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Exploring Men's Intimate Relationships (with Feminism): Another Side of Feminist Consciousness



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Abstract

Research on feminist consciousness and its corresponding benefits has largely been conducted on women. Many feminists find this problematic because it neglects feminist men and the favorable outcomes that have been empirically linked to strong feminist identities for men. In this study, I examined men's feminist consciousness and explored whether correlations exist between men's feminist consciousness, their partners' and peers' attitudes towards feminism, and the overall health of their long-term monogamous relationships. Several different measures of consciousness were utilized, including "Self-identification" (Gurin, 1980), "Feminist Analysis" (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997) and "Sensitivity to Sexism" (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997).

Additionally, previously developed measures were used to assess the relationship health of non-feminist and feminist men. Relationship health was measured on three different components: relationship quality, relationship stability, and relationship equality (Rudman & Phelan, 2007). It was anticipated that men who exhibited higher levels of feminist consciousness would also report higher relationship health than their nonfeminist counterparts. It was also expected that feminist men would report perceiving that their friends and partners held parallel attitudes towards feminism. A survey of undergraduates at a mid-sized university tested these hypotheses and found no correlations between relationship health and feminist consciousness. However, when men self-reported identification as feminist, results revealed that men who identified more strongly as feminist were more likely to identify their partners as feminists and were also more likely to report stronger quality within their relationships than men who identified weakly as feminist. Results confirmed that self-identifying feminist men reported their peers as being likeminded, to the extent that the peers of feminist men were more likely to react disapprovingly to sexism or misogyny and showed a greater acceptance of individuals who adopt feminist identities. Further research should examine the complexity behind male feminist identities to develop new measuring strategies in understanding this discrepancy between self-identification and consciousness, and how men experience feminist consciousness.

Introduction

Feminist identification for women and girls has been associated with many favorable or positive outcomes. For instance, strong feminist identity for women has been linked to high self-esteem (Fischer & Good, 1994), self-efficacy (Foss & Slaney, 1986), and higher academic achievement (Valenzuela, 1993). One study in particular found a positive correlation between strong feminist identity, egalitarian expectations, and sexual assertiveness in intimate relationships for U.S. college women (Yoder et al., 2007). Nonfeminist women exhibited low egalitarian expectations and low sexual assertiveness. In other words, women with stronger feminist ideologies were more likely to endorse egalitarian relationships, practice safer sex and experience more sexual satisfaction than their nonfeminist equivalents.

Although there is a growing body of knowledge that supports feminist identification as beneficial for women, research supporting that it is also beneficial for males remains underdeveloped. Men who adopt feminist ideologies are a largely unknown population. The basis for this is the commonly held belief that men cannot be feminists because they have no personal experience of gender oppression, and consequently cannot create oppositional forms of gender consciousness (Ashe, 2004). While men may experience privilege associated with their maleness, many feminists contend they can still hold a pro-woman stance and assume a feminist identity. Feminist theorist bell hooks (hooks, 2000) argues that a major flaw within feminism has been excluding men from the movement. This is problematic because, as she argues, "Since men are the primary agents maintaining sexism, and sexist oppression, they (sexism) can only be successfully eradicated if men are compelled to assume responsibility for transforming their consciousness of society as a whole" (p. 83). She states that it is absolutely critical that third-wave feminists adopt men as their "comrades in struggle" because sexism and gender inequality af-

fect them similarly, since masculinity often acts as a stranglehold over men's lives. Many feminists share this opinion, such as Connell, who maintains that feminist theory must take men into account and "allows a way for men to relate to feminist women" in order to strengthen relationships and open dialogue between men and women (p. 357). Therefore, it is absolutely critical that feminist men are included in revolutionary struggle for gender equality. To continue neglecting men is to postpone justice.

