Relationships Between Gender, Personal, and Collective Self-Esteem, and Feminist Identity

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Relationships Between Gender, 

Personal and Collective Self-Esteem, and Feminist Identity 

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate potential effects of women’s studies courses on feminist identity development and personal and collective self-esteem, and to analyze relationships between self-esteem and both gender and feminist identity. Participants included 220 students (165 women, 55 men) enrolled in both core and elective women’s studies courses. Students completed the Rosenberg scale, the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES), and the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) at the beginning and at the end of a 14-week semester. Results indicated change on two of the four FIDS subscales in the predicted direction, no gender difference on the Rosenberg scale, gender differences on three of the four CSES subscales, and several significant relationships between FIDS and CSES subscales. These results, as well as implications for future research, are discussed.
An interest in possible immediate effects of women’s studies academic programs provided the impetus for this research. The uniqueness of women’s studies academic programs and courses reflect their origin in and association with a social movement. The main objectives of women’s studies courses are considered twofold by some researchers. Like any traditional academic program, women’s studies aim to encourage and facilitate mastery of knowledge and information. A significant aspect of this objective is the reanalysis of a multitude of disciplines to uncover and overcome an androcentric bias (Ruth, 1995). A second objective often associated with women’s studies, however, is an atypical focus on personal change of the students in an encouraging and student-centered environment. Various researchers (e.g., Brush, Gold, & White, 1978; Stake & Gerner, 1987; Zuckerman, 1983) see these courses as agents to challenge and alter students’ self-concepts, gender role beliefs, and attitudes. By assisting the personal and professional development of female students and by arming them with knowledge, women’s studies programs may ultimately help to improve the status of women in society.

Since their origin in 1970, the number of women’s studies programs has increased considerably. There are currently programs and courses across the country at all levels of study, including the undergraduate minor and major, the master’s degree, and the doctorate. From 1970 to 1982, the number of programs expanded from 2 to 432; from 1988 to 1990, there was a 23 percent increase in undergraduate programs (Ruth, 1995). Such growth and popularity warrant an investigation into the effects of women’s studies courses and programs on the students who enroll and participate in them, especially given that little research has been devoted to such effects (Bargad & Hyde, 1991; Stake & Gerner, 1987).
Currently available research literature on the effects of women's studies courses can be
categorized into four general areas: attitude change, education and career aspiration change, self-
esteeom and personality change, and feminist identity change (Bargad & Hyde, 1991). Attitude
change research has employed such measurements as the Attitudes Toward Women Scale
(Spence & Helmrich, 1972) to explore students' attitudes toward women and gender role
stereotypes. These investigations have found that, as a result of taking a women's studies courses,
students' attitudes became more progressive or their already advanced attitudes were supported
and encouraged (Bargad & Hyde, 1991). Regarding the second area of concern, educational and
career ambitions, researchers have measured students' goals before and after their participation in
a women's studies course. Some studies have found that women gained in job motivation and job
certainty (e.g., Stake & Gerner, 1987). The third and fourth areas of research, feminist identity
development and self-esteem change are the topics of interest for this investigation.

Feminist Identity

Based on the assumption that modern women must acknowledge and in some way deal
with the limitations of an androcentric society (e.g., discrimination), Dowing and Roush (1984)
delineated a five-stage model through which women may ultimately develop a positive feminist
identity. The authors also assume that women's experiences are in many ways parallel to those of
ethnic minorities; hence the model of feminist identity development was based, in part, on a theory
of positive Black identity development (Cross, 1971). Because the experiences of social minorities
are highly salient to them, Downing and Roush explain, any model that attempts to describe their
development of a positive identity must account for such experiences.

During the first stage of Downing and Roush's model, Passive Acceptance (PA), the
individual denies or is unaware of systemic prejudice against women. Traditional gender roles,
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stereotypes, and beliefs are diligently upheld and considered ideal, and men are considered superior to women. Such acceptance of the status quo can lead to a negative self-concept, and, hence, low self-esteem. The end of this stage is marked by readiness on the part of the individual woman to consider other conceptualizations of herself and society.

The second stage, Revelation (R), is initiated by some type of crisis or meaningful experience that leads to a reexamination of the status quo. Examples include a personal experience with discrimination, consciousness-raising groups, or, as will be discussed shortly, women's studies courses. Movement into this stage is a product of both the individual's readiness and environmental stimuli. The combined stimuli and readiness render the individual unable to deny the presence of discrimination and prejudice. Characteristic of this stage are feelings of anger at perceived forces of oppression, and guilt at the realization of one's own participation in such oppression. Dualistic thinking (e.g., all men are bad, all women are good) and a negative identity based on denial of traditional roles and values are also likely.

The third stage, Embeddedness-Emanation (EE), is marked by the desire or need of the individual woman to withdraw from the dominant culture, which often includes withdrawal from men, and to increase social interaction with a subculture of other women. This behavior has been called a "discovery of sisterhood," and provides the individual with a supportive environment in which to release her frustrations with the dominant society. During the second part of this stage, Emanation, the individual's thinking becomes less dualistic and more multidimensional and flexible. Guilt and anger begin to subside, and the individual begins to develop a sense of pride in being a woman and a more positive definition of her identity as a woman. Women begin interacting more with men, but cautiously so, and become willing to grieve the loss of the self that
had been defined first by traditional values and then by the narrow and dualistic thinking of the embeddedness stage.

