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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

When Declaring "I am a Feminist" Matters: Labeling is Linked to Activism

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Abstract Being a feminist has been operationalized as a label (linked with activism), beliefs (associated with personal and interpersonal outcomes), and their combination. Using an internet survey completed by 220 American mid-western college women, we explored the unique and combined impact of feminist self-labeling with feminist beliefs on women's well-being, egalitarianism, and activism. Self-labeling was most clearly defined as a binary declaration of being a feminist or not, which alone was related to increased feminist activism above and beyond the impact of feminist beliefs. Furthermore, self-labeling, unlike feminist beliefs, was not related to personal well-being or interpersonal egalitarianism. Our findings confirm the exclusive and singular importance of self-labeling for enhanced feminist action.

Keywords Feminism · Activism · Social identity · Self concept · Sex role attitudes

Introduction

What makes a feminist? Feminist scholars have addressed this seemingly simple question with some quite complex approaches, including explorations of the predictors of being feminist (e.g., Liss et al. 2004; Myaskovsky and Wittig 1997; Yoder et al. 2007a), examinations of feminism as a construct (e.g., Fassinger 1994; Fischer et al. 2000; Henley et al. 1998; Zucker 2004), and linkages with various outcomes (e.g., Eisele and Stake 2008). What remains most elusive is the construct of feminism itself, or exactly what it means to be a feminist (Liss and Erchull 2010). Being feminist has been defined (a) by a woman's willingness to endorse the label "I am a feminist" for herself (self-labeling), (b) by the beliefs an individual espouses, and (c) by a combination of the adoption of the label and endorsement of beliefs. The purpose of the present study, using an online survey with American undergraduate women, is to further explore the impact of self-labeling − both independent from, and in combination with, feminist beliefs − on individual well-being, interpersonal egalitarian attitudes, and sociopolitical activism.

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Feminist Self-Labeling

Although deciding if an individual woman is feminist or not seems simple, in practice it has proved complex, and none of the three approaches outlined above has emerged in the feminist literature as the dominant definition of being feminist. Self-labeling has been measured as a yes/no response to a simple item like "Do you consider yourself a feminist?" (e.g., Nelson et al. 2008; Liss and Erchull 2010), along a continuum from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very much*) (Cowan et al. 1992), and along a 7-point scale used by Myaskovsky and Wittig (1997) that combined self-labeling with opinions about feminism and how public one's label is (7—*I call myself a feminist around others and am currently active in the women's movement*). Although different definitions of self-labeling do yield overlapping conclusions, they also expose some differences (Liss et al. 2001), underscoring the need for more precise measurement and application. The dominant outcome linked to adoption of the yes/no label is political activism (Duncan 2010; Nelson et al. 2008; Zucker 2004), although Liss et al. (2004) did not find support for this linkage when they

used Myaskovsky and Wittig's (1997) 7-point measure of self-labeling.

Feminist Beliefs

Paralleling the complexity of measuring feminist self-labeling, measures of feminist beliefs have proliferated. For example, Henley et al.'s (1998) Feminist Perspectives Scale (FPS) is a broad attitudinal measure that taps respondents' agreement with statements that reflect each of six sociopolitical variations of feminism: conservative, liberal, radical, socialist, cultural, and womanist. Fassinger's (1994) Attitudes Toward Feminism and the Women's Movement Scale (FWM) explores individuals' affective attitudes—specifically toward feminists and the women's movement. Fischer et al.'s (2000) Feminist Identity Composite (FIC) was designed to capture a theory-based (Downing and Roush 1985) developmental model of feminist identity that has since been re-framed as a series of five dimensions that together capture an individual's beliefs at a single point in time (Fischer and Good 1994). Taken together in the present study, these measures cover a constellation of feminist beliefs that we believe captures their general scope.

