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Jacqueline Enge

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# **Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice**

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Social Work  
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Social Work

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

## **Abstract**

There have been few studies completed exploring the ideas of feminism in the current context of social work practice from the perspective of social workers. For this study, 23 licensed MN social workers completed a survey exploring to what level social workers relate to four perspectives of feminism (liberal, radical, socialist and women of color/womanist), and how these perspectives impact their problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals in social work practice. This research used a portion of the Feminist Perspective Scale (Henley, et al, 1998) to determine the feminist perspective used by the social workers. The feminist perspectives used in this study were liberal, radical, socialist and womanist. Additionally, practice methods hypothesized to be used by social workers based on their feminist perspectives as hypothesized by Nes and Iadicola, (1989) were used to create exploratory social work practice method subscales. Findings showed a statistically significant relationship between the radical, socialist and womanist feminist perspectives and the social work practice methods of problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals. These correlations and the limited recent research completed on this topic show the importance of completing updated research on the feminist perspectives used by social workers and the impact it has on social work practice.

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The women's movement brought increased awareness to the difficulties faced by both men and women due to sexism (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). This movement has obligated individual social workers and social services agencies to deal with concerns about prejudice (Nes & Iadicola, 1989), and has affected transformation in both social thought and social action among social workers (Freeman, 1990). However, since the 1980s there has been a decrease in both the deliberations about the meaning of feminism and the literature published in the general public and the social work sectors (Lazzari, Colarossi & Collins, 2009). Limited effort has been made by social workers to incorporate feminist perspectives into social work practice (Collins, 1986), despite Barretti's (2001) argument that feminism and social work seem to have a "natural" relationship.

The history of the feminist movement in the United States is often split into "three waves", which can help represent different theoretical perspectives (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010; Lazzari et al., 2009). The first wave started with the women's suffrage movement in the late 1800s (Donovon, 2003). During this time, attention was paid to issues such as child labor, prostitution, and safety in order to improve the lives of poor urban women (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). The *liberal feminist perspective*, which focused on political and legal actions, was a common theoretical perspective during this wave (Simon, 1988; Freedman, 2002).

The second wave of the feminist movement is associated with the 1960s and 1970s alongside the civil rights and anti-war movements (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010) and is viewed as more radical than the first wave (Simon, 1988; Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). By the end of the 1960s, the *radical feminist perspective* started to have a larger role in

the feminist movement, often in conflict with the liberal feminist perspective (Simon, 1988). However, while this wave is often associated with the radical feminist perspective, the liberal feminist perspective was still present during this wave. Additionally, near the end of this second wave, in the mid-1970s, the *socialist feminist perspective* and *women of color/womanist feminist perspective* started to emerge, creating even more divisions among feminist professionals (Simon, 1988; Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). During the second wave the focus was on changing patriarchal institutions within the United States. The main issues during this time period were creating equal rights for women in the constitution through the Equal Rights Amendments, and issues concerned with reproductive rights, sexuality and domestic violence (Rampton, 2008).

The third wave of feminism began in the mid-1990s, when women of color and women who identified as a part of the GLBT population questioned the “universalist assumptions about ‘women’ (pg. 355)” represented in the “white” feminist perspective during the second wave of feminism (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). Third-wave feminism aimed to eliminate the idea of “us vs. them” by allowing women to choose who they wanted to be. Second wave radical feminists viewed lipstick, high heels and low-cut shirts as anti-feminist, while third-wave feminists embraced these as signs of femininity (Rampton, 2008). While this third wave continued to focus on unequal power dynamics in our society, it also embraced differences among women. This wave is centered around the idea that not all women want the same thing and third wave feminists encouraged women to make decisions based on their own desires and not on their gender. Issues such as family friendly work policies and rights for individuals who identify as GLBT were also introduced during this wave. While this wave is recognized for perspectives such as

the womanist perspectives, the previous perspectives have not disappeared, and liberal, radical and socialist feminism are still very present (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010).

Throughout these three waves, social work has not always taken an active role in feminism. Simons (1988) argued that the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) was slow to respond to the challenges put forth by liberal, radical and socialist feminists and Barretti (2001) noted that in the 1960s and early 1970s, while feminist organizations were fighting to change policies, the profession of social work was doing little to support this movement. The NASW did show some signs of feminist engagement during the 1973 delegate Assembly of the National Association of Social Workers, where there was a resolution to target at risk populations, including women (Simon, 1988). However, during the 1980s feminism was again downplayed by social workers. Feminism in social work gained momentum once more in the late 1980s and many individuals have been trying to keep the feminist voice active in social work ever since (Barretti, 2001; Kemp & Brandwein, 2010).

There is not an agreed upon definition of the meaning of feminism. For this reason feminists use several different perspectives (Nes & Iadicola, 1989; Freeman, 1990; Sandell, 1993; Saulnier, 2000; Szymanski, 2005). The three most commonly mentioned perspectives in the research about feminism and social work were liberal feminism, radical feminism and socialist feminism (Nes & Iadicola, 1989; Freeman, 1990; Sandell, 1993). Collins (1986) argued that it is important for social workers to be aware of the perspectives they are using because there is no such thing as “value-free practice” and the viewpoints taken by a social worker will impact the social worker’s practice methods. Collins also proposed that understanding social workers’ beliefs about

feminism and the effects these perspectives have on their practice is crucial to both social workers and social work clients in order to ensure that clients are receiving the best social work possible.

The women's movement has seen many shifts and changes since the 1960s and the impacts of these changes have been seen in social work (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). The purpose of this study is to explore ideas of feminism in the current context of social work practice from the perspective of social workers. This study will explore to what level social workers relate to four perspectives of feminism (liberal, radical, socialist and women of color/womanist), and how these perspectives impact their problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals in social work practice.

### **Literature Review**

There is limited recent research on the subject of social work and feminism and the literature on this topic has been declining since the 1980s (Lazzari, Colarossi & Collins, 2009). For that reason, much of the literature used in the following literature review is several years old. While there are multiple feminist perspectives with different values, they all focus on the concept of patriarchy. Lorber (2005) defines patriarchy as men's subordination of women. She explains that patriarchy is a system of organizations, institutions and daily practices which allow men to control women's lives. This literature review will define multiple feminist perspectives, compare and contrast feminism and social work, and examine how feminism is used within social work practice.

## **Types of Feminism**

While many men and women may define themselves as feminists, they do not all agree on the same theoretical orientation (Eisenstein, 1979; hooks, 2000). In order to help measure the diversity of feminist attitudes, the Feminist Perspective Scale (FPS) was created by Henley, Meng, O'Brien, McCarthy and Sockloskie (1998). This tool included six types of feminist perspectives that had been previously defined in feminist literature: liberal, socialist, radical, conservative, cultural, and women of color/womanist feminisms. While this scale included six types of feminism, most of the research completed that focused on the feminist perspective as it is used in social work concentrated on only three of these definitions: liberal, socialist and radical. Thus, this literature review will define all six types of feminism but will focus primarily on liberal, radical and socialist feminisms which have predominated the literature and research.

While overviews of feminist perspectives generally focus on liberal, radical and socialist feminisms (Henley, et al., 1998), there are other feminist viewpoints that the authors of the FPS did not believe were adequately represented by other literature and feminist perspective scales. For this reason, included in the FPS are cultural, women of color/womanist and conservative feminisms. Each will be defined below as research permits.

***Cultural Feminism.*** Cultural feminism takes an essentialist view that there are differences in the nature of men and women, and that female traits are superior to male traits. (Donovan, 1985; Echols, 1989; Saulnier, 2000) This perspective focuses on the culture of women (Lorber, 2005). According this perspective, women share the same "goodness", and this perspective focuses on creating a culture among women (Echols,

1989). Cultural feminists focus on the spirituality of women, stating that women are more connected to spirituality and the earth than men. In this perspective, differences, including those of race and class, are downplayed, in order to create a unity and culture among women (Saulnier, 2000).

Donovan (1995) stated the goal of cultural feminism was to create cohesion among women. In order to do this, feminists with a cultural perspective have argued that society should be restructured and more value placed on female qualities such as peace, care of others and willingness to be emotionally available, and less value placed on male qualities such as aggression, force, and lack of emotional expression (Donovan, 1995). Saulnier (2000) added that cultural feminists create enterprises that are owned by and serve women in order to bring them together.

*Conservative Feminism.* While conservative feminism may not be considered a feminist perspective by all (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993), it has implications for feminism, so it was included in the FPS (Henley et al., 1998). According to Jaggar and Rothenberg (1993), conservative feminism is based on the assumption that the nature of men and women are different for biological and religious reasons. Based on biology, men and women have different capacities. For example, men are physically stronger and therefore more able to take on the role of provider and head of their family. Conservative feminists promote the idea that men and women have equal but complementary roles, and it would be unfair to both men and women to encourage them to complete tasks outside of their biological nature. Secondly, the religion argument adds to the idea that men are should have a societal status above women because they are ordained by a Superior Being (Henley, et al., 1998).

***Womanist/Women of Color Feminism.*** hooks (1984) wrote that the women of color perspective (or womanism) came about as a critique of the white woman's feminist movement. According to hooks (1984), the feminist movement was not taking into consideration the specific needs of women of color. This perspective recognized poverty, racism and ethnocentrism as equal to sexism as creators of oppression. Instead of as separate, womanist feminists encourage a unified view of the two categories, helping women to understand what it means to be a black woman, instead of black or a woman. Women of color/womanist feminists advocated for the specific concerns of women of color (Henley et al., 1998). Little has been written about this perspective as compared to liberal, radical and socialist feminism, as highlighted in Table 1 on the next page. Much of the research completed on feminism has focused on three perspectives, and the following sections will discuss the assumptions, beliefs and goals of liberal, radical and socialist feminism as portrayed in the literature.

