalizing this construct. However, this model has failed to articulate the distinction between holding pro-feminist attitudes and self-labeling as feminist, leading to recent efforts to disentangle these traits (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). The present study has sought to address this concern about the Downing and Roush model by examining feminist self-identification and pro-feminist attitudes (using the five identity styles described by Downing and Roush) as distinct constructs. This included exploration of the differentiation between the identity styles themselves as well as the relationship between the identity styles and women's willingness to self-label as feminist. An additional aspect of the study included an examination of the relationship between these feminist traits and personal empowerment as it is defined from the framework of feminist therapy theory. The study accomplished this through use of self-report measures of feminist attitudes as defined in Downing and Roush's theory (e.g., the Feminist Identity Composite [FIC]: Fischer, et al., 2000; and the Feminist Identity Development Scale [FIDS]: Bargad & Hyde, 1991), a single-item dichotomous choice
(yes/no) assessment of feminist self-labeling, and a feminist theory-derived measure of personal empowerment (the Personal Progress Scale – Revised [PPS-R]: Johnson, Worell, & Chandler, 2005).

A total of 612 women participated in the study (321 of whom self-identified as feminist and 291 of whom did not), all enrolled as college students at the time of data collection (March and April 2012) and within the traditional college student age range of 18 to 25. These students were recruited from courses in Psychology or Women's Studies/Gender Studies at two mid-sized Midwestern public universities. Women who consented to participate in the study completed a series of online questionnaires to assess feminist attitudes and identity, personal empowerment, and demographic traits.

The present data support the idea that feminist consciousness is a complex construct the study of which benefits from use of a multifaceted approach. Specifically, the data suggest that there are conceptually distinct aspects of feminist consciousness that can be effectively operationalized by the five identity styles described in Downing and Roush's model. Furthermore, the present results indicate not only that there is a significant difference between each of the identity attitude styles of both feminist-identified and non-feminist-identified women, but also that there are significant differences between the identity attitude styles of women who do versus do not self-label as feminist. In terms of the connection between feminist traits and personal empowerment, the present data generally provide support for previous research which has suggested that there are positive consequents associated with feminist self-labeling (e.g., Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009; Leaper & Arias, 2011; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011) and with the recognition of the existence of sexism that
stems from holding pro-feminist attitudes (e.g., Eisele & Stake, 2008; Peterson, Tantleff-Dunn, & Bedwell, 2006; Yakushko, 2007).

Summary of Results

The results from the present data and analyses reflect the importance of recognizing that pro-feminist attitudes and a feminist social identity are separate (albeit related) constructs that ought not to be conflated in research on women's feminist traits. This aspect of Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development was challenged by the present findings. However, the utility of the Downing and Roush theory of feminist identity was supported to the extent that it does appear to reflect unique ways of experiencing feminist consciousness that significantly differ between women who do versus do not identify as feminist. In addition, the results suggest that there is a significant relationship between the presence of feminist consciousness and personal empowerment as conceptualized in feminist therapy theory.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that participants would report significant differences in their endorsement of attitudes indicative of the five styles of feminist identity described by Downing and Roush in their model of feminist identity development. The results of the ANOVA and follow-up pairwise comparisons supported this hypothesis, demonstrating that the mean score for each identity attitude style in this sample was significantly different from every other style. This finding provides support for the basis of Downing and Roush's model in the sense that the five forms of feminist consciousness that were articulated in their theory are conceptually distinct and can be considered as qualitatively different ways of experiencing feminist consciousness (Downing Hansen, 93)
2002; Downing & Roush, 1985; Hyde, 2002). This provides support for certain applied uses of the model, not in the developmental sense as originally conceived but rather as a means of operationalizing separate elements of a pro-feminist orientation.

It is noteworthy that the current results correspond with past research (as reported in Moradi & Subich, 2002a) that challenges the developmental nature of the model by exhibiting that each style is not necessarily most highly correlated with those adjacent (e.g., $r = -0.26$ between Passive Acceptance and Revelation, as compared with $r = -0.37$ between Passive Acceptance and Embeddedness-Emanation, and $r = -0.29$ between Passive Acceptance and Synthesis). In addition, the highest average style score for the sample as a whole (regardless of feminist self-identification) was on the Synthesis scale. These results are consistent with recent research on the identity attitude styles of younger cohorts of women in which participants almost universally report high ratings on this style (Erchull, et al., 2009; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006). This finding lends additional support to research which reveals the prevalence of the attitude of self-reliant individualism in young women and underlines the degree to which women's personal empowerment seems to have diverged from a politicized gender identity or belief in the importance of collective action on behalf of women (e.g., Liss & Erchull, 2010). This conclusion is also supported by the present finding that Active Commitment style scores – envisioned as the ultimate enactment of feminist consciousness – were the second-highest rated style for both feminist-identified and non-feminist women. Taken together, these results suggest that the pro-feminist values endorsed by current cohorts of young women may be largely removed from feminist consciousness as it was originally conceptualized by Downing and Roush. The larger
implication of these results is that while the identity styles may reflect distinctive orientations toward pro-feminist values, their ongoing use in research on feminist identity may not be accurately capturing the particular constructs that we are attempting to study.

