DEFINING FEMINISM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF THE MEANING

WOMEN ASSIGN TO THEIR FEMINIST IDENTITIES

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

Sarah Delaney McDougall

In Partial Fulfillment
for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major Department:
Human Development and Family Science

December 2012

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

DEFINING FEMINISM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF
THE MEANING WOMEN ASSIGN TO THEIR FEMINIST IDENTITIES

By

Sarah Delaney McDougall

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***disquisition*** complies with

North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards

for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Christi McGeorge

Chair

Dr. Joel Hektner

Dr. Amy Rupiper-Taggart

Dr. Tom Stone Carlson

Approved:

March 8, 2013	Dr. Jim Deal
Date	Department Chair

ABSTRACT

This study explored the meaning that women assign to their feminist identities. In particular, the study examined the lived experiences of fourteen women who were active in the women's movement during the 1970s. The definitions of feminism provided were organized into six categories: (1) Working Towards Justice, (2) Valuing Self and Other Women, (3) Women with Diverse Perspectives, (4) Relevancy in Personal Lives, (5) Future Orientation, and (6) Changing Understandings of Feminism. Major findings of the study included an understanding that women hold unique experiences as feminists in relation to the larger feminist movement, an insight into the centrality of equality to understanding feminist identities, and an awareness that the results of this study contrast with the leading model of feminist identity in the literature. The findings of this study provided important implications for family therapists as this study highlights the need to explore gender-based oppression with their clients.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF APPENDIX TABLES

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

The study of feminist identity development and its influence on the lives of women has captured the interest of feminist scholars over the last several decades. Feminist identity development can be conceptualized as the ways in which women embrace and live out feminist values in their lives. Much of the literature regarding feminist identity has drawn from Downing and Roush's (1985) five stage model of feminist identity development, intended for women, which describes the process by which women come to learn about feminist values and incorporate them into their lives. This model is the only model that exists regarding feminist identity development and it describes the process by which women move from a denial of the repercussions of sexism towards an awareness of and commitment to ending oppression. A positive feminist identity has been linked to: positive social and psychological well-being (Hurt et al., 2007; Moradi & Mezyldo Subich, 2002; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Witte & Sherman, 2002; Yakushko, 2007), self-esteem (Carpenter & Johnson, 2001), feminist self-labeling (Duncan, 2010; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997; Liss & Erchill, 2010), and positive self-concepts (Ng, Dunne, & Cataldo, 1995). While there are several significant critiques of the Downing and Roush (1985) model (e.g. Downing Hansen, 2002; Ng et al., 1995; Moradi et al., 2002; Shibley-Hyde, 2002; Vandiver, 2002), it remains widely cited in the feminist identity literature (e.g. Carpenter & Johnson, 2001; Duncun, 2010; Hurt et al., 2007; Moradi & Mezyldo Subich, 2002; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Witte & Sherman, 2002; Yakushko, 2007). Therefore, because of these critiques this study did not focus on the Downing and Roush (1985) model, but sought to explore feminist identity development outside of the parameters of the model.

While there has been some significant research regarding the positive impact on women who embrace a feminist identity in their lives, the existing research holds some significant limitations and has failed to ask women directly how they have come to define their feminist identity. For example, most of the research available draws from the Downing and Roush (1985) model which has been heavily critiqued for being outdated, linear in its approach, and ignorant of a woman's social location (Downing Hansen, 2002; Ng et al., 1995; Moradi et al., 2002; Shibley-Hyde, 2002; Vandiver, 2002). It is also important to note that the constructs supporting the Downing and Roush (1985) five-stage model have not been empirically studied in ways that clearly test and prove this stage model (Shibley-Hyde, 2002). Therefore, women's experiences and meanings of their feminist identity were not considered or tested during the formation of the model, which at this juncture serves as the guiding model in feminist identity development scholarship. Moreover, the vast majority of that research has utilized a college-aged sample, which translates into limited knowledge of the feminist identity development process and impact on women beyond the emerging adulthood period (Yakushko, 2007). Thus, this current study sought to capture how women with more lived experience define their feminist identities. A benefit of exploring how women with more lived experience attribute meaning to their feminist identities is that these women have had more opportunity to be involved in collective activism within the feminist movement and solidify their identities as feminists. In particular, I explored the meanings women who attended the North Dakota State Conference and/or the National Women's conference in 1977, which represented a rare opportunity to explore a group of women who uniquely contributed to the advancement of women's issues in our country.

A central part of understanding how women come to identify as feminists involves understanding the history of feminism. bell hooks (2000) defines feminism as "a movement to

end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. 1). The feminist movement has been categorized into three waves. The first wave, which spanned the late 19th and early 20th centuries, developed in the context of industrial society and liberal politics and was concerned with access and equal opportunities for women (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). The second wave began in the 1960s and 1970s. It developed during a time when feminists across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, and other cultural backgrounds were collectively uniting their voices in an effort to confront and end gender-based oppression (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). The third wave of feminism, said to have begun in the 1990s, has challenged the notion of a universal definition of feminism and instead embraces the diversifying theories, ambiguity, politics and personal experiences that shape feminism (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006).

Third wave feminism has dismantled the idea that feminism can be uniformly defined (Alcoff, 1988; Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). Frieze and McHugh (1998) argued that feminism is a continually evolving construct in that it rejects essentialism and universalism in favor of incorporating reflexivity and multiplicity in its approach. Similarly, hooks (2000) stated that there are "as many versions of feminism as there are women" (p. 40). When we consider the multitude of ways that women can embrace feminist values and live out their feminist identities, it becomes important to value and honor each woman's understanding of feminism and how she lives out her experiences as a feminist (Baber & Allen, 1992). In my study, I explored what it meant to identify as a feminist for women who became aware of gender inequities in the 1970s.

Theoretical Framework

Postmodern feminism, which evolved within the third wave of feminism, guided my study. Postmodern feminism argues that there are many ways that feminism is lived out by women through a multitude of discourses (Alcoff, 1988; Baber & Allen, 1992; Frieze &

McHugh, 1998; Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). Baber and Allen (1992) defined postmodern feminism as a framework that deconstructs the ideologies and practices that support gender inequities between women and men while also challenging "essentialist feminist theories that ignore differences among women related to factors such as age, race, class, and sexual orientation" (p. 2). Under this theoretical perspective, we have the opportunity to learn about how a woman's social location may shape the discourses she embraces in her feminist identity and how these diverse discourses that women live out influence the feminist movement at large. In my study, I wanted to learn about what feminism meant for women who became aware of gender inequities in the 1970s and how they have chosen to live out their feminist values and identities. The opportunity to study how these women identified as feminists was important for two reasons. First, this study allowed women to define in their own words and meanings how they identified as feminists within the feminist movement, which is significant because historically women have not been allowed to voice their own meaning and understanding of their process. Second, this study provided unique insight into a specific population, specifically more experienced feminists who were also active at a crucial time in the larger feminist movement.

CHATPER TWO. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the only model of positive feminist identity development, created by Downing and Roush (1985), critiques of the Downing and Roush model, discussions of the research available on the influence that having a feminist identity has on the well-being of women, and an overview of the research available exploring feminist attitudes that women attribute to their feminist identity. In providing an overview of the literature it is important to note that to date much of the literature available is derived from the Downing and Roush model (1985). Therefore, I found it was important to provide an overview of the only existing model in order to have a clear depiction as to what has shaped this research. The focus of this research study, however, was not to further the literature regarding the Downing and Roush (1985) model, but rather it was to explore how women assign meaning to their feminist identity. At the end of the chapter I provided an overview of my research question.

Women's Feminist Identity Development

Downing and Roush (1985) developed a five-stage model regarding the development of a positive feminist identity in women. Their model came as a response to their mutual concern that counselors and therapists were applying the same epistemological principles to all clients in a way that assumed all persons in therapy were experiencing the same social context. In response, Downing and Roush (1985) developed a model that articulated women's subordination in society and examined the multiple positions women might take in response to their subordination so that clinicians could be more responsive to women's varied experiences and support them as they moved more fully into their feminist identities. Their model was based on their own experiences as women, the literature available to them at the time (e.g. Avery, 1977; Gurin, 1980; Moreland, 1976), and Cross's (1971) model for Black identity development; therefore, this model was not

based on empirical data. The five stages of their feminist identity development model included passive acceptance, revelation, embeddedness-emanation, synthesis, and active commitment (Downing & Roush, 1985).

The first stage of this model of positive feminist identity development, passive acceptance, describes women who are not yet aware of the gender inequities happening to themselves and other women. This stage is based on the notion that when women are unaware of the oppression facing them they are more likely to engage in traditional gender roles that privilege men and hold a belief that men are superior over women, which may lead women to view themselves negatively (Downing & Roush, 1985). Downing and Roush (1985) argued that at the end of this developmental stage a woman's unawareness diminishes and she becomes increasingly open to "alternative conceptualizations of herself and the world" (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 698).

Stage two, called revelation, is "precipitated by one or a series of crises" whereby a woman's awareness of gender inequity is heightened (Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 698). This crisis, or series of crises, leads women to re-examine the status quo in their lives (Carpenter & Johnson, 2001). Downing and Roush (1985) proposed that the movement from passive acceptance towards revelation results both from the quality, frequency, and intensity of the crises the woman faces as well as the readiness of the woman to change her frame of reference. The authors proposed that during this second stage of the model women begin to experience feelings of anger at the forces of oppression affecting their well-being and guilt from their own participation in the oppression they experience. During this time, women may be most in touch with a sense of being part of a marginalized group (Carpenter & Johnson, 2001).

The third stage of Downing and Roush's (1985) feminist identity model, embeddedness-emanation, is described as having two distinct phases. Initially, as women continue to be challenged by their increasing awareness of the oppression facing themselves and other women they move into a period characterized by withdrawal from the dominant culture. Downing and Roush (1985) described this shift away from the dominant discourses as also incorporating a shift towards discovery and exploration of the "bonds of sisterhood" (p. 701). During this process, women join and connect with other women who share this awareness of the gender inequities facing all women. During the second phase of this third stage, after women have immersed themselves within female culture, the authors argued that women move into a period where they are able to begin to examine their experience of gender-based oppression from new and alternative perspectives that reflect more flexibility whereby women begin to consider how social location may influence a women's experience of oppression (Downing & Roush, 1985).

The fourth stage of the Downing and Roush model (1985), synthesis, is marked by a woman's ability to integrate these newly realized positive aspects of being a woman with her existing set of values and beliefs into a positive and more realistic self-concept. During this stage women are able to deviate from traditional sex roles, make more choices for themselves based on their new values, and evaluate men on a more individual basis (Downing & Roush, 1985). The final stage of this model, active commitment, is described as taking these fully integrated values as a woman and using these new attitudes for meaningful and effective action (Downing & Roush, 1985). Women in this stage are committed to using their learned experiences to shape and influence the discourse for future women. This effort to be a part of social activism may happen at the individual, familial, or community level and seeks to create societal change (Downing & Roush, 1985).

Critiques of the Existing Feminist Identity Development Model

As stated previously, currently in the literature the Downing and Roush (1985) five-stage model is the only model being used to study positive feminist identity development. While the Downing and Roush (1985) model has been used to explore relationships between feminist identity development and psychological well-being (Hurt et al., 2007; Moradi et al., 2002; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Witte & Sherman, 2002; Yakushko, 2007), self-esteem (Carpenter & Johnson, 2001), feminist self-labeling (Duncan, 2010; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997; Liss & Erchill, 2010), and positive self-concepts (Ng et al., 1995), researchers have critiqued the model in several ways. For example, it is important to note that the model was never empirically tested in its creation but rather based on other literature available at the time (Downing & Roush, 1985). This seems particularly troubling to this researcher, as it appears the model was created without interviewing or confirming that the model matched women's experiences of what their feminist identity means for them or how they considered their process of embracing their feminist identity. As a feminist scholar who values and honors the voices of women and their experiences, it seems clear to me that this model would have benefitted from recruiting more from women's perspectives in its creation.

While there have been attempts to empirically test the constructs within the Downing and Roush (1985) model and operationalize the five stages, Shibley-Hyde (2002) has argued that these attempts have been unsuccessful in clearly testing and proving the efficacy of the model. Attempts to operationalize the five stages of the Downing and Roush (1985) model have consistently been critiqued in the literature (Moradi et al., 2002; Shibley-Hyde, 2002). Moradi et al. (2002) have reported that the three most cited operationalized scales of the Downing and Roush model, namely, the Feminist Identity Scale (FIS; Rickard, 1989), Feminist Identity

Development Scale (FIDS; Bargad & Hyde, 1991), and Feminist Identity Composite (FIC; Fischer et al., 2000) have all been found to have low-to-moderate internal reliability. Researchers (Shibley-Hyde, 2002; Moradi et al., 2002; Vandiver, 2002) have further argued that the difficulty in operationalizing the model is a result of the five stages being poorly constructed as distinct from one another. Shibley-Hyde (2002) has also argued that the constructs supporting the five-stage model have not been empirically studied in ways that clearly test and prove this stage model.

In addition to the problematic nature regarding the way the five stages are defined and made distinct, researchers have questioned the Downing and Roush (1985) model's universality when considered in the context of race, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class (Flores, Carubba, & Good, 2006; Downing Hansen, 2002; Ng et al., 1995; Moradi et al., 2002; Vandiver, 2002). For instance, Flores et al. (2006) found that the Feminist Identity Scale (Rickard, 1989) and the Attitudes toward Feminism and Women's Movement Scale (FWM; Fassinger, 1994) yielded low reliability with a sample of 381 Mexican American students. In addition, the literature presented here highlights that most samples used in the existing literature are composed primarily of White college-aged participants. Finally, Vandiver (2002) has also questioned the viability of the Downing and Roush (1985) model. In particular, Vandiver (2002) argued that, in general, developmental models are continually shaped by the sociopolitical forces present during the time that they are created and as a result a thirty-year-old model of feminist identity development may no longer be applicable to our current climate or to other historic time periods.

It is interesting to note that only one of the published critiques of the model has wondered about its application across different age cohorts of women (e.g. Yakushko, 2007). Yet, several of the studies available point to the fact that most samples consist of younger college aged

women (e.g. Carpenter & Johnson, 2001; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997; Hurt et al., 2007; Ng et al., 1995). Moreover, several of the studies, including the Downing and Roush model (1985) itself, are now outdated (e.g. Carpenter & Johnson, 2001; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997; Ng et al., 1995; Moradi et al., 2002; Witte & Sherman, 2002). In reviewing the limitations of the Downing and Roush (1985) model as well as the available findings built on this model it becomes clear that there is a need to further explore and proliferate the meanings attributed to feminism and feminist values in the lives of women. Thus, the purpose of my study was to explore how women define and create meaning within their feminist identities based on the experiences depicted in my interviews with activist women from North Dakota and Minnesota.

Influence of a Positive Feminist Identity

While there are numerous critiques available regarding the Downing and Roush (1985) stage model, at this juncture this model appears to be leading much of the research pertaining to feminist identity and feminist identity development. Therefore, it is helpful to explore how researchers have used this model to explore positive feminist identity development and the positive outcomes that can be found for women who are working through the five-stage model towards a more fully integrated feminist identity. Positive feminist identity development has been linked to positive social and psychological well-being (Hurt et al., 2007; Moradi & Mezyldo Subich, 2002; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Witte & Sherman, 2002; Yakushko, 2007), self-esteem (Carpenter & Johnson, 2001), feminist self-labeling (Duncan, 2010; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997; Liss & Erchill, 2010), and positive self-concepts (Ng et al., 1995).

