

Abstract

Many women eschew the feminist label despite believing in gender equality. In order to effectively promote feminist change, it is important to understand the factors involved in feminist attitudes, identification, and behavior. The present research helped clarify the relation between these factors. In a survey of 428 U.S. women, we found that participants with stronger attitudes toward gender equality and more favorable explicit and implicit attitudes toward feminist prototypes were more likely to claim a feminist label; those who did so reported greater willingness to intervene when confronted with everyday sexist behavior, particularly if they perceived that they personally were vulnerable to the effects of sexism. We suggested that improving attitudes toward feminist prototypes may help promote feminist identification, whereas informing women about the pervasiveness of sexism, including their personal vulnerability, may be useful for promoting action after the feminist label has been adopted.

Keywords: feminism, sexism, implicit attitudes, prototypes, behavioral willingness

Attitudes toward feminist prototypes, feminist identity, and willingness to intervene on everyday sexist events.

Most people endorse gender equality beliefs, both globally and in the U.S. (Zainulbhai, 2016). However, despite the role of feminist efforts to achieve equality, anti-feminist backlash endures. In 2014, the social media campaign Women Against Feminism featured photos of women holding up pieces of notebook paper declaring their reasons for rejecting feminism (Burleigh, 2014). Many of the women's photos cited a lack of fit between their identity and values and those they perceive to be held by feminists; the women don't need feminism because "fems are Liars and Hypocrites [sic]," because "I am a strong, independent woman!," because "I believe in modesty and respectability." Some reject a feminist identity because they reject group membership *per se*: because "I don't need to define myself as part of a group." For researchers, the value of Women Against Feminism is its powerful manifestation of why women fail to identify as feminists—that they may do so because aspects of their personal identity diverge from what they perceive to be that of the typical feminist.

The current research systematically addresses such questions of feminist identity, asking whether people's attitudes toward the prototypical feminist are related to their own willingness to identify as feminist. More specifically, our purpose is to examine whether implicit and explicit attitudes toward the prototypical feminist predict feminist identity, and whether feminist identity in turn predicts how willing people are to intervene when they encounter everyday sexist events. We examine these questions in a model that also includes feminist beliefs and perceived vulnerability to sexism.

Why Predict Feminist Identity?

Feminist identity is associated with important psychological and behavioral outcomes. People who identify as feminists display lower levels of heterosexism (Szymanski, 2004) and greater psychological well-being (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; though see Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011, for contradictory findings), and lower body surveillance and shame (Hurt et al., 2007). Importantly, feminist identity also predicts behaviors that can promote feminism, boosting self-efficacy to achieve goals (Eisele & Stake, 2008) and predicting increased willingness to engage in feminist activism (Nelson et al., 2008; Yoder et al., 2011), as well as willingness to engage in a range of feminist behaviors, such as donating more to feminist charities and bringing up feminist topics in conversation (Redford, Howell, Meijs, & Ratliff, 2016). These findings showcase feminist identity's distinctive blend of both protective and empowering factors.

Moreover, feminist identity cannot be replaced by or simplified to feminist beliefs (i.e., beliefs about gender equality). Although feminist identity has been conflated with feminist beliefs (Enns, 1997), equality beliefs alone do not necessarily result in willingness to call oneself a feminist (Fitz, Zucker, & Bay-Cheng, 2012; Williams & Wittig, 1997; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Furthermore, consistent with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), identity confers benefits independently of beliefs; feminist identity predicts outcomes such as charity donations and body satisfaction over and above, or better than, feminist beliefs (Murnen & Smolak, 2009; Redford et al., 2016; Yoder et al., 2011). Thus, the benefits of feminist identity are not reducible to one's beliefs; they require that people actually view themselves as feminists.

What Predicts Feminist Identity?

People who identify as feminists are willing to claim the label publicly (Aronson, 2003; Zucker, 2004). This personal identity becomes integrated with a social identity (Turner & Oakes,

1986), in which they see themselves as part of a group made up of other self-identified feminists (Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000; Leaper & Arias, 2011). Because people strive for positive identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), seeing prototypical members of a group (e.g., feminists) as positive can predict greater identification with that group. Thus, in the current research, we examine how much people identify as feminist using their attitudes toward prototypical feminists, among other variables, as predictors.

A prototype of a group is the most central, representative group member, the one that most easily and frequently comes to mind when thinking of the group (Rosch, 1973). Prototypes are rated on a variety of characteristics (Gerrard, Gibbons, Stock, Vande Lune, & Cleveland, 2005); for example, a person may think of the prototypical feminist as cool and fun, or as uncool and boring. These traits can be positive or negative, resulting in a positive or negative attitude toward the prototype of a group. According to the Prototype-Willingness Model of behavior (PWM; Gerrard, Gibbons, Houlihan, Stock, & Pomery, 2008), when opportunities arise to behave in group-relevant ways, people with more positive attitudes toward the group prototype are more willing to engage in those behaviors. For example, more positive attitudes toward “smoker” prototypes predict greater willingness to smoke (Gerrard et al., 2008), and positive prototypes of healthy eaters predict healthy eating (Gerrits, De Ridder, De Wit, & Kuijer, 2009). Prototypes of political groups work in the same way. For example, negative stereotypes of the “typical environmentalist” lead people to avoid affiliating with them and to have less motivation to adopt pro-environmental behaviors (Bashir, Lockwood, Chasteen, Nadolny, & Noyes, 2013).