Hypothesis 2

In light of past research findings about the split between women's support of pro-feminist values and acceptance of a feminist social identity, Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would not be a significant relationship between endorsement of the various feminist identity attitude styles and willingness to self-identify as feminist. The results of the ANOVA and pairwise comparisons indicated that this was generally not the case. Independent samples t-tests demonstrated that average identity attitude style scores were significantly different between feminist-identified and non-feminist-identified women for each of the five styles, with scores differing in the expected direction (i.e., non-feminist women scored higher than feminist women on Passive Acceptance and feminist women scored higher than non-feminist women on all other styles). Within-group comparisons of the mean identity attitude style scores of both feminist-identified and non-feminist-identified women showed that each style was significantly different from every other style, with the sole exception of the pairing of Passive Acceptance and Embeddedness-Emanation for non-feminist women. These results indicate that there is a significant relationship between self-identification and identity styles, such that feminists' identity attitude style scores are distinct from one another, most non-feminists' identity attitude style scores are distinct from one another, and feminists' identity attitude style scores are higher than non-feminists' in the expected direction.
This set of findings provides additional theoretical support for the Downing and Roush model to the extent that the results again indicate that the styles are qualitatively distinct ways of experiencing a pro-feminist worldview. However, the significant interaction of feminist self-identification and identity attitude style underscores that the five styles outlined in Downing and Roush's model are experienced differently based upon whether or not the woman labels herself as feminist. These results are consistent with the recent research on the importance of disentangling feminist self-labeling from pro-feminist attitudes, signifying that attitudes and identity are separate elements of feminist consciousness (Eisele & Stake, 2008; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011). As such, use of the Downing and Roush model to assess a unitary construct of feminist identity is not likely to provide an accurate picture of a woman's personal orientation to feminism. Evaluating feminist self-identification and attitudes separately is therefore a basic prerequisite to achieving a full understanding of women's personal feminist consciousness.

One additional note regarding the results of this hypothesis and its implications for Downing and Roush's model is its further challenge to the developmental nature of the original theory. Specifically, the ranking of average style scores for both feminist-identified and non-feminist-identified women in the present data do not correspond with what would be predicted by the model. For women who do not self-identify as feminist, mean identity attitude style scores from lowest to highest in the current sample progressed from Revelation to Embeddedness-Emanation to Passive Acceptance to Active Commitment to Synthesis. Results were somewhat more aligned with the model for the sample of feminist-identified women, with lowest-to-highest scores progressing
from Passive Acceptance to Revelation to Embeddedness-Emanation to Active Commitment to Synthesis. Beyond their implication for the developmental nature of the original model, the significant discrepancy in these results between feminist-identified and non-feminist-identified women further exhibits the importance of assessing feminist self-identification separately from these identity attitude styles. It is clear that the relationship between endorsement of a feminist social identity and pro-feminist attitudes is more complex than was initially suggested by Downing and Roush's model.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted that women who endorse a feminist social identity would report significantly higher levels of personal empowerment than those women who do not accept this label. Results of an independent samples $t$-test supported this hypothesis, demonstrating a small but significant difference between participants' scores on the Personal Progress Scale – Revised such that feminist-identified women reported higher average scores as compared with their non-feminist counterparts. Women's ownership of a feminist social identity therefore appears to be related to a somewhat greater sense of personal empowerment, defined in this context as a feminist-informed blend of positive coping skills, resilience, and willingness to identify and challenge individual and cultural manifestations of oppression (Worell & Remer, 2003).

These results are congruent with that which would be predicted by feminist theory and past research. Recent studies on the significance of feminist self-identification have found that it is an important attribute in determining whether or not women take an active response toward sexism (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009; Leaper & Arias, 2011) or engage in feminist activism (Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell,
Implicit in these results is that perception of the need to act against discrimination and the sense of self-efficacy necessary to do so are fundamentally connected with a feminist social identity. This is consistent not only with the expectations underlying feminist therapy theory (Brown, 1994; Worell & Remer, 2003) but also with group consciousness theories in general. This includes social identity theory, which suggests that the degree to which an individual identifies with a particular group shifts the way in which events are interpreted from an individual-level focus to a collective focus (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), with evidence indicating that stronger group-level identification improves coping skills through reduction of self-directed anger (Hansen & Sassenberg, 2006). These conclusions are also consistent with Landrine and Klonoff's (1997) suggestion that feminist consciousness provides a cognitive filter through which women can make sense of their daily encounters with sexism and deflect self-focused negative interpretations of these experiences. These results imply that for the current cohort of young women, a feminist social identity may offer a particular form of personal benefit that is not shared by their peers who do not embrace this label. Specifically, although current traditional-age college student women may universally endorse a high degree of self-confidence, competence and resilience, the inclusion of "feminist" into their self-definition may reflect a unique means of coping with the consistent experiences of discrimination that negatively impact women's well-being.

Hypothesis 4

The final hypothesis of the current study, Hypothesis 4, predicted that feminist self-identification and the identity attitude style scores would be significantly related to personal empowerment as well as each contributing unique predictive variance in
personal empowerment scores. This prediction was initially explored through use of bivariate correlations and results were generally supportive of the hypothesis, demonstrating significant negative correlations between personal empowerment and the identity attitude styles of Passive Acceptance and Revelation as well as significant positive correlations with Synthesis and Active Commitment. The relationship between personal empowerment and the Embeddedness-Emanation style was not significant; this is consistent with much of the extant research in which this style is not found to be a significant predictor (either positive or negative) of any variables related to women's well-being (e.g., Fischer & Good, 2004; Moradi & Subich, 2004; Szymanski, Gupta, Carr, & Stewart, 2009).

