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FEMINIST STEREOTYPES: COMMUNAL VS. AGENTIC

by

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Abstract

This study examined relationships between facial appearance, gender-linked traits, and feminist stereotypes. Naïve college students rated traits based on facial appearance of female CEO's whose companies appeared in the Forbes 1000 list. The photos of each female CEO (n=35) were randomly combined with two descriptive identifiers; an occupation (n=9) and an interest area (n=9), including 'feminist'. Participants then rated the head shots of the CEO's on a 7 point Likert scale of communal (expected feminine) qualities like attractiveness, warmth, compassion and cooperativeness, and on agentic (expected masculine) traits like ambition, leadership ability and intelligence. If college students hold negative stereotypes of feminists, feminist identified women are expected to be rated lower on levels of attractiveness, warmth, compassion and cooperativeness, but higher in leadership ability, ambition, and intelligence. Results demonstrated that participants did not hold negative stereotypes of feminists as they rated them similarly to environmentalists, progressives, and liberals. Results demonstrated that participants held negative stereotypes about conservatives and republicans.

Keywords: Feminism, Feminist, stereotypes, personality traits, gender

You Can't Be A Feminist Without Quantifying What You Mean:

A Study on Negative Media Perceptions of Feminism

When celebrities are asked if they are feminist, the question either is met with hesitation, or quick rebuttal. Says Kelly Clarkson, “No, I wouldn't say feminist — that's too strong. I think when people hear feminist, it's like, ‘Get out of my way, I don't need anyone.’ I love that I'm being taken care of and I have a man that's a leader. I'm not a feminist in that sense.” And Lady Gaga, “I'm not a feminist - I, I hail men, I love men. I celebrate American male culture, and beer, and bars and muscle cars....” and Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer, “I don't think that I would consider myself a feminist. I think that I certainly believe in equal rights, I believe that women are just as capable, if not more so in a lot of different dimensions, but I don't, I think have, sort of, the militant drive and the sort of, the chip on the shoulder that sometimes comes with that.” and Beyoncé won't agree without a caveat, “I guess I am a modern-day feminist. I do believe in equality. Why do you have to choose what type of woman you are? Why do you have to label yourself anything? I'm just a woman and I love being a woman...”

What is so wrong with feminism that the female celebrities who are usually spearheading messages of female empowerment and autonomy shy away from the label? How are they able to misinterpret the movement of feminism to evoke such stereotypes of man-hating, aggressive, complaining women? And if they do identify, why do they feel the need to immediately quantify it, or alter it to their interpretation? These quantifiers, and incorrect perceptions, point towards an unclear understanding of the true definition of feminism, and suggest that negative feminist stereotypes are omnipresent.

By looking at stereotypes and how they are created, maintained, activated and applied, I intend to conduct an experiment that will activate the stereotypes surrounding feminism in an attempt to demonstrate the prevalence of the negative feminist perceptions in the media, and how this effects women's evaluations of other women who either identify as feminist or do not. While extensive research exists regarding the automatic activation of stereotypes and implications for social behavior, there is little research surrounding the application of feminist stereotypes on women. Because feminism threatens gendered expectations for feminine behavior, I will look at research surrounding gender roles and how women are evaluated when their behavior demonstrates characteristics that stray from the norms. Furthermore, the automaticity of non-conscious stereotype activation will be examined in order to understand how minimal environmental cues can affect thinking and elicit variations in social behavior.

Creation of Feminist Stereotypes

The media has played a crucial role in the development of feminist stereotypes. Misreporting, exaggerations, examples of behavior out of context, and over generalizations have all contributed to the strong stereotypes built early on in the 70s that still exist and continue to be perpetuated today. When probed for an example of a feminist, many people come up with the image of 'bra burning', without even considering its accuracy. The cliché is a myth: "the most celebrated example is bra burning, a term coined by a journalist to describe feminists' protest at the 1968 Miss America Pageant. No undergarments were in fact charred; they were ceremoniously deposited in a trash receptacle. The problem with the reporter's poetic license was less its inaccuracy than its linkage of feminism to other protests that mainstream America found

highly threatening: burning draft cards, burning crosses, and burning buildings in urban riots” (Rhode, 1995). The reporter has framed this protest in the context of radical protesting, therefore situating feminism within other symbolic forms of protesting, or perceived acts of violence. There was no fire involved, but by coining this term, feminists became considered on par with other groups that use fire as scare tactics. Thus feminism became associated with other threatening groups, and bra burning became a term equated with the cause.

Feminist stereotypes that emerged during the 1970s have maintained their strength and continue to escalate. The media representations created the framework for the stereotypes, as described in the following, “*Time Magazine's* coverage of the women's movement during the 1970s and 1980s offers a representative sample of common media characterizations: ‘strident’, ‘humorless’, ‘extremist’, ‘lesbian’ and, of course, ‘hairy legged’. In *Time's* rendering, the leaders of ‘women's lib’ had a ‘penchant for oddball causes—from ban-the-bras to communal childrearing—that leave many women cold’” (Rhode, 1995). These descriptors used in the early media became stereotypes as they were repeatedly deployed and endorsed. Currently, the most salient stereotypes about feminists are that they are politically liberal, and have an assertive or career-oriented personality style. They are also seen as angry, tense, egotistical and stubborn, and are judged more likely to be lesbian than the average woman (Twenge & Zucker, 1999). Feminist stereotypes conceived in the 70s have influenced the current negative stereotypes.

Feminism as a Fringe Issue

Many media publications attempt to polarize feminists in their presentation of

them. In comparison to “normal” women, these out-of-context depictions of feminists reinforce stereotypes of feminists as abrasive, radical and heavily political. “For example, in covering public protests, reporters commonly offer a sampling of the most radical comments and then make special efforts to interview hostile onlookers or ‘regular’ women on the street who are alienated from such rhetoric” (Rhode, 1995). The idea is that by separating “regular” women from those involved with the movement, the separation between the groups will grow and thus make feminism less acceptable. The tactic is to interview the people who seem most likely to make comments that feed into the greater media perception of feminism, or to take the comments out of context. They also play up the woman against feminist debate, never including men, “Another result is that debates among women are cast as cat fights. Men remain above the fray as seemingly objective onlookers, never opponents, in the feminist struggle. Such coverage undercuts claims to sisterhood while masking male resistance to gender equality” (Rhode, 1995). By framing a movement for gender equality as a competition between women the media is not only undermining the effectiveness of the movement but also alienating feminists from women when they could be fighting for the same team. By making this strictly a women’s issue, the feminists become a fringe group as they are continuously juxtaposed against *regular* women not involved. Once again, feminists are framed as the enemy in order to distance other women away from the cause.