Most prototype studies have only examined explicit attitudes, directly asking participants about how they see prototypes (e.g., “how smart is the prototypical healthy eater?”). Measures of explicit attitudes require that people are able and willing to report all aspects of their attitudes.

However, people may be unable or unwilling to fully report their attitudes toward stigmatized or marginalized groups; for example, research has often shown that in studies involving race, self-reported explicit attitudes have significantly lower predictive validity than do implicit attitude measures (Greenwald, Uhlmann, Poehlman, & Banaji, 2009). Because feminists are often the target of stereotypes, backlash, and rejection (Anastosopoulos & Desmarais, 2015; Robnett, Anderson, & Hunter, 2012; Yeung, Kay, & Peach, 2013), explicit measures about feminists may not capture a full range of attitudes.

Alternatively, measures of implicit attitudes can overcome some of the limitations of explicit attitudes. They may access more gut-level responses, and either do not alert participants to what is being measured, or reduce participants' control over their responses (De Houwer, 2006). Implicit attitudes have been found to have greater predictive power than explicit ones across a range of outcomes in socially sensitive domains, including employment discrimination, administration of medical treatment, and nonverbal behavior in interpersonal interactions (Greenwald et al., 2009). Implicit attitudes (defined here as the outcomes of implicit measures) toward prototypes outperform explicit ones at predicting risky sun behavior (Ratliff & Howell, 2015), and implicit attitudes toward the prototypical environmentalist predict environmentally-friendly behavior (Ratliff, Howell, & Redford, 2017). This predictive power has only very recently been harnessed in research on prototypes or feminism, but findings are promising. One study found that implicit attitudes significantly predicted feminist identification, controlling for both explicit feminist prototypes and egalitarian gender beliefs (Redford et al., 2016).

Importantly, implicit measures are especially appropriate for the Prototype-Willingness Model (PWM). The PWM focuses on willingness to engage in behaviors when opportunities arise, rather than on a priori behavioral intentions. Such spontaneous, unplanned behavior (e.g.,

friendliness; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002) tends to be better predicted by implicit than explicit measures. Thus, including implicit measures not only enhances predictive power, but is theoretically consistent with the types of behavior predicted by the PWM.

We are also interested in perceived vulnerability, another aspect of the Prototype-Willingness Model (PWM). Found in many health behavior models, this construct refers to a person's perception of individual vulnerability to risks associated with behavior (Gerrard et al., 2008) and, as such, acts as a predictor for behavioral willingness (Lewis, King, Litt, Swanson, & Lee, 2016). Though vulnerability typically reflects consequences associated with health behavior, we hypothesized that perceived vulnerability to sexism was important in our theorized model as well (see Figure 1). Similar constructs have been associated with feminism; for instance, in previous research, women who perceived sexism to be pervasive were more likely to support confronting sexist behavior (Garcia, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Ellemers, 2009; Kahn, Barreto, Kaiser, & Rego, 2015). Additionally, experiences of sexism are associated with collective action (Nelson et al., 2008) and with feminist identity (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997; Leaper & Arias, 2011; Zucker, 2004), although there is some debate about the causal direction between sexism and these other constructs. Moreover, general awareness of sexism is associated with feminist identity (Leaper & Arias, 2011). Given that all of these constructs reflect people's awareness of sexism in some way, we expected that perceived vulnerability to sexism would be relevant to both feminist identity and to behavioral willingness.

We expected that perceived vulnerability would also reflect the interplay of identity and systemic oppression. Some people who reject the feminist label likely do so in part because of their lived experiences of such oppression. Historically, activists who occupy multiple marginalized positions have been alienated from the mainstream women's movement,

particularly in the U.S. (for example, see Combahee River Collective, 1977/2015). This has particularly been true for women of color, but extends to all social positions on the margins of society. As a result, some people may reject or reconfigure “White feminism,” or feminism that does not adequately address the intersectional, multifaceted, situated, and structural nature of identity. A recent study (Hoskin, Jenson, & Blair, 2017) found that people who defined feminism using such intersectional principles were more likely to identify as feminists. Alternatively, some individuals with egalitarian beliefs reject feminism for the opposite reason: non-labelers who endorse neoliberal beliefs of individualism, competition, and meritocracy may find that feminism focuses *too much* on structural forces and collective identity (Fitz et al., 2012). Thus, it is clear that feminist identity is deeply rooted in a complex social system, but this is not often explored in models of feminist identity. We strove to reflect the importance of systemic oppression as experienced by the individual. However, related constructs discussed above either focus solely on the systemic (such as pervasiveness of sexism) or the individual (such as sexist experiences). Perceived vulnerability reflects the individual and the systemic and, additionally, fits well with our theoretical basis in the Prototype Willingness Model.

The current research is designed to advance understanding of how implicit and explicit prototypes relate to feminist identity, in a model that also includes other important documented predictors of feminist identity, such as gender equality beliefs (i.e., feminist beliefs) and perceived vulnerability to sexism. We included gender equality beliefs in the model to assess prototypes’ predictive utility over and above those beliefs, as demonstrated in previous studies. We also included perceived vulnerability to sexism which is based in both PWM and feminism research, but which we conceptualized uniquely in this study. By including both gender equality

beliefs and perceived vulnerability to sexism, it is possible not only to examine their effects, but also to demonstrate that feminist identity is not reducible to these other variables.

