

Perceived Sexist Events and Feminist Identity Development Attitudes: Links to Women's Psychological Distress

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Data from 104 undergraduate and 83 faculty/staff women indicated that perceived sexist events, measured by the Schedule of Sexist Events Scale (SSE), along with Passive Acceptance (PA), Revelation (R), and Embeddedness-Emanation (EE) attitudes, measured by the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS), each related positively to women's psychological distress, measured by the General Severity Index (GSI) of the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). When social desirability, age, and socioeconomic status (SES) were entered as covariates in a multiple regression analysis, however, only recent perceived sexist events and PA accounted for unique variance in distress. In addition, PA tentatively was supported as a moderator of the relation between recent perceived sexist events and distress. Finally, PA scores related negatively, and R, EE, and Active Commitment scores related positively to perceived sexist events; beyond covariates, only PA and R scores accounted for unique variance in lifetime perceived sexist events, and only R scores accounted for unique variance in recent perceived sexist events.

Counseling psychologists attend to contextual and intrapersonal variables that impact persons' mental health (Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology, 1999). Adhering to such an interactionist perspective is particularly important in conceptualizing women's psychological distress. Principle one of the Division 17 Principles concerning the counseling/psychotherapy of women (Fitzgerald & Nutt, 1986) states that "counselors/therapists should be knowledgeable about women, particularly with regard to biological, psychological, and social issues which have impact on women in general or on particular groups of women in our society" (p. 181). The present work aimed to integrate feminist

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identity development (Downing & Roush, 1985), an intrapersonal variable, and experience of sexist events (e.g., Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995), a contextual variable, to extend our knowledge of women's psychological distress. This study serves as one example of research that uses feminist identity development theory to improve our understanding of women's experiences and mental health.

Gilbert (1992) suggested that counseling psychologists need "to understand how sexism enters into the fabric of [women's] lives" (p. 402). A plethora of research suggests that women experience various types of sexism: discrimination in the workplace (e.g., Fitzgerald, 1993; Fitzgerald et al., 1988), rape and sexual assault (e.g., Koss, 1993; Koss, Heise, & Russo, 1994), abuse by male partners (e.g., Browne, 1993; Carden, 1994), and general sexist discrimination (e.g., Landrine & Klonoff, 1997). To capture this range of women's experiences, studies of sexist events typically assess events ranging from general sexist remarks and behaviors to sexual coercion and assault (e.g., Brooks & Perot, 1991; Landrine et al., 1995). Although these experiences vary in degree of severity and impact, their occurrence "simultaneously arises from and reinforces women's subordination" (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 1072). This shared point of origin allows these varied experiences to be conceptualized as manifestations of sexism. In this study, we adopt a definition of sexist events as gender-specific, negative life events or stressors "that happen to women, because they are women" (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995, p. 441).

Landrine et al. (1995) operationalized sexist events in accord with Klonoff and Landrine (1995) and argued that sexist events experienced throughout one's life (i.e., lifetime sexist events) can be conceptualized as *distal* predictors of psychiatric symptoms and that these events may set the stage for the manifestation of symptoms but do not lead directly to these symptoms. Further, sexist events experienced within the past year of a woman's life (i.e., recent sexist events) and brutal/physical sexist discrimination such as rape or battering (regardless of time of occurrence) may be *proximal* predictors that may have a direct effect on symptoms.

This model is supported by research that indicates that experiencing sexism is related negatively to women's physical and psychological health. For example, Ingram, Corning, and Schmidt (1996) found that sexual harassment experiences (e.g., being pressured for sex) accounted for unique variance in homeless women's psychological symptoms. Further, Jensen and Gutek (1982) found that 20% of the employed women they interviewed reported feeling depressed, 68% reported feeling anger, and 80% reported feeling disgust following experiences of sexual harassment (e.g., being touched by a man in a sexual way on the job). In a study focused on subtle, daily experiences of sexist events, Landrine et al. (1995) found that women's reported

experiences of sexism, measured by the Schedule of Sexist Events (SSE) (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995), accounted for variance in their physical and psychological symptoms not accounted for by their experience of daily hassles. They also found that perceptions of sexist events were a better predictor of premenstrual, somatization, obsessive-compulsive, depressive, and total psychiatric symptoms than were daily hassles. Thus, experiences of often discounted sexist events appear important to consider in relation to women's psychological distress.

Although experiencing sexism may be related to greater psychological distress, some research has suggested that various operationalizations of feminism are related positively to indicators of psychological adjustment. For example, Stein and Weston (1982) found that women who expressed liberal attitudes toward women (i.e., women categorized as scoring high on the Attitudes Toward Women Scale [AWS]) (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973) scored significantly higher on identity achievement than did women with traditional attitudes toward women (i.e., women categorized as scoring low on the AWS). Foss and Slaney (1986) also categorized women based on AWS scores and found that women with liberal attitudes toward women scored higher on vocational self-efficacy than did women with traditional attitudes.

Stein and Weston (1982) and Foss and Slaney (1986) conceptualized "feminism" as attitudes toward women's roles and rights. Other studies, however, have operationalized "feminism" using Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development. Downing and Roush described feminist identity development as a multidimensional construct that addresses the complexity of the growth pattern involved in becoming a feminist. Their model connects attitudes and values about feminism to attitudes about oneself as a woman and/or feminist. As such, feminist identity development may provide a perspective of feminism that is more comprehensive and relevant to conceptualizing women's psychological distress than were previous operationalizations (Moradi, Subich, & Phillips, 2002 [this issue]).