Homogenizing Effects of Stereotypes

A stereotype is a memory representation of a group that includes characteristics that may or may not be true. They can influence behavior and attitudes towards the group. The presence of stereotypes introduces different types of problems into daily lives

that have proven to be hard to shake. Schemas, a broader and perhaps more abstract sister to stereotypes, have similar functions. A schema is often thought of as a representation at its most abstract level: “the schematic view considers stereotypes as generalized, highly abstract beliefs about groups and their members” (Hilton et al, 1996). By viewing stereotypes as abstract representations, beliefs can be held that do not pertain to specific individuals or contexts, allowing for the potential of assimilation to increase. In this view, stereotypes that are devoid of specifics allow the assimilation of inconsistent individuals who do not necessarily fall under the stereotype. The absence of supporting evidence for stereotypes strengthens them (Hill et al, 1996). This demonstrates that stereotypes are perpetuated in the absence of actual evidence, providing support to the automaticity of stereotypes, in addition to their ability to concretize previous knowledge without any current, specific examples. This makes them extremely difficult to change. Stereotypes are facilitated when one has little to do with the stereotype: “contingencies are easier to learn when they are associated with individuals with whom one has little experience rather than with individuals with whom one has a great deal of experience” (Hilton et al, 245). This reemphasizes the ability for stereotypes to maintain themselves in the absence of specific context. Stereotypes work best when they are operating on generalized assumptions and are reinforced in the absence of actual information. This is relevant to understanding how stereotypes work, because stereotypes are often the most prevalent when someone has had little to no interaction with a stereotyped group. Thus people who have never had any interactions with actual feminists will be more likely to align a feminist’s behavior as consistent with the stereotype. Additionally, marginalized groups experience more application of stereotypes through assimilation. When a group is heavily

stereotyped, the members are seen less as individuals but more as people who satisfy the stereotyped qualifications. Out-group members are seen as more homogenous than in-group members, and group-level stereotypes are more likely to be ascribed to individual group members (Hilton et al, 1996). This demonstrates that marginalized groups are more susceptible to the assimilating effects of stereotypes because their members are all generalized to share the same characteristics, i.e. African-Americans and hostility. When a group is considered more homogenous they are more susceptible: "These relationships between perceived homogeneity and factors such as group competition and knowledge of group stereotypes suggest that perceptions of out-group homogeneity may be critically associated with stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination " (Hilton et al, 1996). Thus marginalized groups are considered to be more homogeneous and therefore are able to be more widely stereotyped. Moreover, stereotypes about out-groups carry a negative connotation, "Furthermore, although stereotypes are not necessarily negative in nature, stereotypes about out-group members are more likely to have negative connotations than those about in-group members, even when the attributes they include may seem objectively positive" (Hilton et al, 1996). When applied to out-group members, attributes associated with a group that seem positive may actually be negative in context, such as Asian, and smart. Even when individuals may not exhibit the stereotyped characteristics, their membership in the stereotyped group associates them with the characteristic anyways: "An important and long-studied route to stereotype maintenance is through assimilation. Put simply, individuals often are perceived as more similar to their stereotype than they really are. For example, a student athlete is more likely to be judged guilty of cheating than a non athlete, [and] an angry housewife is seen as less aggressive

than an angry construction worker" (Hilton et al, 1996). Thus although a person may not exhibit the qualities that a stereotype entails, they are likely to be seen as having the qualities or haphazardly associated with them.

Stereotype Activation and Reinforcement

Minimal cues trigger such assimilation to stereotypes: "Moreover, because race, gender, and age information all seem capable of automatically activating associated stereotypes, the mere presence of a female, African-American, or older person may increase the likelihood that this individual's behavior is interpreted in a stereotype-congruent fashion, even if the perceiver has not consciously encoded the target's social category" (Hilton et al, 1996). Ambiguous behaviors are interpreted through a stereotyped lens on the basis of minimal environmental cues that signify a marginalized, stereotyped group. This demonstrates not only the automaticity of stereotype activation but also the non-conscious application of stereotypes in order to classify information in a simple manner. Because stereotypes are abstract representations that don't require conscious effort on one's part, stereotypes are reinforced through daily experiences that support a stereotype: "even *random* priming events (e.g. daily experiences, stories in the news) facilitate stereotype maintenance by selectively influencing interpretations only when they are stereotype congruent" (Hilton et al, 1996). Thus the more aligned information is with a stereotype, the more easily it confirms the existing conception about the group. But when information is not congruent with a stereotype, it is either ignored or interpreted within the dimensions of a stereotype, "Because the stereotype itself provides a sufficient explanation for many stereotype-congruent events, stereotypes can block people's ability to notice and interpret co-variation between stereotype-irrelevant factors

and the stereotype- congruent event" (Hilton et al, 1996). Because reaffirmation of stereotypes occur automatically and non-consciously, when one encounters a stereotype—incongruent characteristic or action, the information doesn't register, and the existence of the stereotype even blocks the processing of the information. Because stereotypes are strengthened with the absence of actual information, the existence of non-stereotypical characteristics or actions should violate the stereotype, but instead resist it, "At the most basic level, perceivers sometimes simply refuse to make any inferences at all when confronted with stereotype in-congruency, a finding that is important for two reasons. First, when making memory-based judgments people tend to remember and rely on their abstractions in place of the original behaviors that led to the abstractions. Second, and somewhat relatedly, abstractly encoded information tends to be more resistant to disconfirmation and more stable over time than information that is encoded at a concrete level. Taken together, these tendencies suggest that perceivers are more likely to remember, believe, rely on, and communicate stereotype-congruent information than stereotype incongruent information" (Hilton et al, 1996). Thus stereotypes gain strength in their abstraction and are able to resist change, even in the presence of inconsistent behavior.

Stereotypes Resist Change

Stereotypes are perpetuated even with the presence of contrary evidence. People tend to process only the characteristics that align with the stereotype, or characterize them as negative in the specific context. Thus, stereotypes are difficult to change, as "it is easier to maintain a stereotype than to change it, as numerous processes contribute to the maintenance of even unimportant stereotypes" (Hilton et al, 1996). With so many

processes dedicated to the maintenance and confirmation of a stereotype, it is difficult to predict and measure how a stereotype will change, if it does. Four different models of how stereotypes change exist, and while there is specific evidence to support each model, the "evidence for the various models of stereotype change seems to be differentially likely to emerge depending upon the particular function served by the stereotype for a particular individual in a particular context" (Hilton et al, 1996). Thus this inability to define a model of how stereotypes change verifies how stereotypes resist change.

Because stereotypes are context-dependent, the amount of change a stereotype experiences is associated: "the context-dependent functionality of stereotyping probably plays just as important a role in stereotype change as it does in the formation, maintenance, and application of stereotypes" (Hilton et al, 1996). Thus each type of change that a stereotype may experience is dependent on the context in which it is activated and applied. But the models agree that stereotypes are activated automatically, "Despite the differences, however, these models share the assumption that the associations can be activated automatically, and thus that stereotypes can operate outside the perceiver's awareness and/or control. Similarly, these models suggest that stereotypes change only slowly and incrementally, as the attributes that make up the stereotype are extensively interconnected" (Hilton et al, 1996). Thus stereotype change is slow, and incremental, thanks to the automatic activation of stereotypes and their interconnected nature. Stereotypes can be changed with a consistent, effortful mindset: "Importantly, however, as people grow older and begin to evaluate and reflect on their beliefs, those who are not prejudiced learn to suppress or replace the automatically activated stereotypic thoughts in favor of more egalitarian ones. This suppression or replacement of

stereotypic cognitions is proposed to be an effortful process that requires conscious cognitive resources from the perceiver." (Hilton et al, 1996). Thus stereotype change can occur individually with effortful control to not suppress but redefine stereotypes in order to use them with correct connotations, to one's advantage. Stereotypes are difficult to change, as they not only are hard to measure but also resist change through their daily automatic affirmations.