What does Feminist Identity Predict?

Feminist identity predicts myriad positive outcomes, but to establish whether it actually contributes to efforts to achieve gender equality, feminist behaviors are of the greatest interest. Feminist behavioral outcomes are featured in previous research, most often in formal, sporadic, and potentially burdensome forms, such as participating in marches and donating to charities. However, this approach could overlook feminists' experiences of their feminism, which may be better reflected in how they react to everyday sexist events in interpersonal interactions. In addition to being understudied, such everyday interactions are more frequent, accessible, and naturalistic than formal activism. Reactions to everyday events may also have the advantage of better capturing characteristics unique to sexism. Compared to other dimensions of oppression (e.g., racism), sexist events can arise from or be exacerbated by greater daily interaction, intimacy, and interdependence between the enactor and the target of the oppressive event (Glick, 2014). Thus, the current research addresses whether feminist identity predicts greater willingness to intervene when encountering everyday sexist events. Fortunately, feminist identity could be the key to predicting such confrontation. One study of bystander reactions found feminist women to be more likely to confront perpetrators of gender prejudice (Brinkman, Dean, Simpson, McGinley, & Rosén, 2015). In addition, perceptions of sexism as harmful promotes behavioral intentions to discuss and seek information about gender inequity (Cundiff, Zawadzki, Danube, & Shields, 2014), suggesting a potential role of perceived vulnerability to sexism in willingness to intervene. Thus, it could be that perceived vulnerability to sexism predicts willingness via feminist identity—the prediction we test—or that vulnerability more directly predicts willingness.

The Present Research

The purpose of the present research is to explore the role of implicit and explicit attitudes toward prototypes of feminists—the central, representative feminist that comes to mind when someone thinks of feminists as a group—in relation to feminist identity, and whether feminist identity in turn relates to people’s willingness to intervene when they encounter on everyday sexist events. We examine these questions in a model that includes other potentially important predictors of feminist identity: feminist beliefs and perceived vulnerability to sexism (see Figure 1). Because we conceptualized vulnerability uniquely in this study, we could not use the extant literature to situate the variable with total confidence. As stated previously, scholars disagree about the causal direction of related constructs, such as pervasiveness of sexism and experiences of sexism. However, because we acknowledge the role of structural factors in feminist labeling, we decided to place vulnerability alongside other predictors of feminist identity (see Figure 1).

Method

Participants and Procedure

This study was approved by the University of Florida Institutional Review Board. We recruited participants through Prolific (www.prolific.ac), a crowdsourcing website focusing specifically on academic research. This tool was ideal for our purposes for several reasons: the website prevents users from participating in the same study more than once; the site mandates a “minimum wage” consistent with our ethical principles; and the website collects broad demographic data about its participant pool, meaning that we could recruit by age, gender, and location without developing and administering a pre-screening survey. Because of its mandatory minimum payments, Prolific can be costlier than other tools (such as Amazon Mechanical Turk): at least £5/hour for participants plus commission costs of 12.5% on each reward and 10p per

participant. Prolific is based at the University of Oxford, but, because initial recruitment takes place primarily on social media or through university flyer campaigns, the participant pool boasts a high percentage of participants from the U.S. as well as the U.K. Though anyone may join the website, they fill out extensive demographic questionnaires to qualify or disqualify them from available studies. Participant demographics can be explored through graphs on the website (<https://www.prolific.ac/demographics>); the pool is not particularly diverse in terms of race or (with ~70% identifying as Caucasian), but it does offer a wider age range than a typical university setting (18 to 80, with the average age in our sample falling at about 32). A recent study (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017) found that Prolific was more diverse than other crowdsourcing sites in terms of ethnicity and geographic location, although this was not the case in our study.

Regarding data quality, Peer and colleagues (2017) found that Prolific participants reported higher naivety and lower degrees of dishonest behavior as compared to Amazon Mechanical Turk participants. In addition to Prolific's protections against repeat submissions, we administered a two-step attention check adapted from Downs, Holbrook, Sheng, and Cranor (2010): participants read a short email, ostensibly as a formality, followed by two questions of differing complexity about the information in the email, designed to ensure that participants were attending to the content of the survey.

Participants who met our eligibility criteria (women in the U.S. over the age of 18) chose to answer our survey after reading a short description: "In this research study, you will be asked to answer some questions about your attitudes, beliefs and behaviors relating to gender and feminism. We will also ask you to do a sorting task on your computer." They were compensated approximately \$2.50 for their time. Data were collected from 440 adult U.S. women. We

eliminated some participants for data trimming purposes ($n = 4$: one participant who identified as a trans man, one participant who was under 18, and two participants who failed the attention check) and removed incomplete submissions for a final sample of 428 (M age = 32.39 years, $SD = 11.85$). On a political orientation scale ranging from *Strongly Conservative* (1) to *Strongly Liberal* (7), participants reported somewhat more liberal beliefs than conservative ($M = 5.4$, $SD = 1.55$). For additional demographic characteristics, refer to Table 1.

Materials

Supporting materials for this research, including data, can be found on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/t3sve/>).