Well-Being

With respect to women's experiences of their well-being, Yakushko (2007) studied the relationship between women's patterns of feminist identity development and their subjective well-being. Subjective well-being was defined as a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives (Diener, 2000). Yukushko's (2007) study recruited 691 online women participants with a range of ages between 18 and 83 years of age with a mean age of 40 years. Participants completed the Feminist Identity Composite (FIC; Fischer et al., 2000) based on the Downing and Roush model (1985) as well as scales assessing feminist identification (Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997), well-being (SPWB, Ryff, 1989), and satisfaction with life (SWLS, Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985). Yakushko (2007) found that women who were categorized within the embeddedness-emanation, active commitment, and synthesis stages reported greater amounts of well-being, self-esteem, and lower rates of depression. Her results indicated that women with feminist values scored significantly higher on the SWLS, in particular with regards to measuring purpose in life, autonomy, and personal growth, especially compared to women with more traditional gender values (Yakushko, 2007).

Saunders and Kashubeck-West (2006) also examined women's well-being by exploring the relationship between feminist identity development, gender role orientation, and psychological well-being in 244 women affiliated with a university campus. The researchers defined gender role orientation as "the level of stereotypically masculine or feminine characteristics an individual possesses" and they predicted that participants with more masculine characteristics would show stronger psychological well-being (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006, p. 200). Participants completed the FIC scale (Fisher et al., 2000), the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence & Helmreich, 1978) and Ryff's (1989) measure of psychological

well-being. Their results indicated that both feminist identity development positively contributed to psychological well-being independently of gender role orientation (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006). Thus, holding a feminist identity seemed to buffer women against gender norms that would normally be associated with lower on psychological well-being (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006). Similarly to Yukushko's (2007) findings, women who fell into the latter stages of the Downing and Roush (1985) model scored higher on the well-being scale (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006).

Moradi and Mezyldo Subich (2002) explored the relationship between sexist events, feminist identity development, and psychological distress. Their data were collected from 104 undergraduate and 83 faculty/staff women using the Schedule of Sexist Events Scale (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995), the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Derogatis, 1975), the balanced inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR-6; Paulus, 1994), and the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS; Bargad & Hyde, 1991) based on the Downing & Roush (1985) model. Moradi and Mezyldo Subich (2002) found that denial of sexism, heightened awareness of one's anger and guilt about sexism, and the process of seeking out community with other women who are aware of sexism were related to greater levels of psychological distress. These findings suggest the process of learning about gender inequities and taking steps toward adopting a feminist identity may cause greater distress for women initially. This was interesting when compared to the studies previously discussed as it suggested that while the process of adopting a feminist identity may initially cause distress (Moradi & Mezyldo Subich, 2002) others studies have found greater well-being for women who have reached the later stages of the Downing and Roush model (1985) (e.g. Yakushko, 2007; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006). It is intriguing to consider this in the context of my research project which examined a group of women who have been

heavily involved in feminist activism to decipher differences that may exist for women who have, presumably, been more involved in activism work related to their feminist identities than those described in the earlier stages of the Downing and Roush model (1985).

Witte and Sherman (2002) also studied depression as related to feminist identity development and overall well-being. They proposed that women in the passive acceptance stage of the Downing and Roush model (1985) adopt a "silencing the self" strategy in order to minimize conflict and maintain close relationships (Jack & Dill, 1992; Witte & Sherman, 2002). The co-authors defined silencing the self as a strategy involving "judging oneself by external standards, putting others' needs before one's own needs, inhibiting self-expression, and exhibiting a false presentation of the feminine role imperative" (Witte & Sherman, 2002, p. 1075). Their participants included 92 college-aged women who were asked to complete the Silencing the Self Scale (Jack & Dill, 1992), Beck Depression Inventory II (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1997), and the Feminist Identity Scale (FIS, Rickard, 1989) based on the Downing & Roush model (1985). Witte and Sherman (2002) found that women in the passive acceptance stage were more likely to adopt a "silencing the self" strategy and score higher on levels of depression. The results of this study suggested that women benefit from acknowledging the gender inequities and oppression that women face themselves and thereby decreasing their potential risk for self-silencing strategies and higher levels of depression (Witte & Sherman, 2002).

Self-Esteem

In addition to the literature available regarding feminist identity development and social and psychological well-being, Carpenter and Johnson (2001) have explored how feminist identity development influences self-esteem and have investigated the extent to which women

derive self-esteem from their collective membership as women in addition to more established sources of self-esteem such as social acceptance and inclusion. Self-esteem related to a woman's membership within her collective gender group was defined as collective self-esteem (Carpenter & Johnson, 2001). Carpenter and Johnson's (2001) study involved 122 women enrolled in women's studies courses at the University of Alabama with a mean age of 26.13 years. Participants completed the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSE; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS; Bargad & Hyde, 1991) based on the Downing and Roush model (1985). Carpenter and Johnson (2001) found that a woman's feminist identity stage correlated with her connection to collective self-esteem: women who fell into the passive acceptance and lower levels of revelation stages had lower connection to collective self esteem; women who fit within the embeddedness-emanation, active commitment, and synthesis stages, however, had higher connections to collective self-esteem. These researchers suggested therefore, that later stages of feminist identity development correlated highly with greater levels of collective self-esteem, which positively contributed to a woman's sense of self-worth.

Feminist Self-Labeling

More recently, Liss and Erchill (2010) studied the relationship between feminist identity development and feminist self-labeling. Liss and Erchill's (2010) sample consisted of 629 women with an average age of 19 years old who completed an online survey. They surveyed their participants on a number of topics including feminist identity, attitudes, and perceived attitudes regarding gender-based inequities (Liss & Erchill, 2010). The findings of this study revealed several interesting results. First, women who self-labeled as feminist were found to be more likely to acknowledge the presence of sexism, view the current gender system as unjust, and hold a belief that women need to work together to enact change in the gender system (Liss &

Erchill, 2010). Second, Liss and Erchill (2010) found women in the stages of passive acceptance and active commitment were most likely to self-label themselves as feminists. The authors suggest that this surprising finding may be indicative of a developmental aspect within these two stages or that perhaps these stages are capturing opposite ends of a single continuum of feminist attitudes (Liss & Erchill, 2010). It suggests that further insight is needed into understanding the relationship between feminist identity development and feminist self-labeling.

Duncan (2010) also explored the relationship between self-labeling and feminist beliefs that women hold in their lives. This study examined 667 women who participated in a 1992 March on Washington for Reproductive Rights who were either part of the Generation X or the Baby Boomers generation (Duncun, 2010). Participants were asked to answer two open-ended questions describing their definition of feminism and the associations they hold regarding the term feminist, complete the FIS (Rickard, 1989), complete Gurin et al.'s (1980) scale regarding gender consciousness, and describe actions they took in support of social or political causes. Interestingly, the results showed no generational differences between the Baby Boomers and Generation X'ers in their definitions of feminism, self-identification with the feminist label, most feminist attitudes, and women's rights activism although Baby Boomers were more likely to self-identify as strong feminists (Duncan, 2010). The most frequently coded themes in women's definitions of feminism were access to equal rights, self-determination, improving women's position, and challenging role-socialization and negative associations (Duncan, 2010). This study was interesting given that it appears to be one of the first research projects to compare women from different generational groups and to specifically examine how women defined feminism. In this way, this study by Duncan (2010) feels particularly relevant to my project which explored

the meaning that these women assigned to their identities as active feminists and included participants outside the college based age range.

Henderson-King and Stewart (1997) explored feminist self-identification as well by comparing the relationship between feminist group consciousness and self-identification. Their study used measures of group evaluations, political beliefs about gender relations, and sensitivity to sexism to predict women's self-identification as a feminist in a sample of 234 college women (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997). Henderson-King and Stewart (1997) found that the evaluative and phenomenological aspects of consciousness more clearly predict when women will identify as feminists. Specifically, feelings about feminism and sensitivity to sexism were both positively related to feminist self-identification whereas negative feelings about men were negatively related (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997). Further to this, the authors of this study argued that their findings supported the notion of multiple experiences of feminist consciousness given that the five stages of Downing and Roush's (1985) feminist identity development model yielded distinct outcomes on political beliefs and phenomenological aspects of feminist consciousness that suggests there are multiple ways of holding a feminist identity (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997).

Self-Concepts

Positive feminist identity development has also been studied in relationship to positive self-concepts. In a study conducted in New Zealand, Ng et al. (1995) sought to determine whether a relationship exists between a women's feminist identity and the strategies she uses in her efforts to advance a positive self-concept as a women. Their study consisted of 145 women participants who were recruited from four undergraduate psychology and linguistics classes (Ng et al., 1995). The results of their study found that women maintained a positive self-concept

differently depending on which stage of the identity model they fell into: women who were categorized within the passive acceptance stage were likely to try to advance their self-concept by comparing themselves to other women and avoiding comparisons between women and men; women who were categorized within the embeddedness-emanation or active commitment stages were more likely to create and highlight new dimensions within their gender group that would compare favorably to men's ways of advancing their self-concept; and, finally, women categorized within in the active commitment/synthesis stages were more likely to hold a belief that individually they can improve their status to be as successful as a man without needing to leave their gender group (Ng et al., 1995). These results are interesting as they suggest there are benefits to women categorized within the synthesis and active commitment phase in that they maintain a positive self-concept on the basis of their gender strengths regardless of the oppression that may exist against their skills and resources.

Feminist Attitudes

There also exists a small body of research that focuses on feminist attitudes that women embrace as a part of their identities (Berryman-Fink & Verderber, 1985; Eisele & Stake, 2008; Liss, Hoffner, & Crawford, 2000). Eisele and Stake (2008) described feminist attitudes as the beliefs women hold regarding goals of gender equality in social structures and practices. They argued that feminist attitudes contribute to how women are situated within their feminist identity development (Eisele & Stake, 2008). In this way, exploring feminist attitudes becomes an important part of exploring the meaning that women assign to their feminist identity as it encompasses the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes that women ascribe to their identities as feminists (Eisele & Stake, 2008).

Berryman-Fink and Verderber (1985) conducted a study aimed at creating a measure of the meaning of the term feminist based on the general evaluations, behavioral characteristics, political orientation, and sexual orientation typically attributed to feminists. Their sample consisted of 361 men and 407 women who completed a 91-item semantic questionnaire (Berryman-Fink & Verderber, 1985). Their findings indicated that general evaluations of feminists included being perceived as more logical, realistic, intelligent, caring, flexible, comforting, good, and fascinating. Behaviorally, feminists were perceived as more aggressive, extroverted, involved in activism work, more likely to be working outside the home, more opinionated, forceful, ambitious, independent, career oriented, strong, nonconforming, assertive, and energetic (Berryman-Fink & Verderber, 1985). Politically, a feminist was seen as being for reform, equal wages, liberation, equal rights, and the ERA; and sexually a feminist was seen as heterosexual and in terms of gender a feminist identity was associated with being female (Berryman-Fink & Verderber, 1985).

More recently, Liss et al. (2000) examined feminist attitudes within a sample of 71 women using the Feminist Perspectives Scale (FPS; Henley, Meng, O'Brien, McCarthy & Sockloskie, 1998), which assesses the participants' own perspective as well as the perspective they would assign to a "typical feminist." It is interesting to note that Liss et al. (2000) found that liberal feminism appeared to be an omnipresent ideology in that both self-identified feminists and non-feminists had high liberal scores and low conservative scores. Liberal feminism was defined as holding a belief that women and men are equal and should have agency in making personal choices in their relationships free of government control (Liss et al., 2000). Conservative beliefs were defined as those that value traditional values and beliefs that men should remain dominant in society (Liss et al., 2000). It is interesting to note that both feminists

and non-feminists scored more highly in liberal beliefs over conservative ones. This suggests that many women may hold liberal feminist views while not defining themselves as feminists. It is also interesting to observe that both feminist and non-feminist women believed that a "typical feminist" had stronger radical, socialist, and cultural beliefs than they themselves had as it suggests that both feminist and non-feminist women seem to make assumptions that they are not as extreme as the typical feminist.

Qualitative Interviews Regarding Feminism

A small area of literature is emerging within the study of feminist identity whereby women are being asked to describe how they define feminism in their lives. As reflected in this literature review, there has historically been a stronger attempt to understand feminist identity through quantitative measures, which has prevented researchers from fully capturing the nuances involved in how women embrace and live out their feminist identities (Horne, Matthews, Detrie, Burke, & Cooke et al., 2001). Horne and colleagues (2001) have described the advantages of qualitative studies in studying feminist identity as providing researchers with a more "discovery oriented approach" that allows researchers to explore the experiences of feminists from the participants' personal perspectives. This area of research fits more closely with my research project which sought to understand how woman themselves are choosing to define feminism in their lives and the impact this has in the feminist movement at large.

Horne and colleagues (2001) conducted interviews with four experienced and four emerging feminists with the intent of learning how these women described the process of integrating a feminist identity into their lives. Experienced feminists were defined as women who discovered feminism between the late 1960s and early 1980s. Emerging feminists were defined as women who had begun to identify as feminists within their last two years of a doctoral

program at the time of the research study. Horne et al. (2001) found experienced feminists grew up in a social context that viewed feminism as liberating and empowering whereas emerging feminists described more social resistance to being a part of the feminist movement. As such, experienced feminists described their process of becoming a feminist as providing benefits to them in life whereas the emerging feminists talked about experiencing greater social stigma in claiming a feminist identity. Thus, while one might expect that it was more difficult to claim a feminist identity in the earlier stages of the feminist movement when the feminist community was just developing the findings of this study suggest the contrary. Experienced feminists talked about being initiated into feminism during the first and second waves whereas emerging feminists described hearing more negative portrayals of what it meant to be a feminist before learning that feminism was created in an effort to challenge gender-based oppression. Emerging feminists said once they did learn about what feminism offered women they were more likely to want to identify as feminists although they felt more conscious of the risks and losses they may experience with that title. The experienced feminists described feminism as "sparking a fire," "empowering," and "an awakening in their lives" (p. 13). Similarly, emerging feminists described feminism as a core part of themselves that had been present all along within their values even though they did not initially have a name for it.

Manago, Brown, and Leaper (2009) conducted a qualitative study exploring the developing conceptualizations of feminism among Latina adolescent women. This group of 140 women, ranging from grade 9 to grade 12, wrote personal narratives of their understanding of feminism and whether they considered themselves a feminist. The theme of equality between women and men was the most frequently reported in the young women's definitions of feminism. Most of the participants wrote they believed in equality or that they wanted women to

gain equality (Manago et al., 2009). Equality was often written about in terms of being respected, seeing worth in women's skills, and having equal opportunities to the same jobs or skill development. Another common theme in defining feminism was recognizing female empowerment. This was defined as helping women, wanting women's lives to improve, and celebrating the qualities of womanhood with an awareness of gender status differences (Manago, et al., 2009). The results of this study showed that adolescent girls are gaining more complex understandings of feminism and taking greater efforts to utilize this knowledge in making sense of gender inequities.

Welsh and Halci (2003) interviewed 35 women local councilors in England exploring the ways these women made sense of feminism and gender equality agendas. These women represented a politically active and engaged group of women. All women in the interviews stated that equality for women was very important to how they understood feminism. While this was important to all women in the interviews some women expressed that feminism was problematic in some ways as it stood in opposition of their professional goals. Within these concerns, some women referred to feminism as a "separatist movement" in that participation in the feminist movement meant separating from other social groups including family and other social networks (Welsh & Halci, 2003, p. 350). In other words, while many women favored feminism they also recognized that feminism could not be their only lens in which to complete their work.