Greater endorsement of feminist beliefs has been associated with a wide array of outcomes. For example, at the individual level of analysis, holding strong feminist beliefs has been linked with high self-esteem (Fischer and Good 1994), self-efficacy (Eisele and Stake 2008), academic achievement (Valenzuela 1993), rejection of feminine norms for thinness and appearance (Hurt et al. 2007), sexual well-being (Schick et al. 2008), and sexual openness (Bay-Cheng and Zucker 2007). At the level of interpersonal relationships, although some women continue to equate feminism with heterosexual disharmony (Rudman and Fairchild 2007), this stereotype is debunked by survey findings from men with feminist women partners who rate their relationship as both stable and sexually satisfying (Rudman and Phelan 2007). As for being nonfeminist, endorsement of passive acceptance was related to college women's low expectations for having an egalitarian intimate relationship as well as depressed sexual assertiveness (Yoder et al. 2007b).

In addition to highlighting a variety of measures of both feminist self-labeling and feminist beliefs, the above brief review underscores that these two aspects of being feminist appear to be related to different types of outcomes. Grounding these findings within a model of expanding layers of social analysis developed by social psychologists (e.g., Pettigrew 1991), beliefs appear to be linked with outcomes at the individual and interpersonal levels of analysis whereas labeling is associated with the most macroscopic level of analysis, that is, with the sociopolitical (in the form of feminist activism). The point that remains unclear is whether this separation of outcomes is (a) the result of incomplete research that fails to consider labeling, beliefs, and these outcomes together in the same studies or (b) if labeling and beliefs are two different aspects of being feminist that are not isomorphic and thus are associated with different outcomes. Our goals in the present study then are to explore labeling, both singularly and in combination with beliefs, and to include an array of outcome variables, thus starting to address the above gap in the existing segregated research.

Combining Labeling with Beliefs

Although one intuitively might think self-labeling and feminist beliefs should go hand-in-hand, combining the two has exposed a quite frequently adopted third option beyond feminist and nonfeminist: the "I'm not a feminist but ..." position wherein women disavow the label but endorse the beliefs commonly associated with being feminist (Williams and Wittig 1997; Zucker 2004). Most intriguing, Zucker (2004) brought innovative operationalizations to both components of this definition. Consistent with the idea that behaviors are attached to specific social identities (Deaux et al. 1995; Stryker and Serpe 1994), Zucker required more from women's self-labeling than simply checking a box identifying as feminist or not. Rather, she cleverly devised a situation in which the respondent's choice had consequences: in this case, accepting or rejecting the label of feminist purportedly directed the respondent to different series of questions in the survey. To address the second component focused on respondents' beliefs, she filtered many complex definitions of feminism down to three "cardinal beliefs" regarding perceptions of unequal treatment, equal pay, and valuing women's unpaid labor. With some exceptions (i.e., the excluded 9% who self-labeled as feminist but did not embrace all three cardinal beliefs), this combination yielded three distinct groups from her 1996 sample of University of Michigan alumnae from the Classes of 1992, 1972, and 1951–52: feminists (the 45% who both accepted the label and endorsed all three cardinal beliefs); egalitarians (the 31% who endorsed the three cardinal beliefs but rejected the label), and nonfeminists (the 24% who rejected at least one of the cardinal beliefs as well as the label).

Most curious among these groups were the egalitarians, that is, women who refused to identify as feminists but who seemed similar to them in their espoused beliefs. Somewhat surprisingly, on only one of 16 variables Zucker (2004) explored did egalitarians align with self-labeled feminists against nonfeminists. This singular common ground involved higher endorsement of FIC-Revelation, that is, a stage of feminist identity development focused on an awakening to sexist inequities.

Despite their shared beliefs, these egalitarian women differentiated themselves from feminists and instead shared some commonalities with nonfeminists. Like nonfeminists and unlike self-labeled feminists, egalitarian women were less likely to have identified feminists among their family members and in their relationships, to report prior exposure to feminist courses in college, and to perceive suffering due to sexism. Egalitarians also aligned with nonfeminists in their passive acceptance of the status quo, their lower commitment to feminist activism, and their lesser engagement in feminist actions. In other ways, these egalitarians stood alone as a group separate from both feminist and nonfeminists, falling between these two extremes. This middle-ground pattern appeared across four indicators of their group consciousness (power discontent, rejection of sexist discrimination, an affective feeling thermometer about feminism, and attitudes about the women's movement measures with the FWM) and their embeddedness in women's culture (measured by a precursor to the FIC). Thus Zucker concluded that egalitarians are an interesting group in their own right as well as set a new standard for being feminist that included both labeling and beliefs.