During the fourth stage, Synthesis (S), women continue to value positive aspects of womanhood and integrate this positive group identity with their unique, individual qualities, resulting in a positive and balanced self-concept. Traditional gender-roles and attitudes have been transcended and women are valuing themselves in a new way. They are able to realize that prejudice and discrimination explain some unfortunate experiences, but not all of them; thus their attributions are more accurate and flexible. Additionally, men are evaluated on an individual basis, not as a group. The fifth and final stage, Active Commitment (AC), involves commitment of the newly emerged positive identity to meaningful social change. Transcendence of oppressive roles and beliefs become the values with which these women wish to influence society.

Two measures have been developed to study feminist identity development as described by Downing and Roush (1985), and to assess women’s movement through the five successive stages. The Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS; Bargad & Hyde, 1991) and the Feminist Identity Scale (FIS; Rickard, 1989) both have demonstrated high internal consistency, high test-retest reliability, and are not influenced by social desirability (Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997). High convergent validity between the two scales has also been reported. Additionally, Gerstmann and Kramer (1997) found support for the construct validity of the scales in data showing that women’s studies students progressed along the scales of the FIDS and the FIS during the course of a semester, while general psychology students did not. The FIDS will be used in this investigation, as the FIS remains unpublished.

Women’s studies courses were first used to validate the FIDS by the authors (Bargad & Hyde, 1991) immediately following development of the scale. This method also introduced a new
way to evaluate the effects of women's studies courses. Using 184 female students from three
women's studies courses, and 39 female students on waiting lists for women's studies courses,
Bargad and Hyde found that the control participants showed no significant differences on any of
the five scales from the beginning to the end of the semester, while the women's studies students
showed significant differences on four of the five subscales. For stages one, two, and three,
repeated measures MANOVA revealed significant main effects for course, time, and a significant
interaction. The MANOVA for stage four revealed a main effect for course and a significant
interaction. The MANOVA for stage five showed a main effect for time and a significant
interaction.

Follow-up Scheffe comparisons indicated the following distinctions. Students from two
women's studies courses disagreed more strongly with stage one items at the end of the semester,
indicating movement away from the Passive Acceptance stage (means changed from 2.07 and
2.00 to 1.73 and 1.78, respectively). Students from the third course also moved in the same
direction (2.02 to 1.92), but not significantly. Students from all three women's studies courses
agreed more strongly with stage two (Revelation) items at the end of the semester, suggesting the
influence of women's studies courses on the revelation experience (combined mean of 3.25
increased to 3.72). Students from two courses agreed more strongly with stage three
(Embeddedness-Emanation) items at the end of the semester (means increased from 3.02 and 3.13
to 3.31 and 3.28, respectively). No significant changes were found in stage four (Synthesis)
scores, possibly because of the lower reliability (alpha = .65) of this subscale in this study.

Students from one course agreed more strongly (3.48 to 3.75) with stage five items at the end of
the semester. Qualitative data also supported these results. Bargad and Hyde (1991) attributed
differences between courses to differences in course content. Because of these results, it was
expected that the present study would reveal a decrease in PA scores, and an increase in scores on
the other subscales, and that these changes would be more pronounced for students in core rather
than elective women's studies courses.

Other researchers, including Rickard (1989, 1990) have explored the feminist identity
construct using both the FIS and the FIDS to determine the relationships between various stages
of feminist identity development and other behaviors, attitudes, and self-perceptions. Whereas
Cash, Ancis, and Strachan (1997) found no reliable relationship between body image and feminist
identity, Snyder and Hasbrouck (1996) reported that body satisfaction was negatively associated
with the passive acceptance stage, and positively associated with the active commitment stage
(both studies used the FIDS). Rickard (1989) found that passive acceptance (PA) level women
reported more gender-typed dating behaviors than revelation (R) or synthesis (S) level women. S-
level women reported significantly fewer conventional behaviors than PA-level women. It is
possible that these behaviors may generalize to other settings, such as professional environments.

Rickard (1990) also found that stage of feminist identity development is related to gender
prejudice toward artists' works. PA-level women rated slides said to depict a male's work higher
than slides said to depict a female's work. R-level and E-level women tended to rate the 'female'
slides higher than the 'male' slides. The ratings of S-level women were less variable and were
close to equal for illustrations credited to male and female artists. And finally, as part of scale
validation studies, Rickard (1987) found that feminist identity is related to self-esteem.
Participants categorized as high PAs had significantly lower scores on Rosenberg's (1965) scale
of personal self-esteem than women categorized as low PAs, or those categorized as high S
individuals. The relationships between feminist identity and these other variables indicate the
importance of studying this construct.
Self-Esteem