***Liberal Feminism.*** Liberal feminism is based on the assumption that there are no basic differences in the nature of men and women and that people of both genders have the same potential for achievement (Table 1). In this definition, inequality occurs due to the differences in motivation and opportunity (Nes & Iadicola, 1989). For liberal feminists, capitalism and the power associated with "male traits" such as aggression and domination are not recognized as problems, as liberal feminists accept these systems and work to achieve equality within them (Eisenstein, 1984; Lorber, 2005). Liberal feminists assume that inequality is and will always be a part of society and that it only becomes a problem when there is too much inequality or the inequality is due to discrimination

**Table 1. Types of Feminism**

	Liberal	Radical	Socialist	Woman of Color/Womanist
Ranked types of problems with highest severity	Political-legal dimensions (Freeman)	Sexual Reproductive Dimensions (Freeman)	Economically oriented problems (Freeman)	Racial inequality (hooks)
Causes of Sexism	Legal, Economic and cultural inequality created by the denial of equal opportunities based on sex (Eisenstein)	Male domination, patriarchy and systematic devaluation of women (Eisenstein)	Multiple sources of oppression (gender, class, race), gender status determined by relationships and historical factors (Eisenstein)	
Causes of inequality	Inequality is the natural outcome of individual differences and in human potential and motivation. Inequality becomes a problem if things become too unequal or it is the result of discrimination. (Eisenstein)	All inequality is caused by patriarchy and sex-gender oppression. (Eisenstein)	Inequality is caused both by systems of class and patriarchy. Owners control production of things, men production of people (production and reproduction) (Eisenstein)	Racism, Poverty and ethnocentrism (hooks)
Natures of men and women	Men and women have the same nature. Women should become more competitive, assertive and individualistic. (Nes & Iadicola)	Men and women have different natures. Women's nature (more loving, caring and spiritual) should be viewed as equal (some might say better) to men (Nes & Iadicola)	Nature is reflected in human need and the current differences are due to the current sex-gender system. (Nes & Iadicola)	
How to gain equality	Achieved through legal reforms such as equal pay and employment opportunities (Sandell)	Eliminate patriarchy by women "combating their oppressors" and making female traits the basis of social order (Sandell)	Men and women work together to create mutual respect (Sandell)	Advocate for the specific needs of women of color (Henley, et al.)
Strategies	Organizing political interest groups and legal reforms to make sure women have equal opportunities as men in workforce (Nes & Iadicola)	Consciousness-raising, organization of women only groups, promotion of androgynous practices (Nes & Iadicola)	Organizing of oppressed groups and consciousness raising in order to help meet the needs of oppressed groups. Ultimately overthrow patriarchy, class and all other forms of oppression (Nes & Iadicola)	

(Eisenstein, 1979; Eisenstein, 1984; Freeman, 1990; Henley, 1998; hooks, 2000; Nes & Iadicola, 1989; Sandell, 1993)

(Eisenstein, 1984; Firestone, 1970). Therefore, liberal feminists are concerned with the structural barriers women face based on their gender (Nes & Iadicola, 1989).

For liberal feminists, women's individuality, autonomy, and legal equality are important (Eisenstein, 1984). The goal of liberal feminists is to create a society where everyone has an equal chance of succeeding, regardless of gender. Liberal feminists may use individual therapy and psychotherapy in order to help women gain skills they need to be successful within the capitalist and patriarchal society (Nes & Iadicola, 1989).

Additionally, liberal feminists encourage legal and political changes in structure through affirmative action policies and through the creation of the Equal Rights Amendment (Eisenstein, 1984; Firestone, 1970).

***Radical Feminism.*** Radical feminism is based on the assumption that there are differences in the nature of men and women (Table 1) (Eisenstein, 1984; Firestone, 1970). Firestone stated that the push by liberal feminists for equal opportunities did not go far enough and that differences between men and women, and the inequality that is caused by these differences, needs to be recognized as well. Eisenstein (1984) added to this conversation by illustrating the differences between men and women: females tend to be more caring and nurturing, while males have a dominant personality and a need to have control over others, their own feeling and their bodies. According to radical feminists, patriarchy is a universal part of all institutions in the United States (Firestone, 1970) Male supremacy is viewed as a form of domination and the root cause of sexism, as well as other -isms, such as racism, classism and ageism (Eisenstein, 1984).

The goal of radical feminists has been stated as the need to end sexism in order to allow women's values to become societal norms (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993). Radical

feminists proposed that in order to do this, patriarchy must be abolished (Firestone, 1970; Eisenstein, 1984). In many cases, the caring and nurturing nature of women was seen as superior to the nature of men. Radical feminists argued that since men are the oppressors, women should put themselves in combat with them so that men will become more like women (Eisenstein, 1984). Radical feminists attempted to meet this goal through consciousness-raising and the promotion of androgynous practices. Radical feminists also viewed politicization and mobilization of women as important parts of the process to eliminate sexism (Nes & Iadicola, 1989).

***Socialist Feminism.*** Socialist feminism has a strong connection with Marxism (Eisenstein, 1979) and is based on the assumption that the human nature of men and women is reflected in their human needs (both physical and social) and how these needs are met (Table 1) (Nes & Iadicola, 1989). Socialist feminists believe that inequality is rooted in both patriarchy and classism (Eisenstein, 1979; Freedman, 2002). Eisenstein (1979) wrote that physical needs are met through the work place (production) and business owners control the ability to meet these needs. Social needs are met in the home (reproduction), and men control the ability to meet social needs (Eisenstein, 1979). Freedman (2002) continued this argument by stating that in trying to meet both these needs, women often face dual exploitation: they are exploited in the workplace by receiving low wages and then exploited in their home life by high expectations for childcare and housework, with no monetary rewards.

The goal of socialist feminists is to end oppression and they believe that in order to do this, physical and social needs of all groups must be taken into consideration and met (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984; hooks, 2000). However, these needs must never be met

at the expense of any other group (hooks, 2000). Socialist feminists believe this can be done through the organization of all oppressed groups and the creation of coalitions which can work together to meet the needs of everyone. Relationships demonstrating mutual respect should be created so that the physical and social needs of all humanity can be met. (Nes & Iadicola, 1989).

### **Feminism and Social Work**

The feminist approach to social work is based on the assumption that the problems of clients are not within the female psych, but within our societal structure, which is patriarchal and oppressive to women (Berlin & Kravetz, 1981). This approach is based on the belief that, in a patriarchal culture, men have advantages, which preclude equality for women (Berlin & Kravetz, 1981; Collins, 1986). Therefore, the goal of this perspective is to create a society that is equal for both men and women (Forte, 2007).

Practitioners who use feminist principles in their social work practice attempt to create this equality by connecting the personal and political in the experiences of women (Brickner-Jenkins, Hooyman & Gottleib, 1991). Feminist social workers link women's personal experiences to expected sex-role norms, oppressive social structures and discriminatory practices (Berlin & Kravetz, 1981). Feminist social workers often quote the slogan "the personal is political" to illustrate the idea that an individual's unique experience can only be understood by referencing the political, social, cultural and economic contexts in which it occurred (Berlin & Kravetz, 1981; Collins, 1986; Van Den Bergh, 1995). Another way those who have this perspective attempt to change the societal structure is by validating non-rational traits that are often considered to be a part

of the female nature, such as healing, spirituality, and non-linear, multidimensional thinking (Collins, 1986; Sandell, 1993; Coholic, 2003).

The values of feminism are common to the values presented in the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2008). Therefore, these two conceptualizations appear to have a “natural” relationship (Barretti, 2001). This section will compare the values of feminism and social work, contrast some differences between the two, and illustrate the importance of using feminism in social work.

**Shared Values.** Social work and the feminist perspective have many of the same values. Of the core values of social work presented in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Codes of Ethics (2008), service, social justice, dignity and worth of person, human relationships and competence are congruent with the feminist perspective. Based on the value of *service*, social workers have a goal of helping people in need while also addressing social problems (NASW, 2008). Feminists share this value. The main view of the feminist perspective is that women grow up in an oppressed, patriarchal society and feminists have a goal of addressing the social problem of patriarchy to help people in need (Berlin & Kravitz, 1989; Barretti, 2001; Forte, 2007).

The goal of creating equality guided by feminist principles fits nicely with the NASW (2008) value of *social justice*. Grounded in this value, social workers should pursue social change, particularly for those who are vulnerable or oppressed. Feminists are also encouraged to engage in social and political action to promote equality and challenge injustices, particularly by fighting for the equality of women, who are viewed as an oppressed group due to patriarchal culture (Collins, 1986; Barretti, 2001).

Based on the social work value of *dignity and worth of the person* (NASW, 2008) social workers are to treat everybody in a caring and respectful fashion, while recognizing and respecting differences and the individuality of each person and eliminating discrimination aimed at groups of people. The feminist perspective is congruent, recognizing the importance of understanding each individual's personal experience and identifying each individual's intrinsic dignity and worth (Wetzel, 1986). Additionally, like social workers, feminists aim to eliminate discrimination directed at women (Collins, 1986; Barretti, 2001).

As stated in the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) the importance of *human relationships* guides social workers to recognize and understand the importance of the relationships between humans as a vehicle for change. Collins (1986) stated that, in the feminist perspective, there is a focus on the importance of the interconnectedness of people and relationships in an individual's life. Sandell (2003) found this to be true in her research as well, when all seven of the social workers she interviewed talked about the importance of helping clients find supportive relationships in their lives.

Finally, *competence* is part of the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) and is valued in the feminist perspective. In order to be competent, social workers will continually increase the knowledge and skills that can be used in practice. In the feminist approach, there is also the expectation that feminists will gain skills and interdisciplinary knowledge that can be used in practice (Collins, 1986).

There are also commonalities between social work and the feminist perspective that are not found in the NASW code of ethics. According to Berlin and Kravetz (1981), one example is the connection between "personal is political" and "person in

environment". Both of these perspectives consider the client in her surrounding environment. The "the personal is political" is a slogan used by feminists in order to explain that an individual's experience can only be comprehended through understanding and examining her political context, as well as her economic, social and cultural contexts (Collins, 1986). "Person in Environment" examines a client's ability to cope with stress around the factors of social functioning, environmental problems, mental health problems and physical health problems (Hutchinson, 2011). Both of these perspectives examine the client's experience while considering several contextual factors. Finally, social work and feminist perspectives both value the process as an important part of the outcome. (Sandell, 1995; Barretti, 2001).