Quinn and Radtke (2006) paired 18 female students to have conversations about feminism, feminists, and how they were going to position themselves in relation to a feminist identity. Within these conversations, women seemed to make sense of feminism within three domains: feminism as being about emphasizing rights and equality, feminism as about holding undesirable extreme positions, and feminism as defined by virtue of how one lives (Quinn &

Radtke, 2006). Quinn and Radtke (2006) found that women's definitions of feminism seemed to vary based on context and the circumstances being discussed in the conversations, which supported their argument that there are many ways to define feminism within a variety of sociopolitical contexts.

As previously stated, there is a need to expand the research regarding feminist identity to include more qualitative studies that might better reflect the diversity women experience in living out feminism in their lives. Given the relatively small number of qualitative studies with women regarding their feminist identities (i.e. Manago et al., 2009; Quinn and Radtke, 2006; Welsh and Halci, 2003) it makes sense that researchers would do well to take a more discovery oriented approach in their research in order to incorporate the plethora of experiences women live as feminists in their lives (Horne et al., 2001). Thus, my research project was conducted using transcribed qualitative interviews that were analyzed using feminist thematic analysis in order to understand how these women defined and lived out feminism in their lives.

Purpose of Research

It is clear that while the research regarding the Downing and Roush (1985) model has contributed to our understanding of feminist identity development and feminist attitudes, more current inquiry is needed to represent the diversifying meanings women attribute to their identities as feminists. In particular, this research study explored how women who participated in the state conferences and/or the National Women's Conference in 1977 assign meaning to their feminist identity. Researching this unique population allowed me to gain insight into women's experiences that are not only beyond college age samples but also represent a group of women who were actively committed to creating collective change in the feminist movement. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore what it meant for women who became aware of

gender inequities in the 1970s to identify as feminists. In particular, the following research question was used: What does it mean to identify as a feminist for women who were active in the women's movements in the 1970s?

CHAPTER THREE. METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

Feminist phenomenology was chosen to guide this research study as it is a methodology that is used to describe participants' lived experiences and rests on the understanding that knowledge is constructed (Dahl & Boss, 2005; Paterson et al., 1996). In this way, a single event or situation can have multiple meanings for different individuals that are dependent upon the knowledge that these individuals carry (Dahl & Boss, 2005). Central to feminist phenomenology is the importance of recognizing how the participants are describing their lived experience and letting these descriptions shape the outcome of research (Dahl & Boss, 2005; Paterson et al., 1996). In this way, the researcher aims to elicit these descriptions and narratives and minimize her own interpretations and biases of what the participants are sharing (Dahl & Boss, 2005; Paterson et al., 1996). Another fundamental component of feminist phenomenology involves integrating these varied and unique experiences together through common and shared meanings (Dahl & Boss, 2005). Thus, while feminist phenomenology allows for the researcher to learn how social location across race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and religious background may be influencing how women come to make sense of feminist values in their lives, it also allows the research to find commonalities with their varied experiences. Feminist phenomenology served this research study well as it supports the examination and honoring of the diverse lived experiences from which these women created value and meaning regarding their feminist identities as we explored themes in how these women attributed meaning to their feminist identity.

The methods and methodology section of this research project outlines the participant recruitment process and descriptions of the participants, the interview protocol and procedures used for data collection, and the process of feminist thematic analysis used for the data analysis.

Participants

Participant Recruitment and Sample Description

The data for this study came from a larger study examining the impact of the 1977 National Women's Conference. The participants for this larger study were all women from western Minnesota and North Dakota who had attended either or both the North Dakota State Women's Conference or the National Women's Conference in 1977. The participants, therefore, were selected based on their status as elected delegates, delegates at large, alternates, commissioners and official observers. The participants were contacted to participate in this study through phone calls, e-mails, and letters. All of the fourteen women who were still living at the time of the interviews were invited to participate in the project, and all fourteen women agreed to participate in the study and were later interviewed (see Appendix A).

At the time of the interview these women ranged in age from 59 to 90. Twelve women were White, and two women identified as Native American. The education background of these women varied: two women had completed their secondary education, six women completed a bachelor's degree, four women had attained a graduate degree and one woman had completed her doctoral degree. All of the women involved in this project had participated in the women's movement because of personal, collective, and/or professional interests regarding the movement. For example, some women worked in violence centers or women's clinics while others were involved in initiatives regarding equal pay for women and supporting the ERA. All of the women gave permission for their real names to be used in any research related to their interviews.

While not the focus of this thesis, it is important to note that the National Women's conference was the only conference in the history of the United States that was sponsored by the federal government to address gender inequities faced by women across the country. The

conference was held in Houston, Texas in 1977. This conference occurred due to an act of Congress that required each state and territory to hold a local conference to elect delegates, alternates, and official observers to attend the National Conference and represent their local interests (National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, 1978).

Data Collection

Interview Protocol

As stated previously, this current study was part of a larger research project which has sought to document the story of the North Dakota State Women's Conference and the experiences of the women from North Dakota who attended the National Women's Conference. Therefore, the data used for this present study were gathered using a large semi-structured interview protocol. The interview protocol was comprised of questions that were based on the literature, questions from my advisor's lived experiences, and questions that were structured within the feminist phenomenology tradition. The interview protocol was piloted on two women who had general knowledge of the conferences, but did not attend either conference. These two women provided feedback on the interview questions.

The interview protocol was comprised of open-ended questions that allowed participants to share their experiences of how the conference influenced their sense of feminist values (see Appendix C). While the interview protocol provided some structure for the interviews, the questions were not designed to lead or shape the stories or sequence of stories in any particular way. The interview protocol was approved by the North Dakota State University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Procedures

All interviews were conducted by the same team of three female interviewers. The interview team consisted of Dr. Christi McGeorge, who is the principal investigator for the larger research project, as well as Dena Wyum and Heather Guttormson. The interview questions were divided into three parts and each interviewer asked one set of questions. During the interviews, all three interviewers followed up with clarifying questions. The interviews occurred in the participants' home or a location selected by the participants. The interviews ranged in length from one to three hours. Two participants, Gerridee Wheeler, and Laurie Natwick chose to be interviewed together.

These interviews were designed to document the lived experiences of the participants. It is important to note that many of the women selected to participate in these interviews reported feeling honored to share their experiences with the interviewing group. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and these transcripts were then double-checked against the taped audio by the interviewers. Following the transcription of the interviews, according to practice of feminist qualitative research, copies of the transcripts were mailed to each of the participants for their review and possible revisions. Seven participants made revisions to their transcripts. Participants were also given the opportunity to review this thesis and provide input into the thesis in an effort to engage in the process of member checking.

Data Analysis

For this study, I used feminist thematic analysis to identify categories, themes, and subthemes within the interview transcripts related to my research question. Thematic analysis is a method that provides researchers with a way of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It allows researchers to gain rich detail within the data

while also summarizing themes found in the data in minimalistic ways (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Categories represent larger ideas and concepts that encompass themes found in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themed are defined as the main ideas that participants share regarding the phenomena of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Sub-themes can be characterized as underlying ideas, and nuances within a given theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In my study, I used feminist thematic analysis to decipher categories, themes, and sub-themes within the data that capture the values and meaning that these women attributed to their understanding of feminism and feminist identity. I coded the segments of the transcripts related to the meaning participants assign to their feminist identity. The themes I that I pulled from the data were inductive, meaning that these themes were drawn from the data themselves and reflect directly what my participants have shared.

I began the process of feminist thematic analysis by immersing myself in the data set and reviewing each full transcript several times (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After reviewing each transcript in its entirety I was able to narrow my review to the sections specifically related to feminist identity. The process of reviewing the data allowed me to actively search out patterns and meaning within the data and the data set. After I read through each transcript multiple times, I began making notes on each transcript regarding possible ideas related to my research question. Following this, I began grouping together ideas from my notes that represent common ideas that stood out throughout the transcripts and used these ideas to generate codes that reflect the phrasing and wording of my participants. Once these codes were created, I read through the transcripts again using these codes and labeled the sections of the transcripts in relation to my research question. After I finished coding the available transcripts, I began to sort through the

coded data and compile potential categories. As I created potential categories I was able to look for commonalities across the ideas within each category that could represent themes.

Throughout this process of coding, I met with my thesis advisor for peer debriefings. These debriefings held the purpose of ensuring that I was depicting participants' thoughts and words in an accurate and credible manner (Daly, 2007). This process of peer debriefing also allowed me to review the categories, themes, and sub-themes that emerge through the coding process. Additionally, the peer debriefing process supported me in being accountable to my own personal biases in order to minimize their impact on the coding process. Once I completed my analysis and discussion sections, I mailed copies of my work to the participants of my study for them to provide corrections and feedback on my thesis document.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the data will be assessed through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and the role of the researcher.

Credibility

Credibility refers to how we ensure the findings of a study reflect participants' lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). Credibility is comparable to the quantitative concept of internal validity. In qualitative research, credibility is achieved during the interview process through thorough engagement with participants (Morrow, 2005). In my analysis of the data, credibility was achieved through an explicit description of the source data (e.g., verbatim quotes from the transcripts), peer debriefings, and on-going reflective journaling, which involved recording my reactions and reflections on the data throughout the coding process (Morrow, 2005). I then shared my reflective journaling with my advisor in our peer debriefing

sessions. In addition to reflective journaling, I also shared my findings with my participants and sought their consultation and feedback to ensure that my results reflected their lived experience.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which readers of the research are able to generalize the findings of a study (Morrow, 2005). Transferability is similar to external validity (Morrow, 2005). In order to offer readers the opportunity to judge whether this study may be generalizable to other populations, it was important for me to provide a thorough description of the participants of this study, the data collection procedure, and the findings so that reader will be able to decipher if the findings are applicable to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the ways in which a study may be conducted such that it is consistent across time, researchers, and analysis methods (Morrow, 2005). Dependability is similar to reliability. In my study I was able to increase the dependability of my results through peer debriefings with my advisor as this increased the potential that the transcripts were being coded consistently and that the words and meanings being used by the participants were being honored.

Confirmability

Confirmability, similar to objectivity, requests that the researcher aim to produce results that are objective to the data being used as much as possible (Morrow, 2005). Throughout my analysis of the data I kept a reflective journal to document my decision-making process in order to maintain confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This journal allowed me to be more conscientious of my biases. I brought my reflective journal to my peer debriefings in order to discuss what I recorded.

Role of the Researcher

  A final component of trustworthiness involves acknowledging the role of the researcher. As this was a phenomenological study it was imperative that I acknowledged my own experiences and biases regarding feminist identity through both my reflective journaling and in the peer debriefing sessions with my advisor. Reflective journaling played a critical part in acknowledging the role of the researcher. My reflective journal included thoughts and observations regarding the decision making process as I conducted the data analysis. The act of journaling throughout the research process allowed me to explore how and to what extent perspectives shaped from my social location may be influencing the research process. As this was a phenomenological study I needed to acknowledge my own experiences and biases related to my experience of how women attribute meaning to their feminist identity. Reviewing the journal in peer debriefings with my advisor added an additional layer of trustworthiness in my efforts to keep my biases in in check so that I could best represent the lived experiences of the participants.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The results are organized into categories, themes, and sub-themes identified through feminist thematic analysis, which allowed for participants descriptions and lived experience to shape the outcome of research (Dahl & Boss, 2005). As previously stated, the research question guiding this study was "what does it mean to identify as a feminist for women who were active in the women's movement in the 1970s?" Quotations are provided to support each theme and sub-theme.

The feminist thematic analysis was guided by my postmodern feminist framework. As previously stated, postmodern feminism was chosen as the theoretical framework guiding this study because of its focus on deconstructing the ideologies and practices supporting gender inequities between women and men while also honoring the differences among women's social location that traditionally have been ignored in essentialist feminist theories (Baber & Allen, 1996). Postmodern feminism has been described as a highly individualized framework as it acknowledges the many positions and lived experiences that shape women's understandings of gender-based oppression (Baber & Allen, 1996; Frieze & McHugh, 1998). As a result, my postmodern feminist lens allowed me to analyze the data with an understanding that the ways in which these women came to define themselves as feminists were highly unique and based upon their social location and lived experiences. At the same time, postmodern feminism allowed me to analyze these varied lived experiences of feminist women in ways that connected these experiences to shared understandings regarding the influence of gender-based and other forms of oppression. By doing so, I created space to honor areas of intersection within these women's efforts to dismantle gender-based inequities and the different positions from which these women addressed and worked towards equality for women.

The postmodern feminist framework guiding this study encompassed the diversity of responses reflected in this study. For example, within this framework there was opportunity to honor Audrey Neff Hiney's description of herself as a "wild-eyed feminist," Nancy Edmond Hanson's description of feminism as being a movement for "quiet women who needed help," and Gerridee Wheeler's recognition that feminist identity as being so deeply engrained in her being that she talked about it being "genetically" passed onto her, while also noting that each of these women connected feminism to a pursuit for justice for all persons. In other words, each woman's lived experience shaped how she defined and lived out feminism uniquely in her own life and also connected her to the larger feminist movement addressing gender-based oppression.

Defining Feminism

The definitions of feminism provided by my participants can be organized into six categories: (1) Working Towards Justice, (2) Valuing Self and Other Women, (3) Women with Diverse Perspectives, (4) Relevancy in Personal Lives, (5) Future Orientation, and (6) Changing Understandings of Feminism. A list of categories, themes, and sub-themes can be found in Appendix B.

Working Towards Justice

The first category contained definitions of what it meant to be a feminist that articulated these women's interests and motivations in working towards justice. It seemed that within the diverse understandings that these women held regarding what it meant to be a feminist, that many of these women identified feminism with a need to pursue justice for women and all persons. Three themes emerged within this category: a belief in equality and fair treatment for women, freedom to use one's voice, and opportunities for women.

Right for equality and fair treatment. The first theme suggested that part of being a feminist during the 1970s meant believing that women have a right for equality and fair treatment. This belief seemed to exist in many of these women's definitions of what it meant to be a feminist regardless of their social location. This supports the tenets of postmodern feminism that state a core aspect of feminism is addressing gender-based inequities (Baber & Allen, 1996; Enns, 2004). In response to a question posed about what it meant to be a feminist, Pattiann Hanson articulated her sense that being a feminist meant believing in equality of rights. In particular, Pattiann Hanson stated

> I couldn't imagine how anyone could not. You know, equality of rights should not be denied to any person on account of sex. How can you not believe in that? I just can't imagine that any girl growing up wouldn't want to be treated fairly. And I don't think it was ever anything other than just pretty much fairness issues. How could you possibly think that women should be any less than men on an individual basis?

A quotation from Pauline Howard further articulates this theme that part of being a feminist meant that one believes in equality, when she shared: "I've always felt that women are, they're equal to men if they're doing what a man's doing, and there isn't no, there shouldn't be any 'man' or woman' status[es]." Jane Bovard also supports the theme that being a feminist meant recognizing the need for equality between women and men in her statement "I just think that everyone deserves to be treated as a person equally and that your sex doesn't have a whole lot to do with your skills." Helen Rudie connected her belief in equality to her realization that women were experiencing gender-based oppression: "They [women] were all concerned that women got a fair shake at work and in marriage and with children." It seems that these women held a deep belief that women and men should be treated equally in all domains of life.