As a result of males' privileged social position, their experience as feminists is quite different from that of females. This can be seen when many feminist males describe being subjected to harsh criticism and rigid stereotypes from both males and females (Anderson, 2009). Often times, they are ostracized for empathizing with the feminist struggle and are ridiculed for their so-called "effeminacy." Anderson's research further suggests that in terms of social and sexual desirability, feminist men scored lower than other men. She found that ordinary stereotypes of feminist men included: homosexual or bisexual, weak, feminine, and unconfident. Given the stigma associated with these stereotypes, it is likely that men are much less likely than women to label themselves as feminist. This fact is especially important in terms of researching feminist men because, although many men may not adopt a feminist identity per se, they may hold feminist beliefs or exhibit anti-sexist behavior. As a consequence of men being unlikely to self-identify as feminist, previous researchers have relied on other measures that assess feminist beliefs or feminist behavior in an effort to increase construct validity (Henderson-King & Zhermer, 2003). Therefore, careful operationalization is crucial in any research regarding feminist men.

Researchers, however, have discovered evidence that feminism has benefited men's intimate relationships. Rudman and Phelan (2007) examined four different groups that were involved in long-term heterosexual relationships—college-age women and men, and older women and men—and explored their attitudes towards feminists, sexual satisfaction and the stability, quality, and equality of their relationships. The findings revealed that

each group benefited, in one aspect or another, from having a feminist partner and being feminists themselves. For example, feminist men with a feminist partner reported greater relationship stability and sexual satisfaction. In other words, feminist men perceived their relationships as being more secure and sexually satisfying compared to nonfeminist men. College age men who self-identified as feminists and had a feminist partner reported greater overall equality in their relationships, meaning they were more likely to be in agreement with their partner regarding gender egalitarian roles within their relationship. Essentially, the results of this study are groundbreaking, in that they challenge the commonly-held belief that feminism is incompatible with romantic relations and negate the notion that feminism is restricted to women.

In an effort to demystify feminist males and further solidify the results of previous research that associates feminist identity to positive intimate relationships between men and women, the purpose of this research is to gain knowledge about how feminist beliefs and feminist behavior play a role in men's intimate relationships. Previous researchers have defined the concept *feminist consciousness* as the awareness and adoption of a pro-woman stance (Henderson-King & Zhermer, 2003); however, this study defines feminist consciousness as exemplifying the theory and praxis of gender egalitarianism through both feminist beliefs and feminist behavior. Relationships between feminist consciousness in men and the overall health of their relationships were examined in male-identified participants in long-term monogamous relationships, with long term being defined as six months or longer. Based on the previous research that supports feminism as being compatible for romantic relationships, it is expected that men with higher levels of feminist consciousness would exhibit higher levels of relationship health, defined as relationship quality, relationship stability, and relationship equality. In addition, men's perceptions of their partner and peers' attitudes towards feminism were observed to test the hypothesis that men would have a partner and friends who hold parallel attitudes towards feminism.

Data and Method

Participants

One hundred and seven male volunteers were recruited using a convenience sample approved by the Human Research Review Committee at Grand Valley State University (GVSU). A research assistant contacted professors from multiple disciplines for their permission to recruit male students in class; once consent was obtained from the instructor, the trained male research assistant distributed the questionnaire to the male-identified students. Participants who were not in a current relationship were excluded for most of the analyses, leaving a sample of 57 volunteers. Of these, 9.1% had been in a relationship less than six months, 16.4% had been in their relationship for six months to a year, 27.3% for one to two years, 23.6% for three to five years, 18.2% for five to seven years, and 5.5% for eight or more years. Two participants who did not detail the length of their relationships and five with relationships under 6 months were excluded from follow up questions on relationship health and partner attitudes, leaving a sample of 50 with relationships of six months or longer. This length requirement of six months or longer was used to ensure a degree of relationship stability and commitment. The average length of relationships was 3.42 years, or three years and 5 months ($n=55$). There were no significant differences in demographics for men in a relationship and not in a relationship; over 80% of all participants were white and over 90% of participants identified as straight. See Table 1 for additional information.