**Contrasts between social work and the feminist perspective.** While social workers and feminists share many of the same values, there are some distinctions between them. Feminist social worker, Collins (1986), argued that social work focuses on the well-being of society based on the "family-nation" model. She suggested that by focusing on the importance of the family, social workers could view women in an oppressed and subordinated position and potentially impact their self-determination by emphasizing their role as caretakers.

Berlin and Kravetz (1981) argued that social workers tended to focus on interventions for clients that encouraged them to change themselves in order to better adjust to specific situations they may find difficult. However, these two authors suggested that the feminist approach would prioritize changing the situation or structure the individual is in rather than changing the individual. Wetzel (1986) supported the argument that there is a difference between feminism and social work concerning the

orientation of where change happens. She suggested that the main difference between feminism and social work is that, while structural change is welcome for feminists, it is “frightening” for social workers (p. 167).

Another distinction between social work and the feminist perspective is the prioritization that feminists place on patriarchy (Collins, 1986; Freeman, 1990; Van Den Bergh, 1995). Coholic (2003) interviewed 20 self-identified feminist social workers and noted that feminist social workers had a unique focus on gender. While both social work and feminism focused on the importance of the individual, the feminist perspective gives precedence to naming one's personal *female* experience and understanding the person through her experience as a member of the oppressed gender (Van Den Bergh, 1995).

Collins (1986) argues that a final contrast between social work and the feminist perspective is the focus feminists have on validation of the non-rational. In the feminist perspective, traits such as spirituality and healing are validated. Both Sandell (1993) and Coholic's (2003) interviewed self-identified feminist social workers and found a strong connection between feminist social workers and the use of spirituality practice. Spirituality was incorporated into practice in several ways, including meditation and prayers.

**Importance of Feminism in Social Work.** Feminist social workers have been greatly influenced by the women's movement which perceives our culture as patriarchal and lacking in equal opportunities for women. (Berlin & Kravetz, 1981). According to Freeman (1990), feminist social workers have argued that feminist theory is missing from sociological, psychological and historical scholarship. This absence hinders social workers' understanding of the female perspective. A feminist perspective suggests that

the oppression that women face impacts the decisions they make and the problems they are facing (Forte, 2007). Likewise, feminists argued that without knowledge about patriarchy and the impacts it has on the lives of women, social workers cannot recognize and validate women's perspectives and interests, nor can they adequately respond to the demands and realities of a diverse and fluid world (Freeman, 1990; Kemp & Brandwein, 2012).

Feminists have argued that patriarchy has helped create many of the problems that women face (Lazarri et al., 2009). For example, feminists suggested that patriarchy allows men to dominate and rule the family. This dominant position can create an environment for domestic violence (Brickner-Jenkins, Hooyman & Gottlieb, 1991). Likewise, feminists have argued that this structure allows the blame and judgment of domestic violence to be placed on women instead of the abuser. This blame placed on the victim can make her feel guilty, which can lead to depression (Gary, 1991).

Rathbone-McCuan, Tebb and Harbert (1991) contended that another negative effect of a patriarchal society is that it allows for the exploitation of individual women. They explained that in this type of society the role of caregiver is often assumed to be that of the female. However, caring for children or the elderly is often unpaid work. This lack of wages assures that women remain dependent on men to meet their basic needs, and therefore can remain oppressed (Nes & Iadicola, 1989). Wedneoja (1991) argued that the role of female as care-taker also feeds into the idea of "mother-blaming" (pg. 179), where problems of the family and individual family members are blamed on the mother because she did not do a good enough job taking care of the family. This can create a feeling of powerlessness among women (Wedneoja, 1991).

Collins (1986) argued that patriarchal values are embedded in our society and due to the impact this has, social workers must incorporate feminist theories in their practices in order to understand our culture as well as the needs of women. Collins wrote that many social work treatments revolve around the thoughts and needs of the dominant culture, the white male culture. Freeman (1990) argued that the roles of women are changing in our society and these changing roles and the impact that a patriarchal society has on them, must be considered in social work practice.

There are several reasons feminist practitioners have given as to why this framework works. One such reason is that it creates discussions among women about their own stories and experiences and how they compare with other women. This allows these women to make sense of the oppression they have faced and how it has impacted them (Land, 1995). Additionally, by allowing women to see all options available to them, including the ones that do not fit with gender norms and that may not have been revealed to them before, new opportunities become available for women (Berlin & Kavetz, 1981). Finally, this framework gives social workers a way to recognize and validate the female perspective (Freeman, 1990).

### **Practice Methods and Intervention Strategies**

In feminist social work, the personal is political (Collins, 1986; Berlin & Kravetz, 1981; Brickner-Jenkins, et al, 1991). Interventions are offered at both an individual level and at a macro level and the empowerment approach is used to encourage clients to take charge of their own lives (Collins, 1986). Additionally, feminist social workers present clients with all available options, focusing on those that are beyond gender norms. For example, in working with a family who is struggling with employment and finances, a

feminist social worker may suggest that the father stay home with the children while the mother focuses on finding a job. While still respecting client self-determination, the social worker will offer “non-sexist” perspectives as alternatives to a client’s situation to help her better understand all options available to her (Lazzari, et al., 2009). Finally, consciousness-raising, self-help networks and therapy groups are often used (Nes & Iadicola, 1989; Berlin & Kravetz, 1991) in conjunction with grass-root or community organizations to help change policies that will one day hopefully eliminate the biases faced by women (Berlin & Kravetz, 1991).

Feminist social workers use multiple theoretical perspectives and according to previously completed research, liberal feminism tends to be most common. Freeman (1990) completed research with 773 social work faculty and learned that 78% self-identified with liberal feminism, 16.8% with socialist feminism, 6.3% with radical feminism and 7% made up their own definition. Szymanski (2005) also completed a quantitative study with 135 clinical supervisors, asking them to rate their perspectives on a Likert scale (1-7). Participants in this study had the highest mean scores for liberal tenets (5.77), then women of color/womanist (5.53), then radical (4.5), cultural (4.17) and finally, socialist (3.88).

The types of social work practice interventions used vary based on the theoretical perspective the social worker is using (Nes & Iadicola, 1989; Freeman, 1990; Sandell, 1993; Saulnier, 2000). While most of the research completed on this topic has focused on social work practice and interventions among liberal, radical and socialist feminists, the following sections will examine social work practice and intervention strategies in

cultural, woman of color/womanist, liberal, radical and socialist perspectives in alignment with Szymanski's (2005) findings.

**Cultural Feminism.** Saulnier (2000) completed qualitative interviews with 24 self-identified feminist social work group leaders to explore how the feminist perspective was incorporated into social work practice involving groups. She found that consciousness-raising, support, and self-help were common processes used by cultural feminists when working with groups. Additionally, themes in the goals of these groups included celebrating womanhood, discovering female essence, political analysis and the creation of new religious female experiences through discussion to develop new understandings of female spirituality.

**Women of color/Womanist Feminism.** While examining women of color/womanist feminists as group leaders, Saulnier (2000) found that womanist group leaders was toward the needs of women of color. Like cultural feminists, consciousness-raising and support were common processes used by women of color/womanist feminists. However, rather than focus on self-help, these group leaders emphasized community organizing. Saulnier (2000) found that the goals of the groups led by social workers who held this perspective focused on self-empowerment, community building and articulation of racial consciousness.

There has been limited research completed about cultural and women of color/womanist feminist perspectives being used in social work. Much of the research completed in the use of the feminist perspective in social work has focused on the liberal, radical and socialist views. Nes and Iadicola (1989) completed an extensive analysis of the liberal, radical and socialist theoretical feminist framework and identified the political

and philosophical beliefs of each perspective. Based on this analysis, they suggested specific approaches that would be taken by social workers in the areas of problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals. An adaptation of their findings is presented in Table 2.

**Liberal Feminism.** In exploring the liberal feminist perspective, Nes and Iadicola proposed that when identifying problems and assessing clients, liberal feminists would focus on four categories: individual deficits, blockages in opportunity structures, the link between individual deficits and opportunity structure, and the availability of social and institutional supports. Treatment strategies for liberal feminists would include individual therapy, group treatment focused on personal pathologies, and advocacy to create policies eliminating gender discrimination from the capitalist structure. Finally, treatment goals would focus on correcting individual deficits, changing problematic opportunity structures, establishing support groups and validating the personal choices of clients (Nes & Iadicola, 1989).

Freeman (1990) hypothesized that, within social work practice, liberal feminist social workers considered problems related to economic dimensions as more severe than other types of feminists. In Freeman's study, 773 social work faculty were given a list of problems and she hypothesized that the following four would be considered as most severe by liberal feminists: "inadequate legal representation", "ethnic minority discrimination", "pay inequities for work of comparable value", and "lack of passage of

**Table 2. Feminist Social Work Intervention Methods**

Social Work Practices	Liberal	Radical	Socialist
Problem Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Individual Deficits</li> <li>* Link between individual deficits and opportunity structure</li> <li>* Existence of Social-Institutional Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Oppressive social relations rooted in patriarchy</li> <li>*Social and institutional arrangements promoting hierarchal gender roles</li> <li>*Personality attributes that are outcomes of patriarchy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Institutional and belief systems created by patriarchy and class systems</li> <li>*Personality attributes that are the outcome of systems of domination</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Degree of individual deficits</li> <li>*Degree and impact of blockages in opportunity structure</li> <li>*Interplay between individual's deficits and opportunity structures</li> <li>*Availability of social-institutional support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree to which growth is limited by:</li> <li>*Patriarchy in relationships</li> <li>*Patriarchy in institutions</li> <li>*Patriarchy in socialization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Impact of class, race and economic status</li> <li>*Alienation</li> <li>*Self-Esteem</li> </ul>
Treatment Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Individual Therapy</li> <li>*Group therapy to deal with personal pathologies</li> <li>*Advocacy against discrimination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Consciousness-raising to eliminate the psychology of oppressed (women) and oppressor (men)</li> <li>*Support and self-help groups for women</li> <li>*Politicization and mobilization of women around women's issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Consciousness-raising to increase interpretation of classism, sexism and other forms of oppression</li> <li>*Support, self-help and advocacy groups aimed at meeting basic needs</li> <li>*Coalition building to empower individuals and groups</li> </ul>
Treatment Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Correction of individual deficits</li> <li>*Open up problematic opportunity structures</li> <li>*Establish support groups to aid clients' fulfillment and validation of choices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Make the personal political</li> <li>*Promote change in relationships characterized by patriarchy</li> <li>*Mobilize and politicize women to change the system and eliminate blockages from patriarchy</li> <li>*Promote sisterhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Raise political consciousness, showing links between classism and patriarchy and oppression</li> <li>*Encourage coalition building and empowerment of individuals to allow them to change systems of domination</li> <li>*Allow individuals to meet their needs, but not at the expense of others</li> </ul>

\*Adopted from Nes & Iadicola (1989) Toward a Definition of Feminist Social Work: A Comparison of Liberal, Radial, and Socialist Models. *Social Work*, pg17

the equal rights amendment” While this hypothesis was created based on previous findings, her survey did not support this hypothesis. Instead, she found no connection between those who identified themselves as liberal social workers and the problems they identified as most severe. Freeman’s hypothesis was based on the ideas of Nes and Iadicola (Table 2) that liberal feminists would view problems in the opportunity structures faced by women as most problematic. However, her research did not support this to be true. Instead she did not find a pattern in the statements liberal feminists viewed as most problematic.

