RECREATING GENDER ROLES: AN EXAMINATION OF DATING PRACTICES AMONG
FEMINIST COLLEGE WOMEN

A Thesis

by

MARISA RODRIGUEZ

BS, Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi, 2014

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

COMMUNICATION

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Corpus Christi, Texas

December 2016

RECREATING GENDER ROLES: AN EXAMINATION OF DATING PRACTICES AMONG
FEMINIST COLLEGE WOMEN

A Thesis

by

MARISA RODRIGUEZ

This thesis meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

Stephanie Rollie Rodriguez, Ph.D.   Amy Aldridge Sanford, Ph.D.
Chair   Committee Member

December 2016

ABSTRACT

For decades, women have used traditional gender roles to navigate dating processes. However, due to the changing social roles of women and decades of shifting feminist movements, women have the opportunity to challenge and recreate traditional norms. The purpose of this study was to examine (a) how feminist beliefs influenced women's dating ideologies, (b) how women managed cognitive dissonance that occurred between feminist beliefs and traditional dating gender roles, and (c) how conversations with others influenced women's dating practices.

Fifteen college-aged women at a Southwest university who self-identified as having feminist beliefs were interviewed about their feminist and dating beliefs. The participants were between the ages of 19 and 30, and were engaged in a variety of relationship types during the time of their interviews. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using open coding. Results revealed that having feminist beliefs influenced participants to want egalitarian roles in their dating relationships. Also, participants experienced cognitive dissonance when dating under traditional roles because of their desire for egalitarian roles. Participants dealt with dissonance by changing the importance of their beliefs, terminating relationships, and being more selective with future romantic partners. Finally, participants' conversations with parents and friends had an impact on the formation of their feminist beliefs and the health of their dating relationships.

Implications of the study revealed how participants recreated gender roles on dates. Women's adoption of feminist beliefs transferred into their romantic relationships by their desire to engage in egalitarian roles. Further research is needed on feminism and roles that considers gender, men, and the acceptance of the feminist label in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of changes in women's social roles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction

Romantic dating relationships remain a signature occurrence in the lives of young, college-aged women. These women are currently experiencing romantic relationships at a time when their social roles are shifting. According to the Pew Research Center (2010), women now make up the majority of college graduates, and are entering the workforce in greater numbers than in the past. Back in 2009, women made up 47% of the workforce, compared to 33% in 1960. Women are also choosing to get married later in life. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), the average age for women to marry increased from 25.1 in 2000 to 26.1 in 2010. This trend has been increasing since the mid-1950s. Finally, the Pew Research Center (2010) stated that women are delaying starting families. In 2008, 18% of women did not have children until age 40 to 45, compared to only 10% of women of the same age in 1980. Even after getting married and having children, many women are refusing to take on the traditional role as homemaker and mother, and instead, they are choosing to work while also being a parent and spouse. Working mothers now make up 71% of the workforce.

Giele (2008) found that women who chose to work and parent described their careers as the primary theme of their lives, with children and family being the necessary forces that make life more fulfilling. Having a career and children, however, comes with a cost. Johnston and Swanson (2007) argued that mothers working full-time had to engage in cognitive acrobatics to manage their mother and career identities. Not only did they have to create these two distinct identities, but they also used neutralization to balance these identities, meaning that these women bounced back and forth between attending to their careers and motherhood. More often women are challenging long-standing expectations that urge them to work in their homes for the supposed well-being of their families.

These new shifts in women's roles have contributed to the development of conflicting societal messages. Although women are taking on as many career responsibilities as their male counterparts, they often still face long-standing traditional norms that seek to place women back into their homes, where their primary responsibility is caring for their spouses and children (Friedan, 1997). For example, in the academic world, men with higher degrees are more likely to get married and have children. On the other hand, women with higher degrees are less likely to get married and have children, and their chances of divorce increases (Baker, 2007; Fox, 2005). Traditional norms even have an influence on working mothers and household chores. According to Smith and Huston (2004), by the time a child is two-years-old, a working mother works 30 hours a week, while also doing 26 child and household tasks. Their husbands, on the other hand, work 34 hours a week, and only perform five child and household tasks. Even when couples wanted to evenly split household chores, they still felt pressured by prevailing traditional norms to divide up household chores by gender (Vangelisti, 2013). Steinem (1995) explained that continued gender role inequality would limit women and rob children of caring fathers as long as men never learned to take care of children and their homes, just as women have been taught to do. As women attempt to change these norms, they are confronted with all kinds of societal barriers, from unequal pay and body shaming, to sexual harassment and violence (Collins, 2009; Zeilinger, 2012; Kimmel, 2008).

College-aged women are a special group of individuals, who are able to explore new ideas and decide the trajectory of their lives, whether it is to enter the workplace after college, start families, or a combination of the two. These women and other individuals in college are known in the academic world as "emerging adults." Arnett (2000) explained that emerging adulthood is the in-between of teenage and adult years and is characterized as a time of

exploration in considering future directions in relationships, the workplace, and ideologies. Therefore, it is not uncommon for emerging adults to develop their own attitudes regarding love and work. However, there are some aspects of life in which emerging adults' attitudes are influenced by their childhoods rather than the transitory phase of emerging adulthood. Goldberg et al. (2012) found that college students held attitudes about work and families that reflected back to their own upbringings. For example, college students whose mothers went back to paid, stable work shortly after giving birth held favorable attitudes toward maternal employment. College students whose mothers went back to work, but had inconsistent employment histories were less favorable toward maternal employment. The researchers also found that college students held attitudes about gender roles that related to their parents' division of labor. When college students came from families in which their parents engaged in household labor that aligned with gender roles, they were much more likely to support traditional beliefs. Despite the impact individuals' pasts can have on life choices, college-aged women can explore the paths their lives could take as emerging adults.

Young women face challenges not only as they navigate college and the workforce, but also in romantic relationships. They must decide whether to enact traditional gender roles during dates, meaning that they remain passive and reactive towards their male partners (McCormick, Brannigan, & LaPlante, 1980), or they could enact more egalitarian gender roles. Taking on egalitarian roles might mean sharing the responsibilities that come with dating, such as initiating the date and paying for dating activities. College students are a primary dating demographic due to the large presence and availability of potential dating partners. What is more, college-aged women are the recipients of conflicting messages that deal with traditional and egalitarian roles. It is important to examine how college-aged women are performing dating roles today and how

they manage conflicting dating messages in a time when gender roles have become more flexible than they have ever been in the past.

An influential force in the lives of young women is the effect of peer groups. Wright and Sinclair (2012) found that peers had a stronger impact on partner selection than parents did. Also, Morgan and Korobov (2012) argued that women had particular ways of providing support to their female friends when talking about dating experiences. Kerrick and Thorne (2014) found that female friendships foster the co-construction of identity, meaning that as female friends interact, they establish joint activities, emotions, and ideologies that form specific realities (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995). However, researchers have yet to find out how this co-construction could have an impact on traditional and egalitarian roles enacted in dating relationships, especially at a time when norms are changing and women's roles are becoming more flexible (Kerrick & Thorne, 2014). The current study focuses on how peers may influence an individual's feminist identity, and how that identity affects the roles the individual performs during the dating process. In studying young women, their social networks, and their dating processes, this study will explain how conversations with friends might influence the identities of others, and how those identities impact how individuals navigate the dating scene.

This thesis consists of the following four chapters. Chapter two presents the literature review, which presents research on dating, gender roles, feminism, cognitive dissonance, and peer influence and leads to the formation of three research questions. Chapter three introduces the methods section that includes a description of the participant pool, procedures, and data analysis. The fourth chapter describes the results from the study and finally, chapter five consists of the discussion section, and includes the main takeaways from the study, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

This chapter explores previous literature on dating and feminism and is divided into four sections. The first section examines dating scripts with a description of script theory and an exploration of how scripts encourage gender roles. The second section describes power in romantic relationships, how power can influence who does what in relationships, as well as the consequences of power imbalances and the benefits of equal power. The third section covers cognitive dissonance theory, how dissonance occurs, and how individuals reduce dissonance. Finally, the fourth section explores peer support and how peer support can positively influence romantic relationships.

Dating Scripts in American Society

The idea of scripts, first developed by Bartlett (1932), presented a framework for memory organization and explained how human beings understood actions. These scripts are not innate, but instead, they develop from learned behavior, and by repeatedly interacting with others. Scripts help people anticipate, analyze, and comprehend the behavior of others. A script is a series of actions that lead to a particular goal (Nelson, 1986). For example, there is a systematic script for buying and importing songs from iTunes into an electronic device. The script begins with an individual picking up his/her laptop, or other portable device, selecting the iTunes app/page, browsing for the song he/she is looking for (which may require listening to different samples of the same song), choosing to buy the preferred version of the song, paying for it, then transferring the song from the music library to the electronic device.

Each series of actions are made up of scenes. For example, to buy a song on iTunes, the individual must first turn on his/her electron device, make sure the device is hooked up to the WiFi, and then selecting the iTunes app. Schank (1990) concluded that scripts were formed by

the human interaction one observes early on in their lives, which produced stories that cultivated an understanding of human behavior. Once these stories are stored into memory, an individual can easily retrieve them and act in accordance with them if they find themselves in a situation where the scripts come in handy. Stoica (2015) claimed that the strongest scripts form through cultural norms, where scripts are reinforced on a societal level. Once a script becomes internalized, behavior becomes efficient, making scripted behavior automatic.

Types of scripts. Dalli (1991) pointed out three types of scripts: event, physical, and role. The event script tells an individual how to behave on certain occasions. For example, going to a wedding might consist of a script that does not allow women to wear white and obligates guests to bring gifts. Physical scripts are dictated by the surroundings one encounters, or how the places or environments an individual is placed in affects his or her behavior. An example of a physical script might be the way an individual acts when one goes to the movie theater. The script will dictate that those seeing a movie must talk very little and in whispers, if at all. Also, people will not be able to use cell phones or other technological devices in the theater. Finally, role scripts manage the behavior of an individual as she/he takes on a certain role. The role of a teacher might be to remain calm and authoritative in the classroom and to dress professionally.

Dating scripts and socialization. One particularly dominant script in American society is the dating script. Research on dating has examined numerous features of dating scripts including first date sequences (Willoughby, Carroll, & Busby, 2014; Malta & Farquharson, 2014; Choukas-Bradley, Goldberg, Widman, Reese, & Halpern, 2015; Connolly, Nguyen, Pepler, Craig, & Jiang, 2013; Davies & Windle, 2000) , disclosure (Jensen & Rauer, 2014; Daddis & Randolph, 2010; Farrell, DiTunnariello, & Pearson, 2014; Kito, 2005), and the development of online dating relationships (Korchmaros, Ybarra, & Mitchell, 2015; Donn &

Sherman, 2002; Knox, Daniels, Sturdivant, & Zusman, 2001; Ledbetter, 2014). Dating scripts also tends to dictate certain dating occurrences according an individual's biological sex and socially acceptable norms. For example, in traditional dating scripts, men are encouraged to be more active while women are expected to be more passive. This gendered script has been accepted in the United States for decades, which is why, if men and women switched roles, they experience social repercussions, such as gossip they hear from others.

Heterosexual dating scripts are different for men and women, according to their sex, which then manifests in gender role scripts. According to Bem (1974), an individual's sex consists of the parts that make individuals biologically male and female. Gender consists of a continuum with masculinity and femininity lying at the extremes of the continuum and androgyny lying at the center. While an individual's gender may include a person's sex, it can also include an individual's identity, attitudes, and other important aspects. An individual's sex may not align with their gender.

Wienclaw (2015) explained that individuals learn traditional gender roles at an early age through socialization. Some boys, at a young age, engage in rough play with their parents and they have very little room to express soft emotions such as feeling sad or hurt. Blakemore and Centers (2005) found that the toys boys are given to play with are strongly masculine and promote danger, violence, and competitiveness. Also, according to Orr (2011), boys are frequently encouraged to play interactive games, play outside, participate in sports, and engage in physical play. They also spend more time unsupervised by parents. Kimmel (2008) argued that peers have a strong influence on the socialization of men. Boys and men act under homosociality, meaning that their lives are judged and policed by other boys and men, especially when it comes to interacting with women. Because of this, men constantly try to prove their

heterosexuality, which entails being dominant in relationships and acting as sexual initiators (Kimmel, 2008).

Girls also go through the socialization process at an early age. Weinclaw (2015) mentioned that girls are treated more tenderly by parents, and they have more restrictions on the places they are allowed to go. Girls are also taught to be more emotionally expressive. Blakemore and Centers (2005) suggested that even the toys girls are given play a role in their socialization processes. Toys usually given to girls are strongly feminine and promote physical attractiveness, nurturance, and domestic skills. Sherman and Zurbriggen (2014) argued that Barbies, which are given to girls as young as three years old, are highly-sexualized and appearance-focused dolls. Girls who played with Barbies had very limited ideas of their own possible career goals and options compared to boys, leading to the conclusion that Barbies serve in girls' self-objectification, which means that girls begin to think more about how they appeared to others, rather than recognizing themselves as active participants in their own lives. Sanchez, Fetterolf, and Rudman (2012) argued that socializing girls along traditional scripts includes placing women in sexually passive and compliant roles. For example, many young women are taught that it is not appropriate to ask a guy out on a date, or take the lead in any part of a date (such as paying for dinner or activities). This teaches women to be passive, as they are encouraged to let their male partner have control over if and how the date will occur. This kind of socialization remains one of the most powerful influences in how individuals navigate romantic dating situations. Overall, socialization often perpetuates gendered traditional roles for both boys and girls.

Gender roles, then, influence dating scripts. In other words, scripts place men and women in roles by calling attention to certain behaviors that they should ideally perform. Rose and

Frieze (1993) suggested that dating scripts had shown little change since the 1950s, and that the dominant/subordinate relationship between men and women is still prevalent in society today. Examining current dating scripts, Laner and Ventrone (2000) found that the sequence of a date followed traditional scripts from beginning to end. The researchers surveyed 103 college men and women. From 41 possible first date behaviors, the participants indicated which behaviors they thought typically occurred on the first date, and if men or women performed that particular behavior. Both men and women agreed that it was the man's job to initiate the date, make a plan for the date, call the woman the day of the date, get his car ready, buy the woman flowers, pick up the woman from her home, open the door for her throughout the date, pay for the date, then take her home. The participants also felt that the man gets to initiate kisses, hugs, and sex. The woman engaged in particular dating scripts, as well. According to participants, she must wait to be asked out, buy something new to wear, wait to be picked up for the date, introduce the man to her family, eat very little during dinner, go to the bathroom to make sure she looks good, lead the man into deeper conversations, and contact a peer to discuss the date.