Role Congruity Theory

The role congruity theory was proposed by Alice H. Eagly (2002) to explain the resistance and difficulty women have in becoming leaders in the workplace. The expectations of leadership do not align with descriptive female norms, and thus present challenges to the achievement of women in the workplace. In her paper, Eagly proposes a new model through which prejudice against women can be analyzed and evaluated. She is able to reject overarching negative opinions and stereotypes about women in favor of context-specific prejudice in her role congruity theory. Eagly's role congruity theory explains the contingencies in patterns made by people's expectations for certain roles and the type of person who should fill those social roles. She proposes a theory to help explore the role of prejudice and its consequences, in addition to creating a framework by which prejudice can be measured and analyzed. She explains, "A potential for prejudice exists when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success in certain classes of social roles" (Eagly, 2002). Thus because someone expects certain qualities for a certain social role, a group that is considered to not contain those qualities is therefore deemed inadequate or unqualified for the role. Thus a person from that group may not even be

considered: "when a stereotyped group member and an incongruent social role become joined in the mind of the perceiver, this inconsistency lowers the evaluation of the group member as an actual or potential occupant of the role" (Eagly, 2002). The incongruent social role combined with the descriptive expectations about the group member allows the perceiver to dismiss the group member as a possibility for the role.

Successful Women are Evaluated more Negatively

Women who would be good candidates for leadership in the workplace are met with double expectations of qualities of a good leader and qualities of a "proper" female, "Because women who are effective leaders tend to violate standards for their gender when they manifest male-stereotypical, agentic attributes and fail to manifest female-stereotypical, communal attributes, they may be unfavorably evaluated for their gender role violation, at least by those who endorse traditional gender roles" (Eagly, 2002).

Women who match the ideal qualities considered to be a good leader, lack the (descriptive) norms attributed to females, and thus are evaluated poorly, and effectively punished for not displaying the female qualities expected. Research by Heilman et al, 2004 examined the gender bias in the hiring process. By having participants read employee biographies for people who are being considered for a promotion, they found that a woman whose success in her previous position was ambiguous was evaluated more positively but as less competent than a male candidate. When a female's success in her position was explicitly stated, the female was evaluated as competent but was disliked and considered hostile. Thus when females are successful in a traditionally male-occupied role they are not just evaluated as noncommunal but as countercommunal—hostile, in their relations with others (Heilman et al, 2004). Displays of communal

attributes (compassion, warmth) are required in an appropriate performance of femininity (Prentice, 2002). The double expectation for women in the workplace is in some part due to the omnipresence of gender roles, "Because frequently and recently activated constructs are more accessible in memory and gender roles are automatically activated by gender-related cues in virtually all situations, the high accessibility of expectations based on gender likely maintains their impact" (Eagly, 575). Gender roles are reaffirmed in social situations daily, therefore cementing their presence and facilitating their accessibility. Information that is consistent with gender norms is used in order to facilitate social interactions: "Not only is sex the personal characteristic that provides the strongest basis of categorizing people, even when compared with race, age, and occupation, but also stereotypes about women and men are easily and automatically activated. In addition, encoding processes advantage information that matches gender-stereotypical expectations and spontaneous tacit inferences fill in unspecified details of male and female social behavior to be consistent with these expectations" (Eagly, 575). Thus gender-stereotypical expectations are used in social situations to fill in missing information, reaffirming the stereotypes about gender in the process.

Prejudice does not Stem from a Negative Attitude about Women

In terms of prejudice concerning women in leadership roles, the stereotype is not that women would perform the role poorly. Instead it is a combination of prejudices and stereotypes that the qualities of women don't correlate to the qualities expected of a leader, in addition to the prejudice that leadership qualities are not desirable in women, but are desirable in men. It is not from a general negative attitude about women. Rather, the role congruity theory contrasts sharply with other theories that describe prejudice

about women as arising from a negative stereotype and therefore holding negative attitudes about women. The role congruity theory explains then why women are discriminated in some roles but not in others, and why they are sometimes viewed more favorably than men. "Moreover, research on evaluations of women and men as social groups challenges this approach with evidence that women are not regarded as less good than men, even though they are perceived as inferior to men in power and status" (Eagly, 578). Research by Carpenter (2001) found in an implicit association task (IAT) that there were more favorable implicit attitudes towards women. Thus even though women are perceived as inferior to men in some aspects, they are not, as a whole, perceived negatively. By creating a framework in which the prejudice about women can be reevaluated, Eagly has demonstrated that there is not an overarching negative attitude and stereotype held against women but rather a context-specific prejudice held about their capabilities. As Eagly explains, "the first type of prejudice stems from the descriptive norms of gender roles—that is, the activation of descriptive beliefs about women's characteristics and the consequent ascription of female-stereotypical qualities to them, which are unlike the qualities expected and desired in leaders" (Eagly, 576). The characteristics expected of women do not align with the characteristics that are considered ideal to be a leader, creating the social role congruity effect. A woman is expected to present herself differently than men in order to be perceived as an effective leader, as an implication of the social role congruity effect is that women's characteristics and characteristics of a typical leader are incompatible. Carli (1991) explored the relationship between gender and language. In the study, participants rated the persuasiveness of a videotaped speech. Results demonstrated that the women who were

tentative were more influential to men and perceived as more trustworthy than the women who presented themselves in a confident manner. However, for a female audience, confident speakers were judged to be more influential, regardless of their gender. Thus women who projected confidence, a quality that is associated with successful leaders, were not evaluated well by men. This suggests that men are holding women to descriptive gender norms in their evaluation of them, and that men poorly receive women's display of common male attributes, as it is incongruent with their expectation of how women ought to behave.

Women are Evaluated Negatively for not Appearing Feminine Enough

The second part to the social role congruity theory is that women are punished for acting outside of their gender norms. Women in leadership roles are simultaneously rated positively and negatively: "The second type of prejudice stems from the injunctive norms of gender roles—that is, the activation of beliefs about how women ought to behave. If female leaders violate these prescriptive beliefs by fulfilling the agentic requirements of leader roles and failing to exhibit the communal, supportive behaviors preferred in women, they can be negatively evaluated for these violations, even while they may also receive some positive evaluation for their fulfillment of the leader role" (Eagly, 576).