Building on Nes and Iadicola’s (1989) conclusions, Sandell (1993) conducted qualitative interviews with seven self-identified feminist social workers, two of whom were liberal, and found that during problem identification and assessment, the liberal feminists focused on blockages in opportunities structures, and the presence of social supports, but did not seem to focus on individual deficits. Additionally, these social workers focused on the impact that patriarchy and class had on the choices clients they worked with felt they had in life. Sandell (1993) also found that individual and group therapies, as well as advocacy were used as treatment strategies for liberal feminist social workers. Finally, in treatment goals, she noted that changing opportunity structure, establishing support groups and validating personal choices were identified as goals, but correcting individual deficits was not. She also noted that the encouragement of clients to engage in and discuss politics, especially those focused on legislation impacting women, was present, a finding not predicted by Nes and Iadicola’s model.

Based on her study of 24 feminist social work group leaders, Saulnier (2000) found that groups led by liberal feminists tended to focus more on the individual than

other types of feminist perspectives. Additionally she noted that liberal feminists used the treatment modules of psychoeducation, counseling and 12-step programs. When social workers were asked about goals in the groups they led, common themes were assertiveness, increases in self-esteem and developing a sense of competence. Specific foci for groups led by liberal feminists were alcohol problems, codependence and dysfunctional families. Saulnier's (2000) research supported the hypotheses of Nes and Iadicola (1989) who suggested that liberal feminists would focus on the individual deficits. However, there was little to support the hypothesis that treatment goals will include changing opportunity structures of women in Saulnier's research.

Among these studies (Freeman, 1990; Sandell, 1993; Saulnier, 2000) was mixed support for Nes and Iadicola's (1989) hypotheses represented in Table 2. Some of findings supported the hypothesis that liberal feminists would focus on the opportunity structure (Sandell, 1993), while others supported the focus on individual deficits (Saulnier, 2000). However, none of the studies documented a focus on both. Additionally, while Freeman's (1990) hypothesis supported Nes and Iadicola's ideas, her research findings did not.

**Radical Feminism.** Nes and Iadicola (1989) suggested that, like liberal feminists, radical feminists could be distinguished by a specific approach in problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals (Table 2). In problem identification and assessment, they proposed that radical feminists would focus on problems and oppression created by a patriarchal view in relationships and in social and institutional structures, and the impact that these problems and oppressions have on the client's personality and personal growth. According to Nes and Iadicola (1989), treatment

strategies used by radical feminists would focus on consciousness-raising, support and self-help groups for women, and politicization and mobilization of women around women's issues. Finally, treatment goals would focus on the creation of awareness that personal problems stemmed from the patriarchal structure. They also focused on the promotion of change in oppressive relationships and societal structures. Finally, these treatment goals would focus on the mobilization and politicization of women to create these changes and promote sisterhood.

Freeman (1990) predicted that among radical feminists, problems related to sexual-reproductive dimensions would be seen as more severe than other types of feminists. In Freeman's study with 773 social work school faculty members, the two problems ranked as more severe by those who identified most with the definition of radical feminist were "sexual harassment" and "displaced homemakers". Freeman's findings supported the hypothesis by Nes and Iadicola (1989) that radical feminists would focus on problems related to patriarchy in relationships, institutions and socialization.

Through her interviews with two self-identified radical feminists, Sandell (1993) found a focus on patriarchal relationships and structure in problem identification and assessment as predicted by Nes and Iadicola (1989). Treatment strategies used by the radical feminists she interviewed included therapy, group work and consciousness-raising. However, these radical feminists did not use self-help groups or the politicization and mobilization of women, as predicted by Nes and Iadicola (1989). Politicization was missing in treatment goals, but the promotion of change in oppressive relationships and structures were present.

Saulnier (2000) noted that groups led by the radical feminists in her study included processes such as the use of consciousness-raising, support, skill development and the development of action plans. Goals were related to challenging the patriarchal society, social change, and the empowerment of women towards activism. The groups led by these radical feminists were focused on empowerment.

Many of the hypotheses created by Nes and Iadicola (1989) for radical feminists were supported. Freeman's (1990) findings supported the hypotheses related to problem identification and assessment. Additionally, while Sandell's (1993) findings did not show a focus on the politicization of women, Saulnier's (2000) findings did support this. However, neither study (Sandell, 1993; Saulnier, 2000) supported the hypothesis that radical feminists would use self-help groups as a treatment strategy.

**Socialist Feminism.** Based on their analysis of socialist feminism, Nes and Iadicola (1989) also predicted how socialist feminists would approach social work practice (Table 2). In problem identification, socialist feminists would address the impact that the institutional process and belief systems created by patriarchy and classism had on women and would examine personality attributes that were created by these oppressive systems. Assessment would focus on the impact of class, race, sex and socioeconomic status, as well as alienation of the individual and amount of self-fulfillment reported by the individual due to the oppressive systems.

Treatment strategies for socialist feminist practice would include consciousness-raising, support and self-help groups, meeting basic needs, and coalition-building and empowerment focused around meeting needs outside of the parameters of the oppressive system (Table 2). Finally, treatment goals would emphasize raising political

consciousness about the linkage between classism, patriarchy and oppression, encourage coalition building and empowerment of individuals to allow them to make changes in the system, and allow individuals to meet their needs without expense to others.

According to Freeman (1990), within social work practice, socialist feminist social workers considered problems related to economic dimensions as more severe than other types of social work feminists considered them. Social work faculty in her study were given a list of problems and the following ten were viewed by socialist feminists as more severe: "inadequate income or support", "lack of equal job opportunities", "nonpayment of child support", "poor job market", "unemployment", "pay inequities for work of comparable value", "insurance inequalities", "low wages", "lack of access to non-traditional jobs", and "underemployment". These statements all involve economic problems, supporting Freeman's hypothesis that socialist feminist social workers would use a perspective that viewed economic problems as the most severe, thus impacting their practice with clients. Freeman's findings supported Nes and Iadicola's (1989) hypothesis that socialist feminists focus on institutional and belief systems created by patriarchy and class.

Sandell (1993) noted in her interview with three self-identified socialist feminists, that when examining problem identification and assessment of socialist feminists there was a focus on patriarchal relationships, class systems, structure, and race as predicted by Nes and Iadicola (1989; Table 2). There was also a focus on relationships, which was not predicted. In treatment strategies used by socialist feminists, Sandell found therapy, group work, self-help groups, politicization and consciousness-raising to be present, but not the mobilization of women. Treatment goals included promotion of change in

oppressive relationships and structures, politicization and empowerment as predicted, but not organizing and coalition building (Sandell, 1993).

Many of the hypotheses created for socialist feminists by Nes and Iadicola (1989) were supported in the research. Freeman's (1990) study supported Nes and Iadicola's suggestions about problem identification. Sandell (1993) found that much of what Nes and Iadicola hypothesized was accurate, although she did not find the hypothesized focus on organization and coalition building.

Much of the research previously done on this subject has been based on qualitative interviews completed with a small number of social workers (Sandell, 1993; Saulnier, 2000; Coholic, 2003). The two quantitative studies (Freeman, 1990; Szymanski, 2005) included only social work educators and supervisors. Little has been written in the past decade about ideas related to multiple perspectives of feminism and their impacts in social work practice. The purpose of this study was to explore these ideas in the current context of social work practice from the perspective of social workers. This study explored to what level social workers relate to four perspectives of feminism (liberal, radical, socialist and women of color/womanist), and how these perspectives impact their problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals in social work practice.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Based on the literature review, this study was guided by the feminist perspective which is a "work in progress" (Brickner-Jenkins, Hooyman & Gottlieb, 1991, pg 5) and a hybrid of several approaches and perspectives (Land, 1995). The feminist perspectives of each participant were determined through use of the Feminist Perspective Scale (Henley,

et. al., 1998) which asked Likert scale questions. Additionally, participants were asked questions about their social work practices in order to explore how feminist perspectives may impact practice. Finally, social workers were asked to rate their own level of feminism and give a definition of feminism. This study examined four perspectives: liberal, radical, socialist, and woman of color/womanist. Cultural feminism was not included in this research, as it was the second most unreliable subscale, other than the liberal (Henley, et al. 1998). The liberal subscale is included in this research, due to its prevalence in previous studies.

### **Feminist Frameworks**

Survey questions are based on four of the six subscales of the Feminist Perspective Scale (FPS) (Henley, et al., 1998). The items are measured through 7 point Likert Scale questions. Permission was given to use the scale for educational and research purposes in the article written about the creation of the scale (Henry, et al., 1998, p. 345).