Gender equality attitudes. We assessed gender equality attitudes using The Social Roles Questionnaire (Baber & Tucker, 2006), a 13-item measure chosen for its relative brevity and applicability to a modern sample. The SRQ contains two subscales, the Gender Transcendent subscale and the Gender Linked subscale. Sample items from the Gender Transcendent subscale include “Tasks around the house should not be assigned by sex” and “People should be treated the same regardless of their sex.” Sample items from the Gender Linked subscale include “Girls should be protected and watched over more than boys” and “Only some types of work are appropriate for both men and women.” Consistent with the measure’s original intent, participants responded using a percentage scale from 0% (*Strongly Disagree*) to 100% (*Strongly Agree*). We reversed the direction of some items such that the computed scale’s valence would be consistent with the other measures in the study; higher scores, in this case, correspond with more gender-equal attitudes. We averaged the items to create a single gender equality attitudinal score. In previous samples, Baber and Tucker (2006) reported adequate internal consistency for both subscales (Gender Transcendent $\alpha = 0.65$; Gender Linked $\alpha = 0.77$). Alphas for the current

sample were 0.87 (entire scale), 0.78 (Gender Transcendent subscale), and 0.83 (Gender Linked subscale).

Implicit attitudes toward feminist prototypes. A Single-Category Implicit Association Test (SC-IAT; Karpinski & Steinman, 2006), previously used by Redford et al. (2016), measured implicit evaluations of feminists. A computer screen displayed stimuli from two representational categories: *Feminists* and evaluations. We used four pictures related to feminism to represent the *Feminists* category. We used the words “good” and “bad” as well as four positive and four negative images from the International Affective Picture System (IAPS; Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 2008) to represent the evaluative categories. Participants sorted the *Feminists* images into categories *Good* and *Bad* as quickly as possible using the E and I keys on their keyboards.

The Single-Category Implicit Association Test consisted of six blocks of ten trials. After each block, the category labels switched sides. Analysis had the following features: response latencies < 400ms and > 10,000ms were removed, and trial latencies were calculated from the beginning of the trial until the time of a correct response (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). A greater positive *D* score indicates a stronger association between feminist + good. The SC-IAT split-half reliability was .60 in both studies. We did not examine data from 1 participant because of too-high error rates (greater than 40% in a single block or greater than 30% overall).

Explicit attitudes toward feminist prototypes. Participants reported their explicit attitudes toward feminist prototypes on four traits (Redford et al., 2016): (1) How uncool or cool are feminists? (2) How unattractive or attractive are feminists? (3) How unintelligent or intelligent are feminists? (4) How boring or fun are feminists? Each item was assessed with a 7-point response scale, with 1 representing very unfavorable attitudes and 7 representing very favorable attitudes. The four items were collapsed into a single score of explicit attitudes, with higher

scores representing more favorable attitudes. In previous samples, Redford and colleagues (2016) reported good internal consistency (Sample A: $\alpha = 0.86$; Sample B: $\alpha = 0.82$). Alpha for the current sample was 0.89.

Identification with feminism. Participants completed four items regarding feminist identification (Self-Identification as a Feminist Scale; Szymanski, 2004), including: (1) I consider myself a feminist; (2) I identify myself as a feminist to other people; (3) Feminist values and principles are important to me; (4) I support the goals of the feminist movement. Response options ranged from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). We averaged the items to create a single feminist identification score. In a previous sample, Szymanski (2004) reported good internal consistency for the measure ($\alpha = 0.93$). Alpha for the current sample was 0.94.

Perceived vulnerability. In order to assess participants' perceived vulnerability to sexism, we developed three items: (1) In terms of your career, what are the chances that you would be affected by sexism?; (2) In terms of your personal relationships, what are the chances that you would be affected by sexism?; (3) In terms of your romantic relationships, what are the chances that you would be affected by sexism? Responses ranged from 1 (*Very Unlikely*) to 7 (*Very Likely*). We averaged these three items to create a single score of perceived vulnerability. Alpha for the sample was 0.81.

Willingness to intervene in situations of everyday sexism. In order to assess willingness to engage in everyday feminist behaviors, we developed six items exemplifying hostile or benevolent sexist situations. To do so, we incorporated input from all four authors in addition to referring to Glick and Fiske (1996) for operationalization and contextualization of benevolent and hostile sexism. See Table 2 for item list. Participants rated their willingness to intervene in

given situations on a response scale from 1 (*Very Unwilling*) to 7 (*Very Willing*). We averaged the items to create a single score of behavioral willingness. Alpha for the sample was $\alpha = 0.69$.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

All variables were moderately to highly correlated (correlations and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3). Participants reported generally egalitarian attitudes about gender roles ($M = 77.59$, $SD = 14.33$) and moderately high identification with feminism ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.76$). We conducted all other analyses using path analysis in SPSS AMOS (version 12).

Additionally, we analyzed patterns of missing data for each variable. Less than 0.3% of all items in all cases were missing. About 91.6% of participants had no missing data whatsoever, and 63.6% of items had no missing data across all cases. No item had more than 1% missing values.