The first stage of Downing and Roush's (1985) model is characterized by Passive Acceptance (PA) and denial of individual, institutional, and cultural discrimination against oneself and women in general. The second stage involves Revelation (R) concerning sexism, feelings of anger toward a sexist society, and feelings of guilt about one's own participation in the systematic oppression of women. The third stage is marked by Embeddedness in and Emanation (EE) of women's cultures and communities. The fourth stage involves Synthesis (S) of a positive self-concept that includes positive attributes of being a woman. The fifth and final stage is characterized by Active Commitment (AC) to working toward societal change. Women progress through these stages but also can repeat stages at different points in their lives.

Downing and Roush's (1985) model most frequently has been operationalized by the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) (Bargad & Hyde, 1991). The FIDS assesses women's endorsement of self-descriptive statements that reflect the five stages of Downing and Roush's model. Its items were developed rationally and retained in the final scale based on their temporal stability and results from factor analyses. Evidence of structural validity, convergent validity, temporal stability, and internal consistency reliability has been reported in the literature on the FIDS (e.g., Bargad & Hyde, 1991; Fischer & Good, 1994; Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997; Moradi & Subich, 2002 [this issue]). Although, in general, these data do not contradict the validity of the FIDS as a measure of a developmental model (i.e., a linear progression of stages), no direct investigation (e.g., longitudinal study) of this aspect of Downing and Roush's model or the FIDS has been conducted. Thus, like other identity development models and their respective operationalizations, the status of Downing and Roush's model as a linear and sequential developmental process, and the status of the FIDS as a measure of such a process, remains unclear. This lack of empirical clarity along with the theorized fluidity of women's feminist identity development (Downing & Roush, 1985) render using the FIDS to assign women into stages based on FIDS subscale scores inappropriate. As an alternative, continuous FIDS scores have been used to demonstrate relationships of feminist identity development attitudes to such variables as perceptions of sexism in the campus environment (Fischer & Good, 1994) and rape myth acceptance (White, Strube, & Fisher, 1998).

The FIDS also has been used to demonstrate relations between feminist identity development attitudes and indicators of psychological adjustment. For example, Fischer et al. (2000) found that scores on PA were related positively to foreclosed identity, whereas scores on AC were related positively to identity achievement. In addition, Snyder and Hasbrouck (1996) found that PA scores were related positively to symptoms of disturbed eating, whereas S and AC scores were related negatively to these symptoms. Thus, the literature on feminist identity development, in general, and the FIDS, specifically, suggests that PA attitudes may relate positively and S and AC attitudes may relate negatively to level of psychological distress.

A separate body of research from the social psychology literature has suggested more specifically that recognizing sexism may protect women against the distress associated with experiencing sexism. For example, Dion (1975) found that in the condition of severe failure in a task, women who perceived their male opponent to be prejudiced against women reported higher self-regard than did women with a neutral opponent. Crocker and Major (1989) theorized that recognizing prejudice protects self-esteem because it leads to external attributions rather than internal attributions for negative outcomes.

Further, Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, and Major (1991) found that women who received negative feedback from a prejudiced evaluator (an evaluator who expressed negative attitudes toward women) reported less depressive affect than did women who received negative feedback from a neutral evaluator. In this last study, all women who received negative feedback endorsed hostility items on a mood scale (e.g., feeling angry and cruel), but those in the neutral evaluator condition also endorsed depression items (e.g., feeling blue and discouraged) (Crocker et al., 1991). In another study, Krieger (1990) found that compared to women who reported experiencing discrimination, women who reported experiencing no discrimination in situations such as school, work, and in the home were more likely to say that if they were treated unfairly they would accept their unfair treatment as a fact of life and keep it to themselves. Further, women who reported experiencing no discrimination and reported accepting unfair treatment as a fact of life were more likely to report that they had been diagnosed to have high blood pressure. Collectively, these studies indicate that recognizing sexist events may protect women's psychological and physical health and not recognizing sexist events may intensify the psychological distress associated with experiencing sexist events. Thus, if feminist identity development attitudes reflect a recognition (or lack of recognition) of sexism, they may moderate the relationship between perceived sexist events and distress.

Indeed, several studies suggest that various operationalizations of feminism are related to recognizing and labeling sexist events. For example, Schneider (1982) found that women's feminist identification, determined by women's self-report of the extent to which they identified as feminist (from *extremely feminist* to *extremely traditional*), was related positively to their application of the term *sexual harassment* to less extreme acts of harassment such as "touch or hug," "date request," and "jokes." In addition, Brooks and Perot (1991) found that women's stronger endorsement of feminist ideology, measured by the Attitudes Toward Female Sex-Role Inventory (Smith, Ferree, & Miller, 1975), was related positively to reporting incidents of sexual harassment (e.g., general sexist remarks, inappropriate/offensive sexual advances, sexual bribery, sexual coercion, and sexual assault). Further, Klonis, Endo, Crosby, and Worell (1997) reported that, when faced with discrimination, feminism was a coping mechanism for more than 75% of their sample of college and university women as indicated by their narratives. This was corroborated by the fact that 81% of their sample reported that their feminism had helped them deal with discrimination in their lives. The findings of these studies suggest that stronger feminist attitudes may protect women from the negative consequences of perceived sexist events. Yet, the results of these studies do not identify specifically the aspect(s) of feminism that may be protective. This may be clarified by exploring various dimensions of femi-

nist identity development as moderators of the relation of perceived sexist events to psychological distress.