**Liberal Feminist Framework.** The framework for the liberal feminist perspective is based on the assumption that men and women have equal potential for success in a capitalist society, and that the oppression of women is created by unbalanced opportunity structures. Liberal feminists are expected to agree with the ten statements listed in survey questions 6 and 10. These include statements such as: “Whether one chooses traditional or alternative family form should be a matter of choice”; “Homosexuality is not a moral issue but rather a question of liberty and freedom of expression”; “Women should try to influence legislation in order to gain the right to make their own decisions and choices.” (Appendix C).

**Radical Feminist Framework.** The framework for the radical feminist perspective is based on the assumption that men and women have different traits, and that women's traits should be made more universal, and men's traits less so. Radical feminists are expected to agree with the ten statements listed survey questions 7 and 11. These include statements such as: "Using "man" to mean both men and women is one of many ways sexist language destroys women's existences"; "Men use abortion laws and reproductive technology to control women's lives"; "Sex role stereotypes are only one symptom of the larger system of patriarchal power, which is the true source of women's subordination." (Appendix C).

**Socialist Feminist Framework.** The framework for socialist feminists is based on the assumption that oppression is created because of the necessity of each individual to meet his or her basic needs. Socialist feminists are expected to agree with the ten survey statements listed in questions 8 and 12. These include statements such as: "It is the capitalist system which forces women to be responsible for child care"; "The way to eliminate prostitution is to make women economically equal to men"; "Making women economically dependent on men is capitalism's subtle way of encouraging heterosexual relationships." (Appendix C).

**Women of color/womanist Feminist Framework.** The women of color/womanist feminist perspective is based on the assumption that the feminist movement is based on the white woman's feminism, and that racism and poverty are just as much a part of the cause of oppression as gender is. Women of color/womanist feminists are expected to agree with the ten statements listed in questions 9 and 13. These include statement such as: "Women of color are oppressed by White standards of

beauty”; “Women of color have less legal and social service protection from being battered than White women have”; “Discrimination in the workplace is worse for women of color than for all men and White women.” (Appendix C).

### **Applications in Social Work Practice**

Feminist social workers who have different perspectives are hypothesized by Nes and Iadicola (1989) to have different social work practice methods. Nes and Iadicola created a chart (Table 2) which described the problem identification, assessment, treatment goals and treatment strategies of the liberal, radical, and socialist perspectives.

**Liberal Applications.** Liberal feminists are expected to consider the first three statements of question 14 during problem identification. They are: “Individual deficits”, “The link between individual deficits and opportunity structure” and “Existence of social-institutional supports.” While completing assessment, they are likely to consider the first four statements of question 15 which are: “The degree of individual deficits”, “The degree and impact of blockages in opportunity structures”, “The interplay between individuals deficits and the blockages in opportunity structures” and “The availability of social-institutional support” While creating treatment goals, they are most likely to use the first three strategies in question 16: “Individual therapy”, “Group treatment to deal with personal pathologies” and “Advocacy against discrimination”. While considering treatment strategies, liberal feminists are likely to use the first 3 statements in question 17: “Correction of individual deficits”, “Open up problematic opportunity structures” and “Establish support groups to aid clients’ fulfillment and validation of choices.”

(Appendix C)

**Radical Applications.** Radical feminists are expected to consider the following three statements listed in question 14 during problem identification: “Oppressive social relations rooted in patriarchy”, “Social and institutional arrangements promoting hierarchal gender roles” and “Personality attributes that are outcomes of patriarchy.” While completing assessment, they are likely to consider the following three statements listed in question 15: “The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in relationships”, “The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in institutions” and “The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in socialization”. Regarding treatment goals they are likely to use the following three strategies listed in question 16: “Consciousness-raising for elimination of psychology of oppressed (women) and oppressor (men)”, “Support and self-help groups for women” and “Politicization and mobilization of women around women’s issues”. Regarding treatment strategies, radical feminists are likely to use the following four methods listed in question 17: “Make the personal political”, “Promote change in relationships characterized by patriarchy”, “Mobilize and politicalize women to change system and eliminate blockages from patriarchy” and “Promote sisterhood”. (Appendix C)

**Socialist Applications:** Socialist feminists are expected to consider the following two statements during problem identification which are listed in question 14: “Institutional and belief systems manifested in patriarchy and class systems” and “Personality attributes that are the outcome of systems of domination.” While completing assessment, they are likely to consider the following three statements listed in question 15: “The impact of class, race general socioeconomic status on growth”, “Alienation” and “Self-Esteem”. Regarding treatment goals they are likely to use the following three

strategies listed in question 16: “Consciousness-raising to increase interpretation of classism, sexism and other forms of oppression”, “Support, self-help and advocacy groups aimed at meeting basic needs” and “Coalition building to empower individuals and groups”. Regarding treatment strategies, socialist feminists are likely to use the following three methods listed in question 17: “Raise political consciousness, showing links between classism and patriarchy and oppression”, “Encourage coalition-building and empowerment of individuals to enable them to make changes in the systems of domination” and “Allow individuals to meet needs not at the expense of others.” (Appendix C).

**Women of color/womanist Applications:** Woman of color/womanist feminists were not included in the table created by Nes and Iadicola (1989). This study will explore how participants who align with the women of color/womanist perspective view problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals, and contribute to further our understanding of this feminist perspective in the context of social work practice. (Appendix C).

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to explore ideas of feminism in the current context of social work practice from the perspective of social workers. The first question of the research study was: Which of the feminist perspectives do social workers identify with as measured by the feminist perspective scale (Henley, et al. 1998)? Secondly, this study focused on how these perspectives impacted respondents' problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals in social work practice. The four

perspectives explored in this study were radical feminism, socialist feminism, liberal feminism and women of color/womanist feminism. Finally, social workers were invited to offer their own definition of feminism. This study used a multi-method cross-sectional research design to survey licensed social workers using Qualtrics, an online research tool.

### **Sample**

Participants were recruited, using a list obtained from the Minnesota Board of Social Work. This list included a random selection of 100 licensed social workers who have had their licenses for 5 years or less and 100 licensed social workers who have had their license for more than 5 years (Appendix A). These categories were selected in order to obtain the perspectives of both newer and older social workers to see how they compared. The researcher sent an email to each of the participants from the BOSW list with a cover letter (Appendix B) explaining the purpose and parameters of the study and a link to the web survey (Appendix C). Participants then decided whether or not to complete this survey with completion complying consent. There were 31 respondents to the survey, for a 16% response rate; 23 completed the entire survey for a 12% completion rate.

### **Protection of the Subjects**

In order to protect participants, this study proposal was approved by a research committee and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. Once approval was received from the IRB, the researcher sent an email cover letter (Appendix B) to those identified through the board of social work via email inviting participation in this survey. This cover letter explained that participation was voluntary and that by completing the survey, the participants gave their consent. The participants

were not asked any identifying questions and the web based Qualtrics survey was completed under a setting that did not allow the researcher to be able to identify the respondents e-mail addresses. The participants were given contact information for the researcher, the researcher's advisor and the IRB chair in case there were any additional questions.

### **Instrument Development**

The first part of the survey contained questions regarding demographic information. This included race, gender, employment position, agency setting, years as an LICSW and level of licensure. It was expected that additional years of experience as a social worker, measured by the amount of years she has had her license, would impact the perspective and practice methods of the social worker.

The rest of the survey focused on feminist theories and practice strategies. The first part of this survey was based on the 78-item Feminist Perspective Scale (FPS) (Henley, et al, 1998). Permission was given to use the scale for educational and research purposes in the article written about the creation of the scale (Henley, et al., 1998, p. 345). This scale measures a respondent's feminist perspective using the following subscales: liberal, radical, socialist, cultural, women of color/womanist and conservative perspectives. This study included questions from the liberal (6, 10), radical (7, 11) and socialist (8, 12) and women of color/womanist (9, 13) perspectives subscales. Each question contained five 7-point Likert scale statements, which participants were asked to rate their agreement from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). The items addressing the cultural perspective were not included due to its low reliability and lack of

support in the research. The conservative domain was also not included, as it was not considered a feminist perspective by many sources (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993).

The FPS was tested by Henley et al. for reliability using Cronach's alpha coefficient (1998). They found that the liberal subscale had the lowest reliability of the four perspectives with a coefficient of .58. The radical, socialist, and women of color/womanist subscales were higher with coefficients of .84, .78 and .75. The liberal, radical, socialist and women of color/womanist subscales had high test-retest reliability with coefficients of .73, .85, .86 and .85 over a two week period and coefficients of .72, .81, .73 and .80 over a four week period. Validity of each of the subscales was measured by comparing subscale means for respondents professing different political identifications.

The next section of the survey for this study included statements regarding social work practice related to problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals. These statements were created using Table 2, adapted from Nes and Iadicola (1989) who hypothesized how liberal, radical and socialist feminists' perspectives would impact social work practice in the above categories. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a 4-point scale from 1 (*not very likely*) to 4 (*very likely*). Based on the literature, it was expected that there would be a relationship between the feminist perspective identified and the eight problem identification statements listed in question 14, the ten assessment statement listed in question 15, the 9 treatment strategies statements listed in question 16 and the ten treatment goal statements listed in question 17.

In question 18, participants were invited to give their own definition of feminism by answering the question: How do you define feminism? This question was also used in Freeman's (1990) research. In question 19, participants were asked to rank the statement, I consider myself a feminist, on a 4 point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). This statement was used in Freeman's (1990) research. Finally, participants were asked if there was anything else they would like to share about feminism and social work practice.

### **Data Analysis**

The anonymous data from Qualtrics was exported into SPSS for analysis. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). An average score was be calculated for each feminist subscale, the higher the average score, the stronger the respondent connected with that specific feminist perspective. Frequency distributions and measures of central tendency were used to analyze demographic data. A correlation matrix was used to analyze the relationships among the four feminist perspectives and the relationships between the demographics and the feminist perspectives. Additionally, correlation matrices were run to analyze between the perspectives and the social work practice items and the social work practice scales.