Nancy Edmond Hanson also described her belief that feminists were on a quest for justice and equality for women. For example, Nancy stated "the women's rights, the way they were talked about at that point was that we had the right to compete on an equal basis, in the workforce, we had the right to make an equal amount of money." Nancy's comments further illustrate that identifying as a feminist seemed to connect these women to a shared mission that women and men be treated equally and have the same rights as one another. Pauline Howard further suggested that equality of rights was about creating fairness for women in her statement "I just thought of what was right and what was wrong you know." Thus, a feminist's belief in equality between women and men seemed to rest on moral standings of how people should be treated. As previously stated, these findings support that a core component of feminism is the need to collectively work against gender-based oppression (Baber & Allen, 1996; Enns, 2004). It seems that working towards equality between women and men was one way these women addressed their concerns related to gender-based oppression.

Equality and fair treatment for women. Two sub-themes emerged within the theme linking what it meant to be a feminist to equal rights for women. The first sub-theme articulated the need for equality in relation to the discrimination women have experienced due to gender inequities. For example, Cindy Phillips described her experience regarding the need for equality in relation to the discrimination and oppression that women experience, when she stated "it [i.e. being a feminist] means caring about and being committed to doing something about the issues of women and how that fits into patterns of discrimination, um, I think it means having a certain framework for viewing the world." A quotation from Pauline Howard also illustrates how women were coming to understand the inequalities they were experiencing and how this led to women's pursuit of equality: "Women were starting to believe that, hey, we've been had. We've

35

been taken to the cleaners and its time to start standing up and to be counted." As women who

identified as feminists, it seems that recognizing the effects of discrimination on the basis of

sexism led these feminist women in a pursuit for justice and equality.

      Equality and fair treatment for all persons. A second sub-theme in the theme regarding

the link between what it meant to be a feminist and equality of rights expanded the pursuit of

equal rights to all marginalized and oppressed groups in society. In this sub-theme, being a

feminist was described as believing in the equality of all persons regardless of her or his gender,

sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, class, religion, etc. Further, it acknowledge the intersectionality

of these socially developed constructs that inherently allocate power and privilege to some

persons while further marginalizing and oppressing others lived experience. This broader

acknowledgement of how power, privilege, and oppression impact marginalized groups fits

within the postmodern feminist framework guiding this study, which suggests that experiences of

oppression extend into other marginalized groups and lived experiences (Baber & Allen, 1992;

Frieze & McHugh, 1998; Enns, 2004). Roberta Biel provided her definition of what it meant to

be a feminist in relation to her belief that all persons are deserving of equality. In particular,

Roberta Biel stated "I think a feminist is someone who believes and works for equality and

justice for everyone regardless of gender, of sexual orientation, of racial background, or religion

or whatever. That's what I think a feminist is." Cindy Phillips also expressed in her definition of

a feminist that a feminist was someone who believed in extending equality to all persons.

      [A feminist is] one that has, that puts the world into a context of understanding

      discrimination issues, treatment of women, oppression and how that extends into many

      areas, not just women, but certainly women, that looks…that the world is more of a

united whole with these kinds of issues going on and looking at change from a point of

view that's real change, not a token change…for me, its all part of a construct.

Thus, a sub-theme was that being a feminist during the 1970s meant believing that all

persons deserve equality and fair treatment. Gerridee Wheeler summarizes this belief and the

preceding statements by Roberta Biel and Cindy Phillips in her statement " My passion [as a

feminist] is equality. Equal rights for every person." As previously stated, the idea that being a

feminist is connected to believing not only in equality of women but also in the equality of all

persons fits well within the postmodern framework guiding this theory as it acknowledges that

feminism has expanded from addressing gender-based oppression to tackling discrimination in

other areas as well such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, age, and religion. Further, it seems

by considering each women's social location, that these women have come to define feminism as

a pursuit for equality across multiple dimensions, including gender, sexual orientation, race,

ethnicity, age, ability, and religion.

Using voice. The second theme in the category "working towards justice" defined a

feminist as someone who used her voice to advocate for equality for and fair treatment of all

persons. The concept of using one's voice, in the context of this analysis, refers to women's

understandings of how they are affected by gender-based oppression and the ways in which they

amplify these experiences into messages through voice and action such that these messages are

being carried outward into adjacent groups, communities, and larger networks within society in

an effort to create change. Many women in this sample defined their experience as a feminist as

involving strengthening their voice regarding their concerns about gender-based inequities in

order to advocate for greater equality of women. For example, when Helen Rudie described what

being a feminist meant for her, she stated "[It means] just being able to have a voice that's

considered when decisions affecting a wide variety of circumstances have to be made whether it's the home and the family, the family time allocations or the workplace." Thus, using voice led to having women's opinions be considered during times of decision-making such that their thoughts and concerns were being taken into account. This fits within the postmodern framework being used in this study in that different women in this study were bringing different concerns for consideration to be addressed. Thus, each lived experience as a feminist woman was being included more broadly in women's understandings of feminist issues (hooks, 2000).

Harriet Skye further exemplified her beliefs that feminism was about women finding ways to strengthen their voice regarding gender-based oppression in her discussion of how the label feminist did not feel like a relevant identity to her in her own life.

> One of the reasons why I say I'm not a feminist is because I don't think there was anytime in life as a daughter, wife, or a mother or a time where I watched my dad with my grandmother where the men ever left the women out. They never left the women out of any decision that had to do with the family or the community or anything. The women were always included, so I never, and I think, I don't think a lot of women felt that way. I never saw myself as a feminist because of that.

Thus, Harriet's quotation supports Helen Rudie's belief that being a feminist meant having a voice that is considered during times of communal decision-making. The need to have women's voices be taken into account as decisions are made fits within the postmodern feminist framework guiding this study in that a primary goal of postmodern feminism is to collect the many varied lived experiences women have in relation to gender-based oppression so that voice can be amplified regarding varied concerns in order to have all women's concerns be addressed in our pursuit towards justice (Baber & Allen, 1992).

Using voice to advocate for women's issues. A sub-theme of women using their voice to articulate their concerns regarding gender-based oppression was using that voice to advocate on behalf of women's issues. In this way, being a feminist meant advocating or acting for equality in women's rights as discussed in our first theme. This sub-theme illustrated that action is an integral part of what it meant to be a feminist during this timeframe. Gerridee Wheeler exemplified action as a central part of what it meant to be a feminist for her in her statement: "a feminist in my day was action, you know?" In Audrey Neff Hiney's interview she labeled this action as "the feminist crusades", which exemplifies the magnitude of force that these women were required to utilize in order to articulate and transform their experiences regarding gender-based oppression into action and advocacy work. It seems utilizing a feminist voice through action was an essential part of what it meant to be a feminist for these women.

Jane Skjei talked about a feminist identity as meaning that a woman needed to advocate for themselves in her statement "you have to stand up for yourself, you have to." Gerridee Wheeler also talked about what it meant to be a feminist with voice, when she replied "It means to me that I have to speak up, not sit, idly by." As previously stated, it seems that as women strengthened their voices and messages regarding the oppression they were experiencing, a responsibility was placed upon these feminist women to use their voice to pursue justice and equality for all women. This highlights the need that many feminists have to address gender-based oppression in their actions (Baber & Allen, 1992; Enns, 2004).

Voicing concern of gender inequities. A second sub-theme regarding women using their voice to project their concern and awareness of gender inequities was the significant meaning this advocacy work had for them. For example, Audrey Neff Hiney shared how the power of her voice created an impact in her church, when she shared

I was passionate about it and I was arguing with everybody and I did make a big impact in the church I think…I mean not a big one, what am I talking about…but I mean I made a lot of noise let's put it that way.

Through Audrey's words we can see that the ways in which Audrey raised her voice in response to gender-based oppression felt very powerful for her and also linked her to a belief that she was making a difference by using her voice and sharing her perspective. In another way, Gerridee Wheeler talked about how advocating for women's rights brought women together: "Even then it was learning to live together and to respect everybody's opinion." It seems for Gerridee, part of voicing varied concerns in relation to gender-based oppression meant respecting and honoring each woman's experience. This connects well with the tenets of postmodern feminism as it highlights that there were many voices contributing to feminism based on unique lived experiences and as a result, women needed to find ways to listen to and value each individuals' experiences of gender-based oppression.

Opportunity. A third theme found in the category of working towards justice focused on opportunity. Some of the women in this study reported that a feminist identity opened up possibilities for accessing and facilitating opportunity in their lives and the lives of other women. When Edi Falk was asked about what it meant for her to identify as a feminist in her life, she replied: "[It means] I can do anything anyone can do. It just gave me the license to be an individual to do anything that I wanted to do. It gave me the freedom and license to be me." Edi continued to explore her feminist identity as creating opportunity when she spoke about her experiences of times when women were not able to access opportunity for themselves in our society. She shared

When I got divorced, I tried to get the billing for Montana Dakota Utilities out of our

joint names to my name and they were not going to do it period. They did it in the end.

Cable television wouldn't take his name off my billing either.

When Nancy Edmond Hanson was interviewed regarding how she defined feminism in her lived experience, she talked about her changing experience of what feminism has meant to her. Nancy discussed the need feminists had to articulate their pursuit for "equality of rights" in response to experiences of gender-based oppression and how her definition of being a feminist woman has shifted towards a definition that speaks of opportunity for women. In particular, Nancy explained

I think that opportunities is a more accurate way to describe it, because no one has the

right to walk into any job that she wants anywhere, but to have the opportunity to choose

to compete for that job or choose to stay home and raise a family, or to choose to do one

thing or another.

It is important to note Nancy's clear articulation of a feminist identity creating choice and opportunity for women as it highlights the agency women were fighting for in their own lives and for future generations. Later in her interview, Nancy continued to explore the benefits of considering women's advocating for justice as being a mission to create more opportunity for women: "Rights tend to have this kind of salute and opportunities tend to be more reasonable." In this quotation, it seems that Nancy was suggesting that "rights" involve more hierarchy and a sense of requirement whereas opportunity might allow women to experience more freedom and choice within their equal rights. This fits the postmodern feminist framework guiding this study because the concept of women having choice means that women can choose what fits their

unique needs and lived experiences such that all women do not necessarily need to make the same choices uniformly in order to advocate for women's rights.

Valuing Self and Other Women

The second category that developed from these women's interviews was a definition of feminist identity that involved a valuing of oneself as well as other women. Three themes comprise this category: believing in oneself, feeling comfortable as a woman, and valuing and trusting other women.

Believing in oneself. The first theme posits that being a feminist meant believing in oneself. In the following quotation Pattiann Hanson outlined her belief that having a feminist identity meant that women were able to believe in themselves. Pattiann stated "I just can't imagine not being one. That it just, just to believe in yourself or to think you can do things, that you are, should be afforded equal opportunity." It seems that Pattiann Hanson was suggesting that in addition to feminist women's ambition to work towards justice and equality for women that this work also leads to a valuing of oneself as a woman. Pattiann Hanson's quotation also fits within the postmodern feminist framework guiding this study in that she seemed to be suggesting some flexibility in what women are choosing to value in themselves. In other words, each woman can carry her lived experience as a feminist and appreciate her individual understanding of her values and worth she has as a woman as well as the value and worth of all women.

Feeling comfortable as a woman. A second theme in this category defined a feminist as a woman who feels comfortable being herself in the world. When the women interviewed in this study were asked what it meant to be a feminist, many women responded that being a feminist meant connecting with and being their own true selves. For example, Jane Skjei connected this to

increased comfort in who she was as a woman: "I'm comfortable in my own skin now." In Pattiann Hanson's discussion of what it meant to be a feminist during the 1970s she makes an association between believing in oneself and being at ease with herself: "It just means that I can be me." In this way, there seems to be a connection between valuing oneself and experiencing increased comfort in one's social location as a woman. Pattiann Hanson furthers her argument that a feminist identity meant connecting with herself as a woman in the following statement: "I don't see that being a feminist is any different than being a woman." It seems that Jane Skjei and Pattiann Hanson were describing their feminist identity as something that fit naturally with how they connected to themselves as women. In this way, being a feminist was very natural for these women: it fit with who these women were.

This theme, which suggested part of being a feminist meant being comfortable as yourself in your social location as a woman, aligns with the tenets of postmodern feminism. Postmodern feminism acknowledges that women's lived experiences need to be what defines feminism at large and the feminist movements (Baber & Allen, 1992; Enns, 2004). Thus, it seems that when feminism incorporates a woman's lived experience she is more likely to report greater comfort in her social location as a woman. This connection between the inclusion of women's lived experiences as women and the resulting comfort women are reporting as feminists has been one of the goals that postmodern feminism has been trying to create by inviting more understanding of and space for women's individually lived and unique experiences (Baber & Allen, 1992; Enns, 2004).

Sense of fullness and completeness. A sub-theme within the theme of being comfortable as a woman was a sense of fullness or completeness that these women reported as a result of their feminist identity. For example, Juanita Humphrey described her understanding of how other

43

feminist women connect with feminism: "I think its nice being feminine and feminist, a whole woman." There is, therefore, a link between valuing oneself, recognizing the worth that one has as a woman, and the wholeness that this brings to a woman's sense of self. Further, it is interesting to note that the experience of wholeness for feminist women came from embracing their identity as a feminist because it implies their feminist identity created more wholeness in their identity as individual women.

Valuing and trusting other women. A third theme in this category recognized that being a feminist for these women was about valuing and trusting other women. For example, Pattiann Hanson illustrated this in her statement "I guess it just means that you believe in women and trust in other women." Thus, Pattiann Hanson connected her belief in women with increased trust in the ability and knowledge that other women carry with them. Similarly, Gerridee Wheeler talked about how feminism meant caring about all persons: "It means to me that I care about all persons, all people." The ability to believe in oneself and other women seemed to bring purpose into women's feminist identity. For example, Pauline Howard described that valuing and trusting other women meant "being interested in things that pertain to women. Women in the home, women on the job, women as far as raising their children is concerned, anything that has to do with women's issues or where women are concerned." Lastly, Nancy Edmond Hanson stated "[Feminism] only made sense. My friends were involved, now I was involved." Again, these descriptions of being a feminist and its connection to valuing and trusting other women fits within the postmodern feminism framework guiding this study in that it honors lived experiences of this diverse group of women (Baber & Allen, 1992). These comments represent these women's shared stories of what shaped their feminist identity. For these women, valuing and trusting in other women was a part of their pursuit towards justice and equality for all persons.

Each of these three themes hold distinct purpose and definition in relation to what it meant to be a feminist while also intersecting with one another. For example, it seemed that believing in oneself created more space for these women to be comfortable in themselves as women and in their feminist identity in ways that seemed to contribute to trusting in and caring about other women's journeys as well. The following quotation by Pattiann Hanson captures the intersection of the themes within this category.

> I was interested in doing some things to help the greater good of womankind. But I was really interested in helping the greater good of Pattiann Hanson, too. Which I think most of the women are. If you don't have a have a personal interest in it, you're not going to do anything for anybody else.

Again, it is important to highlight that the themes within this category fit with the postmodern feminist framework guiding this study that seeks to explore how women's unique lived experiences contribute and create meaning within the larger feminist movement (Baber & Allen, 1992; Frieze & McHugh, 1998). Pattiann Hanson's comments suggest that there is a direct link between having a personal stance on what feminism meant for women and their resulting interest in joining with other women in their pursuit of justice. It seems having an invested and personal interest in feminism contributed to a woman's likelihood to engage with other women in their search for equality and fair treatment.

Women with Diverse Perspectives

A third category in the data described a feminist as meaning that you were a part of a larger community of women with diverse experiences and relationships to feminism and the feminist movement. In other words, feminists were women with diverse perspectives to contribute to the shared understanding of feminism. The idea that being a feminist meant being a

part of a larger community of women with diverse experiences and relationships to feminism fits very well within a postmodern feminist framework because this framework arose from a need for feminism to branch out from an essentialist definition of feminism primarily defined by White middle class women (Baber & Allen, 1992; hooks, 2000). As a result, postmodern feminism acknowledges that there are multiple and varied causes for women's subordination, and that feminism therefore needs to consider how different women's lived experiences contribute to our understanding of what feminism encompasses (Baber & Allen, 1992).