In sum, based on the previously reviewed empirical literature and Downing and Roush's (1985) theoretical conceptualization of feminist identity, we conclude that women's psychological distress may be a function of both their experience of sexism (e.g., Landrine et al., 1995) and their feminist identity development attitudes (e.g., Snyder & Hasbrouck, 1996). Furthermore, we speculate based on theory and research from the tradition of social psychology (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker et al., 1991) that feminist identity development attitudes may moderate the relationship between women's experiences of perceived sexism and psychological distress. That is, when faced with frequent experiences of perceived sexism, women who deny discrimination (e.g., women with high PA attitudes) may experience greater psychological distress related to their experience of sexist events than may women who do not engage in such denial (e.g., women with low PA attitudes). Other feminist identity development attitudes (i.e., R, EE, S, AC) also may function as moderators of the relation between sexism and distress. These attitudes, however, either relate more indirectly to the recognition of sexism or, in the case of R, have a more complex relation to the recognition of sexism and distress (i.e., the interplay of guilt and anger may complicate matters). Thus, the direction and magnitude of the moderating effects of R, EE, S, and AC attitudes are less clear based on prior literature.

This study advances prior research by attending to often neglected aspects of sexism, integrating disparate lines of inquiry on sexism and feminist identity development and providing theoretical grounding for simultaneous examination of the links of these variables to women's psychological distress. In so doing, feminist identity development attitudes were operationalized as multidimensional, and the influence of demographic variables and social desirability on the relations of interest were covaried. Finally, we extended existing literature by testing for moderator effects of feminist identity development attitudes on the relation between sexism and distress. Of secondary interest, we examined the relation between feminist identity development attitudes and perceived sexist events. We tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Recent and lifetime perceived sexist events are related positively to psychological distress.

Hypothesis 1b: Greater PA of sexism is related to greater psychological distress.

Hypothesis 2: Each of the five feminist identity development attitudes moderates the relation of recent perceived sexist events to women's psychological distress as well as the relation of lifetime perceived sexist events to women's psychological distress. Thus, in each case, the degree of association between

perceived sexist events and distress is influenced by scores on each of the feminist identity development attitudes.

Hypothesis 3a: PA attitudes are related negatively to reports of both recent and lifetime perceived sexist events.

Hypothesis 3b: R, EE, S, and AC attitudes are related positively to reports of both recent and lifetime perceived sexist events.

METHOD

Participants

Participants included a diverse sample of women (106 undergraduate and 85 faculty and staff) from a large midwestern university. Undergraduate women were enrolled in psychology courses and received extra credit toward their course grade for participating in the study. To diversify the sample and improve generalizability of the results of this study, 297 faculty and staff women selected randomly from the university directory were invited to participate and were informed that they would be entered into a lottery for five \$50 cash awards if they chose to participate; awards were given out subsequent to data collection. To protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and to maximize return rate, faculty and staff women were not asked to report their status as members of faculty or staff. All faculty/staff women were sent three reminder letters mailed 2 to 3 weeks apart. Eighty-five (28%) of the invited faculty and staff women completed surveys. Four participants failed to report their age or socioeconomic status (SES). Thus, their responses were excluded from analyses, resulting in a sample size of 187. In addition to this study, this sample was also included in the larger sample used by Moradi and Subich (2002).

Eighty percent of the total sample identified as White, 13% African American, 3% Asian American, 2% Latina, less than 1% Native American, and 2% multiracial or other ethnic minority. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 67 years ($M = 32.60$, $SD = 13.22$, $Mdn = 30.00$). Forty-eight percent of women in the sample were married or in a committed relationship, and 52% were single. In terms of current social class, 45% of women in the sample identified as middle class, 27% as working class, 24% as upper middle class, and 4% as lower class. Sixty-two percent of women in the sample had a high school degree, 12% had a bachelor's or an associate degree, 17% had a master's degree, and 9% had a doctorate. We found differences between faculty/staff members and students on age, SES, educational degree, marital status, impression management, FIDS R and S, SSE Recent, and General Severity Index (GSI) scores. Demographic differences were as expected (e.g., stu-

dents were more likely to be single). Consistent with theory (Downing & Roush, 1985) and prior research (Derogatis, 1993; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995), faculty/staff scored higher on FIDS S, whereas students scored higher on FIDS R, SSE Recent, and GSI.

Although the observed differences between faculty/staff and student participants were expected (and desired), given that our goal in data collection was to obtain a diverse sample, we wanted to ensure that in collapsing the groups for data analysis we were not introducing the confound of differences in interrelations among the variables of interest. Thus, we performed a multivariate test of equality of interrelations. By assessing whether variables of interest have different patterns of intercorrelations, this procedure allows researchers to determine whether combining measures across groups is appropriate (Green, 1992). We used several fit index values (Goodness-of-Fit Index [GFI], Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI], Comparative Fit Index [CFI]) to examine the equality of the interrelations of social desirability, GSI, the five FIDS subscales, SSE Recent, and SSE Lifetime for faculty/staff and student participants. For these fit indices, values roughly in the .90s suggest that a model of equal correlations provides a good fit to the data (Green, 1992). Whether students' or faculty/staff members' matrices were entered first, our values for the GFI, TLI, and CFI were .93, .87, and .92, respectively, indicating a similar pattern of interrelations between the two groups. Thus, we collapsed data across students and faculty/staff participants.