The second portion of this hypothesis was not fully supported by the results. As initially entered into the hierarchical multiple regression model, self-labeling accounted for 1% of the variance in personal empowerment scores. When the five identity attitude styles were added into the equation, the entire model accounted for 30% of the variance. However, only three of the five styles provided significant contributions to the model (specifically: Revelation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment) and any unique predictive variance that had been offered by self-labeling was removed. Thus, results of the current study suggest that the variance in personal empowerment for which these feminist traits account stems from these particular identity attitude styles.

These results demonstrate some consistency with past research to the extent that a stable pattern of relationships is rarely found between all five identity attitude styles and outcome variables indicative of women's well-being. For example, research on the feminist identity styles has found an association between Passive Acceptance and distress
While also demonstrating that the styles indicative of the presence of feminist consciousness do not provide a protective function against distress (Moradi & Subich, 2004). Similarly, Passive Acceptance was the only feminist identity attitude style found to be associated (in a negative direction) with sexual assertiveness in a study on women's expectations for intimate and sexual relationships (Yoder, Perry, & Saal, 2007). Another study using the feminist identity styles found a complex relationship between the styles and various measures of psychological distress, including that Revelation was associated with greater distress on variables such as depression, anxiety and hostility; Synthesis was negatively related to interpersonal sensitivity and hostility; and Passive Acceptance was negatively associated with phobic anxiety (Fischer & Good, 2004). This latter research also found that neither Embeddedness-Emanation nor Active Commitment was significantly correlated with any of the distress domains under investigation. As a final example of the complex relationship between the identity styles and other wellness-related outcome variables shown in past research, a study examining the relationship between feminist traits and women's psychological well-being found that lower scores on Revelation and higher scores on Active Commitment did predict greater well-being (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006).

The results of the current research are also congruent with the small number of currently available studies that have examined both feminist self-labeling and feminist attitudes in the sense that the relationship between these variables is complex and difficult to unravel. A recent study on feminist self-labeling and activism found that analyses which combined labeling and pro-feminist attitudes provided no additional
explanatory value than did labeling alone in significantly predicting collective action, and no relationship was found between these attributes and well-being (Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011). Another study exploring the relationships between feminist attitudes, feminist social identity, and self-efficacy found that feminist attitudes significantly predicted feminist self-identification, self-efficacy, and feminist activism at a pre-test assessment; feminist self-identification also was shown to predict self-efficacy scores and feminist activism (Eisele & Stake, 2008). Analyses conducted on post-test data in this same research failed to demonstrate a significant link between change in feminist self-identification or attitudes with change in self-efficacy but did find that change in feminist attitudes as well as in feminist self-identity significantly predicted scores on a brief, affect-focused measure of empowerment. Determining the cause of these discrepant results is challenging, with one possible explanation being that the inconsistent relationships shown in these studies suggest that other variables may be more directly affecting outcomes, with feminist traits serving as distal rather than proximal predictors (Hurt, et al., 2007). An alternative explanation may be that the methods by which we have attempted to articulate these relationships are simply not relevant to modern young women who have grown up in a sociocultural context in which gender equality is assumed, egalitarian individualism is the norm, and women believe themselves to be empowered without the need for politicized group consciousness.

Implications for Research

Although results of research on feminist attributes are often inconsistent, the predominant theme in the available research is that there are positive outcomes for women associated with ownership of these traits. The current study adds to this literature
base, both in terms of the challenge of effectively operationalizing feminist consciousness and in its possible beneficial effects for women. This research supports the conclusions that feminist self-identification and pro-feminist attitudes are separate but related constructs, as well as that there is some degree of connection between feminist traits and women's personal empowerment. These results suggest that further research is needed in an effort to more accurately articulate the relationships amongst these variables and their implications for women's lives.

A recent theme in the extant research is the call to more effectively differentiate between feminist identity and feminist attitudes (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010) in future explorations of feminist consciousness as a construct. This study supports the contention that researchers examining feminist consciousness should continue to separate attitudes from identity in a manner that allows these to vary independently of one another. Existing data suggest that feminist self-identification and pro-feminist attitudes relate differently to traits indicative of women's wellness, self-efficacy, and empowerment. Further research is needed that will continue to clarify the relationship between holding a feminist social identity and feminist attitudes, as well as how these contribute to our understanding and prediction of associated variables. An additional direction by which these relationships might be explored would be through further exploration of models wherein feminist traits serve as distal predictors that affect outcomes through more proximal intermediating variables. One example of this can be seen in a recent study on women's disordered eating behaviors in which feminist self-labeling indirectly predicted outcome variables such as negative eating attitudes and depression through related intervening variables such as body shame and self-objectification (Hurt, et al., 2007).
Future research should continue to explore these sorts of relationships through models in which feminist self-labeling and/or attitudes are examined relative to other traits indicative of women's well-being by way of more immediately salient variables; an additional example of research in this vein could include studies examining the link between feminist traits and use of positive coping responses to sexual violence through intermediary variables like adherence to rape myths.