Women who aren't supporting feminine descriptive norms through their actions are rated less positively than women who display the traditionally feminine, communal characteristics such as gentle, sensitive, and nurturing, characteristics associated with caring for other people. However, when women are no longer demonstrating traditional feminine characteristics because they occupy leadership positions, they are regarded negatively, and judged by their appearance. Women who occupy leadership roles are

evaluated negatively in interpersonal evaluations, even when they may be evaluated positively in the workplace. A study by Forsythe, Drake & Cox (1985) explored the effect on female dress in the hiring process. Participants viewed four videotaped female applicants in varying degrees of feminine and masculine dress. They found that the more masculine the dress, the more favorable the hiring recommendation was. Thus, femininity of dress decreased the favorability of the hiring recommendation. However, consistent with the role congruity theory that women's complete conformity to masculine standards is met with negative evaluation, the outfit that most appropriated an acceptable masculine outfit (navy blazer, angular shirt and matching skirt) was evaluated more negatively than the woman in the moderately masculine outfit. This is demonstrative of the complexity of the female gender role. Although the females who dressed the most masculine were more likely to be hired, they were evaluated more negatively, because they were straying from feminine descriptors. Therefore the social role congruity demonstrates a choice that women seem to have to make, to either be a leader in the workplace and evaluated negatively, or be a 'woman' in the workplace and be evaluated positively, "women occupying incongruent— or nontraditional—roles receive relatively negative reactions, whereas women occupying congruent—or traditional—roles receive more positive reactions" (Eagly, 579). Women who adopt more masculine qualities or dress receive more negative reactions than the women who maintain feminine qualities and dress in their leadership styles.

Role Congruity Theory and Feminism

The role congruity effect can partly explain why feminism is poorly received. Feminism encourages the agency of a woman to speak up for herself, be independent, and

demand that she be treated equally on social, economic and political grounds. Because a display of assertive confidence is considered masculine, feminist behavior is therefore considered more in line with masculine values. Thus feminist goals and values are based on traditionally masculine ones, making them untraditionally feminine. The polarity between women who don't identify as feminists and feminists is one exaggerated by the media, but is also one based on half-truths; many of the stereotyped feminist characteristics are in direct opposition to traditionally feminine characteristics. Women who work in traditional roles are perceived more positively than women who are in roles that violate their descriptive gender norms (Heilman et al, 2004). This also explains why feminists are often interpreted in negative terms, because they occupy positions of power that are incongruent with traditionally feminine roles.

Automatic Activation of Stereotypes

Stereotypes are difficult to avoid because they are automatically activated when one is exposed to cues identifying a stereotyped group, and they are especially prevalent when one's self esteem is threatened. Even when people are given instructions to refrain from stereotyping, they cannot avoid the automatic activation: "although perceivers who are motivated to refrain from stereotyping may be able to suppress their application of stereotypes, they cannot avoid the automatic activation of the stereotypes" (Spencer & Fein, 1140). Stereotypes are automatically activated through exposure to cues identifying a stereotyped group, and the activation is efficient and unintentional. Even when people are able to suppress the application of stereotypes, the activation has still occurred. Spencer & Fein demonstrated that when people's self esteem is threatened, stereotypes are applied in order to restore self-esteem: "the research suggested that when people

experience self-image threat, they may often stereotype others to restore their own threatened self-image. Because stereotypes are likely to be a salient and particularly effective means for people to restore a threatened self-image, stereotyping others may be a common way for people to attempt to maintain their positive self-image. Stereotypes are an important way for us to make decisions and can help facilitate other processing in the brain, since the activation of stereotypes is an automatic function, and does not drain from the attentional systems. But the automatic activation of stereotypes, while being unintentional, can be used to restore a damaged self-image, essentially reinforcing the validity of a stereotype. The automatic reinforcement of stereotypes for minority groups, or marginalized groups, is accessed in the event of self-image threat. Using the negative stereotypes of minority groups to repair a damaged ego strengthens social hierarchies that continue to undermine the power of minority groups. The results of the study demonstrated that the activation of stereotypes about minority group members occurs automatically when an individual experiences self-image threat. Thus stereotypes about ostracized groups are activated in order to restore self-confidence or validate self worth. This finding is monumental in manipulating people's behavior: by reducing their self-confidence, it automatically activates negative stereotypes about others. Thus negative stereotypes about feminists are automatically activated when people are presented with any cues about the marginalized group, and are utilized when someone feels their self-esteem is being threatened. Because feminism is challenging traditional values about gender roles, people may feel that feminism is a threat to their social status and role in society, thus activating the negative stereotypes about feminists. Stereotypes are automatically activated when presented with cues about a minority group and are

accessed when people's self-esteem is threatened.

How Stereotypes Influence Behavior

Social behavior can be triggered automatically through cues and features of the environment. Bargh et al in 1996 was able to implicitly activate stereotypes and elicit behavioral effects from his participants, in the first recorded demonstration of automatic social behavior. Much of the work Bargh has published contributes to the research surrounding automatically activated stereotypes (Pratto & Bargh, 1991). Research for the automaticity of stereotyping was motivated by the concern for prejudiced behavior. This present study is concerned with behavioral responses to social environmental cues, since the widespread opinion is that behavior is under conscious control. But on the contrary, Bargh's hypothesis seeks to prove that some social behaviors can be influenced: "We propose that social behavior is often triggered automatically on the mere presence of relevant situational features; this behavior is unmediated by conscious perceptual or judgmental processes" (Bargh et al, 1996). This hypothesis is based on the automaticity of stereotype activation in addition to the principle of ideomotor action, which is that the act of thinking about a behavior increases the tendency to engage in that behavior, "imagining or thinking about a behavioral response had the same kind of priming effect on the likelihood of engaging in that response" (Bargh et al, 1996). The mere act of thinking about a response, even when you are trying to prevent that response, has an automatic effect of increasing the likelihood of that response. Additionally, the behavioral schema notion implies that an encounter with a concept or stereotype activates the representation of the concept, leading one more likely to interpret behaviors as aligning with that concept or encouraging one behave similarly. A priming manipulation

study by Carver (1983) found that “the inescapable conclusion is that the activation of the concept of hostility had the simultaneous effects of making the participant both more likely to perceive hostility in another person and to behave in a hostile manner him or herself...the influence of perception on behavioral tendencies is automatic, in that it is passive, unintentional, and non-conscious” (Bargh et al, 1996). The passive, unintentional and non-conscious qualities of that behavior demonstrate the automatic activation of the concept. Bargh's study seeks to demonstrate the direct effects on behavior by automatically activating stereotypes through environmental features. Automaticity of Social Behavior by Bargh et al, 1996 demonstrated the phenomena of automatic social behavior through three experiments. In Experiment One, participants were presented with a scrambled sentence task, in which participants needed to use four of the five words to create a coherent sentence. Naïve to the true nature of the study, the first condition contained adjectives that related to the target prime of “polite”, such as “respect”, “honor”, “yield” and “discreetly”. The second related to the target prime of “rude”, such as “bother”, “disturb”, “bluntly” and “obnoxious”. The third condition was a control and contained neutral words, like “gleefully”, “flawlessly” and “clears”. Participants were instructed to complete the scrambled sentence task, and then meet the researcher in another room down the hall. When participants finished, they found the researcher having a conversation with someone else. Bargh et al hypothesized that participants primed for the rude condition would interrupt the soonest, that the neutral condition would interrupt at an average time, and that the polite condition would wait the longest. The researchers found that the rude condition participants interrupted significantly faster than either two conditions, and that some of the polite condition participants never interrupted over the