Procedures and Instruments

Procedures were described to all participants and written consent was obtained. Participants completed the following questionnaires in the order presented below. We chose this order to minimize potential distortion in reports of perceived sexist events as a result of reactivity to the FIDS. After completing the instruments, all participants were debriefed.

The GSI of the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). The BSI (Derogatis, 1975), a shortened version of the Symptoms Checklist-90-Revised (SCL-90-R), is a 53-item Likert-type (0 = *not at all* to 4 = *extremely*) scale that assesses psychological distress across the dimensions of somatization, obsessive-compulsivity, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism. Participants are instructed to indicate the extent to which they experience symptoms such as "the idea that something is wrong with your mind," "feeling easily annoyed or irritated," and "nervousness or shakiness inside." Scores are averaged across 53 items to obtain a GSI, which is an indicator of the participant's current level of psychological distress and can range from 0 to 4. In this study, the BSI was used

to obtain the GSI as an indicator of participants' overall level of psychological distress. Alpha coefficient for the GSI was .90, according to Derogatis (1993). Derogatis and Melisaratos (1983) reported high convergence between the dimensions of the BSI and corresponding Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory (MMPI) and SCL-90-R scales. In this study, the alpha coefficient for the GSI was .97. The GSI mean and standard deviation obtained in this study (see Table 1) fell between those reported for adult nonpatient ($M = .35, SD = .37$) and adult outpatient women ($M = 1.40, SD = .72$) (Derogatis, 1993).

SSE. The SSE (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) is a 20-item questionnaire that assesses the frequency with which women report having experienced sexist events. Questions include the following: "How many times have you been treated unfairly by your coworkers, fellow students, or colleagues because you are a woman?" and "How many times have people made inappropriate or unwanted sexual advances to you because you are a woman?" Items are rated on the following 6-point scale: 1 = *the event never happened*, 2 = *the event happened once in a while* (less than 10% of the time), 3 = *the event happened sometimes* (10-25% of the time), 4 = *the event happened a lot* (26-49% of the time), 5 = *the event happened most of the time* (50-70% of the time), and 6 = *the event happened almost all of the time* (more than 70% of the time). Each item is completed twice to assess the frequency of perceived sexist events (a) in the respondent's life (Lifetime Sexist Events), and (b) within the past year (Recent Sexist Events). Thus, two scores are obtained; each reflects women's experiences of routine/daily sexist events (rather than brutal/physical sexist discrimination) and each has a possible range of 20 (indicating no perceived sexist events) to 120 (indicating frequently perceived sexist events).

Klonoff and Landrine (1995) reported that total SSE Lifetime scores had a Cronbach's alpha of .92 and split-half reliability of .87; SSE Recent scores had a Cronbach's alpha of .90 and split-half reliability of .83. Klonoff and Landrine found that SSE Recent and SSE Lifetime scores were related positively to the frequency of daily hassles (Hassles-Frequency Scale) (Kanner, Coyne, Schaeffer, & Lazarus, 1981) and the frequency of major stressful life events (the Psychiatric Epidemiology Research Interview Life Events Scale [PERI-LES]) (Dohrenwend, Krasnoff, Askensay, & Dohrenwend, 1978). Fischer et al. (2000) reported nonsignificant or negligible correlations between SSE scores and self-deceptive enhancement and impression management. Alpha coefficients obtained in this study were .90 for SSE Recent and .91 for SSE Lifetime scales. Means and standard deviations obtained for subscales in this study (see Table 1) were similar to those reported by Klonoff and Landrine. They reported SSE Lifetime means of 47.20 ($SD = 14.87$) and 50.80 ($SD = 19.19$) for European American women and Women of Color,

TABLE 1: Summary Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Variables Entered Into Regression Equations

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	SD
Demographic variables													
1. Age	.27****	.12	.40****	-.41****	-.08	-.29****	-.12	-.18*	-.04	.32****	.06	32.60	13.22
2. SES		.17*	.24**	-.25****	-.19*	-.22**	-.23**	-.26****	-.07	.20**	.08	2.89*	.81*
Social desirability													
3. Self-enhancement			.41****	-.37****	-.15*	-.16*	-.23**	-.13	-.10	.06	.15*	7.13	3.87
4. Impression management				-.37****	-.23**	-.26****	-.11	-.17*	-.15	.19*	.01	7.21	3.87
Psychological distress													
5. General symptoms index					.32****	.43****	.35****	.29****	.15*	-.11	-.11	.69	.63
Perceived sexist events													
6. SSE lifetime						.78****	-.20**	.42****	.31****	-.01	.30****	49.02	15.47
7. SSE recent							-.12	.38****	.25**	-.13	.20**	37.90	13.97
Feminist identity development													
8. Passive acceptance								-.04	-.10	-.21**	-.47****	2.37	.62
9. Revelation									.54****	-.13	.39****	3.07	.62
10. Embeddedness-emanation										-.12	.54****	2.80	.63
11. Synthesis											.12	3.92	.58
12. Active commitment												3.19	.56

NOTE: Participants were asked to self-identify as one of five categories ranging from 1 (*lower class*) to 5 (*upper class*); median and mode for socioeconomic status (SES) were both 3.00, indicating middle-class self-identification. SSE = Schedule of Sexist Events.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

respectively, and SSE Recent means of 33.51 ($SD = 10.79$) and 37.32 ($SD = 16.16$) for European American women and Women of Color, respectively.

Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding—Version 6 (BIDR-6). Socially desirable responding was assessed by the BIDR-6 (Paulhus, 1994). The BIDR-6 is a rationally developed Likert-type scale (1 = *not true* to 7 = *very true*) that includes two 20-item subscales: Self-Deceptive Enhancement (SDE) indicates “the tendency to give honest but inflated self-descriptions,” and Impression Management (IM) indicates “the tendency to give inflated self-descriptions to an audience” (Paulhus, 1994, p. 2). As was suggested by Paulhus, one point was awarded for each 6 or 7 response on both the SDE and the IM. Thus, subscale scores had a possible range of 0 to 20. Paulhus (1994) reported evidence of structural and convergent validity. With the above scoring method, he reported internal consistency values ranging from .65 to .75 for SDE and .75 to .80 for IM. He reported a 5-week test-retest value of .69 for SDE and .77 for IM. In this study, alpha coefficients for SDE and IM were both .75.

FIDS. The FIDS is a 39-item Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) with five subscales corresponding to Downing and Roush’s (1985) five-stage model. Higher mean scores for each subscale indicate greater endorsement of attitudes consistent with the feminist identity development stage reflected by that subscale. Using exploratory factor analytic procedures, Bargad and Hyde (1991), as well as Gerstmann and Kramer (1997), reported some empirical support for a five-factor structure. Moradi and Subich (2002) supplemented data from the current sample with the collection of additional data to investigate the psychometric properties of three different measures of feminist identity development (including the FIDS). They used confirmatory factor analysis to test the fit of Downing and Roush’s model to data produced by the FIDS and found fit index values approximating a good model-data fit (e.g., GFI = .89; CFI = .87).

Bargad and Hyde (1991) reported alpha coefficients of .85, .75, .82, .65, and .80 for PA, R, EE, S, and AC, respectively. As evidence for the temporal stability, Bargad and Hyde reported that in the development of the FIDS, only items with a test-retest reliability greater than .60 were retained. Gerstmann and Kramer (1997) reported test-retest reliabilities of .85, .75, .82, .69, and .85 for PA, R, EE, S, and AC, respectively. Finally, correlations between FIDS subscales and social desirability (e.g., Crowne and Marlowe Social Desirability Scale) (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) have been nonsignificant or negligible (Bargad & Hyde, 1991; Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997).

In this study, we obtained alpha coefficients of .81, .63, .76, .58, and .77 for PA, R, EE, S, and AC, respectively. Means obtained for the subscales in

this study (see Table 1) approximated the range of means reported by Bargad and Hyde (1991) for three samples (these authors did not report standard deviations) and means and standard deviations reported by Fischer et al. (2000). Bargad and Hyde reported means ranging from 2.00-2.29, 3.12-3.39, 2.82-3.13, 3.83-4.01, and 3.48-3.52 for PA, R, EE, S, and AC, respectively. Fischer et al. reported means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of 2.54 (.56), 2.90 (.54), 2.66 (.56), 3.87 (.53), and 3.03 (.60) for PA, R, EE, S, and AC, respectively.

RESULTS

Given that there were significant differences between faculty/staff participants and students on several demographic variables, we wanted to partial out the influence of these potential covariates on the tests of our hypotheses. To identify potential covariates, prior to testing the hypotheses, we used stepwise regression to regress each of the criterion variables (i.e., GSI, SSE Recent, and SSE Lifetime) on demographic variables (i.e., age, race/ethnicity, SES, level of education, marital status) as well as faculty/staff member versus student status. The stepwise regression procedure selects as "best predictors" variables that produce significant changes in the R^2 of the regression equation (Wampold & Freund, 1987). Age ($R^2 = .17$) and SES ($R^2 = .02$) emerged as the best predictors of GSI; age ($R^2 = .08$) and marital status ($R^2 = .02$) emerged as the best predictors of SSE Recent; SES ($R^2 = .04$) emerged as the best predictor of SSE Lifetime scores. To avoid using as covariates variables that accounted for redundant variance, we also conducted three simultaneous regressions in which each of our variables of interest (i.e., GSI, SSE Recent, and SSE Lifetime) was regressed on all demographic variables as well as faculty/staff participant versus student status. In these regressions, only age ($b = -.24, p < .05$) accounted for unique variance in GSI scores; none of the demographic variables accounted for unique variance in SSE Recent scores; SES ($b = -.17, p < .05$) accounted for unique variance in SSE Lifetime scores. Consistent with the results of the multivariate test of equality of variance, faculty member versus student status did not emerge as an important predictor of any of the variables of interest in these sets of analyses. Given the results of these analyses, age and SES were judged to be consistent predictors of our criterion variables (i.e., GSI, SSE Recent, and SSE Lifetime) and therefore were entered as a first block into all regression equations testing the hypotheses. To extract any variance in the criterion variables accounted for by socially desirable responding, the social desirability dimensions of IM and SDE also were entered in the first block of the equations. Table 1 presents summary statistics and relationships among the variables of interest.