Diverse experiences shape feminist identity. There was one theme found within this category and it related to the diversity of women's lived experiences in the world and how these diverse lived experiences influenced their understanding of what it meant to be a feminist. As previously stated, this theme is very relevant to a postmodern feminist perspective, which values the socially subjective experiences that shape women's relationship to their feminist identity (Baber & Allen, 1992). Pattiann Hanson illustrated her connection to this framework in the following quotation.

> And I think different people have different descriptions of it, or different, a different definition of it [of feminism]. And granted when I was first on the Commission of the Status of Women, there was one woman who was on there who really truly, I think, believed that all men should just be banned from the earth. She was really the opposite end of the spectrum. Except I saw her as presenting her point of view and she was just kind of a strange thing, except she was kind of fun to listen to sometimes. She made us think. But that didn't mean we all had to be like that.

Pattiann's experience with this woman on the North Dakota Commission on the Status of Women was one that allowed her to both listen and be receptive to this person's lived

experiences while also having space and freedom to define feminism for herself in ways that fit

her understanding and lived experiences of feminism. Even though it may have been challenging

for Pattiann, she appeared to communicate the importance of having all voice heard.

Part of defining feminists as women who were a part of a larger community of women

with diverse experiences and perspectives meant welcoming voices from women who did not

identify as feminists. Harriet Skye talks about her participation in the women's movement as a

way of challenging feminists to be more aware of the diverse experiences that need to be heard:

> No, I never have [identified as a feminist]. I've just considered myself somebody that did
>
> things that maybe somebody, maybe nobody else wanted to do. I never have ever
>
> considered myself a feminist. I think that Indian women, and that's the one thing I
>
> consider myself is an Indian women who's just forced sometimes to do things. But I
>
> don't consider myself a feminist.

Harriet's comments articulated that the feminist movement and a feminist identity did not reflect

all women's lived experiences. This experience reflects the literature describing the feminist

movement that suggests feminism began largely in relation to White women's lived experiences

of gender-based oppression (hooks, 2000). The exclusion of some women's experiences within

feminism is what led to the postmodern feminism perspective beginning in the 1980s (hooks,

2000; Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006).

Thus, Harriet's comments illustrated how shifting away from essentialist definitions of

feminism may be important in welcoming more women's lived experiences as women. Harriet

continued to separate herself from the label of feminist in her statement

These issues [i.e. of feminism] were really insignificant compared to the 500 years of

legacy of bad treatment [Native Americans faced] in this country. I would have to say

that this issue just wasn't on my radar screen. There were too many other things.

Harriet Skye seemed to be suggesting that the issues pertaining to her as a Native American

woman were distinct from the voices of feminism during the women's movements in the 1970s.

Harriet's comments expressed how feminism fell short of representing the lived experiences of

all women.

While it is important to highlight that definitions of what it meant to be a feminist were

exclusionary to some women's experiences in the world, it also interesting to note that points of

intersection that can be found between the struggles shared by the feminists in this study and

those who did not identify as feminists. For example, I wonder if Harriet Skye's experience

might allow feminist women to see points of commonality between their experiences of and

responses to gender-based oppression and other's lived experiences of oppression and

marginalization based on other factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. For

example Harriet Skye talked about herself as an activist in the following way:

I was an activist in my own way. When I realized I could see the rights and wrongs of

society, the rights and wrongs of how to be treated, but to the extent of being involved in

women's issues at the time, I wasn't. I was involved in wanting my own people to be

treated fairly and equally.

While it seems clear that Harriet's goals and interests as a Native American woman activist were

separate and distinct to those of other feminist women interviewed for this study, it also seems

like Harriet's motivations for her activism parallel many of the reported reasons the other

participants in this study were pursuing justice for women's issues.

Roberta Biel also connected her identity as a feminist to extend into concern for women's diverse experiences in the following quotation.

>Yeah, I just think that feminism is where justice is and the big, along with the civil rights, and I just think that it encompasses all of those things and it affects everybody in the world. I mean, do people know what's happening to the women in Afghanistan, again?

It seems like Roberta was trying to expand women's conceptions of feminism to include the diverse lived experiences of women from across the globe. This inclusion of women across varied social locations is imperative to the work being accomplished within the postmodern feminist movement, which seeks to broaden our conceptualizations of feminism so that it can be more inclusive of all person's lived experiences (Baber & Allen, 1992).

Intersectionality of experiences. One sub-theme developed within the theme of diverse lived experiences and social location shaping definitions of feminist identity. This sub-theme related to the areas of intersection within the diverse experiences shaping feminism. This can be best summarized by Pattiann Hanson's comments:

>I think if you look at the women who are involved in International Woman's Year Committee or the North Dakota Commission of the Status of Women, we pretty much represented women who were from 22, I think Agnes Geelan was probably 80 or something at the time, and there were all kinds of people. There were women on there that had children. Women who did not. Women who had been married, women who had not, women who had been, or were widowed. Some were professional people, some had a high degree of education, others didn't. And so I think we were a broad spectrum of people and we all kind of thought women were okay. That was part of it.

From Pattiann Hanson's quotation we hear that being a feminist meant holding diverse lived experiences in relation to other women while also sharing a common belief that women were important and valuable persons in our society. Pattiann Hanson continued to name strength as a core commonality for women engaged in the feminist movement:

> I think that all the women I remember working with had strong values. Whether they were for family or for jobs or for education or whatever, I think we were all strong women in a certain way. Maybe in our own way. Maybe some were more radical than others, maybe some were more conservative. But it was because we came from different backgrounds, we were leading different lives, we had different things going on. But I think we all had a strong core value system.

For Pattiann Hanson, it seems that in addition to recognizing women as important and valuable members of society, women also shared a strong value system regardless of how they utilized this system. Within a postmodern feminist framework, it seems that women were able to work against gender-based oppression in different ways and perhaps with different values guiding them and from different social locations. At the core, however, was a strong value system binding them to their collective interests in working towards justice and dismantling gender-based oppression.

Relevancy to Lived Experience

A fourth category in the data defined being a feminist as an identity that connected women with personal lived experiences of gender-based oppression. This category is very much situated within a postmodern feminist framework, which strives to incorporate women's varied lived experiences into contemporary definitions of feminism (Baber & Allen, 1992; Frieze & McHugh, 1998; Enns, 2004). For example, Cindy Phillips talked about her experience of coming

to identify as a feminist as being a process of realizing that feminist values resonated with much of how she was living her life:

> I tend to think of it [i.e. a feminist identity] more as a label that I came to understand applied to me…umm, you know in the same way that being a lesbian, or any other terms of that era, applied to me, um, I came to understand that being a feminist applied to most everything I believed in.

It is interesting to hear Cindy talk about feminism resonating with her lived personal experiences as a woman because it seems she was suggesting that there was a deep sense of congruency between her lived experiences and how she came to understand feminism. In other words, Cindy's values and beliefs did not change when she came to identify as a feminist but rather she noticed her lived experiences as a women fit within her learned understanding of what it meant to be a feminist. This is part of what the postmodern feminist framework has been trying to offer to feminist women today: a way of connecting personal lived experiences with the issues of feminism such that there is space for feminism to honor and respond to each women's lived experience in the world (Baber & Allen, 1992; Frieze & McHugh, 1998; Enns, 2004).

Feminist issues pertained to lived experience. In this category, one theme emerged and it suggested that being a feminist meant articulating issues pertaining to women based on the knowledge and wisdom gathered through personal lived experiences as women. This theme carried significant stories of women's lived experiences of feminism. For example, Helen Rudie shares her personal connection to how she came to identify as a feminist.

> Women's issues have always been a big concern of mine. Partly because I was widowed. I've been widowed twice, once when my youngest was eighteen months old and then again about twenty years ago my second husband died, so I've been pretty much

responsible for supporting myself most of my life…I had three children which whom I substantially raised alone so I am concerned about that.

Part of what this lived experience contributed to Helen's individual understanding of feminism was a connection to living as a widowed woman who was responsible for supporting herself and her children through much of her life. Within the postmodern feminism framework guiding this study, she is bringing the issues of widowed women and men who have been primarily responsible for supporting themselves and their children to the feminist community as an important issue for women to collectively raise awareness around and work toward creating more just solutions.

Gerridee Wheeler also discussed how being a feminist made sense to her in relation to her lived experiences as a mother. For example, Gerridee explained "As a mother of seven daughters you're certainly going to be interested in what the future holds for them." Thus, Gerridee's lived experiences as a mother connected her to her feminist identity and the feminist movement at large. It seems her lived experiences brought purpose to her need to identify as a feminist woman.

Pauline Howard also depicted her feminist identity as emanating from her personal connection to women's work for justice and equality.

I had just, somehow or another, got involved because of the fact that I was working and wasn't getting a fair deal and I saw the need for something to be done. After I made the headlines in the Minot Daily News twice, once "Deputy Sues," and then three years later "Deputy Wins." And I heard from people from other women all over the state in Minnesota and, many people saying that, you know, we sure needed this and this is gonna help the cause. And it did. After that, the sheriff's office never had any qualms about

paying a woman a sergeant's pay instead of a clerk's pay if she was doing that kind of work, you know, so…I broke the mold there and got something started.

In Pauline's comments it seemed that she noticed injustice in her experience as a woman in the workforce outside the home. Pauline talked about her call to action to create justice and equality for women taking form in choosing to challenge her workplace through a lawsuit. Within a postmodern framework, it seems Pauline's individual experience of injustice in the workforce led her to using her voice to create change in women's rights in the workforce.

Jane Bovard talked about how her feminist identity grew out of her personal connections as a mother. For example, in the below quotation Jane stated

And I think a lot of it came from that, but I, my husband was in graduate school in Denver and I had had one child and was expecting a second child when I made some acquaintances and I got involved with an organization called the La Leche League which is an organization that supports breast feeding mothers and through that organization I really became interested in prepared child birth and educated child birth, breast feeding and that lead me to my whole interest in the area of women's health.

Jane continued to describe how this initial interest in women's issues in motherhood led to her involvement in birthing and abortion rights:

When I was in Denver we had a young woman who was our babysitter, she was a high school student. Her mother was a graduate student at the time with my husband in the English program. She became pregnant, was afraid to tell her mother and hitch-hiked across the country from Denver to Maryland to where her father was a physician and to tell him that she was pregnant and she ended up coming back to Denver. She ended up having an abortion, so we kind of became involved in that whole process at that point.

In Jane's account of her connection to feminism, she described her personal interest in learning about issues pertaining to women during motherhood. Eventually this led to Jane becoming more involved in women's rights for abortion services. Jane later created the first and only abortion clinic in North Dakota, and she continues to participate in the clinic organization today. Thus, Jane's exposure to women's birthing and reproductive issues had a profound effect on Jane's participation in advancing the status of women's rights during the 1970s. This fits within the postmodern framework guiding this study in that Jane's lived experiences as a woman and a mother influenced how she came to participate as a feminist woman during that time in her life.

Through taking into account the lived experiences of Cindy Phillips, Helen Rudie, Gerridee Wheeler, Pauline Howard, and Jane Bovard it is clear that the personal experiences that a woman experiences in her social context influences her connection to and understanding of feminism. For these women, it seemed that their personal lived experiences, which reflected their social location, resulted in these women wanting to advocate and work towards justice in these areas for other women. As previously stated, this models the postmodern feminist framework guiding this study which argues feminism is based upon and draws from women's unique lived experiences as women (Baber & Allen, 1992). Thus, the women in this study who chose to address the experiences of gender-based oppression as reflected in their own personal lived experiences were reflecting the postmodern feminism framework by allowing their lived experiences to shape the change being addressed in the feminism movement.

Future Orientation

A fifth category in the data pertains to the notion that a feminist identity meant that women had an investment in the opportunities afforded to future generations. One theme emerged in this category: a belief that women needed to be invested in the future lives of women.

Investment in the future of women's lives. The first theme related to a belief that identifying as a feminist meant carrying a concern for and an investment in women's status in response to gender-based oppression in the future. For example, Gerridee Wheeler connected her identity as a feminist to her investment in her daughters' futures:

> I think about when you are mothering or parenting seven women, you have to be concerned about what the future holds and they're all exciting young women. I certainly became interested because of my family and wanting the best for them.

Within a postmodern feminist framework, it seems clear that Gerridee's lived experiences as a mother of seven daughters shaped her understanding of why feminist pursuits towards justice and equality for women were so meaningful: she was thinking about the opportunities she wanted her daughters to have in their lives.

Pattiann Hanson also described what it meant for her to be a feminist during the 1970s in relation to thinking about the future for upcoming generations of women.

> I think I still do, you know, I'm sure they do too, I wouldn't speak for them, but I think that's part of it is the women who were involved [in the feminist movement] didn't just do things for each one. I think we all were thinking of the bigger picture and what was coming after. Kind of the idea that planting a tree under which you know you're never going to sit type of thing. But I think they, you know, we all had strong values, family values.

In this category, we start to see a picture of how being a feminist was about working towards justice both in the present and also for future generations of women. It seems that these women recognized within the larger goal of ending gender-based oppression there were likely victories to be made in the short term and then also in the long term there were goals to be

55

accomplished that would serve future women much more than the women working on these changes at the time. This connection to the future fits well within the postmodern feminist framework because of the ways postmodern feminism has attempted to deconstruct essentialist feminist beliefs in order to branch out and encompass more women and their varied lived experiences such that they could let their individual stories of oppression and marginalization be a part of what was shaping the feminist movement (Baber & Allen, 1992; Frieze & McHugh, 1998; Enns, 2004). Pattiann Hanson's comments that feminism was about thinking about future generations of feminists fits well within these ideas because she was interested in future women having space to name their experiences of injustice, in whatever ways that might be relevant to their lived experience. It seems there was a sense of knowing that the feminist movement would be needed for future generations of women.

Changing Understandings of Feminism

The sixth, and final, category contained associations between what it meant to be a feminist and the changing attitudes of what it means to be a feminist within the larger social context.

Feminist identity as valuable. The first theme that arises in this category was comprised of beliefs that a feminist identity was considered a valuable part of women's identity during the 1970's. For example, Gerridee Wheeler described being a feminist as more attractive to women in her generation: "I think it was more popular to be a feminist in my day than it is right now." Edi Falk also continued to describe a feminist identity as a source of value in women's lives during her involvement within the feminist movement:

> Yes, I think most of us were quite proud to say we're feminists and we were very angry
> when it got twisted around and it became something awful. In retrospect, while we were

using that term, it was not derogatory so you didn't really realize it until after, after

everything blew over.

Both Gerridee and Edi reported that it seemed easier to identify as a feminist during the 1970s

than it does presently. It seems that women who were a part of the feminist movement at that

time were proud of their feminist identity. Gerridee and Edi also reported that their experience of

it being easier to be a feminist during the 1970s was different from how they imagine the

experience of feminist identity might feel for women today. Through a postmodern feminist lens,

it seems that Gerridee and Edi were suggesting that a feminist identity might hold different

meaning to women depending on when they joined the feminist movement. Thus, a person's

lived experiences as a feminist influenced that person's experience as a feminist.

Changing perceptions. A second theme that emerged in this category was a sense of

despair in watching how a feminist identity has changed in the perceptions of our larger social

context today. In the following quotation, for example, Laurie Natwick stated

Well I think its scary right now because in some ways that's, it's become for many

people like a dirty word and I don't like that. It's like well are you some sort of feminist?