However, the question about feminist identification that Zucker (2004) left unaddressed asks what parts of these group differences have to do with differences in labeling itself and in the combination of labeling with beliefs. Furthermore, construct validation of the presumed cardinal beliefs is needed. This three-group categorization holds important implications for researchers who elect to use Zucker's categories in research exploring the construct of feminist. If being feminist can be fully captured by this relatively simple combination of labeling with three cardinal beliefs, then this measure will greatly simplify and bring coherence to the complex array of measures available in the current literature and to a range of outcomes. Similarly, for practitioners and social activists interested in the outcomes associated with being feminist, such simplicity of measurement would focus their efforts. Thus the purpose of our study is to explore this dissection of Zucker's measure in relation to other measures of feminist beliefs and to outcomes that span the individual, interpersonal, and activism levels of analysis.

The Present Study

For the present study, we purposively sought out outcome variables that reflected individual, interpersonal (meso), and societal (macro) levels. A common individual-level outcome used by psychologists is personal well-being, measured here with Ryff's (1989) theory-guided Psychological Well-Being scale. At the interpersonal level, one area that stands out in the feminist literature on intimate relationships involves college students' almost universal desire for egalitarian relationships (Gilbert and Rader 2001), which we measured with the authority subscale of the Marriage Role Expectation Inventory (MREI) (Dunn 1960; used by Botkin et al. 2000; Yoder et al. 2007b). Finally, to capture feminist activism at the broadest sociopolitical level, we summed the six behavioral indicators of feminist engagement used by Zucker (2004).

Our specific interest in the present study is on self-labeling—alone, in combination with feminist beliefs (using Zucker's, 2004, scheme), and above and beyond what a broad constellation of feminist beliefs (encompassing the FPS, FWM, and FIC) itself predicts. Specifically, and consistent with past research (Nelson et al. 2008), we expect a MANOVA to show that feminist self-labeling is associated with feminist activism such that women who endorse the label of feminist will engage in more feminist acts than self-avowed nonfeminists. As a more rigorous test of the power of labeling using a MANCOVA, we further hypothesize that self-labeling will remain predictive of greater collective action above and beyond the influence of our constellation of feminist beliefs.

Paralleling the analysis plan for labeling alone and congruent with Zucker's (2004) findings, we predict that the relationship with feminist activism will be confined to self-labeled feminists and not extend to non-labeling women who endorse feminist beliefs (egalitarians). Moving beyond Zucker's work, we again predict that this relationship will remain intact above and beyond the influence of our constellation of beliefs. As for the impact of feminist labeling on well-being and egalitarianism, as far as we know the literature has been silent in these areas so although based on past research we expect beliefs to be predictive of these outcomes, our examination of labeling—alone, in combination with the cardinal beliefs, and above and beyond our constellation of other feminist beliefs—remains exploratory.

Method

Participants

Of the 253 undergraduate women recruited from an American mid-western university who started our lengthy online survey, 220 (87%) completed it. Of the 33 women with incomplete data, eight stopped after completing the initial demographics. No systematic pattern emerged to indicate why the remaining 25 dropped out so that attrition appeared idiosyncratic.

Fully 96% of the respondents were 25 years-old or younger (*mdn*=18.5, *SD*=2.34, range=18–39, with 2 missing); fully 85% (*n*=184) identified as White, with 17 Black women and 16 others (3 missing); and the majority (90%) were first- or second-year college students. Similar proportions were either

in (47%, n=104) or not in (45%, 98) a committed intimate relationship, with an additional 13 cohabiting, one married, one previously married, and three missing this information. The majority (86%, n=190) described themselves as exclusively heterosexual on a scale including mostly heterosexual (20), bisexual (6), mostly homosexual (2), and exclusively homosexual (2). A power analysis indicated that this sample was large enough (with α=.05, power = 80%) to detect a minimum correlation of .20.