In addition to encouraging "a practical adoption of a feminist perspective," such as that measured by the FIDS, one of the other objectives of women’s studies programs, as alluded to earlier, is to “promote students’ self-esteem” (Bargad & Hyde, 1991). If it is the case, as Rickard (1987) found, that self-esteem is related to the stages of feminist identity development, and if women’s studies courses influence feminist identity development, it is possible that these courses might influence self-esteem. Several studies have looked specifically at changes in self-esteem as a result of women’s studies classes. Brush, Gold, and White (1978) claimed that interviews revealed an increase in self-esteem as a result these courses, but objective measures yielded no significant changes. Stake and Gerner (1987) examined a domain-specific self-esteem factor rather than global self-esteem, and found that the scores of women and men who had taken a women’s studies course increased significantly on the Performance Self-Esteem Scale (PSES; Stake, 1979a). The PSES measures confidence to perform in achievement settings, such as educational and career environments, and is significantly related to various achievement variables (Stake, 1979b; Stake and Orlofsky, 1981). Zuckerman (1983), using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), a widely used and well-validated measurement of global personal self-esteem, found that underclasswomen (first-year students and sophomores) in women’s studies courses showed a decrease in self-esteem (mean score decreased from 24.82 to 22.82), while upperclasswomen (juniors and seniors) exhibited an increase in self-esteem (mean score increased from 23.54 to 25.07). Such inconclusive results and the possibility of immediate discouraging effects demonstrate the need for further research in this area. Analyses of change in personal self-esteem in the present study were exploratory, and academic level (i.e., first-year students, juniors) was included as a variable.
Another question regarding self-esteem for which results remain inconclusive is the possibility of differences in self-esteem between women and men. Research from the 1960’s (e.g., Crandall, 1969) revealed that self-esteem was consistently lower in females than in males. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), however, reported that research on gender differences in self-esteem, as a whole, resulted in no reliable gender differences. Some more recent research also suggests the absence of gender differences in self-esteem. Using the Rosenberg scale, Zuckerman (1980) found, contrary to her hypothesis, that college women and men did not differ in self-esteem. She suggests that cultural change may be the instigator of this change. Another study conducted several years later also found that women and men did not differ significantly on self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg scale (Zuckerman, 1985). The mean score for women was 23, while the mean score for men was 24. However, Josephs, Markus, and Tafarodi (1992) found conflicting results. In their first study, men, with a mean score on the Rosenberg scale of 27.5, differed significantly from women, who had a mean score of 24.1. The second study yielded no significant gender difference; the average score for men was 27.1, while the average score for women was 26.3. The authors note that these results are nevertheless in the same direction as the results of the first study, and that the sample size was smaller. Because of this inconsistent relationship between gender and personal self-esteem, no prediction was made for the present study; however, it was expected either that there would be no gender difference, or that men would score higher than women.

Given the somewhat ambiguous nature of the relationship between gender and self-esteem, it may be helpful to examine possible reasons why men and women may differ on this variable. For instance, it may be the case that another type of self-esteem may be important. Because of past research showing that general measures of self-esteem were often unable to
predict female behaviors while they were reasonably successful in predicting male behaviors, Stake and Orlofsky (1981) compared a general (global) measure of self-esteem to specific measures of agentic and communal self-esteem. Examples of agentic characteristics are independence, assertiveness, and ability in task-oriented situations; communal characteristics include warmth, openness, and ability in interpersonal relationships. For both men and women agentic measures correlated significantly with the general measure; however, the relationship was stronger for males. The agentic measures predicted 51% of the variability in male general scores, while they only predicted 33% of the variability in female general scores. Thus, there is a stronger relationship between agentic and general self-esteem for men than for women. The authors suggest that this difference is likely a result of gender-role socialization and expectations. No differences were found between men and women on the measure of communal self-esteem; however, noting that no attempt had yet been made to develop a measure of communal self-esteem, the authors used items derived by Stake for which some convergent and discriminant validity had been shown. It is possible, then, that another scale, developed to measure a communal aspect of self-esteem, may be more successful in detecting differences.

In a related vein, Josephs, Markus, and Tafarodi (1992) explored in depth the relationship between self-esteem, gender, and collectivist versus individualist self schemas. They claim that women are more likely to possess a collectivist schema for the self, meaning that relationships with other people are so important that those others are represented as part of the self, while men are more likely to have an individualist self schema, in which others are represented as distinct from the self. If women and men differ in this manner of self-definition, it would follow that the basis of their self-esteem would differ. The authors draw upon theories claiming that self-esteem develops from succeeding at what is valued in a particular social-cultural niche. Self-esteem in
women and men may correlate with different variables, then, to the extent that they experience different social-cultural niches. Socialization experiences and gender role expectations lead women to feel good about themselves for establishing interdependent connections with others and men to feel good about themselves for establishing autonomy and independence from others. These expectations were supported by the authors' first study which showed that high self-esteem (HSE) men perceived themselves as possessing uniquely superior abilities, while low self-esteem (LSE) men did not. These differences were not observed between HSE and LSE women. Thus, it appears that high self-esteem in women does not require emphasizing the self as unique or different from others in the way that it does for men.

The second study revealed that in relation to LSE women, HSE women had significantly better memory for words encoded with respect to others. For men, however, self-esteem differences were unrelated to recall of words in similar conditions. It appears, then, that HSE women, but not HSE men, have highly developed knowledge structures regarding important others, and that these others are represented as part of the self. While the first two studies were correlational, the third experiment employed a causal design. In HSE individuals, (false) evidence of poor independent thinking ability initiated the strongest compensations in men, while (false) evidence of poor interdependent thinking in women resulted in the strongest compensations in women. The Rosenberg scale was used in all three studies. As a whole, these studies suggest that women are more likely to develop self-esteem from interdependent attachments to others, while males are more likely to develop self-esteem from independent personal achievement.

Because of these results suggesting that women may derive their self-esteem more from collective rather than individual experiences, and because most measures of self-esteem focus on personal, individual experiences, Josephs et al. (1992) suggested, as have other feminist scholars,
that theories and models in various disciplines need to be redeveloped. As many theories have been developed based on men’s experiences, women’s experiences may not be adequately represented, understood, or measured. An example of a measure that may help to tap into such gender differences is the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES) developed by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992). This questionnaire was developed in order to measure the concept of collective self-esteem described by Tajfel & Turner’s (1986) social identity theory. This theory distinguishes two main facets of the self-concept: personal identity (i.e., characteristics of the individual), and social, or collective, identity (which involves membership in and emotional attachment to social groups). Collective identity includes individuals’ perceptions of the groups to which they belong, while personal identity includes individuals’ perceptions of themselves as individuals. In the same manner that personal identity is relevant to personal self-esteem, collective identity has important implications for collective self-esteem. Luhtanen and Crocker claim that because essentially all existing self-esteem measures are individualistic in nature, focusing on personal attributes, a complete picture of peoples’ self-concepts may be lacking. The CSES is concerned with ascribed groups that apply to all individuals such as gender, race, and ethnicity, rather than acquired groups which tend to be more idiosyncratic and related to personal rather than collective identity.