And it's, its how it's put sometimes. It's like sometimes that language at church, it's hard

for me, like at the contemporary services, the language of contemporary songs is much

more sexist then that of hymns in the hymn book.

In this quotation, it seemed like Laurie was expressing her hope that her identity as a feminist

would shift other women's access and freedom in also identifying as feminists. In other words, it

seems that these women hoped that their feminist identities would collectively create social

change such that a feminist identity could be more accepted by women. At the same time, as we

listen to the experiences of Laurie Natwick, Edi Falke, and Gerridee Wheeler it seems they are

expressing a sense of loss over having their work towards justice as feminists not result in creating an atmosphere where a feminist identity for women could be more embraced and accepted within the larger social context. Thus, from a postmodern framework, we learn that part of what it meant to be a feminist for these women was to work toward creating more acceptance of women's varied feminist identities.

This category acknowledges these women's reports that the definitions of what it means to be a feminist seems to have changed negatively over time. Further, it seems as though the effects of gender-based oppression continue to minimize the value and work of feminist women. In this way, then, the women who participated in this study and their lived experiences of what it meant to be a feminist during the 1970s hold great significance and need to be valued. The words and stories delivered through these women's lived experiences signifies the value and work done not only by these women but of all feminist women in ways that honor the resiliency involved in women's lives. These women's collective abilities to hold unto and share the messages of what it meant to be a feminist in the 1970s can be articulated in Pattiann Hanson's reflection on her experiences as feminist women: "I think we were all patriotic, we were all, none of us were thinking of, bad thoughts type of thing. I think we were all good people. I think we still are."

CHAPTER FIVE. DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into five sub-sections: (1) Discussion of the Main Findings, (2) Limitations of the Study, (3) Suggestions for Future Research, (4) Implications for Clinical Practice, and (5) Conclusion.

Discussion of the Main Findings

The quotations throughout the results chapter represent the ways that the women in this study described what being a feminist meant for them. While these women's experiences cover a wide range of aspects of what it meant to be a feminist during the 1970s there are commonalities across these lived experiences of feminism. These commonalities or main findings are encompassed by: (1) Diversity of Lived Experiences, (2) Women Deserve Equality, and (3) Emerging Definitions of Feminism.

Diversity of Lived Experiences

One finding that was common across this study was that this sample truly reflected a set of women with diverse and unique lived experiences that shaped their understanding of feminism. While the women in this study represent a somewhat homogeneous group from the Midwestern United States, it became clear when coding the transcripts of the interviews depicting these women's understandings of what it meant to be a feminist that they each have a unique background that shapes how they embraced feminism in their lives. For example, Gerridee Wheeler defined her feminist identity from her experiences as a mother of seven daughters, Cindy Phillips discussed feminism as a construct that related to her belief system in the same way her identity as a lesbian fit with her beliefs, Helen Rudie defined feminism from her experiences as a single widowed mother with three young children, and Jane Skjei talked about her feminist identity in relation to her strong desire to be a part of the civil rights

movement but being unable to participate at that juncture because of parenting responsibilities. As the interviews with these women unfolded it became clear that each women's lived experience in the world was both unique from the next and deeply shaped their participation in the feminist movement during the 1970s.

The fact that there is such diversity within a relatively homogeneous sample of women exemplifies how a postmodern feminist perspective can be influential in broadening conceptualizations of feminism. As previously stated, the postmodern feminist perspective arose out of a recognition within the feminist movement that there was a need to let go of essentialist feminist beliefs that narrowed women's understanding of feminism to experiences of White middle class women (Baber & Allen, 1992; Enns, 2004; hooks, 200). Instead, the postmodern feminist framework is comprised of multiple definitions of feminism based on women's lived experiences that are more inclusive to the diverse experiences that all women hold in relation to gender-based oppression (Baber & Allen, 1992; Enns, 2004; hooks, 2000). It is interesting to observe, then, that even within a sample that might normally be labeled as a more homogeneous group comprised of predominantly White women that these researchers were able to decipher very unique lived experiences for each of the women involved. Thus, it seems even within a group of primarily White women there is room to diversify what feminism meant for each of these women.

The diversity of these women's lived experiences as feminists contrasts with much of the literature presented on positive feminist identity development (e.g. Downing Hansen, 2002; Flores et al., 2006; Moradi et al., 2002; Ng et al., 1995; Vandiver, 2002). Further, previous literature has suggested that the feminist movement was carried forward by White middle-class women, and that this resulted in a narrow and uniform definition of feminism (Baber & Allen,

1992; Enns, 2004; hooks, 2000). Yet, this study demonstrated that even within a group of primarily White middle-class women there existed stark differences in how these women came to identify as feminists and live out their feminist identities. Thus, it may be that the essentialist theories guiding much of the literature on positive feminist identity were excluding many of the unique lived experiences of White women as well as other marginalized women. In other words, it could be that the essentialist feminist theories guiding feminism were representative of very few perspectives in an efforts to create a universal understanding of feminism, which resulted in excluding the unique lived experiences of women as a result of their unique social location.

While the sample in this study was primarily comprised of White women, it is important to highlight that two of the participants, Juanita Humphrey and Harriet Skye, were Native American women. It seems that as a result of these women's experiences as Native American persons, their understanding of what it meant to be a feminist during this time distinctly differed from the rest of the sample. Both Juanita and Harriet were clear that the term feminist was an identity that did not apply to their experiences as women. In fact, Juanita suggested that the feminist movement was grossly independent of the activism work she was involved with in responding to the oppression and cruelty Native Americans have experienced as a result of colonization processes in the United States. Thus, it seems that while there were unique lived experiences among a sample of primarily White women, women's experiences of feminism changed even more dramatically when a woman's social location differed in terms of race. This experience of heightened difference across race supports the postmodern feminist perspective's initiative to broaden feminist understandings of the varied lived experiences of all women living with oppression (Baber & Allen, 1992; Enns, 2004; hooks, 2000). It seems in taking into account

Juanita's and Harriet's experiences that there is a real need to expand how we understand what it means to be a feminist as well as articulate where feminism falls short of serving some women.

At the same time that these women's lived experiences changed their position and passions within the feminist movement there were also commonalities in their understanding of what it meant to be a feminist. For example, many of the women in this study resonated with the belief that being a feminist meant that they were in a pursuit for justice for themselves and future generations of women. The pursuit for justice was comprised of believing in equal rights for women and advocating for equal rights through voice and action, all in the pursuit of greater opportunity for women. These commonalities also reflect the postmodern feminist's goal of women coming from unique lived experiences towards a common goal of eradicating oppression in women's lives (Baber & Allen, 1992; Enns, 2004).

Women Deserve Equality

The second major finding of this study was that feminist identity is centered on the belief that women deserve equality. This was evident through the interviews conducted for this study and within each of the categories discovered in the data. For example, women's pursuit of justice, which comprised the first category, rested on strong beliefs that women were not receiving equality in society and that equality was an imperative part of creating greater justice between women and men. Thus, these women had an understanding that women deserved equality in their roles and relationships in their family, social networks, and larger communities.

Similarly, the finding that feminist identity is tied to believing that women deserve equality was evident in the third and fourth categories of the results section, which centered on feminists being women with diverse perspectives with unique lived experiences of gender-based oppression in their personal lives. It is interesting to note that from the unique lived perspective

from which each woman spoke, there existed a connection to women needing and deserving equality. Whether a woman was experiencing the effects of raising her children alone, she was advocating for women's rights to abortion services, she was informing feminist movement of places where it was not acknowledging all women's experiences, or she was fighting for equal pay at work, it was clear that these women were articulating women's entitlement to equality. Thus, each woman's experience, regardless of her unique lived experience as a woman, reflected that equality was being met within all aspects of her social location as a woman. In this way, each woman's lived experience of gender-based oppression became a representation that all women deserve equality despite not currently experiencing that equality in their lives.

The finding that women deserve equality was also reflected in the fifth and sixth categories that suggested these women identified their roles as feminists as being about considering the rights and opportunities of future generations of women as well as challenging how feminism is conceptualized and understood by others. For example, when the women in this study discussed how it was important to act as feminists in order to create more justice for future generations of women it was clear that their hope was that this would result in equality for women. For example, Gerridee Wheeler connected her knowing that women deserve equality to her desire for her daughters to be able to live in a world where equality between women and men existed. Similarly, Pattiann Hanson talked about women's needs for equality when she used her metaphor that part of being a feminist meant planting a seed for a tree that would provide support for other women. It seemed that part of the support she was trying to nourish for future generations of women was one that offered women the equality they deserved in their lives. Similarly, when the women in this study spoke to their concerns over how definitions of feminism have grown into more negative representations of feminists, it seemed they were

acknowledging that women were not receiving the equality they deserved and had been working towards in their lives.

It also interesting to note how the women in this study reported greater comfort in themselves as women as they began pursuing their deserving of equality in their lives. Several women reported feeling more at ease within themselves, more whole, and a greater comfort within themselves once they began pursuing equality for themselves and other women. Thus, it seems that even the pursuit of deserved equality brought greater satisfaction to the women in this study.

Emerging Definitions of Feminism

The third major finding from this study was an emerging understanding of what it means to be a feminist that does not reflect the existing literature. In particular, while there may be some similarities in the experiences these women held in relation to their feminist identity, the findings of this study do not reflect the five stage developmental model as proposed by Downing and Roush (1985). As previously stated, the Downing and Roush (1985) model of positive feminist identity development described the process by which women come to learn about feminist values and incorporate them into their lives. The model consisted of five stages: passive acceptance, which represents a time where women are not yet aware of the gender-based oppression happening to themselves and other women; revelation, which reflects times where a crisis or series of crises lead women's awareness of gender inequity in their lives; embeddedness-emanation, which is described as a time where women begin immersing themselves further into female culture and begin examining their experiences of gender-based oppression from new and alternative perspectives; synthesis, which was characterized as a time where women begin to integrate new perspectives of feminism into their lives; and lastly, active

commitment, which has been described as a time where women become more engaged in meaningful and effective action against forms of gender-based oppression (Downing & Roush, 1985).

The results of this study do not reflect the Downing and Roush (1985) model in multiple ways. First, the results of this study suggest that these women held a strong awareness of gender-based inequity and oppression within their understanding of the world. For example, Gerridee talked about this awareness as being so rooted in her being she couldn't fathom anyone not understanding the presence of gender-based inequities. Further, Cindy Phillips' described her understanding of what it meant to be a feminist in relation to her having always known about inequalities between women and men and later realizing that the term feminist applied to her experiences of noticing this injustice. The fact that women in this study reported a strong knowing of gender injustice contrasts with the first stage of the Downing and Roush (1985) model, which argued that women were initially unaware of gender-based inequities in their lives. The Downing and Roush (1985) model seemed to suggest women may be unaware that their social context may be oppressive, which seems to imply women are somehow not able to understand their own experience. Thus, it is interesting to note that the findings of this study demonstrated that many of these women reported a deep awareness and connection to living with gender-based oppression throughout their lifetime. It seems, then, that women are able to notice the effects of oppression and discrimination in their lives regarding gender-based oppression.

Secondly, the third stage of the Downing and Roush (1985) model suggested that as women develop a more solid identity as feminists that there will be a time where they withdraw from their current social community to communities more absorbed in female culture to help cultivate and assure them of their feminist beliefs. Again, the results of this study seem to dispute

65

this notion. It is interesting to note that none of the women in this study discussed having to abandon social networks as they came to participate in feminist activities. In fact, a portion of the interviews with these women directly asked them how their participation in the National Women's Conference impacted reactions from friends and family. The women in this study overwhelmingly commented that their involvement in the feminist movement meant strengthened support from family and close friends. Further, it seemed that many of the women had already been involved in communities with other feminists and each other in ways that seemed to foster a more natural development of one's feminist identity. Thus, these women reported that part of what it meant to be a feminist was that they could feel assured to have the support of their family and social networks.

Further, a feminist identity for the women in this study seemed to foster an interest in collectively creating change at the societal level. In this way, these women were not retreating but rather were challenging patriarchal discourse with their messages of equality for all persons. In addition to their participation in the State and National Women's Conference, these women also engaged people who did not agree with them through challenging laws and places of business, and providing training throughout the United States that supported the ERA and advocating for women's rights. Thus a feminist identity seemed to encourage creating change in one's community and country.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that none of the women in this study described their identity as a feminist as a process of evolution as reflected through the Downing and Roush (1985) five stage model. Rather, the women who participated in this study seemed to convey that a feminist identity was an identity that fit naturally with who they were as women and people. Holding a feminist identity seemed to fit with these women's knowings of gender-based

oppression, their need to carry voice on behalf of women, and the comfort and fullness they experienced as women as a result of these actions.

Thus, the findings in this research study reflect some of the critiques already in the literature pertaining to the Downing and Roush (1985) five stage model for positive feminist identity development. As previously stated, the Downing and Roush model (1985) has been heavily critiqued for being outdated, linear in its approach, and ignorant of a woman's social location (Downing Hansen, 2002; Moradi et al., 2002; Ng et al., 1995; Shibley-Hyde, 2002; Vandiver, 2002). Further, women's experiences and meanings of their feminist identity were not considered or tested during the formation of the model, which at this juncture serves as a guiding model in feminist identity development scholarship. Thus, it seems that in addition to what these critiques offer, this study amplifies through qualitative data that women are not embracing a feminist identity in a way that fits the Downing and Roush (1985) model.

Given the postmodern feminist framework guiding this study, it is not surprising that the Downing and Roush model (1985) does not appear to represent the experiences of the women who participated in this study. Postmodern feminism posits that there are as many versions of feminism as there are women (hooks, 2000). Each woman's lived experiences, then, contribute to her individual understanding of and connection to feminism. Under this tenet it becomes hard to imagine how one would create a model of positive feminist identity development that could accurately capture all women's experiences as feminists.

Limitations

It is important to recognize that the present study has a few limitations related to the sample and methodology. A main limitation of this study was the sample composition, as the majority of the sample was White, middle aged, and comprised of women from the Midwest in

67

the United States. Another possible limitation of this study is that there was a single interview conducted with each participant; however, the interviews ranged in length from one to three hours and participants were allowed to provide further input when reviewing their transcripts. Lastly, it is important to recognize that the perceptions and definitions of feminism offered by the women in this study were shaped by their shared experience of participating in these national and state conferences in the 1970's, and thus this uniquely shapes this group of women's understandings of the feminism in ways that other women may not share.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study worked to diversify current understandings of what it means to be a feminist. A hope in conducting this research project has been that it will be inspiring to other feminist scholars who are interested in broadening conceptions of feminism in women's lives. Thus, it would be valuable to conduct further qualitative research examining how women define feminism in relation to their lived experiences as women given the relatively scarce amount of literature in the field. This kind of work would help broaden conceptualizations of what it means for women to identify as feminists as well as extend current understandings of feminism.

An important part of broadening the literature's conceptualizations of feminist identity in women's lives and feminism at large would be to represent diverse populations of women that are affected by gender-based and other forms of oppression. This would require researchers to conduct research with women with diverse social locations across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, etc. Broadening the research of feminist identity to include more of women's lived experiences would support the postmodern feminism framework in that researchers would be capturing more of the unique lived experiences that women hold as a result of their social location across these domains (Baber & Allen, 1992).

Another relevant research area would be to explore how women define and explore equality. This would a possible area for qualitative research given the findings of this study that suggest that women believe pursuing equality is a core component of being a feminist. Thus, it would be interesting to learn more about where women are working to create equality and what equality means for them given the difficulties that exist in creating balance within systems where power, privilege and oppression are present.