Other implications of the current study include its cautious support for continued use of the Downing and Roush model of feminist identity development for current cohorts of young women, but with the caveat that it be used solely as a means of assessing variations in orientation to feminist consciousness and not identity per se. Further research with this model is needed for purposes of replication of the current results as well as to continue to clarify the salience of the Downing and Roush paradigm for modern young women. The current results suggest that the model may not be tapping that which we are seeking to study (as suggested by high Synthesis and Active Commitment scores for both non-feminist and feminist-identified women) and it may be necessary to alter or reformulate the styles in order to more accurately reflect the values and experiences of this generation of college-age women. The challenge becomes determining how to most effectively assess feminist consciousness in young women raised in a culture in which gender equity is presumed to be normative. Future research would also benefit from further investigation of the current model as applied to more diverse populations of women. This might include exploration of orientation to feminist consciousness in women from other age cohorts, women sampled from contexts other
than a higher-education setting, or women whose identities include membership in
marginalized groups based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, or ability status.

Additional possible fruitful avenues for future research would be to utilize a
design similar to the present study but with the inclusion of a behaviorally-based outcome
measure of empowerment rather than relying on participant self-report. For example,
participants could be asked to keep a daily journal in which they track their experiences
with daily frustrations and the ways in which they responded to these situations. The
journal content would be evaluated by the researchers for responses indicative of positive
self-esteem, self-efficacy, adaptive coping strategies, and recognition of the effects of
power dynamics on relationships. Alternatively, participants could be placed into a
situation in which a portion of the study would surreptitiously require them to engage in
assertive behavior with an individual with greater relative power or social privilege (e.g.,
informing the researcher with whom they are interacting that the study is taking far
longer than they had been told to expect and they need to leave; reacting to an experience
of discrimination occurring as part of the research; responding to unearned or unfair
criticism offered in response to an activity completed within the study, etc.).
Incorporating a behavioral measure, as well as an assessment of socially desirable
responding, would help to clarify the degree to which participants' responses to the
measure of empowerment are affected by the culture-wide neoliberal attitude of
egalitarianism rather than an authentic endorsement of personal empowerment.

The largest question raised by the current results seems to be the role that this
culture of egalitarian individualism plays in contemporary young women's relationship
with feminism. This study calls into question the applicability of the Downing and
Roush model for women who are entering early adulthood in our present culture and the ability of the five identity attitude styles to accurately and fully encapsulate their understanding of what it means to hold a politicized gender identity. The self-ratings of feminist attitudes reported by the women in this sample, regardless of whether or not they claim the feminist label for themselves, generally included elevated Synthesis scores, high Active Commitment scores, and relatively low Passive Acceptance scores. Future research should continue to work to illuminate the relationship between these identity styles and traits such as endorsement of neoliberal egalitarianism, presumptions of individual apolitical empowerment, and disavowal of personal susceptibility to gender-based discrimination. This may require development of new measures, new methods, or possibly even new theories that more accurately capture what it means to hold feminist consciousness in the current sociocultural zeitgeist. Such studies may ultimately establish that agreement with the values implicit in each of these identity attitude styles no longer truly reflects feminist consciousness at all.

Implications for Practice

A sizeable body of research and theory supports the role of feminist consciousness-raising in therapeutic interventions for women (Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1998; Peterson, Tantleff-Dunn, & Bedwell, 2006; Rederstorff & Levendosky, 2007; Sabik & Tylka, 2006; Weitz, 1982). The current study provides some additional support for incorporating a feminist perspective into counseling practice, particularly as relates to promotion of empowerment as a goal of treatment. The results suggest that there exists a link between feminist consciousness and personal empowerment, with attitudes connected to an active response to sexism appearing to account for a moderate portion of
the variance in women's rating of their personal empowerment. This implies that therapists who view empowerment as the foremost goal or overarching theme of their clinical practice with women should continue to incorporate interventions aimed at raising clients' consciousness of the ways in which gender intersects with their presenting concerns.

It seems likely that most clinicians already incorporate a number of the elements of personal empowerment as they are articulated in feminist therapy into their treatment goals, whether or not they conceptualize it as such. Outcome goals articulated in the Empowerment Feminist Therapy model (from which the Personal Progress Scale – Revised was derived) include improving clients' self-esteem and self-efficacy, decreasing distress, and augmenting problem-solving skills – all of which reflect basic aspects of personal wellness that counselors typically hope to foster in their clients (Worell & Remer, 2003). However, there are unique aspects of empowerment as it is understood in this feminist framework that are perhaps not as integral to how clinicians practicing from other orientations view the goals of treatment, including increased gender- and culture-role awareness, analyses of power dynamics, involvement in social activism, and greater flexibility in "beliefs and behaviors informed by gender and cultural identity" (Worell & Remer, p. 26).

While encouraging the generalized aspects of empowerment that all counselors embrace is certainly likely to be helpful to female clients, the current results suggest that the inclusion of some of these more gender-specific interventions would add greater benefit to women's treatment. An integral element of such interventions would include encouragement of adaptive means of responding to cultural and personal messages aimed
at devaluing women, such as working with a client to cultivate a sense of self-worth that is not centered on perceived sexual attractiveness to the male gaze. It is important to note that successful implementation of the feminist aspect of this sort of intervention (raising awareness of cultural messages of women's worth solely as sexual objects) is contingent upon the presence of some of the more universal elements of empowerment (increased self-worth), as past research suggests that raised awareness in and of itself with no attendant coping skills seems to have a detrimental effect on women's empowerment (e.g., Fischer & Good, 2004).