Four aspects of collective self-esteem are assessed by the CSES: Membership, the individual’s perceived worthiness as a member of the social group; Private, the individual’s personal evaluation of the group; Public, how the individual believes others evaluate the group; and Identity, the role or importance of the group in the individual’s self-concept or identity. The division of these four subscales was supported by exploratory factor analyses. Reliability and construct validity were also demonstrated to be reasonably good. In two of the three initial studies, the Membership subscale, which measures the most individualistic aspect of self-esteem,
showed the strongest correlation with Rosenberg’s (1965) scale of personal self-esteem. These studies also showed that collective self-esteem is related to, yet distinct from, personal self-esteem.

A second study by Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, and Broadnax (1994) investigated the relationship between the CSES subscales and psychological well-being, as well as general differences in scores between Blacks, Whites, and Asians. Also, the researchers compared the general form of the CSES to a form modified for race specificity. The scores on both versions were strongly correlated, showing that a group-specific form may also provide a valid measure (and hence a gender specific form was used in this study). One relationship relevant to the current study is that between scores on the public and private subscales. The authors explain how symbolic interaction theory would lead one to hypothesize that these two scales would be strongly correlated. Social movements and consciousness-raising experiences, however, may encourage certain groups (e.g., Blacks and women) to feel positively about their group while acknowledging that society devalues them. Therefore, social group members who have been so influenced are likely to show a difference between Private and Public collective self-esteem. Indeed, Crocker et al. (1994) found that for White participants, Public and Private CSE were moderately related (.43); however, for Black participants there was no correlation between these scales (-.01). Such findings have implications for women’s CSE, then, and suggest that women may be more likely than men to show diverging scores on the Public and Private subscales, especially in latter stages of feminist identity development. Also of interest were the findings that Blacks scored the highest on the Identity subscale, followed by Asians, and then Whites, who scored the lowest. This finding was even stronger for the group who took the race-specific questionnaire, and is in line with theory that group membership is more salient for those belonging to minority or stigmatized
groups (e.g., Downing & Roush, 1984; Lau, 1989). Thus, it is also likely that women would show higher Identity scores than males.

Hypotheses for the present investigation included: 1) Women were expected to progress through the stages of the FIDS through the course of the semester. Scores on PA subscale were expected to decrease, while scores on the other subscales were expected to increase. A larger change was expected for students in core women’s studies courses than for students in elective women’s studies courses. 2) Because of conflicting findings from previous research, no prediction was made regarding gender differences on the Rosenberg scale; this analysis was exploratory. However, it was expected either that women and men would not differ significantly, or that men would score higher than women. 3) Analyses of changes on the Rosenberg scale, for both men and women, were exploratory. The only previous study examining self-esteem change in men used the PSES. Changes for women have been found to be dependent upon academic level, thus that variable was included in the analyses. 4) Analyses of gender comparisons on the CSES, and of changes on the CSES were also exploratory. It was expected, however, that women would score higher than men on the Identity subscale, and that there would be a stronger correlation between the Private and Public subscales of the CSES for men than for women.

Method

Participants

Participants included 220 students (165 women, 55 men) enrolled in one of twelve women’s studies courses at The University of Alabama in Huntsville. The mean age of the participants was 26.13 ($SD = 7.98$). Of these participants, 5% were first-year students, 16% were sophomores, 30% were juniors, 37% were seniors, and 12% were graduates students; 78% were
white, 13% were African-American, 3% were Native-American, 2% were Native-
American/White, 2% were Asian-American, and 2% represented other ethnicities.

Of the total 220 participants, 195 students (144 women, 51 men) participated at the
beginning of the semester (pretest), and 161 students (122 women, 39 men) participated at the
end of the semester (posttest). Sixty-two percent of those who participated in the pretest also
participated in the posttest. Other demographic variables (e.g., age, ethnicity) for the sub-samples
were comparable to those of the total sample.

Materials

Materials included an informed consent form (see Appendix A), the Rosenberg Self-
Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix B), the Collective Self-Esteem Scale
(CSES; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; see Appendix C), the Feminist Identity Development Scale
(FIDS; Bargad & Hyde, 1991; see Appendix D), and a short demographic questionnaire assessing
variables such as age, ethnicity, academic level, and sex. The questionnaires were in the following
order: CSES, RSES, FIDS, demographic questionnaire.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) The Rosenberg scale is a commonly used, well-
validated (Rosenberg, 1965; Wylie, 1974) measure of global personal self-esteem. It contains ten
items to which participants respond on a four-point Likert-type scale. Answers range from
"strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Scores range from 0 to 40 (with some items being
reverse-scored), with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem.

The Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES) The CSES is a 16-item, seven-point Likert-type
measure that assesses several aspects of collective self-concept and self-esteem. Responses range
from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". This questionnaire can be administered such that
participants are asked to think of their social groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, occupation) in
general, or the test items can be adjusted for a specific group. For this study, items were adjusted so that participants were reflecting upon their own gender group.