Procedure

Student recruiters solicited names and email addresses from women enrolled in psychology classes who were interested in an online survey of "your attitudes." An email, which broadcasted that students could "earn extra credit... for participating in psychology research," cautioned students that they would need to complete the online survey in one sitting of "up to 75 mins." A url link to the web-based SurveyMonkey questionnaire was provided so that each student could participate at a time and place convenient for her. Data collection took place between November 17, 2007 and March 7, 2008.

The survey itself began with an opening description and informed consent form that was titled, "A Study of Your Belief System." The introduction started: "Some social and personality psychologists study individuals' belief systems, looking at how people's views of the world fit together. We are interested in how you see and evaluate yourself, your relationships, and your place in various social groups." Data collection began with basic demographic information (age, sex, race/ethnicity, year in college, relationship status, and sexual orientation) then presented 18 different measures, a subset of which is analyzed here.

Feminist Labeling

Immediately preceding a simple checkbox of feminist or not, our respondents read that "There are two versions of the next series of 3 questions. Both versions are the same length. Which version you see depends on whether or not you consider yourself to be a feminist." Participants were directed to pull down a menu and click on their choice, presumably taking them "to the questions appropriate for you" (although all participants actually completed the same subsequent measures). Responses were coded 0 (*I am NOT a feminist*) and 1 (*I AM a feminist*).

Cardinal beliefs (Zucker 2004) were assessed with three items: "Girls and women have not been treated as well as boys and men in our society," "Women and men should be paid equally for the same work," and "Women's unpaid work should be more socially valued." To create an independent measure of endorsement of these beliefs, responses were coded 0 (*no*) and 1 (*yes*) and summed to yield a 4-point scale ranging from 0 to 3 where higher scores indicated broader endorsement.

Using this procedure, 51 (23%) women self-labeled as feminist with the remaining 169 checking the nonfeminist option. Using Zucker's classification scheme, 36 (18%) "feminist" women self-labeled as feminist and endorsed all three cardinal beliefs, 98 (48%) "egalitarian" women did not adopt the label but did endorse all three cardinal beliefs, and 71 (35%) "nonfeminist" women eschewed the label and failed to endorse at least one of the cardinal beliefs (15 unclassified women self-labeled as feminist but did not endorse all three cardinal beliefs).

Measures of Feminist Beliefs

Beyond Zucker's (2004) cardinal beliefs, there exists a wide array of measures of feminist beliefs. We have opted to concentrate on a sample of three that we believe represent the general scope of possibilities: (a) Henley et al.'s (1998) Feminist Perspectives Scale (FPS), (b) Fassinger's (1994) Attitudes Toward Feminism and the Women's Movement Scale (FWM), and (c) Fischer et al.'s (2000) Feminist Identity Composite (FIC). All coefficient alphas, means, and standard deviations for these measures of feminist beliefs appear in Table 1.

Feminist Perspectives

Henley et al. (1998) developed the 78-item Feminist Perspective Scale by including 10 attitudinal and three behavioral items for each of six perspectives derived from feminist theories describing conservative, liberal, radical, socialist, cultural, and womanist feminism. Given the length of our survey, we followed the lead of Henley et al. (2000) and reduced the attitudinal scale to 12 items that covered the full breadth of the scale. We selected the two top loading items for each of the six perspectives and averaged responses across all items such that higher scores represented stronger endorsement of feminist beliefs. A sample item from the liberal subscale is: "Whether one chooses a traditional or alternative family form should be a matter of personal choice"; from the radical subscale is: "The workplace is organized around men's physical, economic, and sexual oppression of women." Items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Feminism and the Women's Movement

Fassinger (1994) developed the Attitudes Toward Feminism and the Women's Movement (FWM) scale as a 10-item measure of affective attitudes toward the feminist move-

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the belief and outcome measures