Independent variables

Sensitivity to Sexism (STS)

Rather than relying on feminist self-identification as the main measure of feminist consciousness, the "Sensitivity to Sexism" scale was developed by previous researchers in an effort to increase construct validity (Henderson-King & Zhermer, 2003). Participants completed the "Sensitivity to Sexism" scale, which assesses respondents' awareness of sexism by examining the participants' behavioral and emotional responses to common situations in which sexism and misogyny occur (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997).

Nine items were utilized, including “I sometimes feel tense because I might be confronted with something that is sexist,” “Sometimes I see things that I think are sexist but that other people don’t,” and “I’m not always sure how to confront sexism when I encounter it.” Responses to each item ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting a more feminist response or higher sensitivity to sexism. Scores to all items were summed, creating a scale item with possible values ranging from 9 to 63. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was $\alpha = .83$.

Feminist Analysis (FA)

Unlike the sensitivity to sexism scale, which evaluates actual feminist behavioral responses, the feminist analysis scale assesses the participants’ ideologies regarding gender equality and gender traditionalism (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997). These items evaluate respondents’ beliefs about gender roles and commonly held rationale that are used to legitimate gender inequality. The ten items for the feminist analysis scale can be found in Appendix A. Responses to each item ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting stronger feminist ideologies or stronger beliefs regarding gender equality. After items two through six were reverse coded, scores to all items were summed, creating a scale item with possible values from 10 to 70. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was $\alpha = .75$.

Self-Identification

This model most explicitly evaluated identification as feminist by listing twelve different political and religious social groups (i.e., Christians, Republicans, Democrats, feminists) and then asking the respondent to rate how strongly he identified with each one (Gurin, 1980). Although the participant was asked to report his level of identification for twelve different groups, only the item feminist identification was used; other social groups were not considered in the analyses. Each item was scored from 1 (not at all) to 5 (strongly identify), with higher numbers on the item “Feminist” indicating a stronger feminist identification.

Dependent variables

Relationship Health

Relationship health was assessed using three different dimensions: relationship quality, relationship stability, and relationship equality (Rudman & Phelan, 2007). In total, there were twelve items assessing relationship health, and each of these items was scored from 1 (never) to 7 (always). *Relationship Quality* entails questions about trust and conflict within the relationship, as well as positive and negative emotions experienced within the relationship. The six relationship quality items can be found in Appendix B. After reverse coding of items five and six, scores were summed so that higher scores reflected greater relationship quality. The possible scores ranged from 6 to 42. The Cronbach’s alpha for relationship quality was $\alpha = .70$. *Relationship stability* considers the likelihood of the participant ending the relationship. The four relationship stability items can be found in Appendix C. After reverse coding of items three and four, scores were summed so that higher scores reflected greater relationship stability. Possible range was from 4 to 28. The Cronbach’s alpha for relationship stability was $\alpha = .89$. Relationship equality measured whether the participants agreed with their partners about gender equality and the appropriate roles in the relationship. The two items were, “How often do you and your partner disagree about your role in the relationship?” and, “How often do you and your partner disagree about gender equality?” Representing the sum of these scores, the relationship equality scale ranged from 2 to 14, with higher scores reflecting greater agreement on gender equality. The Cronbach’s alpha for re-

lationship equality was $\alpha = .67$.

Partner Attitudes Towards Feminism

This adapted model was utilized to shed additional light onto the findings of Rudman and Phelan that suggest feminist males are more likely to report their partners as feminist (Gurin, 1980). As with the self-identification model, which prompted respondents to rate their own affiliation, the participant was asked to rate his partner’s affiliation with twelve different social groups such as vegetarians, feminists and Christians. While the participant was prompted for all twelve groups, the focus of this measure was his partner’s feminist identification; for that reason, none of the other groups was considered in the analyses. Each item was scored from 1 (not at all) to 5 (strongly identify), with higher numbers on the item “Feminist” indicating a stronger feminist identification for his partner.