The questionnaire consists of four subscales (four items per subscale): Membership Esteem; Private Esteem, Public Esteem, and Importance to Identity. Participants receive scores for each individual subscale, with scores ranging from 0 to 28 (with some items being reverse-scored). Reasonable levels of reliability and validity have been demonstrated (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

The Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) The FIDS is a 39-item, five-point Likert-type measure, which has answers ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. This measure consists of five subscales that correspond to Downing and Roush’s (1984) model of feminist identity development: Passive Acceptance (12 items), Revelation (7 items), Embeddedness-Emanation (7 items), Synthesis (5 items), and Active Commitment (8 items). Because the fifth stage may simply represent a behavioral manifestation of the fourth stage, and in order to improve the psychometric qualities of the questionnaire (Bargad & Hyde, 1991), the fourth and fifth subscales were combined to yield a total of four subscales. As with the CSES, each subscale was scored independently of the others. The reliability and validity of this scale have received support from Bargad and Hyde (1991) and from Gerstmann and Kramer (1997).

Procedure

Students completed the questionnaires during the first week of the 14-week semester, and again during the last 1-2 weeks of the semester. All testing occurred during class time, and took approximately 15 minutes each time. At the pretest, the researcher briefly explained the project to each class, and those who wished to participate were given an informed consent form, followed by the questionnaires. At the posttest, questionnaires were administered by the instructors of the
courses. Female students were given all measures; male students were given all measures except the FIDS. Participation was voluntary. The only participants receiving any type of compensation were twelve students who requested and were granted research credit for introductory psychology courses.

The women’s studies courses from which this sample was drawn represented several disciplines. Core courses, those more central to women’s studies or feminist issues, included Human Sexuality (nursing), Feminist Philosophy (philosophy), Introduction to Women’s Studies (women’s studies and sociology), Marriage and Family (sociology), Gender Roles (sociology), and Psychology of Women (psychology). Elective courses, those less central to women’s studies or feminist issues, included Vertebrate Reproduction (biology), The Victorian Novel (English), Introduction to Ethics (philosophy), Contemporary Philosophy (philosophy), and Government Regulation of Employment Relations (management). It was expected that students in core courses, being exposed to and required to analyze issues more explicitly feminist (e.g., Feminist Philosophy), would be more influenced in terms of feminist identity than would students in classes not so explicitly feminist in nature (e.g., Introduction to Ethics).

Results

Feminist Identity

A 2 (Time: pretest vs. posttest) × 2 (Type of Course: core vs. elective) ANOVA, with repeated measures on the first factor, was used for each FIDS stage in order to examine effects of women’s studies courses on feminist identity. See Table 1 for the pretest and posttest means and standard deviations for each subscale of the FIDS. Reasonable reliability of the four FIDS subscales was demonstrated by alpha coefficients between .68 and .76 for the pretest, and by
coefficients between .70 and .80 for the posttest. These coefficients are comparable to, although slightly lower than, those found by Bargad and Hyde (1991), which ranged from .65 to .85.

The ANOVA for stage one, Passive Acceptance, revealed a main effect for Type of Course that approached significance, $F (1, 97) = 3.84$, $p = .05$, but no significant main effect for Time, and no interaction between Time and Type of Course. Students in core courses scored higher (pretest $M = 2.42$, $SD = .54$; posttest $M = 2.46$, $SD = .58$) than students in elective courses (pretest $M = 2.30$, $SD = .56$; posttest $M = 2.26$, $SD = .61$) on the PA subscale at both the pretest and posttest. The hypothesis that scores on this subscale would decrease through the course of the semester was not supported.

The ANOVA for stage two, Revelation, revealed an interaction between Time and Type of Course approaching significance, $F (1, 99) = 3.13$, $p = .08$, but no main effects for either Time or Type of Course. Follow up t-tests revealed a significant increase in scores on this stage for students in core courses (pretest $M = 3.06$, $SD = .65$; posttest $M = 3.24$, $SD = .61$), $t (68) = -2.06$, $p < .05$. However, for students in elective courses, scores on this scale decreased (pretest $M = 3.12$, $SD = .61$; posttest $M = 3.03$, $SD = .70$), although not significantly, $t (31) < 1$. These results support the hypotheses that scores on this scale would increase, and that there would be a difference between students in core and elective courses in such change.

The ANOVA for stage three, Embeddedness-Emanation, revealed a significant main effect for Type of Course, $F (1, 98) = 4.47$, $p < .05$, and an interaction between Time and Type of Course approaching significance, $F (1, 98) = 2.87$, $p = .09$. Follow up t-tests revealed an increase in scores approaching significance for students in core courses (pretest $M = 2.95$, $SD = .63$; posttest $M = 3.07$, $SD = .61$), $t (67) = -1.9$, $p = .07$. Scores for students in elective courses, however, decreased (pretest $M = 2.86$, $SD = .60$; posttest $M = 2.78$, $SD = .69$), although not
significantly, \( t(31) < 1 \). These results support the hypothesis that scores on this scale would increase, particularly for students in core courses, although the effect was not quite as strong as expected.

The ANOVA for stage four, Synthesis – Active Commitment, revealed no main effects and no interaction. Scores for students in core courses remained about the same over time (pretest \( M = 3.60, \ SD = .42 \); posttest \( M = 3.61, \ SD = .46 \)). Scores for students in elective courses also remained about the same (pretest \( M = 3.59, \ SD = .39 \); posttest \( M = 3.54, \ SD = .45 \)). These results do not support the hypothesis that scores on this scale would increase as a result of women’s studies courses.

As a whole, the present study yielded results in predicted directions for two of the four subscales (Revelation and Embeddedness-Emanation, but not Passive Acceptance and Synthesis-Active Commitment), while Bargad and Hyde (1991) found results in predicted directions for four of five subscales (Passive Acceptance, Revelation, Embeddedness-Emanation, and Synthesis, but not Active Commitment). In general, when looking at both pretest and posttest means (see Table 1), students in the present study, in both core and elective courses, scored slightly higher on Passive Acceptance and slightly lower on all other scales than the students in Bargad and Hyde’s (1991) study.