	Mean	SD	Cardinal	FPS	FWM	PA	Rev	EE	Syn	AC	Well-being	Egal.
Beliefs												
Beliefs Zucker's cardinal beliefs	2.52	.67	–									
Feminist Perspectives Scale	4.33	.77	.20**	.74								
Feminism & Women's Movement	3.21	.47	.17**	.54**	.79							
FIC-Passive Acceptance	3.01	.61	.01	−.24**	−.19**	.68						
FIC-Revelation	2.49	.73	.28**	.49**	.32**	−.02	.86					
FIC-Embeddedness/ Emanation	2.86	.91	.26**	.43**	.37**	−.25**	.46**	.85				
FIC-Synthesis	3.93	.56	−.01	.32**	.38**	.02	.06	.25**	.76			
FIC-Active Commitment	3.33	.56	.14	.55**	.50**	−.08	.41**	.51**	.54**	.83		
Outcomes												
Well-being	4.65	.61	−.08	−.09	−.01	−.02	−.31**	.04	.32**	.18**	.85	
Egalitarianism	2.02	.46	−.04	−.23**	−.18**	.15	.14	−.14	−.40**	−.25**	−.45**	.72
Collective action	.65	1.28	.07	.17**	.19**	−.13	.27**	.28**	−.12	.16	−.19**	.19**

N=220. Coefficient alphas are on the diagonal. Zucker's cardinal beliefs were measured on a scale from 0 to 3; the FPS on a 7-point scale; the FWM, all FIC subscales, and Egalitarianism on 5-point scales; Well-being on a 6-point scale; and collection action ranges from participation in 0–6 events

**$p<.006$, Bonferroni correction applied for the set of eight attitudinal measures; **$p<.017$ for the three outcome measures

ment. A sample item, "The leaders of the women's movement maybe extreme, but they have the right idea," was rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). We averaged across items to yield a single composite measure such that higher scores indicate more favorable attitudes toward feminism and the women's movement.

Feminist Identity

The Feminist Identity Composite (FIC; Fischer et al. 2000) is a 33-item, more psychometrically sound (Moradi and Subich 2002) combination of items from the Feminist Identity Scale (FIS; Rickard 1987) and the Feminist Identity Development Scale (Bargad and Hyde 1991). A one-time administration of the FIC captures a self-relevant snapshot of an individual at a single point in time (Fischer and Good 1994; Moradi et al. 2002) within each of the five co-existing dimensions of Downing and Roush's (1985) model: Passive Acceptance, Revelation, Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment. The highest loading items identified by Fischer et al. (2000) to represent each subscale were: FIC-Passive Acceptance ("I don't see much point in questioning the general expectation that men should be masculine and women should be feminine"); FIC-Revelation ("Gradually, I am beginning to see just how sexist society really is"); FIC-Embeddedness-Emanation ("I am very interested in women writers"); FIC-Synthesis ("I feel like I have blended my female attributes with my unique personal qualities"); and FIC-Active Commitment ("I am very committed to a cause that I believe contributes to a more fair and just world for all people"). All items were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Each item was coded so that higher scores reflected more agreement with the ideology of the stage or dimension targeted and then was averaged within its subscale. Thus high scores on the 7-item Passive Acceptance subscale reflect nonfeminist views; on Revelation (8 items), changing views; and on the Embeddedness-Emanation (4 items), Synthesis (5 items), and Active Commitment (9 items) dimensions, endorsement of feminism and a feminist ideology.

Outcome Measures

We purposively sought out a set of outcome variables that reflected individual-, interpersonal-, and societal-level outcomes. A common individual-level outcome used by counseling psychologists is personal well-being, measured here with Ryff's (1989) theory-guided Psychological Well-Being scale. An area that stands out in the feminist literature on intimate relationships involves college students' almost universal desire for egalitarian relationships (Gilbert and Rader 2001). We measured egalitarianism with the reverse-coded authority subscale of the Marriage Role Expectation

Inventory (MREI) (Dunn 1960; used by Botkin et al. 2000; Yoder et al. 2007b). Finally, to capture feminist activism at the broadest sociopolitical level, we summed the six behavioral indicators of feminist engagement used by Zucker (2004). All coefficient alphas, means, and standard deviations for these three outcomes appear in Table 1.