Peer Attitudes towards Feminism

These items assessed the attitudes of participants’ peers regarding misogyny, sexism, and feminist identities. Here, the respondent was asked to think of his closest group of “guy friends” when responding to five different scenarios that measure his peers’ attitudes towards feminism and sexism. Peer attitude items can be found in Appendix D. After reverse coding of the third item, each of the items was scored from 1 (they would definitely disagree) to 5 (they would definitely agree), with higher scores indicating the participant’s peers as holding greater feminist values. As these items examined different scenarios, they were not summed into a scale but used independently in analyses.

Race	In a relationship of six months or more	Not in a relationship
<i>White</i>	87.8%	80.4%
<i>Biracial</i>	6.1%	5.4%
<i>Other</i>	6.0%	14.3%
Sexual orientation	In a relationship	Not in a relationship
<i>Straight</i>	96%	87.3%
<i>Gay/Bisexual/Other</i>	4.0%	12.8%

Table 1. Demographics by relationship status

Results

Due to the focus of this research, most of the analyses were only conducted on male participants who were in a monogamous relationship of at least six months; however, participants who did not meet this criterion were prompted to report their feminist consciousness. As noted earlier, feminist consciousness was measured using three scales: feminist self-identification, feminist behavior (STS), and feminist ideology (FA).

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of feminist consciousness variables, with two of the scales separated by relationship status. In regards to feminist self-identification, the mean score for all participants was fairly low (\bar{x} = 1.89, s = .948), indicating that this sample, on average, only “somewhat identified” as a feminist (where possible range values for feminist self-identification ranged from 1 to 5). Interestingly, when participants were asked if their partners were feminist, the mean score was higher (\bar{x} = 2.45, s = 1.09), revealing that, on average, participants perceived their partners as falling between “somewhat identifying” as feminist and identifying as a feminist “most of the time” (where possible range values for feminist partner-identification ranged from 1 to 5).

Univariate results for feminist behavior (STS) revealed that, overall, participants reported moderately low values on sensitivity to sexism (N = 107; \bar{x} = 28.42, s = 8.80) given that the possible range of values for feminist behavior (STS) was from 9 to 63. The values for STS were not significantly different for participants in a relationship of at least six months versus those not in a relationship of this length (in relationship of at least six months: \bar{x} = 27.72, s = 8.63; not in a relationship or in a relationship < six months: \bar{x} = 28.78, s = 9.35).

The mean scores on the feminist ideology (FA) for both groups of men were relatively high, signifying that, on average, participants held egalitarian views concerning gender (N = 107, \bar{x} = 52.35, s = 8.80). Given that the summated scores for the feminist analysis scale ranged from a low of 34 to a high of 70, where the possible scores range from 10 to 70, this aver-

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Mean</i>		<i>Standard Deviation</i>	
Feminist self-identification	1.89		.948	
N= 107. The range for feminist self-identification index was 1-5.				
	In relationship of 6+ months		Not in a relationship	
<i>Measure</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>
Feminist Behavior (STS)	27.72	8.63	28.78	9.35 (NS)
Feminist Ideology (FA)	54.62	8.30	50.69	7.34*

N s = 50 male-identified individuals in a monogamous relationship of at least six months and 55 male-identified individuals not in a relationship (or in a relationship of less than six months).

* p < .05

Table 2. Univariate Distributions for Feminist Consciousness

age points to moderate support of gender equality. The analysis indicates that men in a relationship of at least six months (\bar{x} = 54.62, s = 8.30) had a significantly higher level of feminist ideology than men who were not in a relationship (\bar{x} = 50.69, s = 7.34), t (101) = -2.55, p = .012. This result reveals that men in a relationship held more egalitarian beliefs regarding gender and were less likely to support gender traditionalism compared to men who were not in a relationship.

Relationship Health and Feminist Consciousness

To test the hypothesis that men with higher levels of feminist consciousness will also exhibit higher relationship health than men who do not, nine separate bivariate regression analyses were conducted; the dependent variables were relationship quality, relationship stability, and relationship equality. The independent variables included feminist self-identification, feminist analysis (FA), and sensitivity to sexism (STS). Table 3 contains the betas and standardized coefficients associated with each dependent variable.