In other American cultures, the same traditional scripts guided dating encounters. Since the current study will be conducted in South Texas, it is important to take a look at Hispanic Americans, as some participants may perform dating roles that reflect their cultural backgrounds. For Hispanic American individuals, Eaton and Rose (2012) found that men enacted significantly more dominant behaviors on a date than women. The dating scripts examined in this study included ten actions that were initiated by men and two actions initiated by women. A majority of both female and male participants agreed that men should be the ones who ask the woman out, pick her up, pay for the date, take the woman home and kiss her goodnight, and ask for a second date. Both male and female participants also agreed that it was the women's role to accept the

date and groom/dress well. The female participants said that one other action women should do was accept the offer for a second date. The researchers concluded that men had more control and power when it comes to dating in Hispanic cultures. As one can see, these small actions that make up a date are highly gendered, and are constructed in a way that creates dominant and subordinate roles for men and women, respectively.

Even in sexual encounters, traditional scripts encouraged men in dating relationships to be more proactive, leaving women to be more passive and reactive. For example, in one study, LaPlante, McCormick and Brannigan (1980) found that there was a strong belief in the script that said men used any strategy to get a female partner to have sex with him and women used strategies to stave off the sexual advances from the man. Jozkowski et al. (2014) explained that traditional sexual scripts ordered that when a man initiates sex, women were supposed to initially refuse, and men were required by these scripts to ignore those refusals.

Same-sex couples. Exploring how same-sex couples date and what scripts they follow proved to be more difficult. Choukas-Bradley et al. (2015) claimed that little research had been done on same-sex couples and how they experience romantic dating. Rather, most of the research that examined same-sex couples focused on their psychological, social, and physical health problems (Mustanski, 2015; Rotheram-Borus, et al., 1994; Rosario et al., 1996; Elze, 1999). The authors went on to say that same-sex relationships needed more attention from researchers because there were differences in the ways same-sex couples and cross-sex couples navigated dating relationships. For example, Eaton and Rose (2012) proposed that once same-sex couples were in romantic relationships, they may have engaged in behaviors that conceal that relationship out of fear of harassment, discrimination, and other social consequences.

Despite the general lack of relationship research on same-sex couples, there is enough research to determine similarities and differences in the dating behaviors of same-sex and cross-sex couples. For instance, Choukas-Bradley et al. (2015) found that both same-sex and cross-sex couples preferred dating-related activities (such as saying "I love you") than sex-related activities. However, same-sex couples desire sexual activity at higher rates than heterosexual couples. The way same-sex individuals found potential dating partners may also be different from the way cross-sex individuals find dating partners. Kuperberg and Padgett (2015) studied cross-sex and same-sex individuals and how they found dating and hookup partners as they spent a lot of time on college campuses. They found that, unlike heterosexual individuals, who were more likely to meet dating partners at on- and off-campus institutions, same-sex individuals tended to find dating partners on the internet. Elze (2002) said that this is mostly because LGBTQ individuals encountered a small pool of potential romantic partners, although in her own study, lesbian and bisexual women often found their romantic partners at sexual minority youth groups. Elze also found that these women dated frequently, but they were often at risk for harassment at school, not only because of their sexual orientation, but also because some people believed that bisexual individuals engaged in sexual activity with both males and females at the same time. Although these studies added to people's understanding of same-sex dating relationships, there still needs to be more research done on how same-sex couples navigate dating relationships, and how that compared to how cross-sex couples date.

In summary, traditional dating scripts are prevalent in American society. Scripts emerged through a process of socialization, which began at birth, and continued into adulthood as individuals learned socially appropriate behaviors from their parents, peers, and the media. Men and women followed long-standing traditional scripts, and therefore knew how each partner was

supposed to behave during a date. However, traditional dating scripts in the U.S. were highly patriarchal, with men being the dominant and active partner, and women acting as the subordinate, passive partner. Researchers have not examined heterosexual dating couples who chose not to follow traditional scripts. To diverge from traditional scripts might prove difficult, but it can still be done, especially as women demand more equality and begin to match men's presence in the workplace. Women's embrace of feminist ideologies could influence or change the roles they enact in romantic relationships.

Power in Romantic Relationships

Negotiating and managing power is an important part of romantic relationships, mostly because the individuals within a romantic relationship have to consider their own needs, and the needs of their partner to benefit their well-being. Knudson-Martin and Huenergardt (2010) explained that many couples experienced power imbalances without knowing it, and the relationship ends up centering around the individual with the most power. This is a problem because according to Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (2009), if one partner had more power than the other, it disturbed the equal flow of attention each partner received. In other words, one partner ended up serving or taking care of one partner, while the other partner did not exert as much effort to reciprocate the same amount of service or care. This phenomenon was demonstrated in a study by Righetti et al. (2015), who found evidence that supported what is called the Selfish Power Hypothesis. This hypothesis stated that the more relative power one has, the less willingness that person had to sacrifice their own personal needs for the relationship. The amount of power an individual had foretold the amount of sacrifices she/he made over time.

Unequal power, according to Parker (2009) was something that people were quick to deny. Even in couple therapy sessions, unequal power was hardly brought up, allowing it to

12

ceaselessly prevail. Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (2009) argued that power patterns in romantic

relationships could only be changed when individuals became aware of the unequal power

between them and set out to transform those patterns. Even then, people have a difficult time

discussing power patterns because it is complicated and uncomfortable to examine their own

relationships. Manifestations of unequal power in traditional relationships are also often difficult

to identify, because they are expected, and even viewed as the norm.

Household divisions of labor. Unequal power dynamics can be seen in the division of

labor in heterosexual households. Coltrane (2000) found that women completed two to three

times as many household chores as men did. Even in dual-income households, Hochschild

(2003) found that women completed the majority of household work, even when husbands' and

wives' work hours were the same. According to Smith, Gager, and Morgan (1998), husbands

benefited the most from the division of household labor, and therefore were less likely to see the

division as "unfair." Nakamura and Akiyoshi (2015) pointed out that wives, however, who

worked what is called the "double shift," meaning they completed one shift at work and then

another shift working in the home, often found the division of labor to be "fair." The researchers

found that wives did not feel that the amount of household chores they did was unfair compared

to the amount of household chores their husbands did. Rather, women only felt that they did an

unfair amount of household chores when they compared themselves to other women in similar

circumstances and found that these individuals did fewer household chores. Thus it is evident

that for many couples, an unequal division of labor was both accepted and expected.

Some factors predict the unequal division of labor among families. Lam, McHale, and

Crouter (2012) found that spouses, often husbands, who had the most financial power, who

worked longer hours and earned more money, had the power to assign more household chores to

13

their wives. Other factors that lent more household chores to wives included men perceiving they had more control over what goes on in the household, and if husbands were psychologically invested in their jobs.

The division of labor often came down to traditional gender roles which focused on the man as the provider and the woman as the nurturer. Coltrane (2000) found that since men usually had more power in traditional relationships, women took care of the bulk of household chores, which decreased marital satisfaction and increased marital conflict and depression. The husband's power came from traditional norms. As a result, women felt an obligation to do household work, and men felt that household work in general counted as "women's work." Men also reported that household chores were optional for them. Thus, traditional roles promoted unequal power so that men benefited more from romantic relationships.

Decision-making processes. Power also influenced decision-making processes in romantic relationships. Blood and Wolfe (1960) conducted a classic study on couples and decision-making. They found that decision-making was all about economic resources, and that the spouse who provided the most resources had a stronger influence in the decision-making process. Fox and Murry (2000), however, disagreed when they discovered that even though certain couples perceived their marriages as equal and egalitarian, men still maintained the most influence when making decisions. The researchers argued that men had enough power to even direct the conversations between themselves and their wives, incidentally eluding certain topics, such as the division of household chores. Still, there were other researchers, such as Rogers and Amato (2000), who argued that dual-earner couples had an equal impact when making decisions.

Negotiations in the decision-making process were gendered, as well. Livingston (2014) examined how husbands and wives negotiated whose job would take precedence for dual-income

families. In other words, the couple had to decide which spouse's job would take primacy, in terms of work hours, effort, compensation, and mobility, as this decision would affect how the relationships and family would function. The researcher found that when women's negotiation tactic became more competitive as they argued for their own career to take primacy, they received less emotional support from their husbands. Women using competitive negotiation tactics were seen as very masculine, and since these women did not receive the support they needed using these tactics, traditional expectations were pushed onto these women, which reminded them of the expectation for them to remain passive. When women used more cooperative, gender-appropriate negotiation tactics, they received more emotional support from their husbands.

Egalitarian roles. An alternative option from enacting traditional gender roles would be to embrace egalitarian roles. Walby (1990) defined egalitarianism as having equal responsibility over raising children, household labor, and paid work. Ogolsky, Dennison, and Monk (2014) agreed by suggesting that egalitarianism was a way of supporting and promoting equality in relationships. When considering decisions, Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (2009) described the nature of egalitarian decision making. Extensive communication was involved in this kind of decision-making process, and each partner made sure that the other partner was being heard. The researchers called this "conscious decision making." Couples engaged in conscious decision making when they acknowledged that each partner had her/his own voice and opinions, as well as an equal measure of influence and responsibility.

Egalitarian roles and conscious decision-making can be closely examined among same-sex couples, since cross-sex couples usually adhered to traditional roles. Connolly (2005) and Kurdek (1995) found that individuals in same-sex relationships tended to better demonstrate

egalitarian roles than those in cross-sex relationships. Sullivan (2004) discovered that lesbian couples often engaged in egalitarian lifestyles. According to Moore (2008), lesbian couples engaged in a balanced division of household chores, and their input of economic resources helped to maintain equilibrium of power. As for same-sex male couples, Bell, Weinberg, and Hammersmith (1981) found that they kept themselves from engaging in traditional male gender roles, and cultivated and cared for the connection they had with their partners. Kurdek (2004) discovered that same-sex male couples fared better than opposite-sex couples with handling conflict and being more open to one another. For both male and female same-sex couples, Naveen (2009) found that they cultivated equity in their relationships by having regular conversations about fairness, frequent relationship evaluations, engaging in conscious decision-making, negotiating the division of labor by addressing which partner wanted to complete which chore, and finally, facing conflict head-on. Since both female and male partners in same-sex couples strove to keep their relationships as high priorities, they were able to share responsibility for the goings-on in the relationship.

When looking at the performance of traditional and egalitarian roles over the past 35 years, Eaton and Rose (2011) found that traditional roles in dating relationships have experienced little change. Masters, Casey, Wells, and Morrison (2013) found that people in dating relationships moved toward egalitarian roles within the individual and dyadic levels, but these changes have not transferred to scripts at the cultural level. For example, if there was a dating relationship in which the female partner initiated sexual activity frequently, even more than her male partner, this did not change the cultural script that says, "Men want sex while women want love."

Overall, traditional roles and expectations are highly gendered. Men, who are granted the dominant role, had more power in relationships. They were expected to do fewer household chores, and had more influence when making decisions. Women, whom typically held the subordinate role in relationships, were given the bulk of the household labor and childcare tasks and had less power in the decision-making process. Same-sex couples had shown that engaging in egalitarian roles was possible by demonstrating the balance of power in their romantic relationships. Clearly power, whether equal or unequal could influence the health of relationships. Unequal power in heterosexual relationships could leave one partner with the bulk of house and childcare work, while maintaining a career. Therefore, unequal power has the potential to leave relationships vulnerable to deterioration and termination, especially for those who do not desire performing traditional roles. It is important to explore how feminism has the potential to change power and scripts within relationships.

Feminism and Gender Roles

Gloria Steinem (1995), a well-known leader of the feminist movement dating back to the 1960s defined feminism as fighting for equality for women and men across economic and racial divides. Feminism, essentially, should have the ability to transform the lives of others for the better. A second definition of feminism, offered by Harnois (2012), described feminism as an acknowledgement of gender inequality and the implementation of behaviors that promote justice and equality among the sexes. While individuals usually associate feminism as primarily a women's movement, researchers Hearn (2008) and Bojin (2013) used the term "pro-feminist" to describe men who take part in feminist campaigns, create strong relationships with women's rights networks, fight for gender equality, and promote anti-sexist attitudes. However, Klocke (2015) argued that men could not be considered feminists since they could not separate

themselves from the power and privilege that comes with being a man, although men can work towards feminist goals and ultimately be pro-feminists.

Looking at many definitions of feminism, Harnois (2012) concluded that feminism is both a mindset and a practice. She suggested that individuals must first obtain a feminist perspective, or a viewpoint that acknowledges the inequality among the sexes. Secondly, individuals need to engage in action that promotes feminism in the form of social movement. hooks (2000) said that engaging in movements was necessary in order for change to occur. She described the feminist movement as one that would eradicate sexism, exploitation, and oppression. Harnois (2012) recognized that feminist social movements, from wide-range movements directed at the state, to participating in Social Movement Organizations, were all highly effective in demanding equality.

Harnois (2012) offered a sociological perspective on feminism, saying that it consisted of three components: feminist ideology, feminist identity, and a social movement. Feminist ideology describes a web of interconnecting values, attitudes, and beliefs that were set on a foundation that honors equality. Factors that play a role in forming feminist ideologies include education, gender, and religion. Research showed that men and women who had a higher education were more likely to shape feminist ideologies (Powers et al., 2003; McCabe, 2005; Peltola et al. 2004). For religion, Davis and Greenstein (2009) found that conservative Protestant individuals were the least likely to support egalitarian views, while Jewish individuals were the most encouraging of egalitarianism, and Catholic and mainline Protestant individuals fell somewhere in the middle. Lastly, the researchers found that women were more likely to have feminist ideologies than men.

Feminist identities are influenced by many factors, including race and ethnic identity. Harnois (2005) said that African American women were much more apprehensive than Caucasian women to call themselves feminists, even if their views reflected feminist ideals. Rather than clinging to a feminist identity, Harnois (2013) claimed that some women of color (WOC) preferred to claim "gender-conscious identities," or identities that included other intersectional inequalities, such as "Black Feminist" or "Womanist." Schnittker, Freese, and Powell (2003) found that the difference between claiming feminist views and identifying as a feminist was generational, with older generations being more accepting of feminism. This demonstrates the evolution of the definition of feminism, and how it holds different meanings for individuals from different generations. Older women are more likely to call themselves feminists as opposed to members of younger generations, who are more reluctant to use the word "feminist" to describe themselves. WOC and other feminists also do not prefer the term "waves" to describe parts of feminist history. Hewitt (2010) argued that the use of "waves" to describe different feminist legacies often simplified, and ignored many other feminist movements that occurred before, during, or in between the waves. Therefore, the researcher of this study will not use the term "waves" in this study. Instead, key terms that focus more on events will be used to describe points of time in feminist history.