TABLE 2: Relations of Perceived Sexist Events and Feminist Identity Development Attitudes to Women's Psychological Distress

Step	Variable	B	t	Total R ²	Adj. R ²	R ² Inc.	F Inc.
1	Age	-.01	-.26	-3.92**	.29	.28	.28
	SES	.02	.03	.42			
	Impression management	-.01	-.08	-1.16			
	Self-deceptive enhancement	-.03	-.16	-2.55			
2	SSE lifetime	< .01	.08	.87	.47	.44	.18
	SSE recent	.01	.26	2.72**			
	Passive acceptance	.32	.32	4.75**			
	Revelation	.12	.12	1.69			
	Embeddedness-emanation	.06	.06	.74			
	Synthesis	.14	.13	2.16			
	Active commitment	-.10	-.09	-1.14			

NOTE: SES = socioeconomic status; SSE = Schedule of Sexist Events.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c stated that reports of experiencing sexist events and feminist identity development attitudes are related to psychological distress. The correlations reported in Table 1 indicate that SSE Lifetime, SSE Recent, PA, R, and EE scores were related positively to distress. To test Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c, we conducted a path analysis using multiple regression. We adjusted alpha to .01 due to the number of variables entered into this regression. GSI scores were regressed on the covariates (i.e., age, SES, social desirability) at Step 1 and on the SSE Recent, SSE Lifetime, and five FIDS subscale scores at Step 2. As presented in Table 2, sexist events and FIDS scores together accounted for 18% of the variance in GSI scores above and beyond the covariates. Of the variables of interest, SSE Recent and FIDS PA accounted for unique positive variance in GSI scores.

To test Hypothesis 2, we followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommendations. We entered covariates at Step 1, main effects at Step 2, and the interaction term at Step 3 of a hierarchical multiple regression. Significant change in R^2 for the interaction term indicates a significant moderator effect. Researchers have pointed out the statistical difficulties of detecting moderator effects and suggested that the contribution of interaction terms above and beyond main effects will be small (e.g., McClelland & Judd, 1993; Wampold & Freund, 1987). Thus, the use of liberal alphas (e.g., .10 or .25) in judging the significance of moderator effects has been recommended (McClelland & Judd, 1993; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Nevertheless, due to the number of regressions conducted to test Hypothesis 2, we set alpha at .05. To reduce multicollinearity among the variables of interest, we centered SSE and FIDS

TABLE 3: Moderating Effect of Passive Acceptance Attitudes on the Relationship Between Perceived Recent Sexist Events and Distress

Step	Variable	B	β	t	Total R ²	Adj. R ²	R ² Inc.	F Inc.
1	Age	-.01	-.21	-3.39**	.29	.28	.29	18.96***
	SES	< .01	.01	.10				
	Impression management	-.01	-.09	-1.29				
	Self-deceptive enhancement	-.03	-.18	-2.94**				
2	SSE recent	.02	.35	5.86***	.36	.35	.07	19.33***
3	Passive acceptance	.32	.32	5.35***	.45	.43	.08	27.09***
4	Passive Acceptance \times SSE Recent	.01	.11	2.04*	.46	.44	.01	4.165*

NOTE: SES = socioeconomic status; SSE = Schedule of Sexist Events.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

scores (Aiken & West, 1991; Holmbeck, 1997). Finally, to reduce the possibility of Type II error as a result of the multicollinearity among interaction terms (due to their common use of SSE subscales), we conducted separate regressions for each of the FIDS subscales.

Thus, to examine the moderating effects of each of the feminist identity development attitudes on the relation between recent sexist events and distress, we regressed GSI scores on the covariates (i.e., age, SES, and social desirability) at Step 1, SSE Recent score at Step 2, the target FIDS subscale score (e.g., PA) at Step 3, and the interaction of the target FIDS subscale score with SSE Recent score at Step 4. To assess the moderating effect of feminist identity development attitudes on the relation between lifetime sexist events and distress, we repeated the above procedure, replacing SSE Recent with SSE Lifetime scores. Only the interaction of PA and SSE Recent scores was a moderator, and this interaction accounted for 1% ($p < .05$) of the variance in GSI scores above and beyond main effects and covariates (see Table 3).

To explore the pattern underlying the significant interaction, we followed Aiken and West's (1991) procedures. We used the regression equation obtained in the previous analysis to calculate and plot GSI scores for SSE Recent centered scores of one standard deviation above and below the mean and PA centered scores of two standard deviations above and below the mean (to examine levels of strong agreement or disagreement with PA). We held covariates constant across these equations by using their mean values in the computations. Figure 1 indicates that there is a significantly (as indicated by the significant regression coefficient for the interaction term) (Aiken & West, 1991) stronger relationship between SSE Recent and GSI scores at a high level of agreement with PA than there is at a low level of agreement with PA.

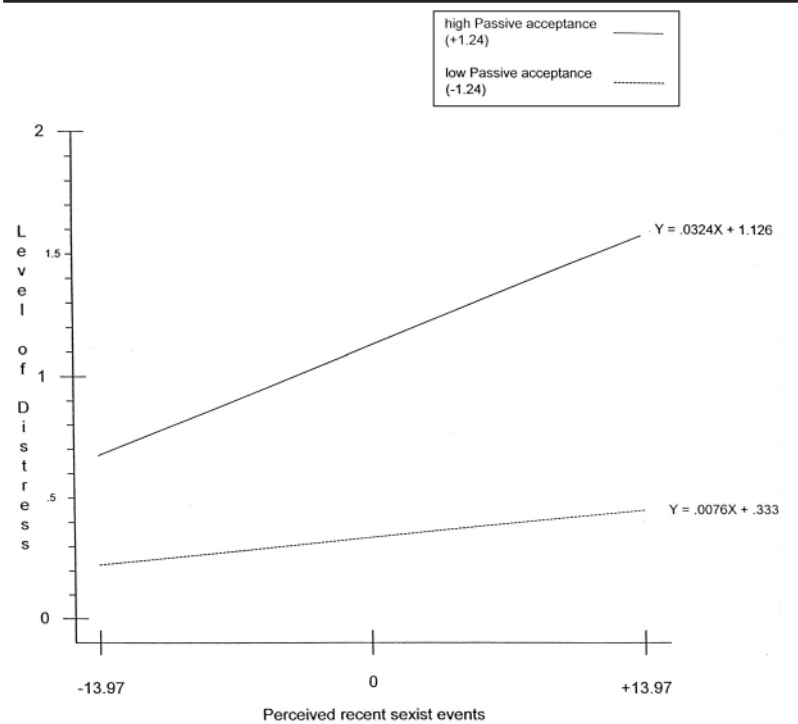


Figure 1. Relation of perceived recent sexist events and distress at high and low levels of passive acceptance attitudes.