Furthermore, correlations between the subscales of the FIDS provide evidence for both their convergent and discriminant validity (see Table 3). For example, the FIDS Revelation subscale was negatively correlated with the Passive Acceptance subscale at both the pretest and posttest, \( r = - .17, \ p < .05 \), while it was positively correlated with the Embeddedness-Emanation subscale at both the pretest, \( r = .45, \ p < .01 \), and at the posttest, \( r = .55, \ p < .01 \). Additionally, the Synthesis-Active Commitment subscale was negatively correlated with the Passive Acceptance
subscale at the pretest, $r = -.25$, $p < .01$, and at the posttest, $r = -.46$, $p < .01$, while it was positively correlated with both the Revelation and Embeddedness-Emanation subscales at both the pretest and posttest (see Table 3).

**Self-esteem**

The purpose of the following analyses was to examine relationships between gender and self-esteem. See Table 4 for means and standard deviations on the self-esteem measures for women and men. The reliability of the Rosenberg scale was demonstrated by an alpha coefficient of .88 at both the pretest and posttest. Reliability coefficients for the CSES subscales ranged from .58 to .73 at the pretest, and from .74 to .81 at the posttest. These coefficients are somewhat lower than those obtained by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992), which ranged from .71 to .88.

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ANOVA, with repeated measures on the first factor, was completed for the Rosenberg scale. It revealed no main effects for Time, Gender, or Academic Level, and no interactions. These results supported the prediction that either there would be no gender difference in personal self-esteem, or that men would score higher.

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ANOVA was complete for each of the subscales of the CSES. The ANOVA for the Identity subscale of the CSES revealed a main effect for Gender, $F (1, 131) = 8.47$, $p < .01$, but no effect for Time, no effect for Type of Course, and no interactions. Follow-up t-tests showed this gender difference to be significant both at the pretest, $t (193) = 2.80$, $p < .01$, and at the posttest, $t (158) = 2.49$, $p < .05$. This finding supported the hypothesis that women would score higher than men on the Identity subscale.
The ANOVA for the Public subscale of the CSES revealed a main effect for Gender, $F(1, 128) = 8.03, p < .01$, but no effect for Time or Type of Course, and no interactions. Follow-up t-tests revealed that the gender difference was significant at the posttest (women: $M = 18.66, SD = 5.38$; men: $M = 21.46, SD = 4.51$), $t(156) = -2.94, p < .01$, but not at the pretest (women: $M = 19.06, SD = 4.61$; men: $M = 20.10, SD = 4.77$), $t(191) = -1.36, p > .05$.

The ANOVA for the Private subscale of the CSES revealed a main effect for Time, $F(1, 131) = 8.57, p < .01$, a main effect for Gender, $F(1, 131) = 5.66, p < .05$, and an interaction between Time and Gender, $F(1, 131) = 5.48, p < .05$. Follow-up t-tests revealed a significant difference between women ($M = 24.86, SD = 3.49$) and men ($M = 22.82, SD = 5.13$) at the posttest, $t(157) = 2.80, p < .01$, but no significant difference at the pretest (women: $M = 25.13, SD = 3.00$; men: $M = 24.27, SD = 3.76$). An unexpected finding was that men's scores, but not women's, decreased significantly, $t(34) = 2.28, p < .05$. Although analyses of gender differences on this scale were exploratory, the finding that women scored significantly higher than men replicated Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) research. Additionally, in support of one hypothesis, there was a stronger correlation between the Private and Public subscales for men, $r = .45, p < .01$, than for women, $r = .31, p < .01$, at the pretest, and also at the posttest, with a correlation of $r = .61, p < .01$ for men, and $r = .37, p < .01$ for women.

The ANOVA for the Membership subscale of the CSES revealed a main effect for Gender approaching significance, $F(1, 131) = 3.29, p = .07$, no main effect for Time or Type of Course, and no interactions. Women scored slightly higher than men at the pretest ($M = 24.75, SD = 3.09$; $M = 23.72, SD = 3.43$, respectively) and at the posttest ($M = 24.71, SD = 3.30$; $M = 24.03, SD = 4.19$, respectively).
Feminist Identity and Self-Esteem

Several significant correlations were found between the subscales of the FIDS and subscales of the CSES (see Table 3). For example, Public self-esteem (CSES) was positively correlated with the FIDS Passive Acceptance subscale, but negatively correlated with the FIDS Revelation subscale and with the FIDS Embeddedness-Emanation subscale. The Identity subscale was positively correlated with the FIDS Embeddedness-Emanation subscale. Both Membership and Private self-esteem were positively correlated with the FIDS Synthesis-Active Commitment subscale. There were also a significant negative correlation between the Rosenberg scale and the FIDS Revelation subscale at the pretest, \( r = -0.34, p < .01 \), and at the posttest, \( r = -0.25, p < .01 \).