The results indicate a positive relation-

ship between feminist analysis and relationship quality, suggesting that men who hold stronger feminist ideologies report higher quality of relationships with their significant other (\bar{x} = 54.62, s = 8.30) than men with weaker feminist ideologies (\bar{x} = 50.69, s = 7.34), (F (1,44) = 5.901, p < .05). More importantly, this result suggests a contradiction regarding the frequently-held notion that feminism and romance are incompatible. Although feminist ideology is a significant predictor of relationship quality, it was not found to be significantly related to relationship equality or relationship stability.

It was predicted that men who exhibited a higher sensitivity to sexism would also report higher relationship health in all three aspects: quality, stability and equality. The results failed to support this expectation, as no significant relationships between feminist behavior (STS) and any aspects of relationship health were found. Based on previous findings that linked feminist identity to favorable outcomes for men, it was predicted that men who identify as feminist would exhibit higher relationship health than men who do not

identify as feminist. As seen in Table 3, findings from the regression analyses did not support this hypothesis, as no significant relationships were found in the bivariate analyses of feminist identification and the three aspects of relationship health.

Partner Attitudes towards Feminism

To test the hypothesis that feminist men would be more likely to report their partners as feminists, a Pearson product-moment coefficient was conducted between the feminist self-identification item and feminist partner-identification item. As expected, the results indicate a strong positive relationship between feminist men and participants reporting their partners as feminist, $r(42) = .661, p < .01$. This result confirms findings of previous researchers that suggest feminist self-identification among men is correlated to reporting their romantic partners as feminist (Rudman & Phelan, 2007).

Peer Attitudes towards Feminism

Regardless of the relationship status of participants, they were prompted to respond to the five peer attitude items listed in Appendix D. These items assessed the participants' perception of their peers' attitudes towards feminism, namely, the extent to which the participants' peers accepted misogyny, sexism, and individuals who adopt feminist identities. These items were developed to gain additional insight on feminist and nonfeminist male lives. Tables 4 and 5 contain the descriptive statistics of all five items, with Table 5 separated by relationship status.¹ As noted earlier, participants were asked to think of their closest group of guy friends when responding to these five items. The possible values for items one, two, three and five ranged from 1 (Sexism never occurs/They definitely disapprove) to 5 (Sexism frequently occurs/They would definitely approve), while observed values ranged from 1 to 5. For the fourth item, they were 1 (They would definitely disapprove) and 6 (They already know), while observed values ranged from 1 to 6.

For the first item, "What do you think their opinion on sexism is?", the mean score was ($N = 107; \bar{x} = 3.67, s = .998$), indicating that the participants, on average,

	β	T
Feminist Ideology (FA)		
Relationship Quality (RQ)	.346	2.472*
Relationship Stability (RS)	.018	.123
Relationship Equality (RE)	.015	.099
Sensitivity to Sexism (STS)		
Relationship Quality (RQ)	.125	.866
Relationship Stability (RS)	-.120	-.836
Relationship Equality (RE)	-.040	-.279
Feminist Self-Identification		
Relationship Quality (RQ)	.082	.548
Relationship Stability (RS)	-.015	-.101
Relationship Equality (RE)	.076	.508

* $p < .05$

Table 3. Regression analyses for feminist consciousness and relationship health

Items	Mean	Std. Dev
1. What do you think their opinion on sexism is?	3.67	.99
2. How do you think your closest friends would react if you were dating someone who self-identified as a feminist?	2.77	.917
3. Imagine that a new person has been added to your group of friends, and the first time you meet them they say a joke that implies that women are inferior to men, how would your friends respond?	2.98	.97
4. How would your friends respond if you told them that you self-identify as a feminist?	2.69	1.18
5. Imagine that you are listening to music with your friends that you believe portrays women negatively. How would your friends react if you pointed this out?	3.32	.78

$N = 107$. The range for peer-attitude items ranged from 1 to 5, with the exception of item 4 which ranged from 1 to 6.