Finally, Hypotheses 3a and 3b addressed the relation between feminist identity development attitudes and women's perceptions of sexist events. As expected, the zero-order correlations presented in Table 1 indicate that, in general, PA attitudes are related negatively and R, EE, and AC attitudes are related positively to reporting sexist events. To examine the relation of the set of feminist identity attitudes to perceived sexist events within the past year and within one's lifetime, and to identify feminist identity development attitudes that accounted for unique variance in reported experience of sexist events, we conducted two multiple regressions (see Table 4). To examine the relation of feminist identity development attitudes to perceived recent sexist events, we regressed SSE Recent scores on the covariates (i.e., age, SES, social desirability) at Step 1, and the set of FIDS scores at Step 2. To examine the relation of feminist identity development attitudes to perceived lifetime sexist events, we repeated this procedure, replacing SSE Recent with SSE Lifetime scores. Due to the number of variables entered into these equations,

TABLE 4: Relations of Women's Feminist Identity Development Attitudes and Perceived Sexist Events

<i>Criterion</i>								
<i>Step</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Total R²</i>	<i>Adj. R²</i>	<i>R² Inc.</i>	<i>F Inc.</i>
SSE lifetime								
1	Age	.05	.04	.54	.08	.06	.08	3.79**
	SES	-2.39	-.13	-1.76				
	Impression management	-.64	-.16	-2.01				
	Self-deceptive enhancement	-.35	-.09	-1.19				
2	Passive acceptance	-5.00	-.20	-2.63**	.27	.24	.20	9.63***
	Revelation	7.28	.29	3.6***				
	Embeddedness-emanation	1.41	.06	.66				
	Synthesis	.85	.03	.45				
	Active commitment	2.17	.08	.86				
SSE recent								
1	Age	-.19	-.18	-2.38	.12	.11	.12	6.46***
	SES	-1.71	-.10	-1.37				
	Impression management	-.35	-.09	-1.67				
	Self-deceptive enhancement	-.31	-.09	-1.14				
2	Passive acceptance	-3.73	-.17	-2.13	.25	.21	.12	5.78***
	Revelation	5.58	.25	2.98**				
	Embeddedness-emanation	.87	.04	.44				
	Synthesis	-.75	-.03	-.43				
	Active commitment	1.10	.04	.47				

NOTE: SES = socioeconomic status; SSE = Schedule of Sexist Events.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

we adjusted alpha to .01. The FIDS scores predicted 12% ($p < .0001$) of the variance in SSE Recent scores and 20% ($p < .0001$) of the variance in SSE Lifetime scores beyond that accounted for by covariates (see Table 3). PA and R scores accounted for unique variance in SSE Lifetime scores, and R scores accounted for unique variance in SSE Recent scores. As expected, in general, lower PA scores and higher R scores were related to reporting more frequent experiences of sexist events.

DISCUSSION

Using a theoretical model to examine concomitantly relations among women's feminist identity development attitudes, perceived experiences of sexist events, and psychological distress, this study extends previous research (Landrine et al., 1995) on the relation of perceived experiences of sexist events and psychological symptoms. Further, our results provide a

stringent test of these relations because possible covariates and socially desirable responding were partialled out prior to testing hypotheses. Indeed, this study's conservative estimates indicated that feminist identity development and perceived sexist events accounted for a substantial amount of variance in women's psychological distress beyond the covariates.

Consistent with Landrine et al.'s (1995) model in which perceived sexist events experienced throughout a woman's life are distal predictors whereas perceived sexist events experienced in the past year are proximal predictors of psychological symptoms, these results indicated that lifetime sexist events did not account for unique variance in women's psychological distress above and beyond that accounted for by recent perceived sexist events and feminist identity development attitudes. Future researchers are encouraged to determine whether this temporal distinction also applies when brutal/physical sexist events are considered.

Inconsistent with these findings, Landrine and Klonoff (1997) reported no difference in overall psychological symptoms between women who self-identified as feminist (i.e., responded "yes" to the question "Are you a feminist?") and women who did not so identify (i.e., responded "no" to the question "Are you a feminist?"). The implications of the inconsistency between our findings and Landrine and Klonoff's findings are unclear because the nature of the relation between feminist identity development attitudes (our study) and feminist self-identification (Landrine and Klonoff's [1997] study) has not been examined in previous literature. We believe this is an important area to investigate. Nevertheless, because feminist identity development is conceptualized to be a multidimensional construct (Downing & Roush, 1985) and may subsume feminist self-identification, these findings may better represent the relationship between feminism and psychological symptoms than the use of a single item assessing feminist self-identification.