Discussion

Change in Feminist Identity

The hypothesis regarding changes in feminist identity was partially supported in that scores on the Revelation and Embeddedness-Emanation subscales increased for students in core courses, but not for students in elective courses. This suggests that women’s studies courses may indeed have an immediate effect on the development of a feminist identity or on feminist attitudes. This also suggests that core courses, which are more centrally related to women’s studies and feminist issues, are more likely than elective courses, which are more peripherally related, to influence such development. However, the results found here were not as strong as those found by Bargad and Hyde (1991). A possible reason for this discrepancy may be age; the mean age of participants in the Bargad and Hyde study was 20.7, whereas the mean age of participants in this study was 26.13. It may be that younger students are more easily influenced in terms of attitudes than are older students. Future studies might investigate the role of such participant variables in the effects of women’s studies courses.
Another possibility for further research involves the use of newer scales of feminist attitudes (Henley, Meng, O’Brien, McCarthy, & Sockloskie, 1998) that measure several different types of feminism (e.g., cultural, liberal, womanist, radical, socialist). It may be the case that such scales could capture which type of feminism and which specific attitudes women’s studies courses are encouraging. It also may be the case that certain variables related to individual courses may encourage one type of feminism more than others (e.g., through the readings selected by the professor, or the collective attitudes of the students), and that some scales, such as the FIDS, may measure a type of feminism that may or may not be similar to the type encouraged in a particular course. For example, at a glance, the items on the FIDS appear to represent a liberal feminist perspective.

Self-Esteem: Gender Comparisons

Consistent with relatively more recent research revealing a lack of gender differences in personal self-esteem (e.g., Zuckerman, 1980), this study found no difference between women and men on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. Although men did score slightly higher than women at both the pretest and the posttest, the difference was not significant. This lack of a gender difference in personal self-esteem may reflect changes in society, such as the encouragement of girls and women to enter traditionally male occupations (i.e., “Take Your Daughter to Work”), and the availability of more (although not completely) egalitarian opportunities for women and girls. Further, there was no change on this scale through the course of the semester, suggesting that women’s studies courses do not have any immediate effect on personal (agentic, individualistic) self-esteem.

Although there were no gender differences in personal self-esteem, there were gender differences on three of the four subscales of the collective self-esteem measure. This supports the
prediction that measurement tools such as the CSES may tap into gender patterns not detected by more traditional measurements. That women scored higher than men on the Identity subscale at both the pretest and the posttest suggests that gender is more salient to women than to men in terms of identity. Further, this pattern appears not to have been influenced by the experience of women's studies classes in the course of one semester, or by the type of such classes (core vs. elective).

Also, that men scored higher than women on the Public subscale suggests that men are more likely than women to believe that others evaluate their gender group positively. This finding may be a product of a patriarchal society that tends to value men more than women; thus, it would be interesting to see if this pattern changes over time. This finding at first seems incompatible with the lack of a gender difference in personal self-esteem, given that a speculation for that lack of difference rests on changes in society. It may be the case, though, that women have higher personal self-esteem today than in past years, but may still recognize that men are valued more. Although there was no main effect for gender for this subscale, gender differences were significant at the posttest but not at the pretest. This suggests a possible effect of time or women's studies courses that may warrant further study.

For the Private subscale, however, there was a main effect for time, suggesting a possible impact of women's studies courses. Interestingly, both women and men reported less positive personal evaluations of their gender group at the end of the semester (the difference was significant for men, but not women). This possible negative effect seems to justify further research. In both cases, however, women scored higher than men, and there was a main effect for gender on this subscale. This implies that women are more likely than men to judge their own gender group positively. This finding replicates Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) analysis of gender
differences on the CSES. That there were no significant differences on the Membership subscale is not surprising given that this subscale is the one that is most strongly correlated with the Rosenberg scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992, and the present study), and there were no effects for gender or time for the Rosenberg scale in this study.

Relationships Between Feminist Identity and Collective Self-Esteem

Correlational data revealed several interesting, albeit mostly weak, relationships between feminist identity and collective self-esteem. The moderate positive correlation ($r = .37$) between the Passive Acceptance subscale and Public subscale suggests that women’s support of traditional gender stereotypes and acceptance of patriarchy are related to their public self-esteem. Thus, personal gender attitudes congruent with dominant social mores are related to women’s perception that others evaluate their gender group positively. Interestingly, Downing and Roush theorized that the Passive Acceptance stage would be related to low self-esteem in women. Although not specified, the authors were probably referring to global, personal self-esteem (i.e., Rosenberg), which was not related to the Passive Acceptance subscale in this study (see Table 2). Thus the relationship between self-esteem and the Passive Acceptance subscale, or any subscale, depends upon the type of self-esteem in question.

Alternately, Public self-esteem was negatively correlated with the Revelation and Embeddedness subscales of the FIDS. Also, the Rosenberg scale was negatively related to the Revelation subscale. This suggests that women’s greater awareness and understanding of sexism, prejudice, and oppression are related to an increased perception that others evaluate their gender group negatively, a greater immersion within a subculture of women, and a lower global, personal self-esteem. Also, the positive relationship between the Identity subscale and the Embeddedness-Emanation subscale indicates that greater immersion within a women’s subculture is related to a
greater importance of gender to women's identity. And finally, the Synthesis - Active Commitment subscale was positively related to both the Membership and the Private subscales of the CSES, suggesting that women's greater perceived worth as a member of their gender group, and their positive evaluation of their gender group, are related to a stronger commitment to egalitarian principles and a non-sexist society.

In conclusion, topics of future investigations might rest upon analyses of participant or other variables in feminist identity development, analyses of the effects of women's studies courses on differing types of feminism, and in the potential negative and positive effects of such courses on the different types of collective self-esteem. Also warranting further investigation are the gender differences on the CSES, both in order to clarify such relationships and their potential causes, and to determine the strength of such trends, especially given that no other research has found differences on the Identity and Public subscales.
References


Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a two-part study examining the interrelationships of personality and identity components and the stability of those interrelationships. You will be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and 2-3 other questionnaires. You will also be asked to complete similar questionnaires near the end of the semester. The entire procedure should take approximately 15 minutes each time. Because the results of this study will provide us with more information in this field, your participation is valued.