Table 4. Univariate Distribution for Peer Attitude Items

¹No significant differences existed between men in a relationship and men who were not in a relationship. Table 5 can be found in Appendix E.

reported perceiving their peers as believing sexism occasionally occurs. In regards to the second item, “How do you think your closest friends would react if you were dating someone who self-identified as a feminist?”, the mean response value was ($N=107$; $\bar{x}=2.77$, $s=.917$), indicating that respondents, on average, expect their peers as either “probably disagreeing” or “remaining indifferent” to the respondent dating a self-identified feminist. To the third item, “Imagine that a new person has been added to your group of friends, and the first time you meet them they say a joke that implies that women are inferior to men, how would your friends respond?”, participants on average reported their peers as remaining indifferent to the sexist joke said in the company of friends ($N=107$; $\bar{x}=2.98$, $s=.97$).

The fourth item asks the respondent, “How would your friends respond if you told them that you self-identify as a feminist?” This item was utilized to assess the extent to which the participant’s friends were accepting of feminist identity. Fifty of the participants (46.7%) reported their friends would definitely or probably disapprove, 42 (39.3%) felt their friends would be indifferent, and only 8 (7.5%) reported their friends would probably or definitely approve. An additional 6 identified their friends were already aware they were feminist. Reflecting on these values and the mean scores for item two, it appears that most participants believe their peers to be disapproving of feminists, since both scores indicate a probable condemnation if the participant or his partner identified as feminist.

Lastly, item five asks the respondent, “Imagine that you are listening to music with your friends that you believe portrays women negatively. How would your friends react if you pointed this out?” The mean value was ($N=107$; $\bar{x}=3.32$, $s=.78$), indicating that respondents, on average, expected their peers to react indifferently to the misogynist lyrics. As noted earlier with item three, this average value reveals that, overall, participants perceived their friends to hold ambivalent attitudes towards misogynist instances or situations.

Measure	Pearson Correlations	Sign.
Feminist Self-Identification		
1. What do you think their opinion on sexism is?	.247	.098
2. How do you think your closest friends would react if you were dating someone who self-identified as a feminist?	.457	.001
3. Imagine that a new person has been added to your group of friends, and the first time you meet them they say a joke that implies that women are inferior to men, how would your friends respond?	.310	.036
4. How would your friends respond if you told them that you self-identify as a feminist?	.574	.000
5. Imagine that you are listening to music with your friends that you believe portrays women negatively. How would your friends react if you pointed this out?	.327	.027

* $p < .05$

Table 6. Bivariate Correlations for Feminist Self-Identification and Peer Attitude

Feminist Men and Peer Attitudes towards Feminism

Another purpose of the peer attitude items was to explore whether self-identifying feminist men have peers with attitudes towards feminism that parallel their own, with the expectation that feminist men would be more likely to have like-minded friends. To test this hypothesis, five separate bivariate correlations were conducted between feminist self-identification and each of the five peer attitude items. Table 6 contains the Pearson correlations and significances of each analysis conducted.

Results reveal strong correlations between feminist identification and four of the peer attitude items, suggesting that feminist men have like-minded friends. In other words, self-identifying feminist participants reported their peers as holding positive attitudes towards feminism and being less likely to approve of sexist situations. For example, there was a significant relationship between the item, “How do you think your closest friends would react if you were dating someone who self-identified as a feminist?” and feminist self-identification, revealing that

being more feminist correlates with reporting that one’s peers will react with greater levels of acceptance towards his hypothetical feminist-identifying partner, $r(42) = .457$, $p < .01$. More importantly, a strong, positive correlation was also found between feminist identification and the item, “How would your friends respond if you told them that you self-identify as a feminist?”, which reveals that the peers of feminist participants are more likely to respond with greater levels of acceptance towards the participant self-identifying as feminist, $r(42) = .574$, $p < .01$.