Participants' answers were used to create exploratory subscales for the areas of problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals. These were created in order to test the relevance of the items hypothesized by Nes and Iadicola (1989). For example, their responses to the three items in the liberal problem ID cell (Individual deficits, link between individual deficits and opportunity structure and

existence of social-institutional support) were summated to create a liberal problem identification scale score. This process resulted in 12 practice-related scale scores grounded by the four feminist scale scores used in this study. Exploratory summated subscales were created to explore the relevance of these items.

Two qualitative questions asked social workers to define feminism, and to offer any additional information they would like to share about social work and feminism. These responses were analyzed to identify themes and comments that would further illustrate their present perspectives on feminism in social work practice. Direct quotes from participants are presented in *italics*.

### **Findings**

Analysis was done on the completed surveys. The following sections will present the demographics of those who completed the surveys, the feminist perspective and practice application findings.

#### **Demographics**

Table 3 shows the demographics of the participants, including the 23 people who completed the survey and the 8 participants who started the survey, but did not complete it.

**Table 3. Demographics**

	n=23 (completed)	n=8 (started but not completed)
Gender		
Female	19	7
Male	4	1
Years with LICSW		
<5	8	2
5-10	7	3
11-15	4	2
>15	4	1
( <i>M</i> =9.98, <i>S.D.</i> = 7.78)		
Agency Setting*		
Mental Health	13	5
Healthcare	6	2
Child/Adolescents**	3	1
Other	3	0
Education	2	3
Corrections	1	0
Position		
Direct Service Worker	15	1
Supervisor/Manager	6	7
Other	2	0

\*Participants were given the option to select more than one option

\*\*This includes child protection and residential services

One noticeable difference is that most of those who started and did not complete the survey were supervisor/managers. It is possible they did not find the questions related to “practice” relevant to their roles.

### **Feminist Perspectives**

One purpose of this study was to explore social workers' perceptions of feminism. The mean of participants' responses to the statement “I consider myself a feminist was 3.09 (*S.D.* = .90) on a scale of 1 (*completely disagree*) to 4 (*completely agree*). When asked to define feminism, common themes related to women's rights and equality were identified. Participants defined feminism as *gender based bias; promotion of equality for all women and belief in the equality of women and men in every area of the person*. One

participant defined a feminist as *an advocate and supporter of the rights and equality of women*.

Additionally, this study aimed to explore how social workers today identify with feminist perspectives. Table 4 shows the respondents' scale scores for each of the perspectives examined in this study. The range for each scale score was 10-70, with a higher scale score indicating the participants' agreement with that perspective. Table 4a shows the respondents' scales scores based on gender of the respondent.

**Table 4. Feminist Perspectives**

	Mean (S.D)
Feminist Scale Score	
Liberal Scale Score	59.83 (8.01)
Womanist Scale Score	51.48 (11.66)
Radical Scale Score	42.87 (12.86)
Socialist Scale Score	36.30 (12.45)
Ranking as Feminist	
"I consider myself a feminist"	3.09 (.90)

T-tests were run on each scale score as well as each individual's ranking regarding the statement "I consider myself a feminist" to determine whether or not there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of men and women. There was a statistically significant difference between men and women on the "ranking as feminist" rating scores ( $p = .037$ ).

**Table 5. Feminist Perspectives by Gender**

	Mean (S.D): Male	Mean(S.D): Female	T-test
Feminist Scale Score			
Liberal Scale Score	50.57 (12.58)	61.74 (5.55)	0.178
Womanist Scale Score	50.50 (21.61)	51.68 (9.39)	0.921
Radical Scale Score	37.25 (16.78)	44.05 (12.11)	0.348
Socialist Scale Score	33.50 (18.08)	36.90 (11.52)	0.631
Ranking as Feminist			
"I consider myself a feminist"	2.25 (0.96)	3.26 (0.81)	0.037

As reflected in Tables 4 and 5, participants had the highest level of agreement with the liberal feminist perspective. This was also exemplified in some of the participants' definitions of feminism. One participant described feminism as *the belief that women are equal in intelligence and talents and that they should have the same opportunities as men do*. Another stated that feminism is *...recognition that gender stereotypes impact what is expected of a person*. The participants who made these statements had a higher liberal scale score than the other scale scores.

Also represented in the participants' definitions of feminism was the radical feminist perspective. One participant defined feminism as the *empowering of women* while another defined it by saying that a *feminist believes women have the power to do what they want and don't need paternalistic men telling them what to do. As a feminist I [am] able to feel the raw power of sisterhood and know its strength*. However, these statements were not reflected in each participant's scale scores. The first participant had the highest value on the womanist scale score, and the second participant had the highest value in the liberal scale score.

Finally, the socialist perspective was exemplified when one participant stated that the feminist framework *...focuses not only in explaining power dynamics of oppression but also on ways to overcome it and link it to other forms of oppression and discrimination*. Another stated that feminism is *...about equality regardless of gender, sexual orientation, culture, religion, age, ability or economic status*. However, these statements were not reflected in each participant's scale scores. The first participant had the highest value on the liberal scale score, and the second participant had the highest value on the womanist scale score. While the womanist scale had a high level of

agreement from participants, it was not represented directly in any of the definitions given by participants.

Participants also commented on the relevance and focus of the items on the feminist scale. One social worker stated *I found many of the statements in this survey simplistic and extreme...I wondered if I would not be considered truly feminist in your eyes if I did not agree with all or most of them* while another wrote *Many of these questions were difficult to answer because of the absolute way in which they were written.*

A correlation was run between the feminist perspective scale scores and social workers' self-identification of feminism. Table 6 shows the results.

**Table 6. Feminist Perspectives and Self-Identification of Feminism Correlation**

	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score
Radical Scale Score	.385 .070			
Socialist Scale Score	.448 .032	.882 .000		
Womanist Scale Score	* *	.762 .000	.778 .000	
Self-identification of feminism <sup>b</sup>	.570 .005	.515 .012	* *	* *

a. While many researchers consider Likert scores to be ordinal variables, it is common to see Likert scales treated as interval variables in research (Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 2011)

b. For exploratory purposes this Likert self-rating is being used as an interval to measure correlations with feminist scale scores

The strongest correlations are between the socialist and radical scale scores ( $r=.882$ ,  $p<.001$ ), the socialist and womanist scale scores ( $r=.778$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and the radical and womanist scale scores ( $r=.762$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The self-identification of feminism rating also has a moderate, positive correlation with the liberal scale score ( $r=.570$ ,  $p=.005$ ) and with the radical scale score ( $r=.515$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Additionally, a correlation was run the between

feminist perspective scale scores and length of time as an LICSW. There are no correlations between length of time as an LICSW and the four feminist scale scores.

### **Practice Applications**

A second purpose of this study was to examine how feminist scale scores related to practice: problem identification, assessment, treatment goals and treatment strategies in social work practice as articulated by Nes and Iadicola (1989) (Table 2). Correlations were run between each feminist perspective scale scores and each individual social work practice item (Appendix D). These showed significant correlations between the radical scale score and most of the items in all of the radical practice methods. Correlations were shown between the socialist scale score and most of the items in SocialID, SocialStrat and SocialGoal, but no correlations between this scale score and the items in SocialAssess. There were no correlations between the liberal scale score and any of the liberal social work practice items. Finally, the womanist scale score showed correlations between most of the radical and socialist items in all social work practice areas, and none of the liberal social work practice items (Appendix D).

Correlations between the social work practice subscales created from Nes and Iadicola's (1989) study and the feminist perspective scales scores created to represent each area of social work practice are shown in Table 7. Only significant findings are presented for ease of review.

Table 7 shows that the liberal scale score was not correlated with any of the liberal practice method scales. The radical scale score showed significant correlation with all the radical practice method scales. The socialist scale score correlated with the SocialistPI ( $r=.665$ ,  $p=.001$ ), SocialistStrat ( $r=.726$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and SocialistGoals ( $r=.699$ ,

p<.001), but not with SocialistAssess. The womanist perspective was not considered in social work practice methods, but was significantly correlated with all of the radical and socialist social work practice method scales.

**Table 7. Feminist Perspectives and Social Work Practice Methods Correlations**

Practice Method Scale	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score
<b>Problem Identification(PI)</b>				
LiberalPI	*	*	*	*
RadicalPI	.460 .027	.690 .000	.599 .003	.672 .000
SocialistPI	.492 .017	.803 .000	.665 .001	.682 .000
<b>Assessment(Assess)</b>				
LiberalAssess	*	*	*	*
RadicalAssess	.438 .037	.619 .002	.590 .003	.679 .000
SocialistAssess	*	*	*	.555 .006
<b>Treatment Strategy(Strat)</b>				
LiberalStrat	*	*	*	*
RadicalStrat	*	.470 .023	.530 .009	.600 .002
SocialistStrat	*	.708 .000	.726 .000	.683 .000
<b>Treatment Goals(Goal)</b>				
LiberalGoal	*	*	*	*
RadicalGoal	*	.592 .003	.611 .002	.706 .000
SocialistGoal	*	.650 .001	.699 .000	.681 .000

## **Discussions**

The purpose of this study was to explore the connection between social work and current day feminist perspectives, as well as to examine how perspectives of feminism relate to problem identification, assessment, treatment goals and treatment strategies in social work practice. One challenge this study faced was a low response rate. Thus findings are based on limited information.

### **Current Day Feminist Perspectives**

In examining social workers' feminist perspectives measured by the subscales of the FPS, this study showed the liberal scale score demonstrated the highest mean, followed by the womanist scale score, the radical scale score and finally, the socialist scale score (Table 4). This order supports Syzmanski's (2005) findings among social work supervisors. Additionally, the higher agreement with the liberal scale score (Table 4) is congruent with findings among social work faculty (Freeman, 1990). However, in contrast to the findings of the study (Table 4), Freeman found more faculty who agreed with the socialist perspective, than with the radical perspective.

### **Feminist Perspectives in Relation to Social Work Practice**

This study used Nes and Iadicola's (1989) framework to hypothesize the types of problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals that would be used by social workers in practice based on their feminist perspectives. As reported in Table 7, the radical, socialist and womanist scale scores had the strongest correlations with social work practice techniques, while the liberal scale scores had few or no correlations. The following sections will discuss social work practice methods in problem identification, assessment, treatment goals and treatment strategies.