maximum 10-minute period. The results of this experiment suggest that behavior in social constructs can be driven by environmental stimuli—preconsciously and automatically. In the same Bargh et al study, Experiment Two sought to replicate their results through different behavior. In Experiment Two, the stereotype of elderly people as slow was implicitly activated for the participants through a scrambled sentence task. The participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to investigate language proficiency. They were to create four-word sentences out of five-word options, with one of the words pertaining to the elderly stereotype. In the control group, the words were neutral. Then, once participants had finished the task, they were thanked for participating, and told they could leave. Covertly, another researcher recorded the amount of time that the participant spent walking from the door of the room to the elevator. The participants were then fully debriefed and asked as to whether they noticed that the task contained words related to the elderly stereotype; no participant expressed any such knowledge. Participants in the elderly priming condition "had a slower walking speed compared to participants in the neutral priming condition" (237), which confirmed the hypothesis. The experimenters double-checked for confounding factors, such as awareness of the elderly stereotype and a potential for emotion's effect on walking speed, but neither were found to be significant. The study therefore demonstrated an effect of automatic stereotype activation and application with a direct change in behavior. Their implicit, non-conscious priming of the elderly stereotype, evoking connotations of age and slowness, had a direct effect on the walking speed of participants after the study. The behavior exhibited by the participants is not natural to their usual behavior: "One notable feature of the present demonstrations is that many of the behaviors automatically triggered are negative and so

run counter to norms for socially appropriate behavior. That these effects occurred despite the general situational norms against them underscores the strength of the automatic behavior effect" (241). This emphasizes that the actions of the participants after the implicit priming tasks occurred outside of the normal behavior expected. For the participants who were primed for slow, both the experiment and replication demonstrated slower walking speeds, compared to those who weren't primed for this age stereotype. Additionally, the stereotypes primed were all negative, and induced behaviors that one wouldn't naturally want to do, i.e. being ruder, or becoming slower. Social behavior is complicated by the activation of stereotypes as the mechanism of stereotypes occurs non-consciously: "The major implications of the findings are, first, the apparent degree to which social behavior occurs unintentionally and without conscious involvement in the production of that behavior. Second, the findings point to the possibility that the automatic activation of one's stereotypes of social groups, by the mere presence of group features, can cause one to behave in line with that stereotype without realizing it" (242). Thus not only did the participants act beyond their usual behavior, they also behaved congruous with actions of the stereotyped group. Bargh et al (1996) demonstrated direct variation in behavior through activating automatic stereotypes implicitly.

What happens when women are exposed to positive representations of feminists?

Research by Roy and Weibust (2007) examined the manipulation of feminist stereotypes on self-esteem and women willing to identify as feminist. In their study, they exposed participants to a paragraph containing positive stereotypes of feminists, like "feminist women are confident and assertive." In the negative condition, they exposed them to negative stereotypes of feminists, like "feminist women are demanding and

aggressive.” The participants then were instructed to read the paragraph and rate the quality. The percentage of women who identify as feminist improved when they were exposed to the positive condition, in addition to bolstering participant’s self esteem. When exposed to a negative paragraph about feminists, the percent of participants who identified as feminist in the Roy and Weibust (2007) study did not differ: "surprisingly, the percentage of participants who identified as feminists in the negative feminist stereotype condition (18%) was almost identical to the control condition". The results reversed for the women who were exposed to the positive stereotype condition, "the percentage of women who identified as feminists virtually double in the positive feminist stereotype condition (30.8%)" (151). This is demonstrative of the effect of stereotypes on decision-making and behavior. The positive paragraph had a stronger effect than either the negative or the control paragraphs, "computation of odds ratios revealed that participants were about twice as likely to identify as feminists if they read the positive feminist stereotype paragraph than if they read either of the other two paragraphs" (151). When exposed to a positive representation, participants are twice as likely to identify as feminists. While this is a result of a study in a manipulated environment, the applicability of these findings is crucial for the feminist movement. It is demonstrative of the misconceptions surrounding the movement, and how they can be easily dispelled by a positive presentation. In addition to increasing the number of people who identify as feminist, the positive paragraphs also had an effect on participants self-esteem: "Bonferroni multiple comparison tests ($p < .05$) indicated that participants who read the positive feminist stereotype paragraph had higher performance self-esteem than did participants who read the control paragraph. Participants who read the negative feminist

stereotype paragraph did not differ from the two other conditions" (152). This result is surprising, but it is also logical. The positive feminist paragraph depicted women as independent agents who were self-confident and leaders. People reading the paragraph either identified with or respected these traits, raising their self-confidence. However, in the negative feminist paragraph, participant's self-esteem did not change because they separated themselves from feminists, distancing themselves from the negative representation in order to preserve their own self-esteem. A positive depiction of feminism doubled the amount of participants who identified as feminist, in addition to improving participants self esteem.

Thesis Proposal

While extensive research exists on feminist identification, the prevalence of gender roles, and the effect of gendered stereotypes on male and female interaction and evaluation, there is not much research surrounding female evaluation of other females on the grounds of gendered stereotypes. Because feminists are (most often) females who have violated the descriptive norms for proper female behavior, it is important to analyze the relationship between females who follow traditional roles and females who move beyond the expectations. Through my research, I want to uncover how women assess other women on the basis of feminist stereotypes in order to 1) understand how deeply ingrained feminist stereotypes are and 2) to discover whether feminism implies a positive connotation or negative connotation on the identity of random women. In order to do this, I will create an experiment where participants (all women) must evaluate pictures of women and write down characteristics about them. They will be given a photo, and two descriptors of the woman, i.e. economist and feminist, or businesswoman and

environmentalist. By giving these frameworks, half that describe them with a feminist descriptor, and half that describe them with an equally respectful but less stigmatized descriptor, I hope to elicit different evaluations of these women. I propose that the women who are given a feminist descriptor will be more negatively evaluated than the women who are not. If they are more negatively evaluated, then it confirms that stereotypes about feminists have been activated and applied. I will also check to see if the characteristics given to the feminist women are consistent with positive feminist stereotypes, which would still confirm the activation of the stereotype.

If results consistent with my hypothesis are found, this will demonstrate that college aged women at women's college hold negative views of feminists. There is little research surrounding how women evaluate other women through feminist identification, and I hope that this research will zero in on how to ameliorate the stigma attached to the feminist label and improve the amount of support, and the amount of people willing to identify as a feminist.

Feminist Stereotypes: Communal vs. Agentic

Despite perceived support for women's issues, feminism still remains a taboo word, with many college students reluctant to identify as a feminist (Abowitz, 2008). Among women who do identify as feminist, many need to quantify what they mean by saying "I'm a feminist, but..." (Roy & Weibust, 2007) and Alexander (1997) found of the 36 women who identified as feminist, only one identified without qualifying what she meant. Many researchers have hypothesized that the reluctance to identify as feminist is a rejection of the label or the assumption that others hold negative views of feminists (Berryman-Fink & Verderber, 1985, Twenge & Zucker, 1999, Roy & Weibust, 2007, Abowitz, 2008). Women who eschew the feminist label justify their choice by explaining that feminism does not fit into their self-identity, describing feminists as "not like me" (Twenge & Zucker, 1999). In addition, those who did not identify as feminist held stereotypes that feminists rejected traditional feminine or masculine appearance or gender roles (Duncan & Steward, 2007).

The present study seeks to assess the prevalence of negative feminist stereotypes at Scripps College, a women's college, in a predominately liberal population. Despite perceived access to women's studies, a demonstrated platform for raising gender consciousness (Aronson, 2003), feminism maintains its status as a stigmatized fringe issue. In order to improve feminist presence on campus, and increase funding for the women's studies department, the prevalence of stereotypes about feminists must be understood.