Testing Models

We first tested a model logically derived from our theoretical basis (Model 1, pictured in Figure 1), as discussed in the Introduction. The χ^2 of this model was significant [$\chi^2(4) = 33.58$, $p < 0.001$], indicating poor fit. However, this statistic is sensitive to large sample sizes and assumes perfect multivariate normality; as a result, we examined additional fit statistics. We followed Byrne's (2009) recommendations and looked to CFI (0.96) and RMSEA (0.13, with a 90% confidence interval between 0.09 and 0.17, $PCLOSE < 0.001$), as well as NNFI (0.83) and SRMR (0.05), for clarification; these results suggested mixed fit. Thus, we respecified the model according to the modification indices. We made two changes based on the modification indices alongside the standardized residual covariances, which were significant only for the relation between willingness and vulnerability (2.81) and between willingness and gender role beliefs

(2.61). Drawing a direct path from gender role beliefs to behavioral willingness (M.I. = 8.90) and a direct path from perceived vulnerability to behavioral willingness (M.I. = 10.24) yielded Model 2 [$\chi^2(2) = 5.83, p = 0.05, CFI = 0.99, NNFI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.02, RMSEA = 0.07$, RMSEA 90% CI between <0.001 and 0.13 with PCLOSE = 0.25]; these changes improved the model, but fit was still somewhat mixed. However, there were no useful modification indices.

In order to progress, we returned to the literature to assess the relations between the constructs. Given that our inclusion of perceived vulnerability is unique in this subject area, we focused on the possibility that it may need to be restructured. Though our original expectations constructed vulnerability as a precursor to feminist identity, we also acknowledged that vulnerability may directly relate to willingness rather than indirectly through feminist identity. Indeed, Model 2's modification indices did support a direct link from vulnerability to willingness. Thus, we decided to reconceptualize vulnerability's role somewhat: we eliminated the indirect path from vulnerability through feminist identity. This retained Model 2's direct paths from gender role beliefs and vulnerability to behavioral willingness, but relocated the vulnerability construct such that a direct path ran from feminist identity to vulnerability (Model 3; see Figure 2). Model 3 fit the data well [$\chi^2(5) = 7.93, p = 0.16, CFI = 0.99, NNFI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.02, RMSEA = 0.04$]. Though the RMSEA 90% confidence interval is somewhat wide for this model (lower bound < 0.001 and upper bound = $.08$), it falls roughly within the values suggested by Browne and Cudeck (1993) for and, in conjunction with the associated probability value ($p = .62$) and other fit indices, we believe that this fit is acceptable. In terms of local fit, none of the standardized residual covariances were large enough to cause concern: values are listed in Table 4. Standardized total and indirect effects are listed in Tables 5 and 6 respectively. Because of the small effects of the implicit measure relative to other predictors, we tested a version of this well-

fitting model without the IAT included; the resulting model (Model 4; $\chi^2(3) = 6.79, p = 0.08$, $CFI = 0.99$, $NNFI = 0.98$, $SRMR = 0.03$, $RMSEA = 0.05$) fit no better, and in fact fit slightly worse in the case of some statistics. As a result, we chose to retain implicit attitudes, as in Model 3.

General Discussion

This research examined the role of gender role beliefs and implicit and explicit attitudes toward prototypes of feminists in predicting feminist identity, and whether feminist identity in turn predicts people's willingness to intervene when they encounter on everyday sexist events. Our hypothesized model did not exhibit excellent fit, but, given that Model 2 had mixed but nearly acceptable fit, we shifted our attention from testing the hypothesized model to developing a slightly different model based in the literature. Although analyses revealed a different model configuration than originally hypothesized, the overall results were consistent with the extant literature, and clarified relations between relevant constructs. We hope that future work will replicate Model 3.

Feminist identity was best predicted by gender role beliefs, explicit feminist prototypes, and implicit feminist prototypes (see Figure 2). Willingness to intervene when confronted with a sexist event (i.e., behavioral willingness) was best predicted by gender role beliefs directly, and by feminist identity directly *and* indirectly, through vulnerability to sexism. Put simply, participants with more favorable attitudes toward prototypical feminists were more likely to identify as feminists, and those more likely to identify as feminists were then more likely to endorse feminist behaviors, especially if they felt that they were personally vulnerable to sexism. Gender equality beliefs were important, but left variance unexplained, in relation to both feminist identity and behavioral willingness.

Consistent with the hypothesized model, implicit feminist prototypes predicted feminist identity beyond the influence of explicit prototypes and gender role beliefs. Divergent from the hypothesized model, vulnerability to sexism related to behavioral willingness directly, rather than through feminist identity. Importantly, this implies that vulnerability to sexism may not actually be a precursor to feminist identity, as we originally hypothesized. Instead, it is possible that feminist consciousness heightens women's awareness of sexism. However, because the measure of perceived vulnerability included the term "sexism," which may be inherently tied to feminism for some participants, the correlation between this measure and feminist identity could be inflated and should be interpreted with care. In this model, it seems that awareness of vulnerability contributes to feminists' willingness to take action in their everyday lives. Thus, we believe vulnerability can be seen as an activating factor: When calling oneself a feminist is not enough to promote action, awareness of personal risk may bridge the gap.

Though our model demonstrates the importance of feminist identity, it also displays its limitations. Given the direct effect of gender equality beliefs on the willingness measure, our results support the idea that a feminist label is not always necessary in order to engage in everyday feminist behaviors. Thus, feminist identity is important, but we should continue to consider the reasons why it may be rejected and how we can promote its value to egalitarian thinkers.