A particularly interesting research area within understanding how women define feminism in their lives would come from engaging in research comparing current generations depictions of feminist identity and comparing them with depictions from more historical generations of women. This would be an engaging study in relation to some of the findings in this study where women were sharing their sense that feminism was an easier identity to uphold during the 1970s compared to today. The idea that feminism was easier to embrace during the 1970s is supported by existing research, which found that feminists from the Baby Boom generation were more likely to identify as strong feminists than more recent generations of women (Duncun, 2010; Horne et al., 2001). This researcher speculates that women today might reciprocally suggest a belief that it seemed easier to be a feminist today than during the feminist movement of the 1970s. It would therefore be interesting to examine how different generations of women make sense of their feminist identity and relate it to other feminists' experiences.

Implications for Clinical Practice

The results and findings of this study highlight the need for clinicians to engage women in conversations regarding how their personal experiences reflect the effects of living in a culture where gender-based oppression exists as well as support women as they make choices in their lives as a result of these experiences. The importance of having conversations with women

regarding their experiences of and responses to gender-based oppression is prevalent in the feminist family therapy literature (Avis, 1989; Hare-Mustin, 1978; Leslie & Clossick, 1992; McGoldrick, Anderson, & Walsh, 1989). Feminist family therapy, which emerged during the 1970s from the work of the feminist movement, has argued that gender was, and continues to be, a central organizing feature of family systems and that issues of gender have been largely ignored in traditional approaches of family therapy (Avis, 1989; Hare-Mustin, 1978; Leslie & Clossick, 1996; McGoldrick et al., 1989). In response to these concerns, feminist family therapy scholars have suggested that family therapists have an ethical imperative to consider social context in their clients' lives such that the effects of power, privilege and oppression in a client's life can be appropriately considered and addressed (Avis, 1989; Hare-Mustin, 1978; McGoldrick et al., 1989). This argument is supported within the results and findings of this study, which has articulated that women are in a pursuit of and deserve justice and equality in their lives and want that for the lives of all women. Thus, this section of the discussion chapter will focus on ways that clinicians can address social context in their clinical practice in an effort to address the effects of gender-based oppression.

One clinical implication that arises from this study is the need for therapists to support women as they connect with their knowing and experience of gender-based oppression. As previously stated, several of the women in this study reported a deep knowing within themselves of the experiences women face regarding gender-based oppression. While the results of this study found that women reported an understanding of their experiences of oppression and marginalization, the feminist family therapy literature suggests that it is less likely women have been able to find places to engage in dialogues regarding these experiences of oppression (Hare

70

Mustin, 2004; Leslie & Clossick, 1992; Rampage, 2002). Thus, therapists need to be actively engaged in exploring and validating women's experiences of gender-based oppression.

The literature has stipulated that people who experience marginalization and lack a safe place to name and have their experiences of oppression validated are more likely to internalize that oppression (Denborough, 1995; Morgan, 2002; White, 2007). The opportunity to validate experiences of oppression can be helpful in allowing people to further acknowledge their lived experiences, which has been found to be helpful in supporting clients to make more conscious choices in response to the oppression they are experiencing within the larger social context in which they are embedded (White, 2007). Thus, when women have the opportunity to engage in conversations regarding their experiences of gender-based oppression in a therapeutic context they may be more likely to make decisions regarding how they want to situate themselves within these inequities. For example, as women have the opportunity to talk about the experience of gender-based oppression they may choose to demand more egalitarian relationships in their lives. This fits with the literature regarding feminist family therapy that has suggested family therapists need to create dialogue with clients that fosters equality in heterosexual relationships, which contributes to greater relationship satisfaction (McGeorge, Carlson, & Toomey, in press; Prouty & Lyness, 2011; Rampage, 2002).

Feminist scholars have suggested that narrative therapy provides clinicians with a theoretical framework to support women in their articulation of the effects of gender-based oppression (Avis, 1989; Lee, 1997). Narrative therapy is a respectful and collaborative therapy approach in which clients are invited to explore the values, beliefs, and ideas that have been guiding their lives and consider whether they would like to re-author narrative that guides them in their life (White, 2007). A basic premise of the theory suggests that people are embedded

71

within a larger sociopolitical context that shapes the way they view themselves (Carlson, 1997; Morgan, 2000; White, 2007). In narrative therapy, clients have the opportunity to explore the messages that are impacting them within the larger social context and consider whether they might have more preferred values and beliefs they would like to re-author into what guides them in their life (Carlson, 1997; White, 2007). This is applicable to the findings of this study as narrative therapy could be used to help women connect to their own preferred values and beliefs while at the same time working to separate them from societal imposed beliefs and values.

A premise of narrative therapy states that as people experience effects of oppression and marginalization in their lives, they often receive negative messages about their self-worth that become internalized negative beliefs that they hold in regard of themselves (Carlson, 1997; White 2007). These messages become integrated into their identity without considering where these messages are coming from and negatively affect their sense of self (Carlson, 1997; White 2007). In the case of this study, some of the messages women may receive are based in gender-based oppression. A major goal of narrative therapy, then, is to help people externalize and explore the influence of these internalized negative messages that they have come to believe about themselves (Carlson, 1997; White, 2007). Externalizing conversations allow clients to appropriately re-situate the negative beliefs they hold about their value and worth as messages that they are actually receiving from the larger social context in which they are embedded. In the context of this study, the work of externalizing supports women in recognizing that they are not the problem, but rather the problem (i.e., gender-based oppression) exists outside of them within a larger social discourse affecting them (Carlson, 1997; White, 2007).

As women separate and externalize the effects of their larger sociopolitical context, they can more freely access alternative and preferred knowings of themselves (Carlson, 1997; White

& Epston, 1990). This is very powerful work because it would allow women clients to access whole parts of their identity that have been blocked because of the larger sociopolitical discourses shaping their current experience. In narrative therapy, this is accomplished by engaging in conversations regarding preferred values and beliefs about oneself and how one wants to respond to the larger discourses affecting them (White, 2007). As these preferred values and beliefs develop in a person's value system, the therapist and client can explore and celebrate times when these values and beliefs have been present for the client throughout her life. The act of adopting a preferred identity or value system from which to live appropriately redistributes power from the larger social context back into a client's preferences and areas of influence.

Thus, it would be helpful for clinicians to engage women in discussions of their experiences of gender-based oppression and gender inequities in their primary relationships and more broadly in society. This may be particularly relevant when we consider how the women in this sample positively reported that the opportunity to use their voice to speak up against gender-based oppression led them to experience greater comfort and wholeness in themselves as women. In this way, it may be particularly important that family therapists engage in these kinds of conversations with women as it seems it may contribute to a greater sense of self and well-being. Further, the women in this study stated that their feminist identity resulted in more involvement in the larger feminist movement. These women reported a desire to use their voice to collectively create change in their communities and society at large. Therefore, it is important for clinicians to engage in conversations with women in therapy regarding the ways in which they embrace a feminist identity in their lives as well as the ways in which they stand for creating justice and equality in their relationships and more broadly in their lives. It seems these kinds of

conversations with women may encourage more women to find ways to become involved in the larger feminist movement's pursuit of justice and equality for all persons.

Training and Supervision

Another clinical implication that demands our attention as a result of this articulated knowledge of gender-based oppression is the need to develop training and supervisory experiences that better prepare therapists to practice family therapy through a feminist lens. As previously stated, traditional family therapy approaches and practices have been heavily critiqued for not incorporating an exploration of the effects of power, privilege, and oppression in considering how a client's social context may be affecting their experiences in the world (Avis, 1989; Hare-Mustin, 1978; Leslie & Clossick, 1996; McGoldrick et al., 1989; Wheeler, Avis, Miller, & Chaney, 1989). One proposed response to this dilemma has been to implement more feminist-based training and supervisory practices, which would allow more clinicians to gain exposure to using a feminist lens in clinical practice (McGeorge, Carlson, Erickson, & Guttormson, 2006; Wheeler et al., 1989).

Adopting a feminist perspective in practicing family therapy would involve encouraging therapists to actively process and analyze the client's context using a feminist lens which considers the effects of power, privilege, and oppression (McGoldrick et al, 1989; Wheeler et al., 1989). This differs significantly from traditional family therapy practices, which hold static conclusions about therapy and the process of change (Wheeler et al., 1989). Part of this training would involve challenging clinicians to seriously consider the detriments of practicing from a systemic approach, which favors circularity and has been heavily critiqued for its apolitical assumptions (Hare-Mustin, 1978; Wheeler et al., 1989). Family systems theory has historically not acknowledged gender inequality, which resulted in an assumption that equality exists

74

between women and men (Wheeler et al., 1989). This is problematic because knowing that

women and men do not hold equality in relation to one another, it follows that that women and

men cannot create change in systems in equal ways (Hare-Mustin, 1978; Wheeler et al., 1989).

Thus, family therapists would benefit from supervision and training that would foster knowledge

regarding how women and men are affected by gender-based oppression and the unique ways in

which women and men may need to respond to the inequities they face.

In addition to educating family therapists on the shortcomings of traditional family

therapy approaches, feminist informed supervision and training could provide space for

therapists to learn about how experiences of power, privilege and oppression may be influencing

themselves as a therapist and the clients they are working with. McGeorge et al (2006) stated that

this requires supervisors and trainers to be intentional and rigorous in requiring students to

consider how issues of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class are affecting the

client system in question. McGeorge et al. (2006) described the purpose of this work is to

support therapists to see their clients' lives in a larger "political and cultural context" (p.10).

Thus, one significant way clinicians can join with women in their pursuit of justice and equality

would be to train themselves to adequately support women with an awareness of how their social

location as women is impacting them.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore how women assign meaning to their feminist identity in an

effort to broaden understandings of feminist identity development and feminist attitudes. Study

findings illustrate the diverse representation of meanings that women carry in their understanding

of what a feminist identity means to them. It is clear that within the unique lived experiences that

these women hold in relation to gender-based oppression that the women in this study were

working towards justice and equality for all persons who experience marginalization and

oppression. My hope in conducting this research project is that it will be inspiring to other

feminist scholars who are interested in diversifying conceptions of feminism in women's lives as

we continue to work toward justice in ending gender-based oppression.

REFERENCES

Alcoff, L. (1988). Cultural feminism versus post-structuralism: The identity crisis in feminist

theory. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 13(3),* 405-436. Retrieved from

http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174166

Avery, D. M. (1977). The psychosocial stages of liberation. *Illinois Personnel and Guidance*

Association Quarterly, 63, 36-42.

Avis, J. M. (1989). Integrating gender into the family therapy curriculum. *Journal of Feminist*

Family Therapy, 1(2), 3-26. doi: 10.1300/J086v01n02_02

Baber, K., & Allen, K. (1992). *Women & families: Feminist reconstructions*. New York:

Guilford Press.

Bargad, A. & Hyde, J.S. (1991). Women's studies: A study of feminist identity development in

women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 15*, 181-201.

doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1991.tb00791.x

Beck, A. A., Steer, R. A., & Brown, G. K. (1997). *The Manual for the Beck Depression*

Inventory-II. San Antonio, TX: Psychological Corp.

Berryman-Fink, C., & Verderber, K. (1985). Attributions of the term feminist: A factor

analytic development of a measuring instrument. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 9(1),*

51-65. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1985.tb00860.x

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in*

Psychology, 3, 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Carlson, T. (1997). Using art in narrative therapy: Enhancing therapeutic possibilities. *The*

American Journal of Family, 25(3), 271-285.

Carpenter, S., & Johnson, L. E. (2001). Women derive collective self-esteem from their feminist

    identity. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 25*, 254-257. doi:10.1111/1471-6402.00026

Cross, W. E. (1971) Negro-to-Black conversion experience: Toward a psychology of Black

    liberation. *Black World*, 20(9), 13-27.

Dahl, C., & Boss, P. (2005). The use of phenomenology for family therapy research: The search

    for meaning. In D.H. Sprenkle & F. P. Piercy (Eds.), *Research methods in family therapy*

    (2nd ed.). (p 43-54.). New York: NY: The Guilford Press.

Daly, K. J. (2007). *Qualitative methods for family studies and human development.* Thousand

    Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Denborough, D. (2006). *Trauma: Narrative responses to traumatic experience*. Adelaide:

    Dulwich Centre Publications.

Derogatis, L. R. (1975). *Brief Symptom Inventory*. Baltimore: Clinical Psychometric Research.

Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national

    index. *American Psychologist, 55,* 34-43. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.34

Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larson, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life

    scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71-75. doi:10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13

Downing, N. E., & Roush, K. L. (1985). From passive acceptance to active commitment: A

    model of feminist identity development for women. *The Counseling Psychologist, 13(4)*,

    695-709.doi: 10.1177/0011000085134013

Downing Hansen, N. (2002). Reflections on feminist identity development: Implications for

    theory, measurement, and research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *30(1)*, 87-95.

    doi:10.1177/0011000002301005

Duncan, L. E. (2010). Women's relationship to feminism: Effects of generation and feminism

    self-labeling. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 34(4),* 498-507. doi:10.1111/j.1471-

    6402.2010.01599.x

Enns, C. Z. (2004). *Feminist theories and psychotherapies: Origins, themes, and diversity.*

    Second Edition. New York: The Haworth Press

Eisele, H., & Stake, J. (2008). The differential relationship of feminist attitudes and feminist

    identity to self-efficacy. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 32,* 233-244.

    doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00432.x

Fassinger, R. E. (1994). Development and testing of the attitudes toward feminism and the

    women's movement (FWM) scale. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 18*, 389-402.

    doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1994.tb00462.x

Fischer, A. R., et al. (2000) Assessing women's feminist identity development: Studies of

    convergent, discriminant, and structural validity. *Psychology of Women Quarterly,*

    24, 15-19. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2000.tb01018.x

Flores, L. Y., Carrubba, M. D., & Good, G. E. (2006). Feminism and Mexican American

    adolescent women: Examining the psychometric properties of two measures. *Hispanic*

    Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 28(1), p. 48-64. doi:10.1177/0739986305283222.

Frieze, I., & McHugh, M. (1998). Measuring feminism and gender role attitudes. *Psychology of*

    Women, 22(3), 349-352. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1998.tb00159.x

Gurin, P., Miller, H., & Gurin, G. (1980). Stratum identification and consciousness. *Social*

    Psychology Quarterly, 43, 30-47.

Hare-Mustin, R. (1978). A feminist approach to family therapy. *Family Process*, *17(2)*, 181-

    194. doi: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.1978.00181.x

Hare-Mustin, R. T. (2004). Can We Demystify Theory? Examining Masculinity Discourses and

    Feminist Postmodern Theory. Journal Of Theoretical And Philosophical Psychology,

    24(1), 14-29. doi:10.1037/h0091235

Henderson-King, D., & Stewart, A. (1997). Feminist consciousness: Perspectives on women's

    experiences. *PSPB, 23 (4),* 415-426. doi:10.1177/0146167297234007

Henley, N. M., & McCarthy, W. J. (1998). Measuring feminist attitudes: Problems and

    prospects. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 22,* 363-369.

    doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1998.tb00162.x

hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody*. London: Pluto Press.