Finally, a social movement described feminist activism, and individuals' efforts to promote and implement equality. Harnois (2012) claimed that oppression alone could not stir large-scale feminist protests, but there were other social factors that built the foundations for a social movement to take place. Ferree and Hess (2000) claimed that the structure of domestic life and marriage, changes in education and wages, and industrialization were all factors that started feminist movements in the past. Dow and Wood (2014) pointed to "SlutWalks," the first one

organized in 2011, as protests from current feminist social movements enacted to reject victim blaming that occurs after sexual assaults, to establish that violence should not occur as a consequence as women's sexual activity, and to make the "slut" label their own. The same researchers recognized that current feminist movements include protests that are used for increasing channels for feminists' voices to be heard, and are marked by diversity. According to Bernstein (2008), one of the biggest influences of feminist movements is the creation of collective identities, meaning that groups of people identified with one another on one or more issues or life experiences. Collective identities can help people defy certain identities or values that are forced onto them. Feminist ideology, feminist identity, and feminist social movements all stand to create a platform used to help individuals move toward gender equality.

Accepting feminism. Individuals come to embrace feminist identities in a number of ways. Marine and Lewis (2014) studied young women, and described four ways in which these young women came to embrace feminism. First, the researchers argued that feminists are not born, but created over time. Women learned about feminism by communicating with others, discerning what is valuable in the world around them, and becoming more aware of the inequality between men and women. Becoming a feminist is an on-going process, where, as women begin to notice inequity among the sexes, they started recognizing past sexist experiences. Those sexist experiences established the platform for the formation of feminist beliefs.

Secondly, experiencing university life was a factor in the women's journey to becoming a feminist. At institutions of higher education, women were exposed to feminist teachers and peers, and also became knowledgeable about women's studies and history. Learning more about feminist perspectives helped develop a feminist lens for these women. Thirdly, the participants

gained a lot of knowledge about feminism when they had a feminist role model. These role models included mothers and grandmothers who acted as catalysts for feminist perspectives at an early age, increased the participants' awareness of sexism and women's goal of achieving equality. Finally, hearing non-feminist peers diminish feminism played a role in the participants' journey in becoming feminists. Hearing peers talk about the undesirability of feminism only reinforced the participants' development of feminist identities, and the participants began to resist disparaging feminist opinions.

Rejecting feminism. While many adopt feminist perspectives in college, other women reject feminist beliefs and identities. According to Harnois (2012), the current generation is experiencing a detachment between feminist ideology and identity. Faludi (1991) suggested that society blames feminism for creating large groups of supposedly unhappy single and childless women. However, Faludi countered, "[Feminism] asks that women be free to define themselves-instead of having their identity defined for them, time and again, by their culture and their men" (p. 15). Swirsky and Angelone (2014) examined reasons young women denounced the feminist label. In the study, the authors used an online survey to obtain data from 494 women. The survey included six demographic questions and three broad, open-ended questions that inquired about the participants' self-identification of feminism, their personal definition of feminism, and the experiences that led to their own conclusions about feminism.

Nine themes were found to be reasons some women refused to identify themselves as feminists, and were placed into three major categories. The first category included associating feminists with negative stereotypes. Some of these stereotypes included equating feminism with extremism, meaning that they believed that feminism harmed society, although the participants never indicated how or why feminists harmed society. Dow (2014) pointed out that extreme

stereotypes such as these originated from the women's liberation movement in the 1960s, when the media showed a deep anxiety of feminism, and believed that women would lose their femininity if they rejected appropriate attire and makeup. The media also painted feminists as women who loathed men and wanted to be men. Another stereotype Swirsky and Angelone (2014) found was that participants believed that men and women were inherently different, and that the traditional roles men and women were assigned (man as breadwinner/woman as submissive homemaker) should be embraced. Other stereotypes mentioned were that feminists were trying to get others to believe that women were superior to men and associated feminism with immorality (e.g. pro-abortion).

A number of other responses fell into the "Feminism is Unnecessary" category. Many participants said that they did not need feminism, because they did not feel inferior to men and they did not feel that they were being oppressed. Others believed that equality had already been achieved, that women in the current age had equal opportunity, and that feminism was an outdated concept. The last category included "other" responses. Participants associated feminism with activism. They believed themselves to have feminist perspectives, but did not label themselves as feminists because they were not doing anything to promote feminism. Other participants were not sure what feminism meant, having heard the word "feminism" used in different ways by different people. All these responses were reasons the participants resisted the feminist label.

Changing the feminist label. Feminism is a repugnant concept for some individuals for many reasons. In her book *A Little F'd Up: Why Feminism is not a Dirty Word*, Zeilinger (2012) argued that feminism, as a concept, had a public relations problem. The author acknowledged that the main problem with feminism was that no one can agree on what feminism is. The author

argued that the struggle was not all that surprising because the people promoting the feminist movement were attempting to unify and liberate a tremendous amount of people under ambiguous and various values.

Zeilinger proposed a renaming of the feminist movement. One reason for this was because the women who took part in Suffrage for the right to vote and challenged society's view of women as property in the late 19th and 20th Centuries, and women who joined in Women's Liberation, who fought for reproductive rights and the rights of minorities starting in the 1960s, were not always positive, with many members of the movement promoting racism and elitism. For example, the majority of the Women's Liberation movement consisted of middle- to upper-class White women who formed their movement to accommodate individuals of the same demographics. Another example was the feminist movement's history of racism. Suffrage feminists excluded Black women from the movement because they were feared to complicate or jeopardize the movement's aim. Not many people are aware of this, mostly because feminists tend to ignore the negative aspects of feminism's past, not to mention that these past transgressions might act to discourage others from joining the movement. Giving feminism a new label would help feminists distance themselves from past negative baggage.

Another reason Zeilinger thought that the feminist movement needed a new name was because "fem-inism" seems to promote a no-boys-allowed message. The term itself, in some ways, promotes exclusivity, and calls for an Us versus Them mentality. Also, men who identify with feminism might be labeled "gay" or "weak" by other men, just for being associated with a term that seems to support women only. Zeilinger believed that not only does feminism need men for the cause, but feminism also benefits men by eradicating harmful masculine stereotypes. A third reason the feminist movement should have a new name is because, looking at the last the

main feminist movements with more current feminists focusing on the freedom to use their bodies as they want and with an emphasis on challenging heteronormity, it is clear that the movements were all brought about by different people, who wanted different things. The movements were different from one another in every way. The current movement of feminism is no exception; therefore, a new name is necessary. Finally, feminism needs a different name because the movement is no longer about gender alone. It is about fighting for equality for different oppressed and marginalized groups. Therefore, instead of using "feminism" to describe a movement that is about everyone, a more inclusive term would be more appropriate.

Although feminism has been an important aspect of society and history for a very long time, it remains a very complex concept. It includes a combination of feminist ideology, identity, and movement, yet the current generation struggles most with the disconnection between feminist ideology and identity. Despite many young women identifying themselves as feminists, there are plenty of other women refusing the label, due to stereotypes, ignorance, and confusion about what feminism stands for. Regardless of whether individuals subscribe to the feminist label, many embrace the spirit of feminism and structure their lives to promote equality. In conclusion, feminism is about promoting equality, and many women embrace feminist ideals, even though they do not identify themselves as feminists.

The extent to which someone identifies as a feminist and/or emphasizes feminist ideology likely enhances both the way they thought about gender as well as how they enacted gender roles. This may influence attitudes and behavior in terms of dating. Having feminist ideologies might make one question traditional dating gender roles. Feminism may give individuals the validation and the flexibility to desire more egalitarian roles. This leads to the first research question.

RQ1: How do feminist ideologies shape dating practices for heterosexual, college-aged women?

Feminism could be the key to individuals re-thinking societal norms and practices, especially when it comes to dating. However, if feminist ideologies encourage individuals to take on egalitarian roles, their attempts to change will likely consist of a lot of work. Feminism may tell women that they are free to take on egalitarian roles in dating; however, feminism cannot smother the voice of society which continues to call for the performance of traditional dating roles. Receiving these two contradictory messages will likely cause women to feel cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive Dissonance Theory, originally developed by Leon Festinger (1957), focused on how people handle inconsistency with their actions and thoughts in their everyday lives. The basic premise of the theory states that human beings desire consistency, because when consistency does not occur, individuals feel dissonance, or a feeling of psychological discomfort. Naturally, individuals do what they can to eliminate those feelings of dissonance while also keeping their distance from anything or anyone who could possibly incite dissonance.

Festinger (1957) used the term "cognitions" to describe an individual's thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves and their actions. Dissonance occurs when two or more of these cognitions come to be at odds with each other. For example, one might feel dissonance if they support and believe in politically liberal views, so that they support gay marriage and abortion rights. At the same time, this individual might be raised Roman Catholic, and still attend church every weekend where gay relations and abortion rights were often denounced by the parish priest. In this instance, dissonance occurs because what this individual believes (liberal

views) does not align with the beliefs of her/his religion, and therefore going to church every week may cause dissonance.

A second concept Festinger developed spoke of the magnitude of dissonance. When people feel dissonance, they do not all feel the same strength of dissonance. They individually feel a different degree of strength of dissonance, depending on the importance and relevancy of the cognitions involved. Sticking with the liberal beliefs/conservative religion example, if the individual develops vague liberal beliefs, and does not feel so strongly about those beliefs to go to openly support gay rights, donate to pro-choice organizations, or even decline to vote in Presidential elections because their beliefs hold little significance, he/she would experience a low magnitude of dissonance. Therefore, this individual might not feel all that bothered about going to church every week. If the individual felt very strongly about her/his liberal beliefs, she/he would feel a more acute sense of cognitive dissonance, and may be more inclined to make a change to reduce dissonance.

Reducing cognitive dissonance. Festinger (1957) proposed several ways to reduce cognitive dissonance. One way is by changing behavior. For example, if one carried strong pro-gay rights and pro-choice attitudes, they may decide not to go to that church anymore. This person changed his/her behavior to eliminate dissonance. A second way proposed that one can change the environment to alleviate dissonance, which can mean eliminating or adding something to the environment that would reduce dissonance in some way. For example, the individual with liberal views might start a petition asking the church priest to keep political agendas out of church services. Changing the environment proves to be one of the more difficult actions to take, because many environments fall out of the control of an individual. To use the same example, one could not change the views of the Catholic Church when it comes to gay

rights and abortion, and neither could one change the habits of the priest in mentioning his opposing views during church services. The individual could not change the environment, but they have the option of going to a new environment, for example, going to a different church that supports more moderate political views, or where they refrain from discussing politics. Lastly, one can seek more consistent information to back up their opinions. For instance, the same individual with liberal views could go out and find information that strengthens his/her views, or information that denounces the church for not exercising grace for all people. Festinger recognized that changing one's behavior is challenging, so most individuals end up changing their attitudes or opinions.

Dissonance frequently occurs as people make decisions in their lives. A decision can produce dissonance when an individual has to decide between two agreeable alternatives, such as traveling to see family on Thanksgiving Day, or staying home to watch the Dallas Cowboys game. One can also be presented with two disagreeable alternatives, such as being given the option of taking a few hours to help cook the Thanksgiving meal or taking the time to clear the table after the meal and washing the pile of dirty dishes left in the kitchen sink. Cognitive dissonance can also occur when one has to make a decision and there are several alternatives to choose from. For example, there might be an option to watch the Cowboys game, see a movie on Thanksgiving night with family, or visit relatives for their annual Thanksgiving evening party. All these options may offer a lot of joy and comfort for the individual, so it would cause dissonance for this person to have to choose only one of these options. Dissonance occurs most prominently, however, when an individual feels forced to do something by society that the person may not agree with. For example, an individual might not celebrate Thanksgiving for cultural or religious reasons, but dissonance occurs because he/she is forced by their significant

other to celebrate Thanksgiving with their family, because it would seem insensitive and selfish for this individual not to celebrate Thanksgiving. When this type of dissonance occurs, Festinger hypothesized that individuals would work to change their attitudes, rather than their behaviors and their environments.

Knowing that people can experience dissonance from the clash of two or more cognitions, there is a strong possibility for cognitive dissonance to occur among college-aged women who hold feminist beliefs, but who still date under powerful traditional scripts which promote traditional gender roles and power differences. This demonstrates Festinger's idea of how people would feel significant cognitive dissonance if certain actions or beliefs were enforced on someone who did not agree with those actions or beliefs. As a result, women who have feminist beliefs might experience cognitive dissonance when navigating strongly gendered scripts such as dating. It is important to understand what this dissonance looks like and how it is managed. This leads to the following research question:

RQ2: How do college-aged female individuals who hold feminist ideologies manage cognitive dissonance as they navigate dating relationships?

Peer Support

Social support is a key factor of influence in many kinds of human interactions. Social support was defined by Daly and Baumeister (2016) as the feeling of being held at high esteem by a social network that is marked by mutual caring and helping actions. It came out of an innate, evolutionary need to seek and provide support for others in times of distress. The authors argued that there are three types of social support. The first of these was instrumental support which involved providing practical assistance to others that might alleviate the problem at hand. This may mean giving advice, or providing a third-party understanding of a stressful or discouraging

event, or providing financial help. Social support can also come in the form of emotional

support, which is aimed more at helping an individual solve a problem, rather than trying the fix

the problem. Providing emotional support includes talking about emotions, increasing

encouragement, and making an individual feel important and cared for. Lastly, Daly and

Baumeister mentioned that social support can also manifest in what is known as implicit social

support, which comes from having a social network that may not provide direct social support,

but just knowing that one has others to rely on brings them comfort. These are just some of the

general positive social influences social support can provide, but social support can also help

individuals in troublesome and stressful situations.

 Benefits of peer support. Research shows that social support has many different benefits

in life circumstances, especially when it comes to female friendships and their heterosexual

dating experiences (Jensen & Rauer, 2014; Sprecher, Felmlee, Orbuch, & Willetts, 2002; Canary

& Stafford, 1991). A growing body of research on social support centers on dating violence and

abuse. Dating violence is known to cause negative effects such as hopelessness, depression, and

suicidal behavior (Howard & Wang, 2003), self-esteem issues, and eating disorders (Ackard &

Neumark-Sztainer, 2002) in victims. When looking at the role that parents and peers play in the

lives of female adolescents experiencing dating violence, Richards and Branch (2013) found that

parental and peer support protected, reinforced, and increased victims' self-esteem. Peer support

even affected the potential chances of perpetration and victimization of dating violence. In one

longitudinal study, Richards, Branch, and Ray (2014) found that adolescents who had peer

support were significantly less likely to perpetrate physical and emotional violence on their

dating partners five years later, and were less likely to become victims of emotional abuse.