This study is only the second we know of to use implicit feminist prototypes to predict feminist identity (see Redford et al., 2016) and the first to apply several constructs analogous to components of the Prototype Willingness Model (PWM; Gerrard et al., 2008). The PWM has been applied primarily to health behaviors, typically finding that low perceived vulnerability predicts greater willingness to engage in negative health behaviors (Gerrard et al., 2008).

Because we measured positive activist behaviors as an outcome, we found the inverse relation. And, consistent with the PWM literature, we found that prototypes and vulnerability both predicted behavioral willingness beyond attitudes alone. Thus, this research not only adds to our understanding of feminist identity and feminist behaviors; it also expands the usefulness of the PWM.

Limitations

The primary limitation in the current research is demographic: its sample consisted primarily of heterosexual White women, and the average political orientation was fairly liberal. Because women with diverse racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds often have different feminist values, definitions, and identities (Harnois, 2005; Moradi, Subich, & Phillips, 2002; Robnett & Anderson, 2017), a complete model of feminist identity and behaviors would likely account for these factors. Unfortunately, our sample did not allow for statistical comparisons by race or ethnicity, and tests of mean differences comparing economic groups yielded no significant results; such nuance might be more evident in a more diverse sample. We specifically targeted women for this study because two of our variables of interest (behavioral willingness and vulnerability to sexism) would need significant restructuring to be applicable to men; however, future studies may try to validate our results among men and people with non-binary gender identities.

In addition, not all constructs were outstanding predictors of feminist identity; the contribution of implicit attitudes was relatively small compared to those of explicit attitudes and gender equality attitudes. It is possible that, because our sample skewed liberal, generally positive opinions of feminists minimized the potential disparity between explicit and implicit attitudes, thus reducing the usefulness of the IAT. This particular implicit measure of feminist

prototypes has only been used in one other study (Redford et al., 2016), and we hope future research may refine and validate it. However, the model without implicit attitudes fit slightly more poorly than did Model 3, which included implicit attitudes. Therefore, this study highlights a novel missing piece in other conceptualizations of feminist identity; although it is a small contribution, it is potentially an integral one. In short, we can better predict feminist identity—and relevant behavior—by understanding how women feel about feminists. Predicting feminist identity is valuable in part because past research has been unable to reliably do so, largely due to the fact that feminist beliefs do not always lead to feminist self-labeling (Fitz et al., 2012; Williams & Wittig, 1997; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010).

There are other limitations regarding our model. When the hypothesized model yielded a mixed fit, we shifted our focus somewhat from model testing to model development; thus, this particular model configuration is novel and requires replication. Although we acknowledge that the changes made in Model 3 are consistent with existing literature, the fact that the initial model required respecification necessitates caution. Because these modifications were made in response to analyses of the current dataset, it is possible that they may represent spurious patterns particular to our sample in some way (Bollen & Noble, 2011). There are undoubtedly also variables missing from the model: for example, Kaysen and Stake (2001) predicted activism in part through agentic self-esteem, although it is possible that such a relation would be complicated by our more casual conceptualization of feminist behaviors as opposed to feminist activism. We also acknowledge that the two measures designed for this study (perceived vulnerability to sexism and willingness to intervene in everyday sexist situations) are limited by a lack of replication. Reliability for the vulnerability measure was very good ($\alpha = 0.81$) but not excellent, and may yield biased results because of its direct use of the term “sexism.” Reliability

for the willingness measure was solidly acceptable ($\alpha = 0.69$). Reliability was not improved by separating into hostile sexism and benevolent sexism subscales, nor did an item-by-item analysis reveal any one item driving the alpha level. We chose these six items to reflect a range of sexist events that might occur to a participant in everyday life, rather than larger political or social justice concerns, but as a result it is certainly possible that some items may have seemed less pressing than others.

Future Directions

As mentioned previously, future studies may consider replicating our findings in a more diverse sample; a replication would also resolve concerns about model respecification. Beyond this, we hope that other researchers will consider incorporating these novel variables in their own feminist identity models: the willingness construct, though incomplete, addresses the everyday sexist interactions that feminists regularly face (rather than focusing on activist work as in past research); the vulnerability construct addresses the personal and individual relation with systemic oppression; and the feminist prototypes measures can add nuance to any investigation of feminist identity. Relatedly, though the willingness construct is certainly important, the measure we use in the present research could be improved by qualitative research that expands and clarifies the specific sexist scenarios that elicit intervention behaviors. Regarding our model configuration specifically, we think that there is potential to investigate differences in feminist identity and behavior in privileged or disadvantaged groups. For example: does privilege make White, cisgender, heterosexual, middle- or upper-class feminists perceive less personal risk, inspiring fewer feminist behaviors? Alternatively, or additionally, does it reduce the risk associated with confrontations of sexism, thereby increasing feminist behaviors? For example, such privilege might allow some feminists to survive or ignore the risk of job loss due to interpersonal

confrontations at work. In the same vein, is this differentially effectual for everyday interactions compared to activist organizing? In a diverse sample, we believe our model could help characterize the increasing visibility of risk for marginalized populations in the current political climate.

Implications

Although there is a sizable literature base examining precursors to feminist identity, this study marks a more specific conceptualization of why and how these models matter. In our model, we see that there is indeed some value to the idea that one need not claim a feminist label in order to speak out against sexist behaviors, given that we found a direct link from gender equality beliefs to behavioral willingness. However, the power of gender equality beliefs was certainly amplified by claiming a feminist label, as past researchers have demonstrated (Yoder et al., 2011; Zucker, 2004).