### **Problem Identification**

This study showed that the radical scale scores correlated with the radical problem identification methods, and socialist scale scores correlated with socialist problem identification methods (Table 7). These findings support Nes and Iadicola's (1989) hypothesis for the problem identification methods used by radical and socialist feminists as listed in Table 2. However in contrast, findings did not support the problem identification methods predicted to be used by liberal feminist social workers. Additionally, in contrast to Nes and Iadicola's predictions, during problem identification radical feminists also considered many of the same things as socialist feminist and vice versa.

This study's findings are congruent with Sandell's (1993) findings about problems identification methods considered by radical feminist social workers and socialist feminist social workers. Her study also found the hypotheses of Nes and Iadicola (1989) to be accurate when considering radical and socialist feminists (Table 2). However, while Sandell's research supported much of Nes and Iadicola's hypothesis for liberal problem identification, this study did not.

### **Assessment**

This study showed the radical scale scores correlated with radical assessment methods (Table 7) supporting Nes and Iadicola's (1989) hypothesis for the assessment methods used by radical feminists listed in Table 2. However, in contrast, it did not support the assessment methods predicted to be used by liberal and socialist feminists social. Additionally, in contrast to Nes and Iadicola's predictions, this study found that

during assessment methods used by radical feminists were also used by liberal and socialist feminists.

This study findings are congruent with Sandell's (1993) findings among the assessment tools used by radical feminists, as her study also supported Nes and Iadicola's radical assessment method hypothesis (Table 2). However, while Sandell's research supported much of Nes and Iadicola's hypothesis for the socialist assessment, this study did not.

### **Treatment Strategies**

This study showed that the radical scale scores correlated with the radical treatment strategies, and socialist scale scores correlated with socialist treatment strategies (Table 7). These findings support Nes and Iadicola's (1989) hypothesis for the treatment strategies used by radical and socialist feminists as listed in Table 2. However, in contrast, the treatment strategies predicted to be used by liberal feminists were not supported. Additionally, in contrast to Nes and Iadicola's predictions (Table 2), treatment strategies used by radical feminists were also used by socialist feminists and vice versa.

This study's findings are congruent with Sandell's (1993) findings about treatment strategies used by socialist feminist social workers. However, while Sandell's research did not support much of Nes and Iadicola's hypothesis for the radical treatment strategies, this study did (Table 2). Additionally, while Sandell's work supported Nes and Iadicola's hypotheses for liberal feminists, this study did not.

### **Treatment Goals Scale**

This study showed that the radical scale scores correlated with the radical treatment goals, and socialist scale scores correlated with socialist treatment goals (Table

7). This supports Nes and Iadicola's (1989) hypothesis for the treatment goals used by radical and socialist feminists as listed in Table 2. However, in contrast, it did not support the treatment goals predicted to be used by liberal feminists. Additionally, in contrast to Nes and Iadicola's predictions, treatment goals used by radical feminists were also used by socialist feminists and vice versa.

This study partially supported Sandell's (1993). While this study supported Nes and Iadicola's treatment goal hypotheses for radical and socialist feminists (Table 2), Sandell's study only found partial support for these hypotheses. However, while this study did not show any support for the treatment goals predicted by Nes and Iadicola to be used by liberal feminists, Sandell's work supported most of these goals.

### **Implications For Social Work Practice**

This study has several implications for social work practice. One such implication is the meaning of the exploratory practice methods subscales created during this study. The validity and reliability of this scale should be established so that the implications of this scale can be determined. If these scales are valid and reliable, then the problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals are impacted by the feminist perspective the social worker uses. Going forward, these subscales could be very valuable tools for social work practice.

The relevance and nature of the feminist perspective scales should be evaluated in today's social work practice content. While the FPS includes six subscales, four were examined in this study (liberal, radical, socialist and womanist) and two were not (cultural and conservative) (Henley, et al, 1998). However, the FPS scale and its subscales may be outdated, as feminist perspectives may have changed over time. Social

workers must continue to examine the content and tone of the statements used in these subscales to determine whether they are still relevant, and determine if there are other subscales that should be included in future studies.

### **Implications For Research**

Very few studies have been completed on the subject of feminism and social work and many of the studies that have been completed are somewhat outdated. In addition, many of the studies completed involved small sample sizes and low participation rates. Additional research should include the womanist perspective to further understand and develop this perspective and to assess how it is applicable in today's practice environment. In this study, the womanist perspective showed strong correlations with many of the practice method scale scores. It was correlated with all of the socialist and radical practice methods scales. In addition, the womanist scale score had the second highest mean among the participants. However, the womanist perspective has not been included in much of the research examining feminist and social work. More research should be completed on this perspective. Additionally, as noted above, more research should be completed on the practice methods scales created in this study, particularly related to their validity and reliability.

Finally, the next step in the research would be to determine impact that the use of different feminist perspectives have on social work with clients. For example, do clients who work with liberal feminist social workers who focus on individual deficits during the problem identification stage have better outcomes than clients working with socialist feminist social workers influenced by belief systems created by patriarchy and class

during the problem identification stage? The understanding of the influence of these perspectives have on clients should be examined in order to improve social work practice.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

There were many limitations when completing this research. One such limitation was the lack of current literature on feminism and social work. This makes the understanding of feminism in social work gained from these studies very limited. Additionally, only four feminist perspectives were examined in this study, meaning that several others were ignored. Another limitation to this study is that the practice subscales used were exploratory. Their validity and reliability have not yet been tested, so all findings must be considered exploratory.

While this study had some limitations, there were also several strengths. One strength is the exploratory scales created for this study. While they are exploratory, they do seem to show some reliability, as the scale correlations are congruent with the individual item correlations. Additionally, both the items and the scales scores showed correlations between the feminist perspective scales, demonstrating the importance of the completion of this study.

A final strength of this study is that it focuses on a subject, feminism and social work, that has not been focused on much in recent years. Additionally, this study focuses on practitioners' voices. Previous studies involving surveys have focused on supervisors and social work faculty. This study shows the relevance of this topic and can be used to create interest and dialogue in the area of feminism and social work.

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## Appendix A

October 30, 2012

State of Minnesota Board of Social Work  
2829 University Ave SE, Suite 340  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

RE: Mailing List

Dear State of Minnesota Board of Social Work:

I am requesting a mailing list that includes a random selection of email address of 200 individuals with the following criteria: 100 who have been LICSWs for at least five years and 100 who have been LICSWs for less than 5 years. This list is being requested to conduct a research project required for the Master's Social Work program through St. Catherine's University and the University of St. Thomas. Please contact me with any questions. I can be reached at 763-442-3457 or [enge7304@stthomas.edu](mailto:enge7304@stthomas.edu).

Included is a payment of \$50.00 for the requested list.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Enge

November 8, 2012

Ms. Enge-

Your requested list of LICSWs is attached. The first tab at the bottom of the worksheet is LICSWs who have had their license for 5 years or less. The second tab is LICSWs who have had their license for over 5 year. I defined 5 years as before or after 11/1 for ease and consistency. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Connie

**Connie Oberle, Office Manager**  
Minnesota Board of Social Work  
2829 University Ave SE Ste 340  
Minneapolis MN 55414-3239

General Office: 612-617-2100  
Direct: 612/617-2111  
Fax: 612/617-2103

**Appendix B**  
**Social Workers' Perspectives on Feminist Ideas and Social Work Practice**  
**INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM**

**Dear fellow social work colleagues,**

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore social workers' perspectives on ideas of feminism as they relate to current practice. This study is being conducted by Jacqueline Enge, a graduate student at St. Catherine University/University of St Thomas School of Social Work under the supervision of Dr. Carol Kuechler, a faculty member at the school. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a licensed social worker in the state of MN and part of the Minnesota Board of Social Work. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

**Background Information**

Little has been written in the past decade about ideas related to multiple perspectives on feminism and their meaning in social work practice. The purpose of this study is to explore ideas of feminism in the current context of social work practice from the perspective of licensed social workers. This study will explore to what level social workers relate to four perspectives of feminism, and how these perspectives impact their problem identification, assessment, treatment strategies and treatment goals in social work practice. Approximately 200 people are expected to participate in this research.

**Procedures**

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to click on the link below which will lead you to a web-based survey and complete this survey. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes and includes questions on a spectrum of ideas articulated by feminists across several decades. These perspectives address beliefs and areas of social work practice. There are no known risks or direct benefits for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality**

No information that can be identified with you will be collected and no one will be identified or identifiable in any written reports or publications and only group data will be presented. The Qualtrics survey is anonymous through a setting that prevents the researcher from seeing email contact info so I will not be able to identify who participates.

I will keep the anonymous results in a locked file cabinet in Lauderdale, Minnesota and only I and my advisor will have access to the records while I work on this project. I will finish analyzing the data by May 2013 and will destroy all original reports by June 1 2013.

**Voluntary nature of the study:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with St. Catherine University or the University of St. Thomas in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships. Completion and return of the survey implies consent.

**Contacts and questions:**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Jacqueline Enge, at [enge7304@stthomas.edu](mailto:enge7304@stthomas.edu). You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, my faculty advisor, Dr. Carol Kuechler at [cfkuechler@stkate.edu](mailto:cfkuechler@stkate.edu) or 651-690-6719, will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. To go to the study, please click on the following link:

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Enge

**Appendix C**

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. This survey is being used in research to explore social workers' perspectives on ideas of feminism and how these perspectives impact current practice. You will be asked about your ideas related to feminist beliefs based directly on material from the last 25 years, as well as about your current social work practice. By clicking on "I agree to participate in the survey" you are implying consent. Thank you again for your participation.

- I agree to participate in this survey
- I do not wish to participate at this time

1 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

2 What best describes your agency setting? Select all that apply.

- Education
- Healthcare
- Mental Health
- Child Protection
- Residential Services
- Senior Services
- Family Services
- Corrections
- Other

3 What type of position do you have at your agency?

- Supervisor/Manager
- Direct Service Worker
- Other

4 What is your level of social work licensure?

- LGSW
- LICSW

5 How many years have you had your social work license?

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

The following sections will ask you to agree or disagree with statements based directly on material and literature of feminist beliefs and ideas through the last 25 years.