Research also shows that social support can have positive outcomes for those in mental or emotional distress. Novara, Garro, and Rienzo (2015) found a link between social support and coping strategies in emergency workers who help those in need. Social support usually came from family members and friends, and the social support they provided these emergency workers had the potential to encourage them to adapt to traumatic experiences. Overall, the effects of social support suggested that emergency workers should increase ties among family and friends, since social support could decrease the feelings of loneliness and the weight of responsibility when it comes to making life choices for those who need medical help. Once again, social support has proven to have positive influences for those who suffer from emotional, mental, and physical distress.

Peer support and dating processes. Looking at romantic relationships, peer support has had an influence on the dating process, for example through partner selection. Research on social networks by Felmlee (2001) showed that the approval or disapproval of one's social network towards a potential romantic partner can increase positive outcomes for the couple, or it can cause the termination of a relationship. One study found that if peers approved of a potential dating partner, the individual considering entering a dating relationship felt more liking for the potential partner, and therefore became more likely to choose that partner (Sprecher, Felmlee, Orbuch, & Willetts, 2002). Also, Wright and Sinclair (2012) found that peers had more influence in partner selection than parents did, but only if the relationship-seeking individual did not depend on their parents for instrumental support or financial assistance. Even during the course of romantic relationships, Sinclair et al. (2015) found that if an individual's social network communicated support for the individual's partner, the individual felt more commitment and

love for their romantic partner because they felt more overall relationship satisfaction. So, it is clear that social support can make or break romantic relationships.

Young female adults tended to solicit social support from peers than their parents when it came to dating relationships. In one study, Friedman and Morgan (2009) investigated how emerging adult females went to their mothers and peers to receive support and advice on sexual issues, but participants preferred going to friends for support rather than parents. Peer support also seemed to be more helpful to the participants than parental support. The issues discussed when seeking social support included topics on sexual health, sexual behavior, romantic and dating situations, identity, discrimination and violence. The sexual orientation of the participants had an influence on the kind of support they received. The heterosexual participants found advice from their parents/friends more helpful than sexual-minority participants (LGBTQ) did. Another study by Lefkowitz and Espinosa-Hernandez (2007) looked at how young female adults talked to their mothers and female peers about sexual matters. The participants talked to friends more often than they talked to their mothers. The topic of abstinence, however, was talked about with mothers frequently, but was one of the least talked about topics with friends. Participants experienced better quality of communication with friends, most likely because they saw friends more often, and they naturally felt more open and comfortable with them. Talking about sexual topics with friends was strongly correlated with sexual attitudes than they were with mothers. Also, Meeus, Oosterwegel, and Vollebergh (2002) found that discussions about behaviors and emotions with friends were strongly correlated with sexual behavior. Overall, peer relationships among adolescents strongly correlated to relational commitment and exploration.

Morgan and Korobov (2012) claimed that conversations with peers about dating help co-construct identity, especially when friends talked about romantic relationships. During these

31

discussions, friends exchanged past dating experiences, encouraged one another, joked about their dating problems, offered advice, and volunteered instrumental assistance in order to support one another. Kerrick and Thorne (2014) found that female friends also co-constructed identity by talking about whom they desired romantically and sexually by using reciprocal identities, meaning that the friends took turns acting as the supporter and the prober. In doing this, they created personal identities for themselves and identities for the people in which they had romantic or sexual interests in.

It is clear that social support from friends played an impactful role for young, college-aged women. Social support not only acted as a kind of mental and emotional shield for those under stress and those who are in harmful relationships, but social support also impacted romantic relationship outcomes. It is also fair to say that young women rely on friends as providers of social support, and friends help in the formation of women's identities. What was not known was the extent to which social support had an influence on women's performance of traditional or egalitarian roles in the dating process. Specifically, we did not know if women interacting with friends and family members who have feminist ideologies and identities affects their willingness to distance themselves from traditional roles, and instead, embrace egalitarian roles. This leads to the final research question.

RQ3: How do conversations with others, including family and friends, influence heterosexual, college-aged women's dating practices and ideologies?

In summary, dating scripts in the U.S. are strong and perpetuate a dating system that promotes unequal gender roles and power. Feminist ideologies encourage people to perform egalitarian roles in dating scenarios. Feminism also has the power to make stubborn societal scripts more flexible and open. As feminism becomes a bigger conversation in society, more

individuals are accepting feminist ideologies, even though they may be reluctant to use the word "feminist" to describe themselves. With more acceptance of feminist ideologies comes mixed messages on how one should date. Societal scripts will continue to call for traditional dating roles, but feminist ideologies will call for more egalitarian dating roles. Scripts and feminist ideologies will likely create contradictory messages to individuals on how to navigate dating, and individuals who experience cognitive dissonance will have to find ways of relieving that dissonance. College-aged women are likely to experience cognitive dissonance when it comes to dating because they are learning and understanding what it means to have feminist ideologies, often while dating. Unique to college women is that their peers are readily available to talk with them about dating. Peers serve as support-givers for many individuals, and their presence may have an influence in the dating process of others.

There are several aims of this study. One aim is to understand how college-aged women today understand feminism, and if/how those feminist beliefs influence the way these women date. The message of equality might have an influence on women's dating practices. Another goal is to understand how women manage cognitive dissonance in a dating context. College-aged women who identify as having feminist beliefs will likely experience discomfort in trying to date with equal roles while also having the need to honor long-standing traditional dating roles. Examining how these women manage this discomfort is crucial to understanding the emergence of new dating ideologies. A final aim of this study is to explore if and how peers influence women's dating practices through conversations. Since peers often take precedents over parents for college-aged individuals, they may have more power to affect others' dating ideologies.

From this study, one can learn and understand how societal scripts are changing. This is necessary to learn because the U.S. has performed dating the same way for decades, and those

traditional gender roles in dating are reflected in career roles, as well. Now, things are changing. More women are entering the workforce, and changing the roles of women and men so that men are no longer the sole provider of families, and women are not the sole caretakers of their families. This is a power change that may be significant to dating practices and reflect an overall changed in power in every day society that will be passed down to future generations. Individuals must understand these societal changes in order to know how to navigate through dating, their careers, and life as a whole.

Chapter III: Methodology and Procedure

Participants

The participant sample included 15 female college students enrolled in a mid-sized university in the Southwest United States. The participants were recruited in three ways. First, the researcher visited undergraduate and graduate communication classes to present an overview of the thesis study and the participant criteria. Secondly, fliers (see Appendix A) were handed out to all students in these classes and were also given to graduate students in the Communication department. A few professors also posted the call for participants on Blackboard. Originally, participants had to be between the age of 18 and 29 in order to participate in the study. The age range was later expanded to include participants between the age of 18 and 30. Another criterion was that participants had to have at least one past heterosexual romantic relationship.[1] Participants also had to identify as having feminist beliefs, meaning that they agreed with the belief that men and women should have equal opportunities. Finally, after each interview, participants were given a few fliers to give to other women whom they thought might be eligible and interested in participating in the study. This was a snowballing method used in order to recruit more participants (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

All participants fell into the 19 to 30 age range, with a mean range of 23 years. The participants were involved in a variety of relationship types. Most participants were single (40%), married (27%), or in dating relationship (27%). Others were engaged (7%). Ethnic demographics were also noted in the interview through participant self-identification, meaning that the participants were asked open-ended questions about their race/ethnicity, and participants verbally described the race/ethnicity they identified with. Most of the participants identified as Latina/Hispanic (34%), White (20%), or a combination of the two (27%). Others identified

themselves as African American or Black (13%) or a combination of African American and White (7%).

Procedures

In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted in order to gain an understanding of the 15 participants' dating experiences and feminist ideologies in their own words. The researcher wanted to capture participants' belief systems and their stories through the use of interviews in order to produce experience-rich data. Conducting more interviews was unnecessary, since saturation was found at the thirteenth interview.

The interview (see Appendix B) was divided into five sections. The first section focused on assessing the participants' feminist beliefs and served to answer the first research question. It included questions such as, "With whom do you talk about your feminist beliefs and why?" and "Where did your feminist beliefs come from?" The second and third sections inquired about the participants' romantic relationship beliefs and dating experiences. Participants were asked questions such as, "How have your feminist beliefs changed your ideas about dating?" and "When you imagine the ideal first date, what does that look like?" Both sections were aimed at answering the second research question. The fourth section of the interview covered dating advice and addressed the third research question. This section included questions such as, "Who do you regularly talk with about dating and why?" and "Can you give me an example of dating advice you recently received?" The last section consisted of three brief questions that inquired about the participants' age, race or ethnicity, and current relationship status.

Participants who met the criteria and who wanted to participate contacted the researcher to set an interview time. All interviews were conducted face-to-face at the campus library or in a conference room on campus. The informed consent document was given to each participant

before the interview began. All participants gave consent to be audio recorded. Participants were told that the interview was meant to be similar to a conversation, that there were no right or wrong answers, and that they were allowed to stop and leave the interview at any point in time. Participants were assured that they would not be identified in the study in any way and that they would be given pseudonyms (see Appendix C) to protect their identities. The longest interview lasted 70 minutes, while the shortest interview lasted 17 minutes. The average amount of time the interviews lasted was 37 minutes. Field notes were also taken during the interviews.

Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, the researcher listened to all the audio recordings while simultaneously transcribing the interviews. The transcriptions yielded 7,299 lines and 168 single-spaced pages of transcribed data. In order to avoid visual distractions, transcription line numbers were not used to reference the indirect or direct quotations from the participants. Also, technology now allows for easy searches to quickly find terms or sentences in the transcriptions. The data analysis then began with a first read of the transcriptions. After the first read was complete, the researcher conducted open coding. Lindlof and Taylor (2010) described open coding as a process where individuals, "label, separate, compile, and organize data." (p. 216). The researcher read every transcription while utilizing open coding.

Each transcript was highlighted for themes and was reviewed in accordance with the research questions. Potential themes for each research question that initially manifested were recorded. A major theme was discovered when an attitude, event, or action in the participants' interviews appeared in the majority of other participants' interviews. When a potential theme showed up in one or more interviews, the interview study codes were written down under that theme. For example, if one theme was found in eight interviews, all eight study codes were

grouped under that theme. The researcher also reviewed the data for any additional themes. After the thesis study was completed, the researcher sent out an email that contained a summary of the results to all participants of the study. The researcher encouraged the participants to ask questions or make comments about the results summary and the study, and received a few emails from the participants with comments about the study. The comments included congratulatory notes to the researcher of this study on being close to finishing the thesis. Other participants noted that they agreed with the findings and that they could see their own experiences reflected in the results.

Chapter IV: Results

The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of how women's feminist beliefs influenced their dating ideologies and practices. This study examined the potential clash between participants' feminist desires for egalitarian roles and the societal pull of traditional dating practices, and how participants worked to resolve the dissonance that resulted in this clash. This study also investigated participants' conversations with others to see if these interactions had an influence on participants' dating practices or beliefs.

The results of the study introduced themes identified and organized from 15 interviews. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section covers participants' descriptions of their feminist beliefs and the ways that participants' feminist beliefs shape their dating expectations. The second section offers insight to how participants resolved cognitive dissonance in dating. Finally, the third section examines the communication of feminist beliefs and dating practices.

Feminism and Dating

The definition of feminism has remained ambiguous over time, with its continually-changing values (Zeilinger, 2012). For this reason, it is important to have an understanding of what it meant for participants to have feminist beliefs. It is also important to understand how feminist beliefs influenced dating expectations in terms of gender roles. Having feminist beliefs may lead participants to want equality of roles in the dating process.

Defining feminist beliefs. All of the participants identified as having feminist beliefs when they were recruited. When asked whether or not they would tell others they were feminists, twelve out of fifteen participants said they would say they were feminists, although half of the twelve individuals added further explanations to their feminist labels. Emily, age 19, described it

this way: "I would call myself a feminist to a certain point…I'm not a huge go 'round talk about feminists all the time. But I do believe that women have equal values as men." Emily, while claiming to have feminist beliefs saw feminism on a scale, where the more expressive and active feminists are on the more extreme end of that scale. By explaining that she is a feminist up "to a certain point," Emily attempted to make others understand she is not an extreme feminist. Another participant, Megan, a recently engaged 22-year-old, said that she added a second label to her verbal claim that she is a feminist:

There's always this connotation that people associate with feminist, so whenever I do say that I am a feminist I say I'm also an equality-ist where I want equality for [men and women] and I think that it's important to have a balance where both receive the same kind of respect for the same kind of position.

Finally, Genevieve, a married 29-year-old, talked about her recent education on feminism through her college courses, and how even though she recently gained a better understanding of the term "feminist," she still struggled to verbalize her feminist beliefs to others. When asked what she would say if a stranger came up and asked her if she was a feminist, Genevieve explained it this way:

So if I think of it in the correct terms, the definition, yes I'm a feminist, but I think more people have a bad connotation of what it means to be a feminist and so after I was educated, I would say yes, but before I was educated, I would have most likely have said no because the connotation of being a feminist is like burn your bras kind of don't shave your armpits protest. At least that's what I thought of before. And so now that I'm educated, I would say yes.

These participants demonstrated that they have an awareness of feminist stereotypes and peoples' negative attitudes toward feminism. As a result, the six participants added more explanation to their claim to be feminists in order to stave off negative stereotypes and sufficiently manage the presentation of themselves to others.

When asked what having feminist beliefs meant to them, participants gave answers that related to equality. Maria, age 19, talked about the importance of equality for women, while also respecting men, "I do believe that you should fight for equality and it doesn't mean you should underrate men, but try to fight for equality and to get our values and rights recognized." Rachel, age 25 and who had been married a few years, discussed how she wanted equality for all individuals, "It means that I would like equality amongst all humans, it's something that I believe that everyone should have. There's equality in how we do business, equality in how we perform at life in general."

Isabel, a married 28-year-old, reiterated the values that come with feminist beliefs, "I believe feminism talks about equality. Equality of gender so in regards of having the same rights, being respected as a person with equal opportunities, equal rights as male or female."

Genevieve's idea of equality related to the workplace, and she gave an example to demonstrate the unfairness of workplace inequality:

So what [feminist beliefs] means to me is I believe that women should be on equal status with men, we should have the same opportunities and we should have the same opportunities as in working. Same career opportunities that men do, for example, I was talking to somebody the other day who was a lawyer and she had mentioned that she was on the track to be a partner in the firm, but she wanted to have kids. If she had kids, they were gonna take her off the partner track and she would never be able to have that

opportunity, so she was at a point where she had to decide do I want a family, or do I

want to have this career of my dreams and I don't believe in things like that. That's not

fair, so I think that goes with having feminist beliefs. Women should not be penalized for

having a family and things like that.

The common theme regarding feminist beliefs was the need for equality, indicating that the

participants were aware of sex inequality in the world around them. The participants also pointed

out the importance of equality for everyone, not just women.