These results also advance our understanding of perceived vulnerability to sexism as an activating factor in feminist behavior. Specifically, although feminist identity is important in relation to everyday feminist behaviors, perceived vulnerability may also be necessary to maximize those feminist behaviors. Conceptualizing vulnerability to sexism as an activating factor has theoretical and practical implications for feminist identity as a construct. It suggests that simply taking on the feminist label is not necessarily a commitment to action. Indeed, women in the U.S. today may call themselves feminists without perceiving risk in their daily lives. Our results suggest that those feminists who see themselves as vulnerable to the effects of sexism are a separate group meriting further study. This finding also has important links to the concept of denial of personal disadvantage (Crosby, 1984); even women who are aware of the existence of sexist discrimination may not act to change it if they do not perceive themselves to

be at risk personally. Thus, our vulnerability construct goes beyond measuring perceived pervasiveness of sexism; everyday feminist actions may be contingent on perceptions of personal risk. Future researchers may want to consider vulnerability when examining feminist behaviors or even activism.

Practice implications. We also acknowledge substantial practical implications. Importantly, intervening on everyday sexism may be one way feminism could translate to greater gender equity. Such interventions can reduce subsequent bias (for a similar study related to racism, see Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006) and increase men's attempts to compensate for their sexism in later interactions (Mallett & Wagner, 2011). However, the social costs of intervening, such as being evaluated negatively or punished, often prevent women from intervening (Nicole & Stewart, 2004; Swim, Eysell, Murdoch, & Ferguson, 2010; Swim & Hyers, 1999). Despite these benefits, researchers rarely study confrontations of sexism (Becker, Zawadzki, & Shields, 2014).

To that end, our results lend empirical evidence to the effectiveness of consciousness-raising for promoting action. For example, educators or interventionists looking to promote change may want to promote a more favorable "prototypical feminist," (thereby increasing feminist identification) and also provide information about vulnerability to sexism (in order to motivate women to engage in feminist behaviors). Women's Studies courses could be an ideal venue for such interventions, as students enrolled in those courses display increases in both feminist consciousness and feminist identification (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1999), and Women's Studies students who are more aware of sexism demonstrate greater activist intentions (Stake, 2007). Our research speaks to one pathway through which this may occur, emphasizing the personal nature of consciousness-raising.

Conclusion

In systematically addressing questions of feminist identity, the current research illustrates how favorable attitudes toward prototypical feminists relate to feminist identity, which in turn relate to willingness to engage in feminist behaviors, especially for women who feel that they are personally vulnerable to sexism. The current findings showcase the importance of awareness of sexism, attitudes toward feminists, and feminist identity for reducing sexist interactions, suggesting that to live in a world with fewer gendered constraints on their ambitions, outcomes and opportunities, that yes, women do need feminism.

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Race/ethnicity		
White	337	78.7
East Asian	26	6.1
Black/African American	23	5.4
American Indian/Alaska Native	3	.7
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	.2
multiracial	22	5.2
other/unknown	4	1.2
Hispanic/Latina	18	4.2
Sexual orientation		
heterosexual/straight	302	70.6
bisexual	79	18.5
lesbian/gay	16	3.7
queer	15	3.5
other	16	3.7
Highest level of education		
some high school	2	.5
high school	34	7.9
some college	115	26.9
associate's degree	38	7.9
bachelor's degree	155	36.2
some graduate school	34	7.9
master's degree	37	8.7
J.D.	4	.9
Ph.D.	7	1.6
M.B.A.	1	.2
Economic situation		
not enough money to get by	24	5.6
barely enough money to get by	78	18.2
enough money for needs, but no extras	161	37.6
more than enough money	146	34.1
well-to-do	15	3.5
extremely well-to-do	3	.7

Table 2

Items in the Willingness to Intervene in Situations of Everyday Sexism Measure

Item text	Type of sexism
1. Imagine that you're at a party and someone tells a joke that is degrading to women. How willing would you be to speak out against this?	Hostile
2. Imagine that you are helping a friend move into her new apartment. You offer to help carry furniture, but instead she said, "No, we'll let the men do the heavy lifting; come and help me unpack the dishes." How willing would you be to speak out against this?	Benevolent
3. Imagine that you learn that you make less money than a male co-worker for doing the same labor. How willing would you be to speak out against this?	Hostile
4. Imagine that you are at a job interview and your potential boss asks you if you plan to have children because he "doesn't want to hire someone who will be quitting soon to be a stay-at-home mom." How willing would you be to speak out against this?	Hostile
5. Imagine that you are at a restaurant and when you ask the waiter for the bill, he gives it directly to your male date instead of to you. How willing would you be to speak out against this?	Benevolent
6. Imagine that you are on a date with a male partner and he insists on opening the car and restaurant doors for you. How willing would you be to speak out against this?	Benevolent

Note. In future iterations of this measure, we plan to use the phrase "male friend" instead of "male date/partner" in items 5 and 6.

Table 3

Zero-Order Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for Indicator Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Implicit prototypes						
2. Explicit prototypes	.32**					
3. Gender equality attitudes	.25**	.35**				
4. Feminist identification	.32**	.67**	.53**			
5. Perceived vulnerability	.16**	.30**	.19**	.45**		
6. Behavioral willingness	.14*	.37**	.36**	.44**	.34**	
<i>M</i>	.25	4.87	77.59	5.03	4.37	4.49
<i>SD</i>	.26	1.23	14.33	1.76	1.66	1.15

* $p \leq .01$. ** $p \leq .001$.