Your professor (of the course during which you are participating), the experimenters, and the other participants in this study are the only people who will know you have participated. Questionnaires will be coded with your student number. Only the primary experimenter will know of the responses you have made. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. We do not expect any physical or psychological risk to result from this study. The main cost to you is the time you spend completing the questionnaires.

Up to 200 students will be participating in this study. If you wish to acquire the results of the entire study or have questions about participants’ rights, please contact Dr. Sandra Carpenter, Department of Psychology, Morton Hall, UAH, (256) 890-6191. If you consent to participate please fill in the spaces provided below. Your participation will not be allowed to continue without your consent. You may discontinue participation at any time. There are no negative consequences of such discontinuation.

Name (print) ___________________________ Date ______________________

Signature _______________________________ Student Number ____________
Appendix B

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)

Please read each of the following statements and circle one of the four responses, depending on whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD).

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.  
   SA   A   D   SD

2. At times I think I am no good at all.  
   SA   A   D   SD

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.  
   SA   A   D   SD

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.  
   SA   A   D   SD

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.  
   SA   A   D   SD

6. I certainly feel useless at times.  
   SA   A   D   SD

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.  
   SA   A   D   SD

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.  
   SA   A   D   SD

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.  
   SA   A   D   SD

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.  
    SA   A   D   SD
Appendix C

The Collective Self-Esteem CSES (CSES; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), modified for gender group

(Note: For administration of this questionnaire, items were mixed, and were not labeled by subscale)

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. Some of such social groups or categories pertain to gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. We would like you to consider your gender group and respond to the following statements on the basis of how you feel about that group and your membership in it. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements; we are interested in your honest reactions and opinions. Please read each statement carefully, and respond by using the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = disagree somewhat
4 = neutral
5 = agree somewhat
6 = agree
7 = strongly agree

Membership

_____ 1. I am a worthy member of the gender group I belong to.

_____ 2. I feel I don’t have much to offer to the gender group I belong to.

_____ 3. I am a cooperative participant in the gender group I belong to.

_____ 4. I often feel I’m a useless member of my gender group.

Private

_____ 1. I often regret that I belong to the gender group I do.

_____ 2. In general, I’m glad to be a member of the gender group I belong to.

_____ 3. Overall, I often feel that the gender group of which I am a member is not worthwhile.

_____ 4. I feel good about the gender group I belong to.

Public
Feminist Identity

1. Overall, my gender group is considered good by others.

2. Most people consider my gender group, on the average, to me more ineffective than other social groups.

3. In general, others respect the gender group that I am a member of.

4. In general, others think that the gender group I am a member of is unworthy.

Identity

1. Overall, my gender group membership has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

2. The gender group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am.

3. The gender group I belong to is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.

4. In general, belonging to my gender group is important part of my self image.
Appendix D

Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS; Bargad & Hyde)

(Note: For administration of this questionnaire, items were in mixed order, and were not labeled by subscale.)

Please read each of the following statements and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree using the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = neither agree nor disagree
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

Stage 1: Passive Acceptance

_____ 1. I don’t think there is any need for an Equal Rights Amendment; women are doing well.
_____ 2. I think that most women will feel most fulfilled by being a wife and a mother.
_____ 3. 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.
_____ 4. I’ve never really worried or thought about what it means to be a woman in this society.
_____ 5. 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.
_____ 6. I do not want to have equal status with men.
_____ 7. I think that men and women had it better in the 1950’s when married women were housewives and their husband supported them.
_____ 8. I don’t see much point in questioning the general expectation that men should be masculine and women should be feminine.
_____ 9. I am not sure what is mean by the phrase “women are oppressed under patriarchy.”
10. 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.

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

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

Stage 2: Revelation

1. I used to think that there isn’t a lot of sex discrimination, but now I know how much
    there really is.

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

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

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

5. Recently, I read something or had an experience that sparked a greater understanding of
    sexism.

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

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

Stage 3: Embeddedness-Emanation

1. I just feel like I need to be around women who share my point of view right now.

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

3. My social life is mainly with women these days, but there are a few men I wouldn’t
    mind having a nonsexual friendship with.

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

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

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

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

Stage 4: Synthesis – Active Commitment

1. Some of the men I know are more feminist than some of the women I know.

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

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

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

5. I evaluate men as individuals, not as members of a group of oppressors.

6. I want to work to improve women's status.

7. On some level, my motivation for almost every activity I engage in is my desire for an
egalitarian world.

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

9. It is very satisfying to me to be able to use my talents and skills in my work in the
women's movement.

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

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

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

13. 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.
Table 1

Pre- and Posttest Mean Scores on the FIDS for Students in Core and Elective Courses

<table>
<thead>
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<th>FIDS Subscale</th>
<th>Type of Course</th>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>99</td>
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<td>3.24b</td>
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Note. These means represent ratings made on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Means that differed significantly (p < .05) are indicated by differing subscripts.
### Table 2

Correlations Between FIDS Subscales, CSES Subscales, and the Rosenberg Scale at the Pretest and Posttest

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*Note.* * significant at the 0.05 level, ** significant at the 0.01 level
Table 3
Pre- and Posttest Mean Scores on the Self-Esteem Measures (RSES and CSES) for Women and Men

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Note. These means represent the total scores made on a 4-point scale for the 10-item Rosenberg measure, and a 7-point scale (4 items per subscale) for the CSES. Means that differed significantly (p < .05) are indicated by differing subscripts.
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