Feminist beliefs and dating expectations. This study focused on how feminist beliefs

influenced dating practices. Therefore, it was important to look at how participants' dating

expectations aligned with their feminist beliefs, and to find out how feminist beliefs may have

changed dating role expectations. Dating expectations among the participants reflected two

themes: the theme of enacting *traditional first dates* and the theme of exhibiting *flexible role*

expectations from the very beginning of a dating relationship.

Traditional first dates. The first theme developed from participants who felt strongly

about their first dates following tradition, while the following dates allowed for more egalitarian

roles. Megan and Lauren gave some examples. Megan said this about her first dates:

As far as who pays, traditionally on the first date, I allowed the guy to pay for the first

date but dates after that I liked to pay for some of them. It's kind of a traditional

customary thing that I do, but I think that after the first date, it's important for the woman

to feel like she is involved in paying as well that way it's a balance.

Lauren, a 19-year-old who was in a dating relationship, also felt that first dates should be more

traditional, "I like to think that the first date is traditional. With that you're still getting to know

someone, you know? So you wanna make sure you're respecting their beliefs." Many of the participants saw first dates as distinct from subsequent dates.

Flexible role expectations. The second theme developed from participants who were able to enact flexible dating expectations in the onset of dating relationships, including a mix of traditional and egalitarian roles. Some participants even denounced traditionalism altogether. Maria stated how she did not believe in certain traditional ideals, "That belief of the guy should pay the first date. I think that's ridiculous. From the first time, I'm like let's split the check…instead of you paying for me."

Kathleen, who was age 19 and single, felt similar towards traditional values:

> If it were someone that I had just met, we were gonna go get to know each other, I like to pay for myself and then he can pay for himself, too, cause I don't need anybody to take care of me. I can take care of myself. I know it could just be courtesy to pay [for] me but if we're barely getting to know each other, I don't think we should do that even down along the road, I like to offer to pay for both of us and if they do as well, it should just be equal.

Another participant, Rachel, did not denounce traditionalism. Instead, she described how she implemented some traditional and egalitarian roles when she dated her now-husband:

> How I always like it is that he pays for [the] movie aspect and dinner aspect, and dessert I would pay for. It's still giving a little bit to the tradition of the male paying, but with a new spin of allowing me to be an equal and providing something to the date.

The results regarding dating expectations reveal that participants varied in the extent to which they veered away from tradition. As a result, there was equality in some aspects of the date, such as both partners paying for different parts of the date, yet they still honored tradition

43

by allowing their male partners to pick them up/drop them off at home, or allowing him to pay more money on the date.

Managing Cognitive Dissonance

The development of participants' feminist beliefs brings a new set of values to the dating game, particularly the focus on equality. Society, however, values traditionalism, with men leading romantic relationships as the default way to navigate dating relationships. One purpose of this study was to examine how participants resolved cognitive dissonance caused by the clash of individuals' egalitarian dating ideologies that stem from feminist beliefs and society's traditional dating ideologies, which promote patriarchy. It is important to have an understanding of why and how participants resolved cognitive dissonance because it involves the strengthening of participants' feminist beliefs. For the majority of participants, cognitive dissonance was present and resolved at different points in their past. The participants resolved cognitive dissonance in three ways. Some participants *altered* the importance of cognitions in order to resolve dissonance. Another way participants managed cognitive dissonance was through *relationship termination*. Participants also avoided cognitive dissonance through *partner selection*.

Altered cognitions. Some participants described an experience when their feminist beliefs were violated. Participants mentioned how they altered their beliefs in order to rationalize the inconsistencies they experienced. Altering beliefs came in the form of making some beliefs more important than others. For instance, after Lisa, a 20-year-old who was in a dating relationship, stated that her current relationship consisted of equal roles, she described the ideal date with her boyfriend, "He'd drive me back home. He'd pay for the movie, pay for everything, cause he won't let me. And then, probably come home and hang out." Then Lisa acknowledged

the importance of traditional roles, "I think people expect a guy to do so much more in a relationship cause they're guys and if they don't do it, they're seen as weak. Like why are you letting your girlfriend do that?"

Lisa experienced dissonance because of her desire for equal roles, but according to her description of a date with her boyfriend, the roles were not equal. As a result, Lisa acknowledged that it was appropriate for her boyfriend to pay for all dates because if he did not, he would experience social consequences for not adhering to traditional roles. Lisa made it a priority to protect her boyfriend from social consequences by allowing him to be the active partner in their relationship.

Another example of altering cognitions came from Megan. She described feminism in terms of equality by telling others that she is a feminist and an equality-ist, but when asked if she had ever experienced a time when her beliefs and dating experiences conflicted, Megan talked about traditionalism:

> For example, the idea that [women] expect men to pay for the first date's meal, that would in a sense conflict with the idea that men and women are equal, but I think it's more something that's traditional for me. And it's something that also makes my date feel good so that would kinda be a conflict[ing] belief.

Megan recognized her conflicting beliefs and actions, but she eliminated dissonance by altering cognitions by personalizing traditionalism and feeling that allowing her date to pay benefitted him.

Relationship termination. Several of the participants mentioned experiencing tension in past romantic relationships because their partners enacted anti-feminist attitudes and actions. Sometimes, participants' romantic partners were even emotionally and mentally abusive towards

them. The way the participants overcame cognitive dissonance in these situations was by breaking up with their partners. This change in participants' behavior likely served to eliminate dissonance. Emily described how a previous boyfriend treated her when she tried to help him with his outdoor work:

> He was working on a tractor or something, and he would [say], oh, go get me this tool. He'd go all into all this detail but wouldn't explain it, and I'd come back with the wrong one he would get all mad, and say that this is why women don't do anything, you should just back to the house and make me a sandwich. He literally said that a few times.

During these situations, Emily was not afraid to confront him about his behavior:

> I'm like no. I'm not gonna make you a sandwich. I'm gonna leave until you fix your attitude. I said that specifically, and I left every time he did that. He knew better. His views were never gonna change, and so I was like no, I'm not gonna be considered less than you. And if you're not gonna fix that, then that's that.

She experienced one last time when her ex-boyfriend treated her badly after she was forced to cancel their date plans to babysit her nieces. Emily struggled to hold on to her feminist beliefs while experiencing emotional abuse from her ex-boyfriend. She eventually eliminated dissonance by breaking up with him.

Another example of managing dissonance through relationship termination was described by Akilah, a married 30-year-old, whose culture values men over women, and therefore, men are deemed as leaders of relationships and households. Akilah describes how men in her culture reacted to strong and powerful women in her country:

> I mean you don't want to tell a man that you're equal with them. They don't like to hear that. They tend to just run away, so usually if a woman is successful, has a good job, has

a good life, they still bash her online especially if she's trying to [be] a prominent person. They bash her all the time because she is not married and they tie that around being a feminist who wants to be equal with her husband and it's not acceptable.

She went on to talk about one of her ex-boyfriends, who grew up in the same culture. His beliefs about women and feminism mirrored the values of his culture:

He said stuff like oh you behave like a man. And he said stuff like I don't see you as someone who is going to be submissive when we get married. [I] see [you] as someone who would want to control everything, who would tell me I can't do this, who'd want to have a 50/50 power in the house and he always made that clear to me. He told me I want a woman who would not think she's equal with me.

Akilah eventually broke up with her boyfriend, and explained how her feminist beliefs were partly to blame for why she had to let him go:

Part of the reason why we broke up is because of me being this feminist because he has this view that is so anti-feminism that I could not just buy into regardless about how I feel about him. That was what eventually made me realize this is not my man.

Akilah terminated her romantic relationship because her ex-boyfriend could not accept her feminist views.

Partner selection. Participants also talked about actively avoiding dissonance through partner selection. Many of the participants were aware of the strength of their feminist beliefs, and tended to look for partners who were accepting of their feminist attitudes, while avoiding partners with anti-feminist attitudes. Akilah described what she was looking for in a man before she met her husband:

I wanted to get married. One of the things I was looking for was a guy who shared my belief. I don't want to be with a guy who is not feminist because such a man would not respect me as much as I would want him to.

Kathleen looked for men who shared her beliefs by verbalizing to her partners that she would not be taking a passive, motherly role in their relationship:

Whenever I date men I make it clear that I'm not the type to be after them, cleaning up after them, like I'm not your mom. You still have to do your own things. It's equal, I'm not gonna be the stay-at-home [mom] and you're the one who does everything, even though it's not gonna be that serious, of course, but just to where I make it clear that I'm not gonna be taking care of them.

While Kathleen had the criteria of her possible romantic partners having feminist beliefs, she also made it clear to them from the very beginning that she valued equality in her romantic relationships. That way, her potential partners had the opportunity to change their minds about dating her before their relationship developed on a deeper level.

Communication of Feminist Beliefs

The third research question focused on how college student's conversations with others shape their feminist beliefs and dating practices. Participants noted that communication played an important role in shaping and reinforcing their beliefs, which in turn, shaped their thoughts about dating. Participants also described various types of conversations and interactions with friends about dating. Advice was also a key aspect of communicating about dating.

The development of feminist ideology. Participants were often reflective of the ways that their feminist beliefs developed. Sometimes this occurred through explicit conversations with people that the participants viewed as mentors or valued authority figures, and sometimes it

occurred through observation of relationships and interactions. Three themes emerged: *verbal socialization, emulations of egalitarianism*, and *rejection of traditionalism*.

      Verbal socialization. One way participants talked about the formation of their feminist beliefs was through verbal socialization, where parents or other authority figures talked to participants about women, their capabilities, and their worth. The authority figures explicitly had a lot of influence on participants, since they served as role models for equality and courage. Megan talked about how her beliefs formed because of her parents' encouragement:

> My mom always told me to never assume that you can't do something just because
>
> you're a woman, so in regards to my mom, especially, she wanted to make sure that as I
>
> grew up and I enjoyed math and science. She wanted me to know that that's okay, that
>
> it's okay to be a woman and enjoy a field that is considered a man's field and to break
>
> that mold. My dad put an emphasis on respecting me and that any man that I was with in
>
> the future or any position that I was in, I should hold respect for myself too and know that
>
> I could do anything that a man could do and that I should have the same respect for
>
> whatever it is that I wanted to do.

Rachel also experienced the development of her feminist beliefs through her mom's verbalization of how women should be treated:

> She has taught me how to be strong and very independent. As an only child she always
>
> told me never to take lick from anybody, that I'm equal to everyone's thoughts and
>
> beliefs, but that does not mean that I am superior to others. So, she just taught me about
>
> equality and from there I started learning about equality and feminism.

Finally, Genevieve's mom had a unique way of socializing her to know her worth:

She's[a] very strong woman [laughs]. Raising me, she would always have me watch the Lifetime channel with her and [she would say] never let anybody treat you like what's happening on this movie [laughs]. So she's the one who raised me to be very strong and always to seek justice and fairness in how people treat me.

Genevieve's mom used Lifetime movies as examples to demonstrate how men should not treat her. In this way, Genevieve learned to remind herself of her worth in dating relationships.

Emulations of egalitarianism. Other participants observed and desired to imitate others who displayed feminist beliefs and behaviors by enacting egalitarian roles. The observations the participants made influenced their feminist beliefs and their desires to implement equality in their relationships. Genevieve explained how her Aunt influenced her view of strong, independent women:

I think she broke a lot of barriers in that she is a veteran of the Vietnam War and she was a drill sergeant and she was one of the few women who were deployed to the combat zone. She never really talked about it except for the good things. Being in a man's world but being able to succeed and excel in that world and just growing up, all of her accomplishments all on her wall, her drill sergeant hat, all the people she led. I thought it was really cool because she explained to me in that time there were very few women that they would deploy out there to the front lines to be with the guys and so I think I gained a lot of those beliefs from her, too, that women should be able to do these things that men can do, too, because she did it.

While her aunt might not have talked a lot about her time in Vietnam, Genevieve observed all the evidence of her Aunt's accomplishments and realized the great capabilities of women. Her Aunt influenced the formation of Genevieve's feminist beliefs.

Lisa described what she observed about her parents' relationship and how they ran their household:

> It's equal in their marriage, it's equal in my household where I grew up. It's never the man does the "man job" and the woman does a "woman's job." It was always "Well if you're busy, I'll do that" and if my dad was busy, my mom would do that. It was always equal.

She then talked about how her parents influenced the way she wanted her dating relationships to unfold, "I look at a romantic relationship as seen as how my parents are together, I think that's how a relationship should be. I think it should be 50/50." Lisa's observation of her parents' performance of egalitarian roles helped her to realize the benefits of the flexibility of roles feminism offers to individuals. Kathleen described her parents' gender role reversal:

> My dad was like the mom in the relationship. My dad did laundry, my dad cooked, my dad was the one who was always working. He'd work close to sixty to eighty hours a week and still my mom never did anything. All she does is she's a teacher aid at a school so she just has eight to three. She came home she kinda just relaxed and did what she wanted and my dad was the one who took care of us. Both outside of work and in the house.

Kathleen's dad was unhappy with this role appropriation. When he verbalized it, Kathleen observed the strength of her mom:

> Even when they argue about it, she would just say well that's not something that I like to do. I don't like to be in the kitchen, I don't like to always do laundry and so I think there should be mutual help in a relationship, definitely, but seeing how strong she was definitely influenced me to what I believe now.

Kathleen saw her mom refuse to do household work, and that influenced her feminist beliefs, knowing that it was acceptable to take on opposite gender roles. In summary, participants' feminist beliefs often developed from observing egalitarian roles and desiring to emulate those roles.

Rejection of traditionalism. As younger individuals, participants observed others around them, which influenced the development of their feminist beliefs. Some participants observed others practicing traditional gender roles and then rejected those roles. Jane, a single 27-year-old, who identified as bisexual, described her early family life, which was driven by her mother's adherence to traditional values:

> My mother is a very traditional Korean person so she thinks women should be silent. She thinks women should take care of everyone in the house, she thinks that women are worth less than men, so she always treated [my brother] way better than she treated me because he's the one that carries on the family name, he's the important one, and I was always relegated to the kitchen and I was always relegated to serving him and serving my father, and serving her and I didn't understand why I had to be the one constantly in service of everybody.

Jane then talked about how feminism was a concept seemingly more accepting of who she was as an individual:

> What I really liked about equity feminism was that it allowed you to be how you define yourself and I liked that because the way I'm supposed to be based on society and my parents, I was never those things and so I needed to find where I fit. I needed to find how to define myself.

Jane found the nature of her traditional home life to be stifling and rejecting of who she was. Her beliefs were formed by observing a lifestyle she did not want and therefore rejected it. Jane was drawn to feminism because it offered her acceptance, flexibility, and the freedom to be who she wanted to be, and to be unrestricted by the traditional expectations for women.