An additional consideration in applying the current results to clinical practice is the relevance of encouraging feminist self-labeling as an element of such empowerment-based interventions. The extant research on holding a feminist social identity has largely been consistent in demonstrating a link between self-labeling and feminist activism (Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000; Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011). The results of the present study support this link to the extent that personal empowerment appears to share a relationship with openness to accepting this label. Therapists who are working with women on presenting concerns in which social advocacy and/or deliberate aligning with a group social identity would be beneficial may find it useful to foster clients' self-labeling as feminist. In contexts in which this particular aspect of personal empowerment would have immediate consequences (e.g., developing greater self-confidence in assertively challenging a sexist work climate; learning to advocate on her own behalf or on behalf of an issue about which she is passionate), personal association with the feminist label might prove to be adaptive (e.g., Klonis, Endo, Crosby, & Worell, 1997).
Regardless of whether or not a woman participating in counseling is receptive to a feminist social identity, feminist-informed interventions seem to hold potential to be of benefit to all female clients. In the current sample the highest identity attitude style scores for both feminist-identified and non-feminist-identified women were on Synthesis and Active Commitment. These styles reflect a positive sense of self and a belief in one's ability to enact social change in service of a "more fair and just world" (FIC AC scale item #33). In addition, Passive Acceptance scores were not markedly elevated even for women who do not consider themselves to be feminist, with significantly lower scores only shown on the Revelation style for these women. The pattern of relationships between identity attitude styles shown in the present results imply that the current cohort of young women are less likely to embrace the traditional female gender role reflected in the Passive Acceptance style than they are to espouse the values of egalitarian individualism (i.e., to "feel as though they have infinite opportunities but [remain] unaware of continued gender discrimination," Liss & Erchull, 2010, p. 94). Inclusion of treatment interventions aimed at increased awareness of gender-based inequities in the client's own life may foster a politicized gender identity, result in greater group consciousness, and lead to identification with a social label (feminist or otherwise) that encourages an active response to experiences with sexism. This idea of "personal political salience" has been implicated as a significant factor in the development of a politicized gender consciousness (Duncan & Stewart, 2007).

For female clients whose orientation to feminist consciousness does reflect an embrace of Passive Acceptance values (either in addition to or in place of values indicative of egalitarian individualism), the responsibility of the feminist therapist is to
encourage the same sort of gender-role flexibility and awareness within the parameters of
the client's values. Worell and Remer (2003) discuss the potential ethical conflict
inherent in "borderland dilemmas" (p. 291) of working with clients whose cultural norms
and values are incongruent with a feminist orientation. Other researchers have noted that
it is possible to have a politicized gender identity that is not feminist in nature (e.g.,
Schreiber, 2002) and it is the ethical obligation of the feminist practitioner to ensure that
his or her own biases are not unduly influential on the client. Moradi and her colleagues
(2002a) suggest that the most appropriate way to conceptualize work with these clients is
to highlight the distinction between traditional gender-related values that are freely,
consciously chosen by the client rather than those cultural messages that have been
internalized without question or self-reflection.

In addition to these specific implications for practice, the results of this project
also have potential bearing on clinical training. Implicit in each of the suggestions
discussed herein is the assumption that practitioners will be able to effectively and
ethically employ these kinds of feminist-based interventions with clients. However, the
provision of appropriate, effectual care using a feminist orientation necessitates some
degree of training in the fundamentals of this paradigm as well as recognition of its
potential for misuse. At its core, feminist therapy is a conscious effort to challenge
oppressive cultural systems. Its practice requires that the clinician "continually trace the
path back from the personal to the political, basing… interpretations and understandings
on feminist political analysis and feminist strategies for action" (Brown, 1994, p. 37).
Training in feminist psychotherapy therefore calls for practitioners to develop "an
understanding, acceptance, and integration of a general feminist perspective" (Worell &
Remer, 2003, p. 313) from which such politically-oriented treatment interventions can emerge. This includes endorsement of the values and beliefs that guide feminist practice, including that the personal is political (i.e., recognizing that personal difficulties are connected to and situated in social realities), that symptoms typically reflect clients' best means of coping with pathogenic environments rather than intrapsychic disorder, and that the goal of counseling is change rather than adjustment (Enns, 1997). Implementation of feminist interventions ought to flow from a familiarity with these basic principles, knowledge of sociocultural systems of power and privilege, and self-awareness of the values and biases that flow from the clinician's own social location. Practitioner training programs have a responsibility to provide opportunities for learning in each of these areas when preparing students to use feminist-focused approaches to treatment. Failure to do so runs the risk of causing inadvertent harm to clients through overemphasis on personal rather than contextual contributions to their presenting concerns.