In the present study links between feminist identification and perceived

personality traits are assessed. To do so, judgments of personality characteristics were made by naïve female college students on the basis of facial appearance, a research technique that has demonstrated success in predicting personality characteristics and success (Pillemer et al., 2011, Rule & Ambady, 2008).

Feminist Stereotypes

Stereotypes most strongly impact minority groups as the presence of minority group members automatically activate negative stereotypes about the group when people experience self-image threat (Spencer & Fein, 2007). Stereotypes are also activated without awareness and can influence behavior (Bargh et al. 1996).

Stereotypes about feminists are conflicting, lack a consensus, and include positive and negative characterizations (Suter & Toller, 2006). Attitudes towards feminists "frequently exhibit a 'Jekyll and Hyde' quality wherein feminists are both admired and reviled" (Anderson, 2009). They are viewed as being competent, independent and intelligent (Suter & Toller, 2006), while simultaneously being viewed as man-hating extremists, angry and physically and sexually unattractive (Twenge & Zucker, 1999). Twenge & Zucker (1999) found that, "compared to women in general, feminists are evaluated more negatively and in more explicit behavioral terms"(602). They found that feminists were characterized by action; therefore, assumed to be more politically liberal, more aggressive, assertive, and more likely to be activists. Feminists have also been evaluated to be more competent but colder than other women (Fiske et al, 1999). These studies demonstrate that feminists are occasionally rated positively, as competent, intelligent independent women, but are often evaluated with qualities that are viewed in a negative light, like assertive, politically active and liberal.

Positive Stereotypes About Feminists

Research attempting to tease out opinions of feminism frequently report both positive and negative evaluations of feminists (Berryman-Fink & Verderber, 1985, Twenge & Zucker, 1999, Jackson, Fleury & Lewandowski (1996). Jackson, Fleury, and Lewandowski (1996) found that participants defined feminism in open-ended responses as having both positive and negative aspects, with 71% of the definitions as positive, 23% mixed, and 6% negative. In a large assessment of feminist stereotypes, Berryman-Fink & Verderber, 1985 found that feminists were "seen as more logical, knowledgeable, realistic, intelligent, caring, flexible, comforting, good, and fascinating, as opposed to the opposites of each of these evaluative criteria" (62). Here, feminists are seen as caring, comforting women, who are also intelligent and good. All of the evaluative criteria are explicitly positive. But the behavioral evaluations of them are interpreted differently. Behaviorally, feminists are seen "as more aggressive, extroverted, more of an activist, more likely to be working (i.e. outside the home), more opinionated, forceful, ambitious, independent, assertive, busy, talkative, and energetic" (62). Thus although the same participants evaluated their qualities in a positive light, behaviorally they are expected to be more aggressive, ambitious, forceful and opinionated. Thus, it is the behavior of feminists that becomes construed in a negative light.

Prevailing negative stereotypes about feminists have characterized them as man-hating extremists, angry and physically and sexually unattractive (Twenge & Zucker, 1999). The man-hating stereotype of feminists occasionally gets translated into the characterization of all feminists as lesbian (Unger, Hilderbrand and Madar, 1982, Twenge & Zucker, 1999), although Berryman-Fink & Verderber (1985) found that feminists were

considered more likely to be heterosexual women. Additionally, multiple studies have explored the stereotype that feminists are unattractive (Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999, Bullock & Fernald, 2003). Goldberg, Gottesdiener & Abramson (1975) demonstrated that unattractive women are more likely to be categorized as feminists.

Gender Stereotypes and Leadership

Prentice & Carranza (2002) explored prescriptive gender stereotypes in the highly masculine context of Princeton University. Their results demonstrated that the feminine gender role expects women to be "affectionate, cheerful, childlike, compassionate, feminine, gentle, gullible, loves children, loyal, shy, soft-spoken, sympathetic, tender, understanding, warm, and yielding." (269). All of these traits are communal traits, as they pertain to relationship building and maintenance. In contrast, prescriptive gender expectations for the masculine role are agentic, "acts as a leader, aggressive, ambitious, analytical, assertive, athletic, competitive, dominant, forceful, independent, individualistic and willing to take risks" (270). The finding that feminine role qualities are communal and masculine role qualities are agentic is crucial in understanding why females who attempt to take on leadership positions are discriminated against. Alice Eagly's research has been devoted to demonstrating the effects of social role theory, and the effects of gendered expectations on female leaders. In Eagly & Karau (2002), she explains that because people believe that each sex has typical, and divergent traits and behaviors, "A key proposition of social role theory is that the majority of these beliefs about the sexes pertain to communal and agentic attributes" (574). Women who are effective leaders are violating expectations for their gender when they exhibit male-stereotypical, agentic qualities, and do not exhibit female-stereotypical, communal

qualities. These women are unfavorably evaluated for their performance and more likely to be disliked (Heilman et al., 2004). Women who did not appear feminine enough were evaluated more negatively than those who dressed to feminine standards (Forsythe, Drake & Cox, 1985) and yet if they dressed more femininely they were less likely to be hired. Eagly observes that incongruity with the gender role sparks negative or hostile reactions against women who occupy incongruent or nontraditional roles. Eagly concludes that for women leaders to be successful, they must balance the communal qualities appropriate for their feminine role, with the masculine/agentive qualities appropriate for their leadership role.

Social Role Theory and Feminism

Bullock & Fernald (2003) explored the relationship between feminist messages and female presentation. They observed that in their own teachings, one of them, who dresses herself in a more feminine manner, was more positively received than her colleague when talking about feminism. In order to explore this phenomena they presented participants with videos of a feminine appearing speaker and a masculine appearing speaker, both who were talking about feminism. The results were surprising, but confirmed their hypothesis. Calling this phenomena 'feminism lite', they found that, "feminism, at least for young, White, heterosexual, college students, is more appealing when communicated by a feminist whose physical appearance does not directly challenge traditional standards of femininity" (296). They further hypothesize that a more masculine appearing woman may threaten their own feminist identity, and that participants who identified as feminist tried to distance themselves from feminists who appeared consistent with the feminist stereotype. Thus, "physical appearance continues to

influence interpersonal judgments, and traditional femininity continues to be equated with attractiveness" (296). This just goes to show that even feminists, who supposedly hold less traditional gender attitudes, are still holding women to certain expectations, and masculine appearing feminist women may activate a stereotype threat (Spencer et al., 1999).

The Current Study

In the present study, naïve participants rated personality traits on the basis of headshots of female CEO's of *Fortune* 1000 companies. Traits for assessment were selected for their association to communal or agentic traits, consistent with social role theory and feminine gender expectations. Based on social role theory and feminist stereotypes, I hypothesize that feminist identified women would be rated higher on agentic traits (i.e. ambition, leadership ability) but lower on communal traits (i.e. compassion, warmth) than other identified groups.