Another example comes from Maria, who observed how her extended family treated her female cousins:

I have three brothers and three sisters, and [my parents] have always treated all of us the same way, but that doesn't happen for the rest of my family, for example, one of my aunts has two girls and one boy and the guy is the only one allowed to drive the car in the family, and the only one who has a driver's license because he is the boy of the family. I think that's really unfair and I encourage them: you should get a driver's license. You're completely capable of driving. And my cousins are like yeah I should probably get one, but they don't do it. They don't have the motivation to do that.

Maria was not treated differently from her brothers and sisters, so she has the ability to look at her cousins' family and see how her female cousins were not given privileges her male cousin received. This reinforced her feminist beliefs.

Discussions of dating practices. Participants also described talking about dating practices with their friends. They shared stories about dating, asked questions and offered advice. These discussions often reinforced their own beliefs. Advice giving and receiving about the state of participants' romantic relationships was a common way that participants implicitly or explicitly referenced their feminist beliefs and the process of constructing and maintaining healthy relationships. Advice that was given to participants tended to encourage healthy relationships with participants' romantic partners. The participants' friends and relatives also

gave advice that showed goodwill to protect the participants and others from getting hurt in their dating situations. Isabel recounted a conversation with a male friend about her long-term marital expectations of her current boyfriend:

He'd tell me that when you're dating a guy, the guy expects the girlfriend to be someone to have fun, to go out and talk and do stuff together, but they're not expecting to get married, for you to be their mother, for you to take care of them, that's not what they expect and so when I was dating, I was dating my husband back then and [my friend] was giving me that advice so he was telling me to adjust my expectations and say hey, slow down. The guy is going out with you. He's nice, you're nice, you're going somewhere but he's not trying to get married next month so slow down. It was hard [laughs] to do something about that, but yeah, I think it was good advice.

Another example of friends helping participants develop and maintain healthy relationships came from Emily. She had difficulty with the desire to be in constant communication with her boyfriend, mostly because she was worried for her boyfriend's safety when it came to his dangerous job occupation. When Emily's boyfriend grew frustrated about the constant text messages, Emily turned to her sister for advice:

She just told me when you're worried, just call me or go do something like get your mind off of it, set your phone down, don't blow up his phone. You just wait for him to call you. Blowing up his phone's not gonna do anything. It's helped. And so now, I kind of understand there's nothing I can do about it, even if something does happen, me trying to get ahold of him isn't gonna really fix anything.

Emily's sister encouraged Emily to lean on her when she was worried about her boyfriend. The advice helped Emily understand the situation more and it helped her and her boyfriend maintain

a healthy relationship. Yet another example of how friends helped the participants maintain healthy relationships came from Jane, who struggled to have an accurate sense of the appropriateness of her actions on a date. She turned to her male friends to check her behavior:

> The guy [I am out with] will generally be disrespectful or mean or walk out and sometimes I just wonder if I was too forceful or if I did something wrong or if I was being too offensive, but when I tell my guy friends, they generally [say] like what you did was right, like I would've done the same thing if I was in that situation cause sometimes it's hard to tell if you were doing too much of something, if you were wrong and just talking to them helps me to see if I was wrong in the situation or if I need to correct my own behav[ior] so it's more of a check.

Akilah talked about a friend of hers who's advice went a long way to the development of her relationship with her husband:

> If you are going to be my man, there's a standard you have to meet and everything but she told me that you can't find a perfect person and sometimes you just have to help that person be better. Not change that person. And I remember when I was with my husband, then my boyfriend, I used that and it helped cause I had this issue with him about not talking a lot and then I'm always complaining about it and at one point [I said] I'm not going with this relationship, because I want someone like me, someone who wants to talk all the time and he just doesn't want to talk all the time. Sometimes he wants to be alone and not talk about anything and then when my friend told me that, it stood out to me and I still would say that she was a big influence on me deciding whether to go for the relationship and I decided to go forward and give him the benefit of doubt and now he's a good talker.

55

Akilah's friend helped her to realize that there was no perfect man out there for her, and that it was okay to help her romantic relationships grow in their short comings.

Sometimes, participants demonstrated how they rejected advice given to them because the advice encouraged traditional roles. Madison, a single 24-year-old, was an individual with strong feminist beliefs. She talked about confiding in her friend, Bianca, who preferred traditional dating roles that she wanted to tell a guy that she liked him:

It's been hard for me because one of my very good friends here that I met in grad school she's waiting for the prince to roll up in the white horse and take her off into the world, so I would see her in these relationships where she tried talking to guys and she wanted him to do everything, and I would think to myself, Bianca, do something, but the point of the story is I had actually been wanting to [tell him I liked him] for a long time. I had mentioned [telling him I liked him] to her a few times in previous months cause I've known this guy a really long time and she was like oh my god, you can't do that, you shouldn't do that, really discouraging me and I would listen to her because she's my friend, but in the back of my head, I was always thinking what's the big fucking deal?

Madison went on to describe what she has observed from Bianca's romantic relationships:

She hasn't had too many past relationships. That's the thing about it, too. She's had one long-term relationship and it was very black-and-white and then she's been in a lot of on-and-off kind of dating situations. So no, they haven't worked out because the guy gets what he wants and then he's gone.

Madison's feminist attitudes were reinforced as she observed Bianca traditionally navigating romantic relationships and discouraging her from telling a guy that she liked him. She saw

Bianca's failures when it came to romantic relationships due to her traditional navigation of dating relationships. Therefore, Madison was critical and challenging of traditional gender roles.

The results demonstrated changes in dating practices and ideologies due to participants' feminist beliefs. It would seem that no matter the strength of societal and traditional roles, feminist beliefs can change the dating game. Though many participants may have experienced cognitive dissonance in the past with the clash of their feminist beliefs and society's ideas of dating, the participants overcame dissonance in a variety of ways, while their feminist beliefs were strengthened in the process and continue to make a difference in their lives.

Chapter V: Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the connection between feminist beliefs, dating ideologies, and dating practices of college-aged women. One aim of this study was to examine if individuals with feminist beliefs used more egalitarian gender roles instead of traditional gender roles when dating. A second aim of this study was to find out if feminism had an influence in individuals' moving away from traditional roles and embracing egalitarian roles. Finally, a third aim of this study was to investigate the influence conversations with others had on the perpetuation of individuals' dating practices.

Feminist Identities

Three research questions directed the study. The first research question asked how feminist beliefs influenced individuals' dating ideologies and practices. In line with a study done by Swirsky and Angelone (2016), the participants of this study self-identified as feminists due to exposure to feminism through college courses, or because of a feminist role model, even if the role models themselves did not verbally identify as feminists. Role models passed their feminist ideals down to others either explicitly through conversations or implicitly by enacting (or not enacting) feminist ideals. The researchers also found that women were drawn to feminism because it offered the freedom to choose, indicating that individuals use feminism to break away from social pressure that calls them to take on traditional gender roles. A final finding of Swirsky and Angelone's (2016) study that aligned with the current is that women identified as feminists because of their desire for equality on a broad scale. All these reasons for identifying as feminists were offered by the participants of the current study.

Even though the participants described reasons for self-identifying as feminists that mirrored previous research, half of the participants who identified as feminists did not fully

commit to the label. These participants gave further explanation to their self-identification of feminism to clarify that they were not stereotypical feminists. Callaghan et al. (1999) believed that stereotypes act to maintain dominant power structures within a society, as well as support authoritative ideologies. Feminist stereotypes described by participants in the researchers' study included images of feminists as extreme, ugly, and involving derogatory depictions of lesbians. However, many women who described feminist stereotypes were able to reject them and identify themselves as feminists. It might be said that in the current study, the participants' further explanation of their embracement of the feminist label was their way of acknowledging feminist stereotypes and verbally overriding them in order to accept the feminist label.

Another reason for participants' feminist identity explanations could point to the researcher's question of if participants used the word "feminist" to describe themselves. The question itself was dichotomous and left no room for variation in their answers. However, some of the participants did not hesitate in embracing the feminist label and did so without further explanation. Future research might look at how and why some individuals show no discomfort in self-identifying as feminists, and how they came to the point where they felt comfortable in giving no further explanations to their feminist identities. Despite the participants of this study self-identifying as feminists with or without explanations, it seems that having feminist beliefs was enough to trigger a change in traditional dating expectations.

Embracing feminism creates opportunities to question societal norms, including that of traditional gender roles in dating. Heterosexual traditional dating consists of roles that encourage male partners to be dominant and have more leadership opportunities, while encouraging female partners to be passive and reactive actors within the couple. Since traditional dating calls for male dominance and female passivity, it also draws out dating scripts for male and female

individuals to follow. Egalitarian gender roles, on the other hand, call for equality in a variety of contexts. In the dating context, egalitarian roles are performed when both partners in a relationship have the ability to take on equal or opposite roles. From the results of the study, it seems that embracing feminist beliefs has influenced participants to include egalitarianism in their dating expectations. Dating expectations for participants included desiring egalitarian gender roles after the first date, while others wanted a hybrid form of egalitarian and traditional roles. These egalitarian expectations turned into action, as seen when participants described their dating experiences and the roles they took on during dates.

The result of feminist beliefs creating expectations that turn into actions mirrors Nelson's et al. (2008) equation model for the formulation of feminist identities that manifest in action. These researchers identified three sources of feminist exposure to individuals that are similar to the results of the current study. They include taking women's studies classes, having a feminist mother, and experiencing sexist events. These three sources led individuals to either evaluate feminist beliefs, or develop conservative, liberal, or radical beliefs. An individuals' evaluation of feminism and formation of beliefs potentially led to their self-identification as feminists, and then led to collective action on behalf of feminism. The researchers put emphasis on life experiences, such as experiencing sexist events as strong predictors of the creation of feminist beliefs, self-identification, and action.

This calls to mind the participants of the current study who had previous relationships with sexist partners, and who terminated those relationships, ending up with stronger feminist beliefs. Participants experienced sexist treatment by their partners, and then were able to evaluate their relationships later, form beliefs and then take action by creating new, pro-feminist criteria for future romantic partners. The same process works for participants who had role models to

help the development of their feminist beliefs. Role models sent feminist verbal and nonverbal messages that participants assessed and input into their beliefs. Eventually, those beliefs followed into action. In general, the participants of this study followed in Nelson's et al. model which explained how participants' exposure to feminism and life experiences solidified their beliefs, formed egalitarian expectations, and led to egalitarian role-taking in the dating context. However, because participants developed and enacted egalitarian roles, they had to internally struggle to fight traditional dating expectations, leading to cognitive dissonance.

Gender Roles

The second research question asked how individuals who held feminist ideologies managed cognitive dissonance as they navigated dating relationships. Many of the participants struggled in thinking about times they had experienced cognitive dissonance in the past when it came to dating roles. Since the participants had solid feminist beliefs at the time of their interviews, they implied to have overcome dissonance at a certain point in the past. Some participants may have resolved cognitive dissonance unconsciously. In other words, some participants may still struggle with desiring or performing traditional dating. As a result, these participants created strong feminist beliefs systems that allowed them to only perform traditional roles on the first date, and then perform egalitarian beliefs on proceeding dates. Therefore, participants resolved dissonance by separating and differentiating the performance of traditional gender roles on first dates and egalitarian roles on all other subsequent dates.

Another reason participants desired to honor the first date as traditional while engaging in egalitarian roles for subsequent dates might be found in the propositions of Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT). Berger and Calabrese (1975) explained that the basic assumption of URT focused on individuals' need to reduce uncertainty and increase the predictability of

behavior when interacting with strangers or encountering new situations for the first time. As a result, individuals will engage in certain behaviors to decrease uncertainty about another individual or situation, such as increasing verbal communication, information seeking behaviors, and reciprocity.

The first date itself holds a high level of uncertainty. Individuals are likely getting to know each other exclusively in a date setting. They do not know the end result of the date or if the encounter will go well enough to desire a second date. As a result, individuals use the traditional gender roles to increase certainty with how the date proceeds, as well as to increase certainty in the behavior of an individuals' romantic partner.

There might also be uncertainty for individuals who have feminist beliefs and desire egalitarian roles. These individuals might not feel comfortable enacting their beliefs right away when considering how that will make their potential romantic partners feel. As a result, individuals may enact traditional roles on the first date as a safe platform to create a comfortable environment for themselves and their partners. The platform can also open the door for feminist individuals to talk about dating roles with their partners and set the stage for egalitarian roles in preceding dates.

Participants also resolved cognitive dissonance while continuing to enact traditional roles on first dates by choosing to use their feminist beliefs to support traditional gender roles. In this case, participants may openly act on their feminist beliefs in other areas of life. When it comes to dating, however, some participants believed that they were making use of their feminist beliefs by allowing room for their male partners to take on a traditional role, to show their masculinity. Allowing male partners to pay for meals, to pick up their female partners for dates, to open doors

for their female partners may be a participant's way of enacting feminist beliefs and therefore, resolving dissonance.

An additional possibility for why participants had difficulty thinking about a time when they experienced cognitive dissonance when it came to dating roles is because of memory distortion. A study by Rodriguez and Strange (2015) found that individuals who resolved cognitive dissonance through a change in attitude experienced memory distortion when thinking back to individuals' initial attitudes. In other words, individuals who experienced an attitude shift used their current attitudes to inform themselves about their past, and in the process, they misremembered their initial attitudes. In another study, Grysman (2014) found that individuals downplayed both the significance and the quality of dissonant memories. Individuals downplay dissonant memories in order to distance themselves from them and to maintain a positive self-image. With these studies in mind, the participants in the current study may have struggled to think of dissonant experiences because they could not see through their current feminist or egalitarian attitudes to remember their initial, possibly traditional, attitudes they held in the past. There is also a possibility that participants tried to maintain positive self-images to the researcher by misremembering or devaluing the importance of dissonant memories. Cognitive dissonance cannot develop without the formation of beliefs. Therefore, it is important to understand who influenced the formation of feminist beliefs in participants' lives.

Communicating about Feminism

The third research question inquired about how conversations with others influenced participants' dating processes. In this case, feminist beliefs seemed to hold more influence over dating processes than did conversations with others. One result from the study that dealt with feminist beliefs was that parents and other authority figures appeared to have more influence on

the development of participants' feminist beliefs than did peers. This may be a result of early socialization parents had on their children. In fact, when children are in their elementary school years, parents' beliefs shape those of children, especially when it comes to their ability self-concepts ("IV. Child Factors," 2015). This means that as some participants' parents repeatedly verbalized that they believed the participants were capable of feminist values, such as believing they could do anything as a woman and to know their worth, participants formed and maintained that same belief about themselves. Also, parents had more of an impact on participants' beliefs than peers because according to Starrels and Holm (2000), individuals are more influenced by individuals who are most familiar and emotionally intimate to them. Plus, the same study found that mothers' expectations for marriage had a stronger influence on women than men. This is mostly because of the strong mother-daughter relationship dynamic. This coincides with the current study, with many of the participants relating their feminist and relational beliefs back to their mothers.