Strengths and Limitations

The current study has a number of strengths that contribute to its utility. First, there are several qualities of the obtained sample that are noteworthy. The size of the sample garnered for this project was significantly larger than that found in most similar studies, improving the likelihood of the reliability of the results. The sample also contained a large number of women willing to claim the feminist label; this is a population that is often challenging to sample because of the strong tendency for women to disavow this social identity (e.g., only 31% of participants in a 2006 study by Saunders and Kashubeck-West were willing to even tentatively identify with the label; just 27.3% of participants in a 1987 study by Renzetti were willing to self-label as feminist, etc.).
The sample also had the benefit of drawing participants from two different sites with appreciably different cultural contexts (i.e., a moderately diverse urban campus and a fairly homogenous campus in a more rural environment). Other strengths of the study include that the sample was drawn from a population that is similar to that often found in the extant literature on feminist traits, allowing for greater ease of comparison with the current literature base. This study is one of a small number to date to specifically articulate the split between feminist self-identification and feminist attitudes. It is also unique in using a feminist-theory-derived outcome measure.

Despite these strengths, the current study also demonstrates a number of limitations that should be taken into account when considering the results. First, despite having several strengths associated with the sample, there are also a number of concerns to note. The sample suffers from the same weaknesses that are found in most similar studies: a lack of diversity (i.e., a preponderance of women who identify as White, heterosexual, able-bodied, and of Christian faith) that in turn reflects a significant degree of sociocultural privilege. The homogeneity of the demographic characteristics of the sample and the relative degree of privilege (both in these axes of identity and in the additional educational privilege associated with attending college) suggests that the results may not be readily generalized to other populations, particularly those that have historically been marginalized or oppressed. Other concerns about the study stem from methodological concerns, including that participants self-selected to engage in the research and may therefore hold more intense or deeply-held attitudes and values about women's "personal sense of power and well-being" (as the study was described in the informed consent materials) than women who chose not to participate.
Additional limitations of the current research stem from the methodology, including the measures and the analyses that were employed. Some of the measures used (specifically, those used to assess the feminist identity attitude styles) have had concerns raised about the strength of their psychometrics (Hyde, 2002; Moradi & Subich, 2002a). Beyond their limited psychometric qualities, these tools are also solely self-report in nature and did not control for the possibility of socially desirable responding. In regard to the design of the analyses, a mixed-design ANOVA was utilized to allow for comparison both between and within identity attitude style scores as relates to feminist self-labeling. Although this was useful in addressing the hypotheses established for this study, caution should be exercised in similar research in which the identity attitude styles might be similarly applied as levels of an independent variable. Exploration of bivariate correlations demonstrated significant relationships between almost all of the styles, indicating a marked degree of shared variance that may adversely affect the results of multivariate analyses if used in this manner.

Although these concerns must be taken into account, the present study has contributed in several ways to the research base on feminist traits and their implications for women's lives. Principally, it has added additional information to the extant research on the distinction between holding a feminist social identity and endorsing pro-feminist attitudes. It has aided in clarifying the utility of the Downing and Roush model of feminist identity in general by exploring identity and attitudes as separate yet related constructs. In more specific terms, it has also contributed to the literature on the salience of the Downing and Roush model for younger cohorts of women. Lastly, this study has contributed to the broader research base on the relationship between feminist traits and
positive outcomes for women. This was accomplished through use of a feminist theory-derived outcome measure, which differs significantly from the focus on symptom reduction or generalized well-being in this research base and reflects a positive new direction for future study.
REFERENCES


Williams, R., & Wittig, M. A. (1997). "I'm not a feminist, but...": Factors contributing to the discrepancy between pro-feminist orientation and feminist social identity. *Sex Roles, 37*, 885-904.


APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide the following information:

1. Are you a woman or woman-identified transgender individual? □ Yes □ No

2. What is your current age? _________

3. What is your ethnic or racial identity?
   □ African American/Black/African Origin
   □ Asian American/Asian Origin/Pacific Islander
   □ Latin@/Hispanic
   □ American Indian/Alaska Native/Aboriginal Canadian
   □ European Origin/White
   □ Bi-racial/Multiracial
   □ Other (please specify) _____________________________
   □ Prefer not to answer

4. How do you currently identify your sexual orientation?
   □ Heterosexual
   □ Lesbian
   □ Bisexual
   □ Other (please specify) _____________________________
   □ Prefer not to answer

5. Do you identify as a person with a disability? □ Yes □ No □ Prefer not to answer

6. How do you label your spiritual or religious identity or affiliation (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Muslim, atheist, etc.)? ________________________________________________

7. What is your current academic major? ________________________________

8. What is your current academic standing?
   □ First-year □ Sophomore
   □ Junior □ Senior
   □ Super-senior (5 years or more) □ Graduate student
   □ Other/not currently enrolled in a higher education setting
9. How were you recruited for this study?
   □ Psychology course
   □ Women's Studies or Gender Studies course
   □ Online discussion group (please specify: ________________________)
   □ Other (please specify: ________________________)

10. Please respond to the following statement: "I consider myself to be a feminist."
    □ Yes □ No
APPENDIX B

FEMINIST IDENTITY COMPOSITE

On this page you will find a series of statements which people might use to describe themselves. Read each statement carefully and decide to what degree you think it presently describes you. Then select one of the five answers that best describes your present agreement or disagreement with the statement.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I think it’s lucky that women aren’t expected to do some of the more dangerous jobs that men are expected to do, like construction work or race car driving.