Discussion and Limitations

Consistent with the findings of previous research, I found that strength of feminist self-identification for men was relatively low. Even when men hold gender egalitarian beliefs, they were unlikely to identify as feminist (Henderson-King & Zhermer, 2003). Findings support a large disconnect between feminist ideology and feminist behavior, which is made apparent when the majority of participants reported believing in gender equality (FA

scale: $N=107$; $\bar{x}=52.35$, $s=8.80$), namely pay equity or sharing equal roles in running government, but described being less likely to act in an egalitarian fashion (STS scale: $N=107$; $\bar{x}=28.42$, $s=8.80$), such as challenging a misogynist joke or reacting negatively to sexism (where possible FA values ranged from 7 to 70; possible STS values ranged from 9 to 63).

Additionally, while there was a significant difference in feminist ideology (FA) present between the two groups of men ($t(101)=-2.55$, $p=.012$), which suggests that men who are in a relationship are more likely to be proponents of feminist beliefs, there was no significant difference in feminist behavior between the two groups of men. This implies that, although men in relationships (of at least six months) may hold stronger feminist ideologies, there is nonetheless an inconsistency present between theory and praxis. Moreover, the results shed light on another problem facing the feminist community—disconnected men who align themselves with feminist principles but do not actualize them. The results support a large discrepancy between feminist ideologies and feminist behavior, such that the majority of participants reported believing in gender equality but exhibited less than egalitarian actions in their every day lives (i.e., challenging a misogynist joke or reacting negatively to sexism).

Although the results of this study failed to strongly support the hypothesis of feminist consciousness improving relationships and most of the findings of prior researchers, one analysis indicated that holding feminist ideologies does improve the quality of men's romantic relationships. The significant relationship between the measure of feminist ideology and relationship quality indicates that the proponents of gender equality experienced lower levels of conflict and higher levels of trust and positive emotions within their relationship ($F(1,44)=5.901$, $p<.05$). This result is in harmony with Rudman and Phelan's (2007) proposal that feminism and romance are not only compatible, but also that feminism can actually enhance one's relationship.

In this study, there was a marked difference in feminist beliefs between men in relationships of at least six months and

men who were not in a relationship (or in a shorter duration relationship). Men in relationships of at least six months reported holding stronger feminist ideologies than the other men. It would be interesting to explore why this pronounced difference exists between the two groups of men. In addition, results confirmed the findings of previous researchers, indicating feminist-identifying men are more likely to identify their partners as feminist (Rudman & Phelan, 2007).

As expected, it was found that feminist-identifying men also perceived their peers as holding similar values towards gender equality. This result was reflected in feminist men's expectations that their peers would likely disapprove of misogynistic music, $r(42)=.327$, $p<.01$, and sexist jokes, $r(42)=.310$, $p<.05$. These results suggest that the peers of feminist men are less likely to respond ambivalently towards sexism or misogyny compared to the peers of nonfeminist men. Feminist participants also expected their peers to approve of the participant identifying as feminist, $r(42)=.574$, $p<.01$, and approving of the participant's partner identifying as feminist, $r(42)=0.457$, $p<.01$. These results imply that feminist males' peers are more likely to approve of individuals who identify as feminist. Future researchers should examine whether feminist males tend to pick like-minded, feminist peers and partners, or whether their feminist beliefs shape their peers and partners (and vice versa).

Furthermore, other results revealed that the majority of participants believed their peers would respond or react ambivalently in situations of gender oppression. While, on average, participants personally held feminist values ($N=107$; $\bar{x}=52.35$, $s=8.80$, with possible values ranging from 10 to 70), they nonetheless reported their peers holding contempt towards feminists. For example, participants, on average, expected their friends to disapprove if their hypothetical romantic partner identified as feminist ($N=107$, $\bar{x}=2.77$, $s=.917$, with possible values ranging from 1 (they would definitely disapprove) to 5 (they would definitely approve)). On average, participants also reported that they expected their peers to disapprove if the participant identified as feminist ($N=107$;

$\bar{x}=2.69$, $s=1.18$, with a possible range from 1 (definitely disapprove) to 6 (they already know)). These results suggest that most participants believe their peers to be more or less disapproving of feminists. Based on prior findings, the negative stereotypes of feminists may be the underlying reason for the disapproval of feminists exhibited here; it may also contribute to the prevention of men adopting feminist identities (Anderson, 2003).