Peers may be useful for evaluating ideas as a comparison point or in brainstorming situations, but similar-aged peers do not have the social and familial authority or the credibility to have a significant role in developing others' feminist beliefs. In fact, Starrels and Holm (2000) found that when it came to the socialization of marital relationships, men were more influenced by peers than women. This could relate back to men having more of a group orientation when it comes to socializing, and therefore, they are more likely to be influenced by friends. Women, on the other hand, were not influenced by peer groups, no matter the size. Their marital plans were independent from peer groups as a result of women desiring intimate dyadic relationships. It could also be the case that college aged peers are also working to form and understand their own beliefs about feminism. Therefore, participants are more likely to look to adults for help in the

formation of their beliefs because adults are more likely to already have complete and strong

beliefs in many areas of life, including feminism.

Yet another finding was how participants emulated egalitarian roles they observed in

others, and rejected traditional roles that they observed in others. A study by Hyde and Jaffee

(2000) found that four sources of influence pushed young women to enact traditional roles:

parents, peers, the media, and schools. It might be inferred from the present study that at least

one of these sources, parents, have the ability to influence young women into performing

egalitarian gender roles. Participants who observed others around them, especially parents,

enacting egalitarian roles saw the benefits of these relationships. They saw that household tasks

were not divided by a parents' sex. Rather, participants saw team effort in their households, and

they saw the mutual respect their parents had for one another. As a result, participants naturally

wanted that same success in their own relationships, and desired to emulate egalitarian roles. On

the other side of the spectrum, participants rejected traditional roles they observed in others.

Some participants grew up in households where traditional roles guided social interactions in

their families. Participants who were unhappy in these households grew to dislike traditional

roles and embraced feminism and egalitarian roles. Other participants observed friends and other

family members enacting traditional roles, and seeing the negative results that came from their

unwillingness to break from tradition solidified participants' decision to navigate dating

experiences with egalitarian roles.

Limitations

A few limitations for this study need to be addressed. First, during recruitment, many

individuals who possibly had feminist beliefs did not participate because they might not have felt

comfortable using the word "feminist" to describe themselves or to participate in this study on

feminism due to stigma. Because many of the participants felt strong in their beliefs, this might have influenced the data in terms of cognitive dissonance, since these individuals claimed to have overcome cognitive dissonance in the past. Individuals who may have had feminist beliefs, but showed reluctance at labeling themselves "feminists" might have demonstrated more cognitive dissonance if they had participated in the study.

Another limitation is that the data collected for this study is mostly a product of participants' retrospective accounts of their family and dating lives. It is also important to consider that some participants were married at the time of their interviews and have not dated in several years. Married individuals may have given information based on memories that were formed years ago, which leaves the possibility of inaccurate data (Hassan, 2005). The data exposes one side of a multifaceted story, and is subject to bias and confounding.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study suggests opportunities for the development of future research. One aspect of this study that could be examined is the rejection and acceptance of the term "feminist." A future study could look at individuals who reject or accept the term "feminist" and whether these individuals may perform traditional or egalitarian roles when they date. This study could investigate the possibility of a threshold of acceptance or rejection of the feminist label that then influences the performance of traditional or egalitarian roles. A study like this could confirm or disprove the finding that the acceptance of feminism has the potential to drive the performance of egalitarianism for dating individuals.

One thing to consider in a future research study is to measure the strength of feminist beliefs. Measuring the strength of an individual's feminist beliefs could create correlations to their resistance or acceptance to enacting traditional or egalitarian roles in dating situations.

66

Another study that could be done could look at aspects relating to gender and the performance of feminist beliefs and egalitarian roles. While participants in this study were biologically female, they most likely varied when it came to their genders, with some being more masculine, feminine, or androgynous (Bem, 1974). Gender may play in a role in how and why participants enact traditional or egalitarian roles in dating situations.

Research could also take a closer look at dating processes, ideologies, and roles from individuals who are in the dating process. While this research study included some of these individuals, other individuals were married or divorced and had to pull from distant memories to describe their dating experiences. Individuals who are currently dating will have fresh memories that would possibly seamlessly transfer into rich data. It would be desirable to collect recollections from women right after concluding a first date as well as subsequent dates.

Finally, another study could be done on feminist beliefs and male participants. Specifically, what kinds of roles male individuals perform could be examined as well as what influences male individuals to enact egalitarian roles. The study could examine how men perceive the meaning of feminism and how much or how little they embrace feminism. It is possible that men, more than women, may believe in feminist stereotypes, and therefore reject feminism. In this case, researchers could examine what kinds of dating roles they prefer to perform, and how they might react if their female partners prefer to perform opposite gender roles.

In summary, this study represents an effort to gain insight and understanding into college aged women's feminist beliefs and dating processes. While society still has the powerful tendency to pull individuals into performing traditional dating roles, it seems that feminist beliefs act as a buffer to societal forces and allows individuals to question and change the dating norm.

With the influence of parents, role models, and life experiences, participants formed feminist beliefs which then transferred into the dating context in the form of egalitarian roles. For the majority of participants, feminist beliefs acted as a way to change what has been expected of them in the dating context for decades in order to create relationships with roles that are flexible and equal.

References

Ackard, D. M. & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2002). Date violence and date rape among adolescents: Associations with disordered eating behaviors and psychological health. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *26*, 455-473. doi: 10.1037/e315072004-001

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 469-480.

Baker, M. (2007). *Choices and constraints in family life*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering*. Oxford: Macmillan.

Bell, A. P., Weinberg, M. S., & Hammersmith, S. K. (1981). *Sexual preference: Its development in men and women*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Bem, S. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *42*, 155-162. doi: 10.1037/h0036215

Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some explorations in initial interaction and beyond: Toward a developments theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research*, *2*, 99-112. doi: 10.1111/j.468-2958.1975.tb00258.x

Bernstein, M. (2008). Afterward: The analytic dimensions of identity: A political identity framework. In J. Reger, D. J. Meyers & R. L. Einwohner (Eds.), *Identity work in social movements* (pp. 227-301). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *10*, 141-163.

Blakemore, J. O. & Centers, R. E. (2005). Characteristics of boys' and girls' toys. *Sex Roles*, *53*, 619-633. doi: 10.1007/s11199-005-7729-0

Blood, R., & Wolfe, D. (1960). *Husbands and wives: The dynamics of married living*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Bojin, K. (2013). Feminist solidarity: No boys allowed? Views of pro-feminist men on collaboration and alliance-building with women's movements. *Gender and Development*, *21*, 363-379.

Callaghan, M., Cranmer, C., Rowan, M., Siann, G., & Wilson, F. (1999). Feminism in Scotland: Self-identification and stereotypes. *Gender and Education*, *11*, 161-177. doi: 10.1080/09540259920672

Canary, S., & Stafford, D. (1991). Maintenance strategies and romantic relationship type, gender, and relational characteristics. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *8*, 217-272. doi: 10.1177/0265407591082004

Choukas-Bradley, S., Goldberg, S. K., Widman, L., Reese, B. M., & Halpern, C. T. (2015). Demographic and developmental differences in the content and sequence of adolescents' ideal romantic relationship behaviors. *Journal of Adolescents*, *45*, 112-126. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.08.019

Collins, G. (2009). *When everything changed: The amazing journey of American women from 1960 to the present*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company. doi: 10.5860/choice.47-4124

Coltrane, S. (2000). Research on household labor: Modeling and measuring the social embeddedness of routine family work. *Journal of Marriage & Family, 62*, 1208-1233. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.01208.x

Connolly, C. (2005). A qualitative exploration of resilience in long-term lesbian couples. *Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, *13*, 266-281. doi: 10.1177/1066480704273681

Connolly, J., Nguyen, H. T., Pepler, D., Craig, W., & Jiang, D. (2013). Developmental trajectories of romantic stages and associations with problem behaviors during adolescents. *Journal of Adolescents*, *36*, 1013-1024. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2013.08.006

Daddis, C., & Randolph, D. (2010). Dating and disclosure: Adolescent management of information regarding romantic involvement. *Journal of Adolescents*, *33*, 309-320. Doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2009.05.002

Dalli, C. (1991). Scripts for children's lives: What do parents and early childhood teachers contribute to children's understanding of events in their lives? Paper presented at the 5th Early Childhood Convention. Dunedin, New Zealand.

Daly, M. & Baumeister, R. F. (2016). Social support and mental health. *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health: Research Starters*.

Davies, P. & Windle, M. T. (2000). Middle adolescents' dating pathways and psychosocial adjustment. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, *46*, 90-118.

Davis, S. N., & Greenstein, T. N. (2009). Gender ideology: Components, predictors, and Consequences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *35*, 87-105.

Donn, J. E. & Sherman, R. C. (2002). Attitudes and practices regarding the formation of romantic relationships on the Internet. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior: The Impact of the Internet, Multimedia, and Virtual Reality on Behavior and Society*, *5*, 107-123.

Dow, B. J. (2014). *Watching women's liberation 1970: Feminism's pivotal year on the newtwork news*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Dow, B. J., & Wood, J. T. (2014). Repeating history and learning from it: What can SlutWalks teach us about feminism? *Women's Studies in Communication*, *37*, 22-43.

Eaton, A. A., & Rose, S. (2011). Has dating become more egalitarian? A 35 year review using Sex Roles. *Sex Roles*, *64*, 843-862.

Eaton, A. A., & Rose, S. (2012). Scripts for actual first date and hanging-out encounters among young heterosexual Hispanic adults. *Sex Roles*, *67*, 285-299.

Elze, D. E. (1999). Risk and protective factors in mental health and behavioral functioning Among sexual minority adolescents. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *60*, 3527.

Elze, D. E. (2002). Against all odds: The dating experiences of adolescent lesbian and bisexual women. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, *6*, 17-29.

Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

Farrel, L. C., DiTunnariello, N., & Pearson, J. C. (2014). Exploring relational cultures: Rituals. privacy disclosure, and relational satisfaction. *Communication Studies*, *65*, 314-329.

Felmlee, D. H. (2001). No couple is an island: A social network perspective on dyadic stability. *Social Forces*, *74*, 1259-1287.

Ferree, M. M., & Hess, B. B. (2000). *Controversy and Coalition*. New York: Routledge.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, and Company.

Fox, G. L., & Murry, V. M. (2000). Gender and families: Feminist perspectives and family research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *62*, 1160-1172.

Fox, M. (2005). Gender, family characteristics, and publication productivity among scientists. *Social Studies of Science*, *35*, 131-150.

Friedan, B. (1997). *The feminine mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Friedman, C. & Morgan, E. (2009). Comparing sexual-minority and heterosexual young women's friends and parents as sources of support for sexual issues. *Journals of Youth and Adolescence*, *38*, 920-936.

Giele, J. Z. (2008). Homemaker or career woman: Life course factors and racial influences among middle class Americans. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 393-411.

Goldberg, W. A., Kelly, E., Matthews, N. L., Kang, H., Li, W., & Sumaroka, M. (2012). The more things change, the more they stay the same: Gender, culture, and college students' views about work and family. *Journal of Social Issues*, *68*, 814-837.

Grysman, A. (2014). The role of gender and temporal distance in the recall of dissonant self-related memories. *Consciousness & Cognition*, *29*, 10-22. doi: 10.1016/j.concog.2014.07.003

Harnois, C. E. (2005). Different path to different feminisms?: Bringing multicultural feminist theory and quantitative sociological gender research. *Gender & Society*, *19*, 809-828.

Harnois, C. E. (2012). Sociological research on feminism and the women's movement: Ideology, identity, and practice. *Sociological Compass*, *6*, 823-832.

Harnois, C. E. (2013). *Feminist Measure in Survey Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Hassan, E. (2005). Recall bias can be a threat to retrospective and prospective research designs. *The Internet Journal of Epidemiology*, *3*, 1-7.

Hearn, J. (2008). The personal is work is political is theoretical: Continuities and discontinuities in women's studies, (pro)feminism, "men," and my selves. *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, *16*, 241-256.

Hewitt, N. (Ed.). (2010). *No permanent waves: Recasting histories of U. S. feminism*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *The second shift*. New York: Penguin Books.

hooks, B. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody*. Boston: South End Press.

Howard, D., & Wang, M. (2003). Risk profiles of adolescent girls who were victims of dating violence. *Adolescence*, *38*, 1-14.

Hyde, J. S., & Jaffee, S. R. (2000). Becoming a heterosexual adult: The experiences of young women. *Journal of Social Issues*, *56*, 283-296.

IV. Child factors and parent belief models. (2015). *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *80*, 65-84. doi: 10.1111/mono.12160

Jacoby, S. & Ochs, E. (1995). Co-sonstruction: An introduction. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, *28*, 171-183.

Jensen, J. J., & Rauer, A. J. (2014). Turning inward versus outward: Relationship work in young adults and romantic functioning. *Personal Relationships*, *21*, 451-467.

Johnston, D. D. & Swanson, D. H. (2007). Cognitive acrobatics in the construction of worker-mother identity. *Sex Roles*, *57*, 447-459.

Jozkowski, K. N., Peterson, Z. D., Sanders, S. A., Dennis, B., & Reece, M. (2014). Gender differences in heterosexual college students' conceptualizations and indicators of sexual consent: Implications for contemporary sexual assault prevention education. *Journal of Sex Research*, *8*, 904-916.

Kerrick, M. R. & Thorne, A. (2014). 'So it's like do you like Jeff a lot, or, I mean…': How

    women friends interactionally position personal identity while conversing about desire.

    Emerging Adulthood, *2*, 294-303.

Kimmel, M. (2008). *Guyland: The perilous world where boys become men*. New York:

    HarperCollins Publishers.

Kito, M. (2005). Self-disclosure in romantic relationships and friendships among American and

    Japanese college students. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *145*, 127-140.

Klocke, B. (2015). *Roles of men with feminism and Feminist Theory*. Retrieved from:

    http://nomas.org/roles-of-men-with-feminism-and-feminist-theory/

Knox, D., Daniels. V., Sturdivant, L., & Zusman, M. E. (2001). College student use of the

    Internet for mate selection. *College Student Journal*, *35*, 158.

Knudson-Martin, C. & Huenergardt, D. (2010). A socio-emotional approach to couple therapy:

    Linking social context and couple interaction. *Family Process*, *49*, 269-384.

Knudson-Martin, C., & Mahoney, A. R. (Eds.). (2009). *Couples, gender, and power: Creating*

    Change in intimate relationships. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.

Korchmaros, J. D., Ybarra, M. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2015). Adolescent online romantic

    relationship initiation: Differences by sexual and gender identification. *Journal of*

    Adolescents, *40*, 54-64.