2. Regretfully, I can see ways in which I have perpetuated sexist attitudes in the past.

3. I am very interested in women’s studies.

4. As I have grown in my beliefs I have realized that it is more important to value women as individuals than as members of a larger group of women.

5. I owe it not only to women but to all people to work for greater opportunity and equality for all.

6. I think that most women will feel most fulfilled by being a wife and a mother.

7. In my interactions with men, I am always looking for ways I may be discriminated against because I am female.

8. I am very interested in women artists.

9. I enjoy the pride and self-assurance that comes from being a strong female.

10. On some level, my motivation for almost every activity I engage in is my desire for an egalitarian world.
11. If I were married to a man and my husband was offered a job in another state, it would be my obligation to move in support of his career.

12. My female friends are like me in that we are all angry at men and the ways in which we have been treated as women.

13. I am very interested in women musicians.

14. I have incorporated what is female and feminine into my own unique personality.

15. I feel that I am a very powerful and effective spokesperson for the women’s issues I am concerned with right now.

16. I think that men and women had it better in the 1950s when married women were housewives and their husbands supported them.

17. I feel like I’ve been duped into believing society’s perceptions of me as a woman.

18. I am very interested in women writers.

19. I am proud to be a competent woman.

20. I choose my “causes” carefully to work for greater equality of all people.

21. I like being a traditional female.

22. I never realized until recently that I have experienced oppression and discrimination as a woman in society.

23. I feel like I have blended my female attributes with my unique personal qualities.

24. I care very deeply about men and women having equal opportunities in all respects.

25. One thing I especially like about being a woman is that men will offer me their seat on a crowded bus or open doors for me because I am a woman.

26. Men receive many advantages in society and because of this are against equality for women.

27. It is very satisfying to me to be able to use my talents and skills in my work in the women’s movement.
28. I don’t see much point in questioning the general expectation that men should be masculine and women should be feminine.

29. I feel angry when I think about the way I am treated by men and boys.

30. I am willing to make certain sacrifices to effect change in this society in order to create a nonsexist, peaceful place where all people have equal opportunities.

31. Gradually, I am beginning to see just how sexist society really is.

32. I want to work to improve women’s status.

33. I am very committed to a cause that I believe contributes to a more fair and just world for all people.
APPENDIX C

FEMINIST IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT SCALE

On this page you will find a series of statements which people might use to describe themselves. Read each statement carefully and decide to what degree you think it presently describes you. Then select one of the five answers that best describes your present agreement or disagreement with the statement.

_____ 1. I don’t think there is any need for an Equal Rights Amendment; women are doing well.

_____ 2. Being a part of a women’s community is important to me.

_____ 3. I feel that some men are sensitive to women’s issues.

_____ 4. I used to think there wasn’t a lot of sex discrimination, but now I know how much there really is.

_____ 5. Although many men are sexist, I have found that some men are very supportive of women and feminism.

_____ 6. Especially now, I feel that the other women around me give me strength.

_____ 7. While I am concerned that women be treated fairly in life, I do not see men as the enemy.

_____ 8. I share most of my social time with a few close women friends who share my feminist values.

_____ 9. My social life is mainly with women these days, but there are a few men I wouldn’t mind having a non-sexual friendship with.

_____ 10. I’ve never really worried or thought about what it means to be a woman in this society.

_____ 11. I evaluate men as individuals, not as members of a group of oppressors.
12. I just feel like I need to be around women who share my point of view right now.

13. It makes me really upset to think about how women have been treated so unfairly in this society for so long.

14. I do not want to have equal status with men.

15. When you think about most of the problems in the world—pollution, discrimination, the threat of nuclear war—it seems to me that most of them are caused by men.

16. I am angry that I’ve let men take advantage of me.

17. It only recently occurred to me that I think that it’s unfair that men have the privileges they have in this society simply because they are men.

18. If I were to paint a picture or write a poem, it would probably be about women or women’s issues.

19. Some of the men I know seem more feminist than some of the women.

20. When I see the way most men treat women, it makes me so angry.

21. Generally, I think that men are more interesting than women.

22. Recently I read something or had a specific experience that sparked my greater understanding of sexism.

23. I think that rape is sometimes the woman’s fault.

24. I am not sure what is meant by the phrase “women are oppressed under patriarchy.”

25. I have a lifelong commitment to working for social, economic, and political equality for women.

26. Particularly now, I feel most comfortable with women who share my feminist point of view.
APPENDIX D

PERSONAL PROGRESS SCALE – REVISED

The following statements identify feelings or experiences that some people use to describe themselves. Please answer each question in terms of any aspects of your personal identity that are important to you as a woman, such as gender, race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, family background, etc. Write your answers in the space to the left of each question using the scale below. For example, for the statement "I have equal relationships…," you would write 1 if this is almost never true of you now, 7 if this is true of you almost all the time, and 2 through 6 if the statement is usually not true, sometimes true, or frequently true for you in your life now. There are no right or wrong answers.