Well-Being

Ryff's (1989) 120-item measure of psychological well-being spans six converging aspects of positive psychological functioning—autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations, and purpose in life—that are distinct from general positive and negative affect and global life satisfaction. A sample item, evaluating self-acceptance and rated on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), is: "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out." To create a single measure of overall well-being for our study, we used nine items from the Autonomy, Personal Growth, and Self-Acceptance subscales that C. D. Ryff (personal communication, October 16, 2007) indicated as well as the three items used by Ryff and Keyes (1995) from each of the remaining subscales. Such topical selectivity has been employed successfully elsewhere (e.g., Costanzo and Ryff 2009), and in our case, it was designed to emphasize the individual indicators of well-being appropriate to our interests. This procedure yielded a 36-item questionnaire that was scored as a single averaged composite, such that higher scores indicated more favorable well-being.

Egalitarianism

The Marriage Role Expectations Inventory was developed by Dunn (1960) and was subsequently used to track the expectancies of six cohorts of women from 1961 through 1996 (Botkin et al. 2000). The full measure includes six subscales, one of which explores the anticipated balance of power in a "committed intimate relationship" (Yoder et al.'s 2007b, modification from the original focus on marital relationships). A sample item from the 11 in this subscale on Authority is: "In my marriage or committed intimate relationship, I expect that if there is a difference of opinion, my partner [originally "husband"] will decide where to live." Respondents rated each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). We reverse-coded the scale so that higher scores indicated greater endorsement of egalitarian relationships.

Collective Action

Zucker (2004) reduced Duncan's (1999) list of women's right activism to six behaviors "on behalf of women's rights": signed a petition; contributed money; attended a meeting; wrote a letter, called, or called on a public official; was an active member of an organization; and attended a rally or demonstration. Our respondents answered 0 (*no*) or 1 (*yes*) for each item; we summed these responses to yield a 7-point scale from 0 to 6 where higher scores indicated greater activity. The full range of responses was represented among women who both labeled and did not label themselves feminist, however, fully 79% (n=133) of self-labeled nonfeminists engaged in none of these activities in contrast to only 39% (20) of feminists, $\chi^2(6)=39.36$, $p<.001$. Indeed, 24% (12) of feminists reported three or more actions.

Results

Table 1 shows the expectedly high intercorrelations among the belief measures. Scores for the Feminist Perspective Scale and the Attitudes toward Feminism and the Women's Movement Scale positively correlated, and both these scales related positively with the Revelation stage and three feminist dimensions (Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment) of the Feminist Identity Composite as well as negatively with FIC-Passive Acceptance. Zucker's (2004) cardinal beliefs correlated with both the FPS and FWM but with only the Revelation and Embeddedness/Emanation subscales of the FIC, demonstrating some construct validity with established measures of feminist beliefs. Notably, these cardinal beliefs alone were not associated with any of our outcomes measures (well-being, egalitarianism, and collective action).

Labeling Alone

To test our hypothesis that labeling alone will predict feminist activism and to explore its relationship with well-being and egalitarianism, we conducted a MANOVA with the three outcome variables as the dependent variables and with the dichotomous yes/no self-label of feminist as the independent variable. As expected, the multivariate effect was significant, Hotelling's F (3,214)=15.43, $p<.001$, $eta^2=.178$, and included a strong univariate effect for activism, F (1,216)=108.98, $p<.001$, $eta^2=.335$. Specifically, women who committed to the label of feminist (M=1.59, SD=1.85) reported engaging in significantly more collective activities than self-identified nonfeminists (M=.37, SD=.87). Neither the effect for well-being, F (1,216)=3.26, p=.072, nor for egalitarianism, F (1,216)=.005, p=.942, proved significant, thus confining the impact of self-labeling to feminist activism.

To examine the unique effects of feminist self-labeling, we conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance involving

the eight belief measures (cardinal beliefs, FPS, FWM, and the five subscales of the FIC) as covariates, the three outcome measures (well-being, egalitarianism, and collective action) as the dependent measures, and dichotomous self-labeling (feminist or not) as the independent variable. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. The significant multivariate main effect for self-labeling was again accounted for solely by collective action. Thus the impact of labeling alone was quite robust, predicting feminist actions above and beyond feminist beliefs.