Kuperberg, A., & Padgett, P. (2015). Dating and hooking up in college: Meeting contexts, sex,

    and variation by gender, partner's gender, and class standing. *Journal of Sex Research*,

    52, 517-531.

Kurdek, L. A. (1995). Developmental changes in relationship quality in gay and lesbian

    Cohabiting couples. *Developmental Psychology*, *31*, 86-94.

Kurdek, L. A. (2004). Are gay and lesbian cohabiting couples *really* different from heterosexual married couples? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *66*, 880-900.

Lam, C. B., McHale, S. M., & Crouter, A. C. (2012). The division of household labor: Longitudinal changes within-couple variation. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, *74*, 944-952.

Laner, M. R. & Ventrone, N. A. (2000). Dating scripts revisited. *Journal of Family Issues*, *4*, 488-500.

LaPlante, M. N., McCormick, N., & Brannigan, G. G. (1980). Living the sexual script: College students' views of influence in sexual encounters. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *4*, 338-355.

Ledbetter, A. M. (2014). Online communication attitude similarity in romantic dyads: Predicting couples' frequency of e-mail, instant messaging, and social network site communication. *Communication Quarterly*, *62*, 233-252.

Lefkowitz, E. S., & Espinosa-Hernandez, G. (2007). Sex-related communication with mothers and close friends during the transition to university. *Journal of Sex Research*, *44*, 17-27.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2010). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Livingston, B. A. (2014). Bargaining behind the scenes: Spousal negotiations, labor, and work-family burnout. *Journal of Management*, *40*, 949-977.

Malta, S. & Farquharson, K. (2014). The initiation and progression of late-life romantic relationships. *Journal of Sociology*, *50*, 237-251.

Marine, S. B., & Lewis, R. (2014). "I'm in this for real": Revisiting young women's feminist becoming. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *47*, 11-22.

Masters, N. T., Casey, E., Wells, E. A., & Morrison, D. M. (2013). Sexual scripts among young heterosexually active men and women: Continuity and change. *Journal of Sex Research*, *50*, 409-420.

McCabe, J. (2005). What's in a label? The relationship between Feminist self-identification and "Feminist" attitudes among U.S. men and women. *Gender & Society, 19*, 480-505.

McCormick, N. B., Brannigan, G. G., & LaPlante M. N. (1980). Social desirability in the bedroom: Role of approval motivation in sexual relationships. *Sex Roles*, *11*, 303-315.

Meeus, W., Oosterwegel, A., & Vollebergh, W. (2002). Parental and peer attachment and identity development in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence, 25*, 93-106.

Moore, M. R. (2008). Gendered power relations among women: A study of household decision making in black, lesbian, and stepfamilies. *American Sociological Review, 73*, 335-356.

Morgan, E. M. & Korobov, N. (2012). Interpersonal identity formation in conversations with close friends about dating relationships. *Journal of Adolescence, 35*, 1471-1483.

Mustanski, B. (2015). Future directions in research on sexual minority adolescent mental, behavioral, and sexual health. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, *44*, 204-219.

Nakamura, M., Akiyoshi, M. (2015). What determines the perception of fairness regarding household and division of labor between spouses? *Plos ONE*, *10*, 1-17.

Naveen, J. (2009). Carrying equal weight: Relational responsibility and attunement among same-sex couples. In C. Knudson-Martin & A. R. Mahoney (Eds.), *Couples, gender, and power: Creating change in intimate relationships* (79-103). New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.

Nelson, J. A., Liss, M., Erchull, M. J., Hurt, M. M., Ramsey, L. R., Turner, D. L., & Haines, M.
E. (2008). Identity in action: Predictors of feminist self-identification and collective
action. *Sex Roles*, *58*, 721-728. doi: 10.1007/s11199-007-9384-0

Nelson, K. (Ed.). (1986). *Even knowledge: Structure and function in development*. Hillsdale, NJ:
Erlbaum Assoc.

Novara, C., Garro, M., Rienzo, G. D. (2015). Coping styles and social support in emergency
workers: Family as a resource. *Romanian Journal for Multidimensional Education*, *7*,
129-140.

Ogolsky, B. B., Dennison, R., & Monk, J. (2014). The role of couple discrepancies in cognitive
and behavioral egalitarianism in marital quality. *Sex Roles*, *70*, 329-342.

Orr, A. (2011). Gendered capital: Childhood socialization and the "boy crisis" in education. *Sex
Roles*, *65*, 271-284.

Parker, L. (2009). Disrupting power and privilege in couples therapy. *Clinical Social Work
Journal*, *37*, 248-255.

Peltola, P. M., Milkie, M. A., and Presser, S. (2004). The "Feminist" Mystique: Feminist identity
in three generations of women. *Gender & Society*, *18*, 122-144.

Pew Research Center: A Social and Demographic Trends Report. (2010). The decline of
marriage and the rise of new families. http://presocialtrends.org.

Powers, R. S., Suitor, J. J., Guerra, S., Shackelford, M., Mecom, D., & Gusman, K. (2003).
Regional differences in gender-role attitudes: Variations by gender and race. *Gender
Issues*, *21*, 40-54.

Richards, T. N., & Branch, K. A. (2013). Examining parental and peer social support as a buffer between dating violence victimization and negative outcomes among female adolescents. *Women and Criminal Justice*, *23*, 232-246.

Richards, T. N., Branch, K. A., & Ray, K. (2014). The impact of parental and peer social support on dating violence perpetration and victimization among female adolescents: A longitudinal study. *Violence and Victims*, *29*, 317-331.

Righetti, F., Luchies, L. B., van Gils, S., Slotter, E. B., Witcher, B., & Kumashiro, M. (2015). The prosocial versus proself power holder: How power influences sacrifice in romantic relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *41*, 779-790.

Rodriguez, D. N., & Strange, D. (2015). False memories for dissonance inducing events. *Memory*, *23*, 203-212. doi: 10.1080/09658211.2014.881501

Rogers, S. J., & Amato, P. R. (2000). Have changes in gender relations affected marital quality? *Social Forces*, *79*, 731-752.

Rosario, M., Meyer-Bahlburg, H., Hunter, J., Exner, T. M., Gwadz, M., & Keller, A. M. (1996). The psychosexual development of urban lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Journal of Sex Research*, *33*, 113-126.

Rose, S., & Frieze, I. H. (1993). Young singles' contemporary dating scripts. *Sex Roles*, *28*, 499-509.

Rotheram-Borus, M. J., Rosario, M., Meyer-Bahlburg, H., Koopman, C., Dopkins, S. C. Davies, M. (1994). Sexual and substance abuse acts of gay and bisexual male adolescents in New York City. *Journal of Sex Research*, *31*, 47-57.

Sanchez, D. T., Fetterolf, J. C., & Rudman, L. A. (2012). Eroticizing inequality in the United States: The consequences and determinants of traditional role adherence in intimate relationships. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *49*, 168-183.

Schank, R. C. (1990). *Tell me a story: A new look at real and artificial intelligence*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Assoc.

Schnittker, J., Freese, J., & Powell, B. (2003). Who are feminists and what do they believe? *American Sociological Review*, *68*, 602-622.

Sherman, A. M., & Zurbriggen, E. L. (2014). "Boys can be anything": Effect of Barbie play on girls' career cognitions. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, *70*, 195-208.

Sinclair, H. C., Felmlee, D., Sprecher, S., & Wright B. L. (2015). Don't tell me who I can't love: A multimethod investigation of social network and reactance effects on romantic relationships. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *78*, 77-79.

Smith, H. L., Gager, C. T., & Morgan, S. P. (1998). Identifying underlying dimensions in spouses' evaluations of fairness in the division of household labor. *Social Science Research*, *27*, 305-327.

Smith, S. E. & Huston T. L. (2004). How and why marriages change over time: Shifting patterns of companionship and partnership. In R. Conger (Ed.), *Continuity and change in family relations: Theory, methods, and empirical findings* (pp. 145-180). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sprecher, S., Felmlee, D., Orbuch, T. L., & Willetts, M. C. (2002). Social networks and change in personal relationships. In A. L. Vangelisti, H. T. Reis, & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Stability and change in relationships* (pp. 257-284). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Starrels, M., & Holm, K. E. (2000). Adolescents' plans for family formation: is parental

  socialization important? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *62*, 416-429.

Steinem, G. (1995). *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (2ed ed.). New York, NY:

  Henry Holt and Company.

Stoica. I. (2015). Script theory. *Research Starters: Education (Online Edition).*

Sullivan, M. (2004). *The family of women: Lesbian mothers, their children, and the undoing of*

  gender. Berkeley, CA: California Press.

Swirsky, J. & Angelone, D. (2014). Femi-Nazis and bra burning crazies: A qualitative evaluation

  of contemporary beliefs about feminism. *Current Psychology*, *33*, 229-245.

Swirsky, J. & Angelone, D. (2016). Equality, empowerment, and choice: What does feminism

  mean to contemporary women? *Journal of Gender Studies*, *25*, 445-460.

United States Census Bureau. (2010). U.S. Census Bureau reports men and women wait

  longer to marry. Retrieved from

  https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/families_households/cb10-174.html

Vangelisti, A. L. (Ed.). (2013). *The routledge handbook of family communication* (2ed ed.). New

  York: Routledge, Inc.

Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Wienclaw, R. A. (2015). Gender roles. *Research Starters: Sociology (Online Edition).*

Willoughby, B. J., Carroll, J. S., Busby, D. M. (2014). Differing relationship outcomes when sex

  happens before, on, or after first dates. *Journal of Sex Research*, *51*, 52-61.

Wright, B. L. & Sinclair, C. H. (2012). Pulling the strings: Effects of friend and parent opinions

  on dating choices. *Personal Relationships*, *19*, 743-758.

Zeilinger, J. (2012). *A little f'd up: Why feminism is not a dirty word*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.

Call for Participants

For a Graduate Thesis Study on Feminist Beliefs and Romantic Relationships

You are eligible to participate if you:
- Are a female college student between the age of 18 and 29
- Have had at least one heterosexual dating relationship
- Identify as having Feminist beliefs. You believe that men and women should have equal opportunity

Participants will be asked to complete an interview about:
- your feminist beliefs
- the conversations you have with others about dating
- your past dating experiences

Interview Time Range: 60 minutes

Please contact Marisa Rodriguez

Email:
Mrodriguez45@islander.tamucc.edu
Phone#: (405) 410-8322

Appendix B

Interview Scripts and Questions

Identifier: _____   **Date:** _____

Location: _____   **Time:** _____

Interview Questions

Introduction/Welcome:

You have shown interest in participating in this interview because you are a female college student aged 18 to 29, who has had at least one heterosexual romantic relationship, and who has identified as having Feminist beliefs (you believe that men and women should have equal opportunities). Is this correct?

This interview is meant to assist in the study of how women who identify as having Feminist beliefs influence behavior and communication processes within romantic dating relationships. I am interested in learning about your Feminist beliefs, the conversations you have with other individuals about dating, and your past romantic relationship experiences.

I hope to have a conversation with you; there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Also, you can choose to stop this interview at any time.

This interview will last about an hour.

Please read the Informed Consent. I will answer any questions you may have about it. If you agree to the informed consent, please sign and date it.

May I audio record you?

Do you have any questions before we begin? Again, remember all answers are confidential. We will use pseudonyms for all research participants. All data used for the thesis or other publications will only use pseudonyms and you will not be identified.

I. First, I'm going to ask you some questions concerning your feminist ideology and beliefs.

RQ1: How do individuals who hold feminist ideologies manage cognitive dissonance as they navigate dating relationships?

1. You identify as having feminist beliefs. Tell me what that means to you.

2. Do you use the word "feminist" to describe yourself? Why or why not?

3. Where did your feminist beliefs come from? How and when did they form?

4. With whom do you talk about your feminist beliefs?

II. Now I'm going to ask some questions about your romantic relationship ideologies and beliefs.

5. In what ways do your feminist beliefs influence your ideas about romantic relationships?

6. Have your Feminist beliefs changed your ideas about dating? In what way?

7. Do you ever find your feminist beliefs challenged in romantic relationships? Example?

8(a). How do you handle situations in which your feminist beliefs are challenged? Example?

III. Now that we've talked about some of the beliefs you have about romantic relationships, I'm going to ask a few questions pertaining specifically to dating.

8. When you imagine the ideal first date, what does it look like? Walk me through the steps of how that date would play out [Why?].

9. Thinking about your experiences, have your first date(s) met up to this ideal? Why/why not?

10. Tell me about a time where your Feminist beliefs conflicted with your dating experiences. How did you deal with the conflict? Do you have an example?

IV. Let's switch gears here and talk about dating advice.

    RQ2: How do conversations with others influence women's dating practices and ideology?

11. Who do you regularly talk with about dating? Why?

    13(a). Are there people you avoid getting dating advice from? Why?

12. Give me an example of dating advice you have recently received?

13. Do you put the dating advice you are given into practice? Example?

14. Do you receive any advice that conflicts with your feminist beliefs? Do you put this advice into practice? Why?/Why not?

15. Do you ever give dating advice to others? Example?

16. Does the advice you give ever contradict with your feminist beliefs? Example?

17. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being "full feminist," where would you fall on that scale?

18. Is there anything you would like to add?

V. Before we conclude the interview, I would like to ask you a few demographic questions.

19. What is your age?

20. How would you identify your race/ethnicity?

21. What is your current relationship status?

Appendix C

List of Pseudonyms and Participant Info

	Length of Interview	Age	Relationship Status	Racial/Ethnic Identity	Identified with the "feminist" label
Iesha	18:43	19	Single	African American	No
Maria	40:51	19	Dating	Latina	Yes
Lisa	39:56	20	Dating	White/Hispanic	No
Denise	49:44	19	Single	Hispanic	Depends
Emily	36:57	19	Dating	White	Yes
Lauren	17:11	19	Dating	White	No
Jane	47:44	27	Single	African American/White	Depends
Akilah	52:30	30	Married	Black	Yes
Megan	29:46	22	Engaged	Caucasian	Yes

Isabel	32:48	28	Married	White/Latina	Yes
Rachel	24:17	25	Married	White/Hispanic	Yes
Genevieve	55:52	29	Married	Caucasian/Hispanic	Yes
Amber	1:10:14	25	Single	Hispanic	No
Kathleen	22:55	19	Single	Hispanic	Yes
Madison	33:35	24	Single	Hispanic	Yes

---

[1] Heterosexual women were recruited for this study in order to gain understanding of their past romantic relationships. LGBTQ+ romantic relationships were not examined in this study in order to ensure that the negative effects LGBTQ+ individuals experience, such as stigmatization, prejudice, and discrimination, did not affect the results of the study.