Limitations of the research include a racially and sexually homogenous sample (the majority of the respondents were white and self-identified as heterosexual) and a relatively small sample size ($N=107$). There is also a possibility that the strength of using pre-established scales designed to measure feminist consciousness for female participants was problematic for this particular study. Using the feminist consciousness measures "Feminist Analysis" (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997) and "Sensitivity to Sexism" (Henderson-King & Zhermer, 2003) could have been challenging, since they may not be considered applicable to male feminists, if they do in fact experience feminist consciousness differently than females. Further research should examine this discrepancy between theory and praxis found in college-aged men, in order to fully understand their experience of matriculating or maturing into feminist consciousness.

Appendix A.

Feminist Analysis Items (Henderson-King, 1997)

1. When I am dealing with other people, I sometimes wonder if they react to me the way they do because I am male.
2. When it comes to sex roles and relations between males and females, things will always be pretty much the way they are now. *
3. In general, men are more qualified and successful than women. *
4. Men are more qualified for jobs that have great responsibility. *
5. By nature women are happiest when they are making a home and caring for children. *
6. A woman's place is in the home. *
7. Men and women ought to have an equal role in running business, industry, and government.
8. In the future relations between males and females could be quite different from the way they are now.
9. Do you think that the status of women in American will directly impact your life?

* Items were reverse coded.

Appendix B.

Relationship Quality Items (Rudman & Phelan, 2007).

1. How often do you feel relaxed with your partner?
2. How often do you confide your deepest feelings to your partner?
3. How often do you and your partner quarrel?
4. How often do you and your partner get on each other's nerves?
5. Do you and your partner share similar interests? *
6. How often do you and your partner laugh together? *

* Items were reverse-coded

Appendix C.

Relationship Stability Items (Rudman & Phelan, 2007).

1. How often do you think about finding another partner?
2. How often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?
3. How often do you think your romantic relationship has a good future? *
4. How often have you considered terminating your relationship? *

*Items were reverse coded

Appendix D.

Peer Attitude Items

1. What do you think their opinion on sexism is?
2. How do you think your closest friends would react if you were dating someone who self-identified as a feminist?
3. Imagine that a new person has been added to your group of friends, and the first time you meet them they say a joke that implies that women are inferior to men, how would your friends respond? *
4. How would your friends respond if you told them that you self-identify as a feminist?
5. Imagine that you are listening to music with your friends that you believe portrays women negatively. How would your friends react if you pointed this out?

* Item was reverse coded

Appendix E.

Items	In a relationship		Not in a relationship	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
1. <i>What do you think their opinion on sexism is?</i>	3.78	1.04	3.57	.97
2. <i>How do you think your closest friends would react if you were dating someone who self-identified as a feminist?</i>	2.76	1.08	2.77	.763
3. <i>Imagine that a new person has been added to your group of friends, and the first time you meet them they say a joke that implies that women are inferior to men, how would your friends respond?</i>	3.08	.922	2.89	1.02
4. <i>How would your friends respond if you told them that you self-identify as a feminist?</i>	2.86	1.4	2.64	1.27
5. <i>Imagine that you are listening to music with your friends that you believe portrays women negatively. How would your friends react if you pointed this out?</i>	3.20	.857	3.41	.71

Ns= 50 male-identified individuals in a monogamous relationship of at least six months and 56 male-identified individuals not in a relationship (or in a relationship of <6 months).

Table 5. Univariate Distribution of Peer Attitude Items, by Relationship Status

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