The seven qualities presented for assessment were compassion, warmth, independence, ambition, intelligence, cooperativeness, attractiveness and leadership ability. The qualities assessed attempted to examine stereotypes surrounding feminists. The qualities like compassion, warmth attractiveness and cooperativeness were used because they are consistent with femininity (Prentice, 2002) but are in opposition with negative stereotypes of feminists: angry, tense, anti-male, and egotistical (Twenge & Zucker, 1999). The other qualities; independence, leadership ability, ambition and intelligence were measured as they are consistent with positive stereotypes of feminists as intelligent, knowledgeable and productive (Twenge & Zucker, 1999), and consistent with expectations for an effective leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002), but are incongruent with

expectations for femininity (Prentice & Carranza 2002).

Method

Participants

Participants in the study are 28 female undergraduate students at the Claremont Colleges. Students were compensated for their participation by being entered in a raffle to win gift card prizes. All participants were naive in the true intention of the study in addition to the identities of the women in the headshots.

Materials

The women were evaluated by publicly available headshots. The headshots (n=35) were drawn from the companies in the Fortune 1000 list that had female CEOs (<http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-ceos-fortune-1000>). All of the headshots were pulled from each company's website and grayscaled and resized to appear congruous in the study. More famous female CEO's, like Marissa Mayer, were removed from the study due to likely recognition.

The headshots were randomly paired with two descriptive identifiers designed to help the participants make their evaluations. The descriptive identifiers paired an occupation with an interest area, such as businesswoman and environmentalist, or professor and republican. There are 9 occupations and 9 interest areas that the women are randomly paired to and described as. This list is provided in the appendix. Therefore, to test for the stereotype effect on feminists, 5 out of the 45 women are identified as feminist. By controlling the ratio, this reduces the likelihood that participants suspect that we are testing their stereotype for feminism.

Procedure

Participants read instructions that informed them that they would be presented with a series of photos and be prompted to evaluate the following women on their facial characteristics, their profession and personal identity. The participants were presented with the headshot, a profession and an identifier, and then completed an assessment of their qualities on a 7-point-scale (e.g. Compassion, 1 = not at all...2...3...4...5...6...7 = very). They evaluated each woman one at a time and assessed each woman's likelihood of having those qualities due to their facial characteristics, profession and identifier paired with the picture.

Results

Repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the identifier feminist on mean ratings of traits: communal (compassion, warmth, cooperativeness) and agentic (ambition, independence, intelligence, leadership ability), in addition to attractiveness. Tests were done by comparing all of the feminist identified women, against another group identity, like democrat. Then, the rated qualities within each identity are compared to one another. Effects for professions were not compared.

For Feminists and Conservatives, repeated measures analysis of variance that compared the mean ratings in the qualities of compassion, warmth and attractiveness was found to be statistically significant at an alpha level of .05, $f(2, 25) = 11.919$, $p < .01$. The strength of the relationship, as indexed by eta-squared, was .332. Follow up t-tests between the two groups and three identifiers demonstrated that Feminists were rated as being more compassionate $t(25)=3.813$, $p < .001$ and warmer $t(25)=3.271$, $p < .001$ than conservatives. But, repeated measures analysis of variance that compared mean ratings for Feminists and Conservatives in the agentic qualities of ambition, independence and

leadership ability was not found to be statistically significant. T-tests between groups demonstrated marginally significant results with feminists being rated higher on levels of independence $t(24)=2.937$, $p<.001$.

For Feminists and Republicans, repeated measures analysis of variance that compared mean ratings in the qualities of attractiveness, intelligence and leadership ability was found to be statistically significant at an alpha level of .05, $f(2,25) = 6.759$, $p<.001$. The strength of the relationship, as indexed by eta-squared, was .220. Follow up t-tests for each rated trait demonstrated significant results with feminists being rated higher on levels of attractiveness $t(25) = 3.604$, $p<.001$, intelligence $t(25) = 5.395$, $p<.001$, and leadership ability $t(25)=5.970$, $p<.001$. Additionally, repeated measures analysis of variance that compared mean ratings for Feminists and Republicans in the qualities of compassion, warmth and cooperativeness was found to be partially statistically significant at an alpha level of .05, $f(2,25) = 5.273$, $p<.001$. Follow up T-tests on mean ratings of compassion between Feminists and Republicans was found to be statistically significant $t(25) = 3.228$, $p<.001$, and partially significant on mean ratings of warmth, $t(25)=2.765$, $p<.001$.

For Feminists and Progressives, in contrast, a repeated measures analysis of variance that compared the mean ratings in the same qualities of compassion, warmth and attractiveness was not found to be statistically significant. There was a marginally significant result between compassionate feminists and compassionate progressives, $t(26) = 2.183$, $p<.01$. No significant results were found when the mean ratings between Feminists and Progressives on the traits of ambition, independence and leadership ability were compared.

For Feminists and Environmentalists, a repeated measures analysis of variance that compared mean ratings in the agentic qualities of ambition, independence and leadership ability was not found to be statistically significant. Another test that compared mean ratings for the same groups but in the traits of compassion, warmth and cooperativeness was also not found to be statistically significant. There were also no significant findings for differences in ratings between Feminists and Democrats, Feminists and Animal Rights Advocates, Feminists and Health Care Advocates, and Feminists and Humanitarians.

Discussion

The present study explored the relationships between identification to a particular group and assignment of personality traits. Through stereotype activation, the study assessed perceptions of feminism in comparison to other groups. I hypothesized that the perceived lack of support for feminist issues was due to the prevalence of negative stereotypes held about feminists. **Results do not demonstrate that participants hold negative stereotypes about feminists.** Instead, the results suggest that participants held positive stereotypes about feminists as participants evaluated feminists more positively than two other identified groups, conservatives and republicans.

The present study demonstrates the finding that the traits attributed to women based solely on facial appearance vary according to the identifiers prescribed to them. First, the effect of the feminist identifier is compared with the effect of the conservative identifier. Feminists were rated higher on compassion, warmth and attractiveness than conservatives, contrary to the hypothesis that feminists would be rated lower on these qualities due to the negative stereotypes of feminists as angry, cold, and unattractive

(Berryman-Fink & Verderber, 1985, Twenge & Zucker, 1999, Bullock & Fernald, 2003). However, the results are consistent with studies that explore in-group/out-group bias, ideological opponent stereotypes and out-group stereotypes (Graham et al, 2012, Fiske et al, 2002). Stereotypes are perpetuated in the absence of actual evidence. When one has little experience with individuals in a group they are more likely to be seen as more homogenous, and for group level stereotypes to be ascribed to in-group members (Hilton et al, 1996). The results suggest that people hold negative stereotypes of conservatives, which gives evidence to suggest that they identify as liberal. Liberals are characterized by their moral concerns of compassion and by their commitment to fairness (Graham et al, 2012).

Through comparisons between feminist identified women and conservative identified women, the differences in the degree to which traits are assigned to them are statistically significant. These results are illuminated in part by findings by Graham et al (2012) which demonstrated that liberals and conservatives perceptions of one another overestimate differences: "Liberals see conservatives as being motivated by an opposition to liberal's core values of compassion and fairness, as well as being motivated by their own (non-moral) values of in-group loyalty, respect for authorities and traditions, and spiritual purity" (12). Thus liberals view conservatives as more religious, traditional, and close-minded.