Horne, S., Matthews, S., Detrie, M., & Cook, B. (2001). Look it up under 'F': Dialogues of

    emerging and experienced feminists. *Women & Therapy, 23(2)*, 518.

    doi:10.1300/J015v23n02_02

Hurt, M., et al. (2007). Feminism: What is it good for? Feminine norms and objectification

    as the link between feminist identity and clinically relevant outcomes. *Sex Roles, 57,*

    355-363. doi: 10.1007/s11199-007-9272-7

Jack, D. C, & Dill, D. (1992). The Silencing The Self Scale. *Psychology of Women Quarterly,*

    16, 97-106. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1992.tb00242.x

Klonoff, A. E., & Landrine, H. (1995). The schedule of sexist events. *Psychology of Women*

    Quarterly, 19, 439-472. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1995.tb00086.x

Krolokke, C., & Sorensen, A. S. (2006). *Gender communication: Theories and analyses*.

    Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lee, J. (1997). Women re-authoring their lives through feminist narrative therapy. *Women &*

    Therapy, 20(3), 1-22. doi:10.1300/J015v20n03_01.

Leslie, L., & Clossick, M. (1996). Sexism in family therapy: Does training in gender make a

difference. *Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy*, 22(2), 253-269.

doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.1996.tb00202.x

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Publications, Inc.

Liss, M., & Erchull, M. J. (2010). Everyone feels empowered: Understanding feminist self-

labeling. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 34*, 85-96.

doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2009.01544.x

Liss, M., Hoffner, C., & Crawford, M. (2000). What do feminists believe? *Psychology of Women

Quarterly, 24,* 279-284. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2000.tb00210.x

Luhtanen, F., & Crocker, J. (1992). A collective self-esteem scale: Self evaluation of one's

social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18*, 302-318.

doi:10.1177/0146167292183006

Manago, A. M., Brown, C. R., Leaper, C. (2009). Feminist identity among Latina adolescents.

Journal of Adolescent Research, *24(6)*, 750-776. doi:10.1177/0743558409341079.

McGeorge, C., Carlson, T., Erickson, M., Guttormson, H. (2006). Creating and evaluating a

feminist informed social justice couple and family therapy model. *Journal of Feminist

Family Therapy*, *18(3)*, 1-38. doi: 10.1300/J086v18n03_01.

McGeorge, C., Carlson, T., & Toomey, R. (*in press*). Establishing the validity of the feminist

couple therapy scale: Measuring therapists' use of feminist practices with heterosexual

couples.

McGoldrick, M., Anderson, C., & Walsh, F. (1989). Women in families and family therapy. In

  M. McGoldrick, C. Anderson, & F. Walsh (Eds). *Women in Families*. W. W. Norton &

  Company: New York.

Moradi, B., & Mezyldo Subich, L. (2002). Perceived sexist events and feminist identity

  development attitudes: Links to women's psychological distress. *The Counseling*

  Psychologist, 30(1), doi:10.1177/0011000002301003

Moradi, B., Mezyldo Subich, L., & Phillips, J. (2002). Revisiting feminist identity development

  theory, research, and practice. *The Counseling Psychologist, 30(1)*, 6-43.

  doi:10.1177/0011000002301002

Moreland, J. R. (1976). Facilitator training for consciousness raising groups in an academic

  setting. *The Counseling Psychologist, 6(3)*, 66-68. doi:10.1177/001100007600600313

Morgan, A. 2000. *What is narrative therapy? An easy-to-read introduction*. Adelaide: Dulwich

  Centre Publications.

Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling

  psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52(2),* 250-260. doi:10.1037/0022-

  0167.52.2.250

Myaskovsky, L, & Wittig, M. A. (1997). Predictors of feminist social identity among

  college women. *Sex Roles*, *37*, 861-883. doi:10.1007/BF02936344

National Commission on the Observance of International's Women's Year. (1978). The spirit of

  Houston: National women's conference (DHHS Publication No. ADM 052-003-00505-

  1). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Ng, S., Dunne, M., & Cataldo, M. (1995). Feminist identities and preferred strategies for

      advancing women's positive self-concept. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 135(5),* 561-

      572. doi: 10.1080/00224545.1995.9712229

Paterson, B. L., Tschikota, S., Crawford, M., Saydak, M., Venkatesh, P., & Aronowitz, T.

      (1996). Learning to care: Gender issues for male nursing students. *Canadian Journal of*

      Nursing Research, 28(1), 25-39. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2005.11.013

Prouty Lyness, A. M., & Lyness, K. (2007). Feminist issues in couple therapy: Innovations in

      clinical and educational interventions, *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 6(1-2)*,

      181-195. doi:10.1300/J398v06n01_15

Quinn, J., & Radtike, H. (2006). Dilemmatic negotiations: The (un)tenability of feminist identity.

      Psychology of Women Quarterly, 30(2), 187-198. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2006.00281.x

Rampage, C. (2002). Marriage in the 20th Century: A feminist perspective. *Family Process*,

      41(2), 261-268. doi:10.1111/1545-5300.2002.41205.x

Rickard, K. M. (1989). The relationship of self-monitored dating behaviors to level of feminist

      identity of the Feminist Identity Scale. *Sex Roles, 20*, 213-226. doi:10.1007/BF00287993

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of

      psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*, 1069-1081.

      doi:10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069

Saunders, K., & Kashubeck-West., S. (2006). The relations among feminist identity

      development, gender-role orientation, and psychological well-being in women.

      Psychology of Women Quarterly, 30, 199-211. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2006.00282.x

Shibley-Hyde, J. (2002) Feminist identity development: The current state of theory, research, and

      practice. *The Counseling Psychologist, 30(1)*, 105-11. doi:10.1177/0011000002301007

Spence, J. T., & Helmreich, R. (1978). *Masculinity and femininity. Their psychological dimensions, correlates, and antecedents.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Vandiver, B. J. (2002). What do we know and where do we go? *The Counseling Psychologist, 30,* 96-104. doi: 0.1177/0011000002301006.

Welsh, E., & Halci, A. (2003). Accounts of feminism among women local councilors in England. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *26(4)*, 345-356. doi:10.1016/S0277-5395(03)00079-7.

Witte, T., & Sherman, M. (2002). Silencing the self and feminist identity development. *Psychological Reports, 90*, 1075-1083. doi:10.2466/pr0.2002.90.3c.1075

Wheeler, D., Avis, J. M., Miller, L. A., & Chaney, S. (1989). Rethinking family therapy training and supervision: A feminist model. In M. McGoldrick, C. Anderson, & F. Walsh (Eds). *Women in families*. W. W. Norton & Company: New York.

White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company

White, M. (2007). *Maps of clinical practice*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company

Yakushko, O. (2007). Do feminist women feel better about their lives? Examining patterns of feminist identity development and women's subjective well-being. *Sex Roles*, *57*, 223-234. doi: 10.1007/s11199-007-9249-6.

APPENDIX A. BRIEF NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF EACH PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWED

Table A1. Brief Narrative Description of Each Participant Interviewed (N=14)

Participant	Age	Race	Education	Status	Professional Demographics	Additional Notes
Roberta Biel	66	White	BS in Education	North Dakotan Delegate	Director and founder of a domestic violence center that serves eight rural counties in ND	Heterosexual; married; 3 children; 4 grandchildren
Jane Bovard	64	White	MS	North Dakotan Delegate	Owner/Administrator of Red River Women's Clinic (providing the only abortion services in North Dakota, and services women from South Dakota and Minnesota	Heterosexual; Married; 4 children
Edi Falk	63	White	BS	Delegate at Large	Member of the National Board of Directors of American Association of University Women	Heterosexual; 3 children
Juanita Helphrey	66	Native American	BS in Art	North Dakotan Delegate	Worked as a team leader and executive director for the council for American Indian ministry of the United Church of Christ, passionate about any issues related to Native American people, educating people about racism, racial justice	Heterosexual; Single; 2 sons
Audrey Neff Hiney	80	White	BS in Music Education	North Dakota Alternate	Former Assistant Vice President for Development at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago	Heterosexual; Divorced, then widowed; four daughters, four grandchildren

Table A1. Brief Narrative Description of Each Participant Interviewed (Continued)

Participant	Age	Race	Education	Status	Professional Demographics	Additional Notes
Pauline Howard	90	White	Attended Business College of Commerce	North Dakota Delegate	Deputy Sheriff in Ward County, took Ward County to court for equal pay for equal work	Heterosexual; widowed; 3 children
Cindy Phillips	60	White	MS in Political Science	North Dakota Delegate	Works as an attorney and college professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead	Lesbian; partnered
Helen Rudie	79	White	MS in Education; MS in Library Science	Official observer for Minnesota	Retired assistant professor of education, former media director and librarian at Concordia College, Moorhead	Heterosexual; widowed; 3 children; 3 grandchildren; 1 great grandchild
Jane Skjei	72	White	BA in History	North Dakota Alternate	Retired teacher	Heterosexual; married; 3 children; 5 grandchildren
Dr. Harriet Skye	76	Lakota	PhD in Ethnic Studies	North Dakota Delegate	Vice President of Intertribal Programs at United Tribes Technical College, Director of the Institute for American Indian Multicultural studies	Heterosexual; single; 2 children, 1 grandchild
Gerridee Wheeler	80	White	BA	Was appointed as one of 35 individuals by President Carter to the National Commission	CEO Dacotah Foundation, has been involved with the Republican National Committee	Heterosexual; 8 children

Table A1. Brief Narrative Description of Each Participant Interviewed (Continued)

Participant	Age	Race	Education	Status	Professional Demographics	Additional Notes
Pattiman Hanson	59	White		Chairwoman for the North Dakota state meeting	Involved in her church, United Way, Community Center, GOP, member of Job Service board, member of the State Committee for North Central Association, Judicial Nominating Committee, worked to pass ERA in ND, was involved in the ND Commission on the Status of Women's projects on monitoring ads that were demeaning to women, helped create abused women's resource centers and shelters across the state	Heterosexual; married; 1 child
Nancy Edmonds Hanson	55	White	BS in Communication	Director of the North Dakota State Conference	Writer, editor, teacher, photographer, graphic designer, consultant	Heterosexual; married; 1 child
Laurie Natwick	52	White	MS/Graduate	North Dakota Alternate	Hospitality Pastor, Lutheran Church, Assistant to the Bishop of Western North Dakota	Heterosexual; single

APPENDIX B. CATEGORIES, THEMES, AND SUB-THEMES

Table B1. Categories, Themes, and Sub-themes Found in Defining Feminism

Categories:	Themes:	Sub-themes:
Working towards justice		
	Right for equality and fair treatment	
		Women
		All persons
	Using voice	
		Advocacy of women's issues
		Advocacy in addressing oppression/injustice
	Opportunity	
Valuing self & other women		
	Believing in oneself	
	Feeling comfortable	
		Feeling complete & whole
	Valuing & trusting other women	
Relevancy in personal lived experience		
	Connection to issues relevant to lived experience	
Women with diverse perspectives		
	Diverse experiences shape feminist identity	
Future Orientation		
	Investment in future women	
	Pursuit of justice for future women	
Changing understanding of feminism		
	Feminist identity as valuable	
	Changing Perceptions	

APPENDIX C. NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL-

DELEGATES

* bold questions were most often used in data analysis

- Can you tell us about your life right now?
    - What sort of activities are you involved in?
    - What are some of your passions today?
- **How did you get interested in women's issues?**
    - **Do you identify as a feminist?**
    - **How did you become a feminist?**
    - **What does being a feminist mean to you?**
    - **How did people respond when you got active in women's issues?**
- Can you think back and tell us about how you first learned about the National Conference?
    - Friend?
    - Newspaper?
    - Organization you belonged to?
- Did you attend the state conference in Bismarck June 3rd - 5th 1977? What were your motivations for attending the state convention?
    - What hopes did you have for the state convention?
        - Were there certain issues that drew your interest?
- Can you tell me what you remember about the state conference?
    - Speakers?
    - Activities?
    - **How would you describe the women who attended the conference?**
    - Anything that inspired you there?
    - Anything surprising, upsetting (controversial issues)?
        - Would those issues still be controversial today?
    - Were there protestors at the state convention?
    - How were you feeling when you left the conference?
- What influenced you decision to be involved in the national conference?
    - How did you decided that you wanted to be involved
- What was it like to run?
    - Was it competitive?
    - How did the campaigning work?
    - How did you feel about running?
    - How did the voting work?
    - Did people encourage you or discourage you from running?
- What were the reactions of people when you decided to attend the state convention and when you decided to go on to be involved on the national level?
    - Family members
    - Friends
    - Employer
    - Community members, religious affiliates, etc.

- When you think of the national conference what is the first thing that comes to your mind?
  - What is your most memorable moment of the conference?
- What did you do to prepare for the national conference?
- What concerns did you have about going to the national conference?
  - Safety?
  - Protesters/reactions of others?
  - Financing the trip?
- What about going to the National Conference excited you?
  - Sessions?
  - Meeting other delegates?
  - Voting on resolutions (outcomes)?
- Thinking back before you went to the conference, what did you hope would be accomplished?
  - What did you think the conference would do?
  - How did you hope things would change for women?
- What was your experience of traveling to Houston?
  - How did you get there?
  - Where did you stay at the conference?
  - Who did you room with?
- Upon arriving at the conference, what were your initial impressions?
  - Protesters
  - Registration at Hyatt Regency
- Was the conference segregated by state and were people interested in what state you were from?
  - How did people react when you told them you were from ND?
- Were you aware of the negative media coverage of the conference?
- How did the protesters impact you?
  - What did you think of the women who were protesting?
  - Did any of there signs or things they yelled stay with you?
    - do you remember what they were saying or what their signs said?
  - Did you feel personally attacked? if so, what was that like?
- What do you remember about the opening ceremony?
  - What was the feel of the convention center as the conference got underway?
  - How were you feeling?
  - Where were you seated and who was seated around you?
- Were you apart of any caucus?
  - What was your caucus topic of discussion?
  - How did you decide what caucus to attend?
  - Did you plan as a delegation who would attend which caucuses or did you make individual decisions?
- Was there consensus among the ND delegation?
  - What issues was there agreement on?
  - What issues did you all disagree on?

- o
    - ▪ What can you tell us about the National Conference? (What do you remember about the conference)?
        - o What were your days like at the conference?
        - o What were some of the controversial issues at the National Conference?
        - o Are there planks/resolutions that you voted against?
            - ▪ Have your views changed on any of these issues?
        - o What planks/resolutions did you struggle with voting for or against?
            - ▪ How did you decide on those resolutions?
        - o Are there planks/resolutions that you were particularly excited to support and vote in favor of?
        - o How did you make sense of the women who were voting against the resolutions you agreed with?
    - ▪ What role did the conference play in your life?
        - o Do you consider the conference a major event in your life?
        - o If you had it to do again, would you attend the conference?
        - o What would you change about your experience?
    - ▪ What do you feel were the outcomes of the conference?
        - o What do you feel the conference accomplished?
    - ▪ What influence did the conference have?
        - o On a personal level?
        - o On a state level?
        - o On a national level?
        - o The song *We Shall Go Forth* (see page 4) that was sung at the conference contains the line "we shall not fail", what reaction do you have now to the lyrics of that song?
    - ▪ What is your sense of how the National Conference has been remembered and recorded in history?
        - o Do you believe that people know about the national conference?
        - o Are you pleased with how it has been remembered in history?
        - o Displeased?
    - ▪ **How have you seen the status of women change in your lifetime?**
        - o **What did you expect would change but hasn't?**
        - o **What advice do you have for women continuing the work for equality?**
            - ▪ **What advice do you have for young activists?**
        - o What needs to happen to continue the "work" of the national conference?
            - ▪ What do you see as the barriers for female activists?
            - ▪ What supports do you see in place for female activists?
    - ▪ Is there anything we didn't touch on with our questions that you would like us to know about you or your experience?