Almost never                      Sometimes true          Almost always
1------------------- 2------------------ 3------------------ 4------------------- 5------------------ 6------------------ 7

_____ 1. I have equal relationships with important others in my life.

_____ 2. It is important to me to be financially independent.

_____ 3. It is difficult for me to be assertive with others when I need to be.

_____ 4. I can speak up for my needs instead of always taking care of other people's needs.

_____ 5. I feel prepared to deal with the discrimination I experience in today's society.

_____ 6. It is difficult for me to recognize when I am angry.

_____ 7. I feel comfortable in confronting my instructor when we see things differently.

_____ 8. I now understand how my cultural heritage has shaped who I am today.

_____ 9. I give in to others so as not to displease or anger them.

_____ 10. I don't feel good about myself as a woman.
11. When others criticize me, I do not trust myself to decide if they are right or if I should ignore their comments.

12. I realize that given my current situation, I am coping the best I can.

13. I am feeling in control of my life.

14. In defining for myself what it means for me to be attractive, I depend upon the opinions of others.

15. I can't seem to make good decisions about my life.

16. I do not feel competent to handle the situations that arise in my everyday life.

17. I am determined to become a fully functioning person.

18. I do not believe there is anything I can do to make things better for women like me in today's society.

19. I believe that a woman like me can succeed in any job or career that I choose.

20. When making decisions about my life, I do not trust my own experience.

21. It is difficult for me to tell others when I feel angry.

22. I am able to satisfy my own sexual needs in a relationship.

23. It is difficult for me to be good to myself.

24. It is hard for me to ask for help or support from others when I need it.

25. I want to help other women like me improve the quality of their lives.

26. I feel uncomfortable in confronting important others in my life when we see things differently.

27. I want to feel more appreciated for my cultural background.

28. I am aware of my own strengths as a woman.
APPENDIX E

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT

Introduction:
You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Stephanie Cunningham, M.S., a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at The University of Akron. The research is being conducted under the supervision of John Queener, Ph.D. as part of the dissertation requirement for a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to assess women's attitudes and traits related to their personal sense of power and well-being.

Procedures:
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out questionnaires about gender-related attitudes, current sense of general well-being, and demographic information. The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Exclusion:
Individuals may participate only if they are women or women-identified transgender individuals between the ages of 18 and 25.

Risks and Discomforts:
There are no anticipated risks or discomforts associated with this study. Should some distress occur, participants are assured that they may discontinue participation at any time. If you do experience discomfort, you may seek help at The University of Akron Counseling Center (registered students only) at 330-972-7082, the Clinic for Individual and Family Counseling at 330-972-6822, or seeking other professional counseling by searching the National Board for Certified Counselors' CounselorFind at http://www.nbcc.org/counselorfind2 or the American Psychological Association's Psychologist Locator at http://locator.apa.org/.

Benefits:
You will receive no direct benefit from participation in this study, but your participation may help us better understand how particular attributes relate to women's well-being. This information may be beneficial as part of the development of more effective counseling interventions for women.
Incentives:
One participant will be randomly chosen following completion of data collection to receive a $25 gift card to a popular online retailer. Should you wish to be entered into the drawing, you will be asked to provide your email address following submission of the completed surveys. Your email address will not be connected to your responses.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw:
Participation is voluntary and refusal to participate or withdraw from the study at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Confidential Data Collection:
Your responses to questionnaires will not be tied to identifying information and your responses will remain confidential. Any identifying information collected will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data. Participants will not be individually identified in any publication or presentation of the research results. Only aggregate data will be used.

Whom to Contact with Questions:
If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Stephanie Cunningham at sjc20@zips.uakron.edu or Dr. John Queener at (330) 972-6149. This project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at (330) 972-7666 or 1-888-232-8790.

Acceptance:
I have read the information provided and all of my questions have been answered. I may print a copy of this consent statement for future reference.

I attest that I meet the participation criteria and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

□ Yes □ No
APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVALS

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

March 14, 2012

Stephanie Cunningham
809 Terry Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45206

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 21020317 "An Investigation of the Relationship between Feminist Traits and Personal Empowerment for Young Women"

Thank you for submitting your IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects for the referenced project. Your application was approved on March 14, 2012. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 – Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☐ Exemption 2 – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 – Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 – Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 – Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

☐ Approved consent form/s enclosed

Co: John Queener - Advisor
Co: Stéphanie Woods - IRB Chair

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
330-972-6700 • 330-972-4881 Fax

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution

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Date: March 27, 2012

Principal Investigator:  Stephanie Cunningham
Department or Division: Counseling Center
Co-Investigators: 
Faculty Sponsor: 
Title of Project: An Investigation of the Relationship between Feminist Traits and Personal Empowerment for Young Women

The above project has been approved by USI's IRB under the provisions of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46. The research is

X Exempt

Expedited Review

Convened

This approval is based on the following conditions:

1. The materials you submitted to the IRB (through the Sponsored Research Office) provide a complete and accurate account of how human subjects are involved in your project.

2. You will carry on your research strictly according to the procedures as described in the materials presented to the IRB.

3. You will report to the Sponsored Research Office any changes in procedures that may have a bearing on this approval and require another IRB review.

4. If any changes are made, you will submit the modified project for IRB review.

5. You will immediately report to the Sponsored Research Office any problems or adverse events encountered while using human subjects.

Signed: Curtis Price

Curtis Price, PhD
Chair, USI IRB

Date: March 27, 2012

My electronic signature on this document constitutes my legal signature in accordance with 21 CFR Part 11: Electronic Records; Electronic Signatures.