Combining Labeling with Cardinal Beliefs

To explore whether Zucker's (2004) labeling-plus-beliefs classification scheme predicts a wider array of outcomes than labeling alone, we conducted a MANOVA with well-being, egalitarianism, and activism as the dependent measures and Zucker's three-group classification of feminists, egalitarians, and nonfeminists as the independent variable. As with labeling alone, the multivariate effect was significant, Hotelling's F (6,394)=7.72, $p<.001$, $eta^2=.105$, and was singularly accounted for by activism, F (2,200)=20.61, $p<.001$, $eta^2=.171$. A post hoc Tukey test ($p<.05$) revealed that feminists ($M=1.64$, $SD=1.73$) reported engaging in more feminist acts than similar egalitarians ($M=.35$, $SD=.79$) and nonfeminists ($M=.39$, $SD=.98$). Interestingly, when the small cell of 15 women who self-labeled as feminist but did not endorse all three cardinal beliefs was added to the above analysis as a fourth level of the independent variable, a post hoc Tukey test showed that labeling played its predicted role: the number of feminist acts ($M=1.47$, $SD=2.17$) reported by this usually deleted group aligned with those of categorized feminists and differed from those of both egalitarians and nonfeminists.

To further explore whether combining cardinal beliefs with self-labeling lead to different patterns in our data, we ran a second MANCOVA, which paralleled the first but deleted cardinal beliefs as a covariate and replaced the dichotomous independent variable of labeling with Zucker's (2004) three-group categorization of feminists, egalitarians, and nonfeminists, which itself includes the cardinal beliefs. This analysis yielded a significant multivariate main effect for categorization, Hotelling's F (6,380)=3.86, $p=.001$, $eta^2=.057$, that was again accounted for by collective action alone, F (2,193)= 10.61, $p<.001$, $eta^2=.099$. The pattern for all covariates consistently paralleled the results from the first MANCOVA. In terms of the overall pattern of covariates, the prediction of collective action, and failure to relate to well-being and egalitarian interpersonal attitudes, Zucker's combination of labeling with beliefs proved no more explanatory than labeling alone.

Discussion

Our findings highlight three important conclusions about how and when declaring "I am a feminist" matters. First, feminist self-labeling is best conceived as a binary choice that either links, or does not link, a woman to

Table 2 MANCOVA of self-labeling with measures of feminist beliefs on outcomes

	Analysis	F	p	eta^2
Covariates (Beliefs)				
Zucker's cardinal beliefs	Multivariate	.56	.64	–
Feminist Perspectives Scale	Multivariate	4.62	.004	.063
	Egalitarianism	6.73	.01	.031
Feminism & Women's Movement	Multivariate	.32	.81	–
FIC-Passive Acceptance	Multivariate	1.00	.40	–
FIC-Revelation	Multivariate	10.66	<.001	.134
	Well-being	24.57	<.001	.106
	Egalitarianism	18.40	<.001	.081
FIC-Embeddedness- Emanation	Multivariate	1.99	.12	–
FIC-Synthesis	Multivariate	9.35	<.001	.120
	Well-being	11.41	.001	.052
	Egalitarianism	17.05	<.001	.076
	Collective action	11.47	.001	.052
FIC-Active Commitment	Multivariate	4.24	.006	.058
	Well-being	9.10	.003	.042
Independent Variable	Multivariate	7.82	<.001	.102
Feminist label	Collective action	23.41	<.001	.101

Only significant univariate effects with $df=1$, 208 are reported for significant multivariate effects, Hotelling's F (3, 206)

feminists as a social group. Second, framed as this dichotomous choice, self-labeling is associated with increased feminist activism, independent of feminist beliefs. Finally, the effects of self-labeling appear confined to a collective level of analysis, not extending to well-being (at the individual level) nor to egalitarian attitudes (at the interpersonal level). Rather, it is feminist beliefs independent of labeling that seem to make these other linkages, a point that is more fully explored elsewhere (Yoder et al. 2009).