The mixed stereotype hypothesis proposed by Fiske et al (2002) explains how liberals view, and eventually stereotype conservatives. The results found in this study demonstrated that feminists were rated significantly higher than conservatives on traits of compassion and warmth. This is explained by Fiske, as perceived lack of compassion is

related to negative stereotypes about other stereotyped groups like, feminists, or women in leadership positions: "stereotypes elicit dislike for perceived lack of warmth, e.g. Asians, Jews and career women" (879). Thus, the perceived lack of compassion and warmth in conservatives contributes to the general dislike of the group. Conservatives are competitive with liberals because they are perceived as competent, and therefore activate envious stereotypes: "out groups that are seen as competent but not warm, resulting in *envious stereotypes*. These groups are acknowledged as doing well (for themselves), but their intentions toward the in-group are presumed not to be positive" (879). Perceived success of conservatives is threatening to liberals because conservatives are in direct opposition to liberal ideology. They are a potential threat to liberal agenda: "competitive out-groups frustrate, tantalize, and annoy, so they are viewed as having negative intent. Out-group goals presumably interfere with in-group goals, so they are not warm. A primary source of negative affect toward out-groups results from perceived incompatibility of their goals with in-group goals" (881). Conservatives threaten the goals of liberals. And, because the women evaluated in this study are women who retain traditional ideology but are nontraditional in the sense that they are women with successful careers, they are especially threatening to liberal career women because they are direct competitors.

Interestingly, there were no significant differences between feminists and conservatives in the ratings of ambition, independence and leadership ability. This is supported by Fiske et al (2002)'s findings that the out-group that is perceived as successful and competent is in exchange rated lower in warmth and compassion.

In contrast, the finding that feminists are rated significantly higher than

republicans on traits of attractiveness, intelligence and leadership ability is in opposition to the results found for the conservatives. Because conservatives and feminists were rated similarly in these agentic traits, it is interesting to note that feminists were rated significantly higher than republicans in these traits. These results can also be explained by the mixed stereotype theory proposed by Fiske et al (2002), in combination with findings by Graham et al (2012). Conservatives are seen as competent but low on warmth, in part because they are viewed as a high status group. Conservatives are seen as serious competitors, making them threatening and activating envious stereotypes. It could be republicans are not seen in as threatening of a light because the stereotype about their group does not associate them as a high status group. However, this is in opposition to the findings by Rule & Ambady (2010) that demonstrated that democrats perceive republicans as a high power group. They found in an assessment of characteristics based on facial appearance, faces that were perceived to be warm were likely to be categorized as Democratic, while the faces that were perceived to be powerful were likely to be categorized as Republican. Additionally, feminists were rated higher than republicans in communal traits like warmth and compassion, which is consistent with the results found between feminists and conservatives, as discussed above.

Ratings attributed to Environmentalists, Progressives, Health Care Advocates, Animal Rights Advocates, Humanitarians, and Democrats, reported no significant differences. This is consistent with in-group/out-group bias as none of these groups are as ideologically distinct from Feminists as conservatives and republicans. These results are consistent with findings by Berryman-Fink & Verderber (1985) and Twenge & Zucker (1999), both of who reported that a liberal political orientation was most salient to the

feminist stereotype. Additionally, it could be argued that Environmentalist, Progressive, Health Care Advocate, Humanitarian and Democrat group identification all point to a liberal or left wing ideology. Positive views about human rights are affiliated with the liberal political camp, whereas conservative or right wing ideology emphasizes that human rights sometimes need to be restricted (Cohrs et al, 2007). The finding that conservative political ideology correlated negatively with pro-human rights attitudes and human rights commitments and positively with human rights restriction may help explain the present study's findings (Cohrs et al, 2007). If a liberal political orientation is correlated positively with pro-human rights attitudes, then it is possible that testing for differences between group identification of Environmentalists, Progressives, Health Care Advocates, Animal Rights Advocates, Humanitarians, and Democrats is like testing for differences between the same group. Because positive attitudes about pro-human rights are correlated with liberal ideology, and the present study's findings suggest that participants hold a liberal political orientation, then the lack significant findings between the groups discussed can be explained by their correlation with liberal principles.

It would be interesting to correlate these results with political orientation, in addition to willingness to identify as feminist, and to determine whether exposure to women's studies courses correlates with positive representations of feminists. In the present study, I refrained from asking people if they identified as feminist because numerous studies reported inconsistency across willingness to identify under the name and ideology of the feminist movement (Bullock, 2003, Suter & Toller, 2006, Roy & Weibust, 2007, Anderson, 2009, Duncan, 2010). The present study focused on examining feminist opinions through attribution of personality traits to pictures of women, rather

than asking the participant to reflect on their own self-identity. This would reduce the likelihood of automatic stereotype activation under self-esteem threat (Spencer & Fein, 1997).

Another further direction for stereotypes of feminists might include a more diverse group of participants. Because participants in this study identified with liberal views, and stereotypes about feminists are most strongly held by those who have little to no interaction with them (Hilton et al, 1996) results consistent with previous studies exploring negative stereotypes about feminists could be found. Although I didn't ask my participants their political affiliation, feminist identification, or racial identity, these are factors that would affect the decisions made by participants. Future research should utilize a multi-item measure of feminist identity since the word feminist does not account for all representations of feminism.

The results of the present study suggest that liberals have positive representations of feminists. Having positive representations of feminists (or any group) are important in willingness to identify as feminist (Roy & Weibust, 2007), and will predict self-identification Abowitz (2008). Exposure to feminism is therefore crucial in developing a feminist identity, "Providing an environment where a variety of feminist self-labels are accepted might then influence these "weak" feminists to embrace more strongly the elements of feminist consciousness" (Duncan, 2010). Participating in collective action can lead to the development of group consciousness and encourage individuals to be more open to feminist messages. Thus collective action may be the answer to reducing the status of feminism as a fringe issue and therefore help reduce stereotypes about feminists.

The results found in the present study suggest that attitudes about feminism are changing. Beyoncé's inclusion of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's speech in her song *Flawless* solidified Beyoncé's identification with feminism, in addition to creating a platform for feminist consciousness to be widely distributed. Katy Perry recently retracted her statement that she wasn't a feminist, and instead said, "I used to not really understand what that word meant, and now that I do, it just means that I love myself as a female and I also love men — so, sure!" (PolicyMic). Miley Cyrus also considers herself a feminist. The feminist identity of these female celebrities are applauded by some and challenged by others. The definition of feminism comes into question when female celebrities assert their feminism, as people are quick to cite their actions that clash with conventional feminist ideology, like the same Beyoncé song, *Flawless*, in which the ending chorus repeats "bow down bitches". But the assumption that a feminist needs to prescribe to certain actions and morals in order to obtain feminist membership is outdated; it perpetuates existing negative stereotypes about feminism and ignores the existence of multiple types of feminism.

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Appendix

Occupations

1. Business woman
2. Financial analyst
3. Architect
4. Realtor
5. Investment banker
6. Professor
7. Therapist
8. Lawyer
9. Software engineer

Descriptors

1. Conservative
2. Republican
3. Environmentalist
4. Progressive
5. Feminist
6. Humanitarian
7. Animal rights advocate
8. Democrat
9. Health care advocate