Further, we found that denial of sexism (i.e., PA), heightened awareness of and guilt and anger about sexism (i.e., R), and seeking of community with other women (i.e., EE) are related to greater distress. Yet, only PA attitudes accounted for unique variance in symptoms. Also, some very tentative support was found for the moderating effect of PA on the relation between women's experiences of perceived sexist events within the past year (i.e., SSE Recent) and psychological distress. These results suggest tentatively that denial of individual, institutional, and cultural discrimination against women and against oneself (i.e., high PA) may intensify women's psychological distress related to experiences of perceived sexism within the past year. Such an effect is consistent with previous literature (e.g., Crocker et al., 1991; Dion, 1975; Klonis et al., 1997). On the other hand, increased vigilance with regard to discrimination against women and oneself (i.e., high R) did not act as a moderator. Perhaps, the guilt and anger associated with R increases psy-

chological distress and overrides the potential benefits of recognizing sexism. Further, these data suggest that integration of feminist ideology into one's self-concept (e.g., high EE, S) and commitment to such ideology (e.g., high AC) do not appear to protect women from such distress. These speculations, however, must remain tentative, due to the preliminary and correlational nature of these results. Further research on the moderating effect of various stages of feminist identity development on the relationship between sexism and distress is needed to assess the replicability and causal direction of these results.

Finally, the finding that only increased vigilance (R) and perhaps lack of awareness (PA) of sexism were related uniquely to reporting sexist events is consistent with Downing and Roush's (1985) theoretical conceptualization of these two stages as directly involving awareness (R) or denial of sexism (PA). These results also are consistent with Landrine and Klonoff's (1997) findings that women who responded "yes" to the question "Are you a feminist?" reported more sexist events on the SSE than did women who responded "no" to this question.

Limitations and Implications for Research and Practice

Several limitations of this study should be considered when making inferences based on its results. First, within-group differences among women must receive further attention. Landrine and Klonoff (1997) found that compared to White women, minority women reported more sexist events, and their reports of these sexist events were related more strongly to psychological symptoms. Landrine and Klonoff hypothesized that this was due to the fact that minority women experience sexist events more frequently than do other women. Perhaps a greater relationship between sexist events and psychological symptoms for minority women exists because minority women experience sexist events against a background of other societal oppression due to their race and ethnicity. Thus, sexist and racist events could have a multiplicative impact on psychological symptoms for this group. Due to the small number of minority women in this sample, however, we did not conduct separate analyses. Also, further attention should be directed toward the applicability of these findings to lesbian and bisexual women, women with disabilities, women of various ages and educational backgrounds, and women who have experienced rape, battery, or other forms of violent sexist victimization.

Causal links among the variables examined in this study also need to be explored. The correlational design of this study did not allow for causal inferences. Yet, identifying possible causal links could have important implications for counseling, in that interventions focused on decreasing women's

denial of sexism might be supported as a way to prevent or reduce adverse psychological symptoms. Relatedly, researchers must explore the process by which women perceive and report events as sexist. For example, if a woman does not perceive an event such as hearing derogatory comments about women at work as sexist, does the event still have a negative psychological impact? If such events have negative psychological consequences, researchers need to examine whether helping women to reconceptualize the events as sexist would reduce the negative psychological impact of those events. Helping women reconceptualize and rename such events as sexist is consistent with one of the cornerstones of feminist therapy, the notion that the personal is political (Enns, 1993; Worell & Remer, 1992). Our finding that denial of sexism is related to greater psychological distress for women provides some support for such practice. Our results also provide support for the feminist therapy contention that women's experiences of sexism are related to greater psychological distress (e.g., Enns, 1993; Worell & Remer, 1992), although causal inferences cannot be made. To investigate causal relationships among these variables, researchers must consider the ethical implications and costs and benefits of manipulating women's experiences of sexist events. One possible concession is to investigate women's perceptions of the causal link between their perceived experiences of sexist events and psychological distress (e.g., Klonis et al., 1997).

Finally, this study's tests of the stated hypotheses were limited by two methodological issues. First, we chose to minimize the impact of FIDS items on reports of perceived sexist events by presenting the SSE first in participants' packets. This choice may have led to other types of reactivity; for example, FIDS items may have been affected by responses to the SSE. Researchers are encouraged to consider this issue in future studies.

Further, these results are limited to the state of the art in the assessment of feminist identity development. Although in many ways the FIDS seems an acceptable measure of the multidimensionality of feminist identity development (e.g., Blum & Subich, 1998; Moradi & Subich, 2002), low internal consistency reliability coefficients for R and S suggest that results related to these two subscales should be interpreted with caution. Thus, the observed relations of R and S attitudes to women's experiences of perceived sexist events and their psychological symptoms may be underpredictions or unstable predictions of the actual relations between these constructs. The development of and research with stronger instrumentation is needed to support the generalizability of these results involving feminist identity development. In addition, longitudinal studies examining directly the developmental aspect of Downing and Roush's (1985) model as well as revision and addition of items to FIDS subscales with less than acceptable internal consistency reliability estimates are needed.

In sum, this study was a response to calls within the counseling psychology literature for research and theory that advances understanding of psychological and social issues that impact women's lives (Fitzgerald & Nutt, 1986; Gilbert, 1992). Consistent with counseling psychology's commitment to exploring issues of diversity, this study examined concurrently contextual and intrapersonal variables related to women's psychological symptomology. The results of this study support that feminist identity development and experiences of perceived sexist events have important practical value because of their relation to women's psychological concerns (Downing & Roush, 1985; Gilbert, 1992; McNamara & Rickard, 1989). These results, however, also suggest that the status of feminist identity development as a moderator of the relationship between sexist events and women's psychological distress is questionable and further investigation is needed.

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