Consistent with prior research (Nelson et al. 2008; Zucker 2004), a yes/no operationalization of being feminist predicts reported activism in our study, both strengthening this conclusion and also underscoring the importance of this specific approach to measuring being feminist. When a more convoluted definition is used, such as Myaskovsky and Wittig's 7-point measure (Liss et al. 2004), this relationship becomes more muddled. Similarly, by combining self-labeling with cardinal beliefs (Zucker 2004) or by including other established measures of beliefs (e.g., the FPS, FWM, and FIC), these beliefs can serve to obscure the fundamental, singular importance of self-labeling. Our findings uniquely document that not only is self-labeling related to activism above and beyond the influence of a wide constellation of feminist beliefs, but it also is critical to greater activist engagement even when all three of Zucker's (2004) cardinal beliefs are not endorsed (a small and seemingly puzzling group that is dropped from Zucker's analyses because of its small size). Quite simply put, regardless of their reported feminist beliefs, women who adopted the label of feminist, and only these women, participated in significantly more feminist activities than women who rejected the label. For self-labelers, their personal choice then is quite political, following a core tenet of feminism in which the person is political (Taylor and Whittier 1997).

Although our data show that self-labeling reflects a consequential choice, they also underscore the limitations of this decision. Despite evolving definitions of being feminist in the counseling psychology literature as also including personal empowerment (e.g., Worell and Remer 2003), women's self-labeling is notably unrelated to both well-being and egalitarian attitudes. Rather in ours and other research (see Moradi and Yoder, in press, for a review), there is a growing body of research linking feminist beliefs to positive personal and interpersonal outcomes for women. In addition, other research has uncovered some instances of distress that can accompany feminist beliefs (e.g., Fischer and Holz 2010). Overall then, beliefs are not inconsequential; indeed, they may serve as precursors to college women's feminist self-labeling (Nelson et al. 2008). Our main point though is that we cannot let our intuition that the feminist self-label and feminist beliefs are isomorphic (an assumption not borne out in the literature; Williams and Wittig 1997; Zucker 2004) obscure the importance of labeling alone.

Although we believe that Zucker's (2004) expansion of the construct of being feminist to include labeling with beliefs offers strong research potential, we do urge future researchers to consider the independent impact of labeling when using this and other blended categorizations of feminists (e.g., Myaskovsky and Wittig's, 1997, measure). As for the utility of Zucker's three simple cardinal beliefs, there is evidence in our data to support their construct validity, although their utility as a stand-alone proxy for more complete measures of feminist beliefs is questionable given that alone they predict none of the outcomes tested in our study.

There are, of course, a variety of limitations with the present findings. As a quasi-experimental design, the direction of causality among our variables remains largely indeterminate. What we describe and test as outcome variables could very well further reinforce feminist labeling and beliefs in a reciprocal loop. What we have with our cross-sectional design is a stagnant snapshot of feminist labeling, beliefs, and outcomes that in practice are necessarily dynamically related. Furthermore, our data did not address the processes though which both labeling and beliefs are linked to their respective correlates, leaving these clarifications for future research.

Additionally, although our largely White, heterosexual, volunteer, American college sample of women links our study to much of the research in this area, the generalizability of our findings remains restricted. Our study also is limited by our choices of measures to tap into women's feminist beliefs and to represent the three levels of scope (individual, interpersonal, and collective). Most notably, our abridged measure of the FPS did not capture the richness of the full measure, although it did contribute to the constellation of feminist beliefs we meant to represent. As for labeling itself, we do believe that following Zucker's (2004) behavioral grounding of feminist labeling (presumably leading respondents to different subsequent survey items) reflects an advance over women's inconsequential check-box designation as feminist or not, although out data cannot speak directly to that point and future research might simultaneously examine all measurement strategies for categorizing women as feminist.

In conclusion, self-labeling matters. Although some feminist beliefs may importantly promote women's personal and interpersonal empowerment, feminism is by definition a social movement for social change that will move forward only though collective action (Taylor and Whittier 1997). The point our study contributes to this agenda is that such collective change depends on having women embrace the feminist label as a social identity that requires self-

categorization with a collective ingroup and its associated activism.

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