Table 4

Standardized Residual Covariances for Model 3

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Implicit prototypes	<.001					
2. Explicit prototypes	<.001	<.001				
3. Gender equality attitudes	<.001	<.001	<.001			
4. Feminist identification	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		
5. Perceived vulnerability	.31	-.15	-.98	<.001	<.001	
6. Behavioral willingness	-.41	1.34	-.18	<.001	-.18	-.05

Table 5

Standardized Total Effects for Model 3

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Implicit prototypes						
2. Explicit prototypes						
3. Gender equality attitudes						
4. Feminist identification	.07	.54	.32			
5. Perceived vulnerability	.03	.24	.14	.45		
6. Behavioral willingness	.02	.18	.30	.34	.19	

Table 6

Standardized Indirect Effects for Model 3

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Implicit prototypes						
2. Explicit prototypes						
3. Gender equality attitudes						
4. Feminist identification						
5. Perceived vulnerability	.03	.24	.14			
6. Behavioral willingness	.02	.18	.11	.08		

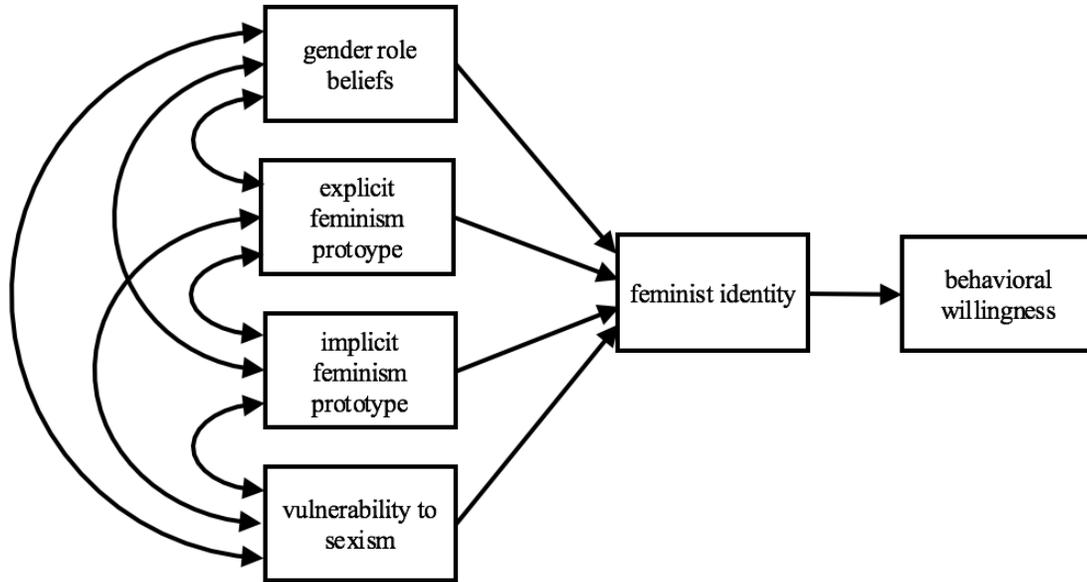
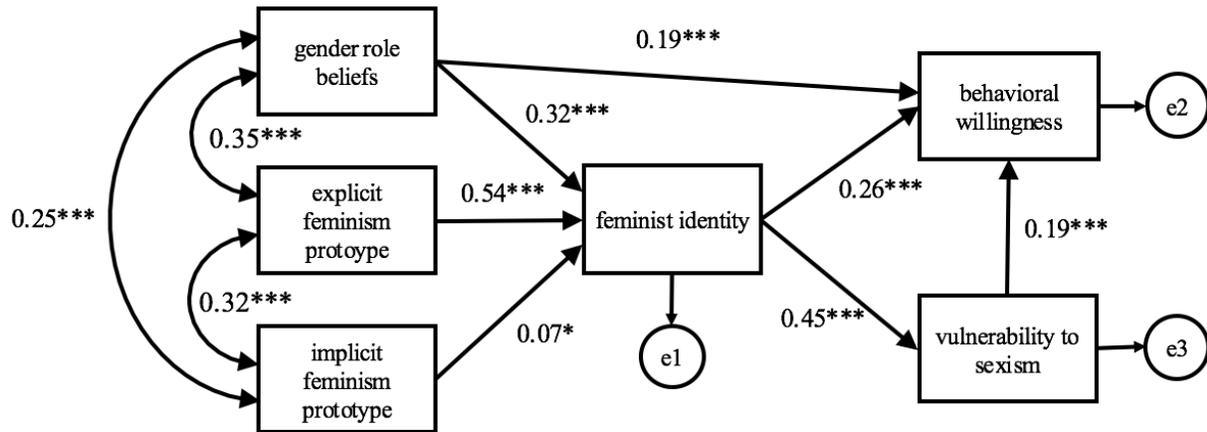


Figure 1. Model 1 – hypothesized model.



$\chi^2(5) = 7.93, p = 0.16, CFI = 0.99, NNFI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.02, RMSEA = .04$

Figure 2. Model 3 – adjusted final model.