6 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Whether one chooses a traditional or alternative family form should be a matter of choice	<input type="radio"/>						
People should define their marriage and family roles in ways that make them feel most comfortable	<input type="radio"/>						
The government is responsible for making sure that all women receive an equal chance at education and employment	<input type="radio"/>						
The availability of adequate child care is central to a woman's right to work outside the home	<input type="radio"/>						
Homosexuality is not a moral issue but rather a question of liberty and freedom of expression	<input type="radio"/>						

7 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Using "man" to mean both men and women is one of many ways sexist language destroys women's existence.	<input type="radio"/>						
Pornography exploits female sexuality and degrades all women	<input type="radio"/>						
Sex role stereotypes are only one symptom of the larger system of patriarchal power, which is the true source of women's subordination	<input type="radio"/>						
The workplace is organized around men's physical, economic, and sexual oppression of women	<input type="radio"/>						
Men's control over women forces women to be the primary caretakers of children.	<input type="radio"/>						

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

8 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Capitalism and sexism are primarily responsible for the increased divorce rate and general breakdown of families	<input type="radio"/>						
Making women economically dependent on men is capitalism's subtle way of encouraging heterosexual relationships	<input type="radio"/>						
A socialist restructuring of businesses and institutions is necessary for women and people of color to assume equal leadership with White men	<input type="radio"/>						
Romantic love supports capitalism by influencing women to place men's emotional and economic needs first.	<input type="radio"/>						
The way to eliminate prostitution is to make women economically equal to men.	<input type="radio"/>						

9 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
In education and legislation to stop rape, ethnicity and race must be treated sensitively to ensure that women of color are protected equally.	<input type="radio"/>						
Racism and sexism make double the oppression for women of color in the work environment.	<input type="radio"/>						
Women of color have less legal and social service protection from being battered than White women have.	<input type="radio"/>						
Women of color are oppressed by White standards of beauty	<input type="radio"/>						
Being put on a pedestal, which White women have protested, is a luxury that women of color have not had.	<input type="radio"/>						

10 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Social change for sexual equality will best come about by acting through federal, state and local government	<input type="radio"/>						
Legislation is the best means to ensure a woman's choice of whether or not to have an abortion	<input type="radio"/>						
Women should try to influence legislation in order to gain the right to make their own decisions	<input type="radio"/>						
Women should have the freedom to sell their sexual services	<input type="radio"/>						
Men need to be liberated from oppressive sex role stereotypes as much as women do	<input type="radio"/>						

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

11 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Men use abortion laws and reproductive technology to control women's lives	<input type="radio"/>						
Men prevent women from becoming political leaders through their control of economic and political institutions	<input type="radio"/>						
Marriage is the perfect example of men's physical, economic and sexual oppression of women	<input type="radio"/>						
Romantic love brainwashes women and forms the basis for their subordination	<input type="radio"/>						
Rape is ultimately a powerful tool that keeps women in their place, subservient to and terrorized by men	<input type="radio"/>						

12 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Capitalism hinders a poor woman's choice to obtain adequate prenatal medical care or an abortion	<input type="radio"/>						
It is the capitalist system which forces women to be responsible for child care	<input type="radio"/>						
All religion is like a drug to people and is used to pacify women and other oppressed groups	<input type="radio"/>						
Capitalism forces most women to wear feminine clothes to keep a job	<input type="radio"/>						
The personalities and behaviors of "women" and "men" in our society have developed to fit the needs of advanced capitalism	<input type="radio"/>						

13 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Antigay and racist prejudice work together to make it more difficult for gay male and lesbian people of color to maintain relationships.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In rape programs and workshops, not enough attention has been given to the special needs of women of color.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination in the workplace is worse for women of color than for all men and White women.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Much of the talk about power for women overlooks the need to empower people of all races and colors first.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The tradition of Afro-American women who are strong family leaders has strengthened the Afro-American community as a whole.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

**Some authors have identified specific social work practices based on feminist views. The following sections will ask you how likely you are to use certain techniques in your social work practice.**

14 How likely are you to consider the following during the problem identification stage?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely
Individual deficits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The link between individual deficits and opportunity structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify existence of social-institutional support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oppressive social relations rooted in patriarchy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social and institutional arrangements promoting hierarchal gender roles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personality attributes that are outcomes of patriarchy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Institutional and belief systems created by patriarchy and class systems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personality attributes that are the outcome of systems of domination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15 During assessment how likely are you to assess the following:

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely
The degree of the individual's deficits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The degree and impact of blockages in opportunity structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The interplay between individual's deficits and opportunity structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The availability of social-institutional supports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in institutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in socialization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The impact of class, race and economic status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alienation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-Esteem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16 How likely are you to use the following as part of your treatment strategies?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely
Individual therapy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group treatment to deal with personal pathologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advocacy against discrimination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consciousness-raising for elimination of psychology of oppressed (women) and oppressor (men)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support and self-help groups for women	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Politicization and mobilization of women around women's issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consciousness-raising to increase interpretation of classism, sexism and other forms of oppression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support, self-help and advocacy groups aimed at meeting basic needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coalition building to empower individuals and groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

17 How likely are you to include the following as a part of your treatment goals?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely
Correction of individual deficits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open up problematic opportunity structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish support groups to aid clients' fulfillment and validation of choices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make the personal political	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promote change in relationships characterized by patriarchy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mobilize and politicize women to change the system and eliminate blockages from patriarchy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promote sisterhood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Raise political consciousness, showing links between classism and patriarchy and oppression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage coalition-building and empowerment of individuals to enable them to make changes in the systems of domination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allow individuals to meet basic needs not at the expense of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. How do you define feminism?

19. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement:

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Completely Agree
I consider myself a feminist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Is there anything else you would like to share about feminism and social work practice?

Thank you for your participation. Findings will be presented on May 20, 2013.

### Appendix D

Both this study and Sandell's (2003) examined the items created by Nes and Iadicola (1989) to see if they were reported by research participants as part of their social work practice. The following tables compare each individual item of the practice scales for problem identification, assessment, treatment goals and treatment strategies. Each scale score item is listed, along with its mean and standard deviation. The far right column of this Table reflects how Sandell operationalized the items. Each item is correlated with each scale score. The r and p values are listed for each significant relationship. Additionally, Sandell's findings from her interviews are included in the following way as a comparison with the findings of this study:

+ = present and expected

(+)= present but not expected

- = not present and not expected to be present

(-)= not present but expected to be present

Radical Problem ID	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Oppressive social relations rooted in patriarchy ( <i>M</i> =2.57, <i>SD</i> = .99)	* (+)	.658 .001 +	.530 .009 +	.541 .008 N/A	Patriarchal Relationships
Social and institutional arrangements promoting hierarchal gender roles ( <i>M</i> =2.61, <i>SD</i> = 1.08)	.456 .029 +	.663 .001 +	.613 .002 +	.682 .000 N/A	Sex-Role Socialization
Personality attributes that are outcomes of patriarchy ( <i>M</i> =2.48, <i>SD</i> = .90)	.417 .048 N/A	.572 .004 N/A	.495 .016 N/A	.624 .001 N/A	NA

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

Radical Assessment	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in relationships ( <i>M=2.30, SD = 1.02</i> )	* (+)	.454 .030 +	.462 .027 +	.534 .009 N/A	Impact of patriarchy
The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in institutions ( <i>M=2.17, SD = .89</i> )	.491 .017 (+)	.656 .001 +	.633 .001 +	.677 .000 N/A	Impact of patriarchy
The degree to which growth is limited by patriarchy in socialization ( <i>M=2.39, SD = 1.08</i> )	.414 .049 (+)	.661 .001 +	.595 .003 +	.723 .000 N/A	Impact of patriarchy

Radical Treatment Strategies	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Consciousness-raising for elimination of psychology of oppressed (women) and oppressor (men) ( <i>M=2.57, SD = .94</i> )	*	.560 .005	.630 .001	.684 .000 N/A	Consciousness-Raising
Support and self-help groups for women ( <i>M=3.13, SD = .87</i> )	*	*	*	* N/A	Self-help groups
Politicization and mobilization of women around women's issues ( <i>M=2.3, SD = .88</i> )	* (+) -	.561 .005 (-) (-)	* (+) (-)	.648 .001 N/A N/A	-Politicization -Mobilization of Women**

\*\*Politicization and Mobilization of women were two separate items for Sandell.

Radical Treatment Goals	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Make the personal political ( <i>M=2.04, SD = .88</i> )	* N/A	.484 .019 N/A	.539 .008 N/A	.704 .000 N/A	N/A
Promote change in relationships categorized by patriarchy ( <i>M=2.52, SD = 1.08</i> )	* +	* +	* +	.423 .045 N/A	Promote change in relationships
Mobilize and politicize women to change the system and eliminate blockages from patriarchy ( <i>M=2.00, SD = 1.04</i> )	* (+)	.596 .003 (-)	.566 .005 +	.631 .001 N/A	Politicization
Promote sisterhood ( <i>M=2.61, SD = 1.08</i> )	* N/A	.581 .004 N/A	.640 .001 N/A	.711 .000 N/A	N/A

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

Socialist Problem ID	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Personality attributes that are the outcome of systems of domination ( <i>M</i> =3.09, <i>SD</i> = .79)	* N/A	.715 .000 N/A	.605 .002 N/A	.610 .002 N/A	N/A
Institutional and belief systems created by patriarchy and class systems ( <i>M</i> =2.87, <i>SD</i> = .97)	.536 .008 (+)	.773 .000 -	.630 .001 +	.654 .001 N/A	Class System

Socialist Assessment	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Self-Esteem ( <i>M</i> =3.78, <i>SD</i> = .42)	* N/A	* N/A	* N/A	* N/A	N/A
Alienation ( <i>M</i> =3.39, <i>SD</i> = .78)	* N/A	* N/A	* N/A	.417 .048 N/A	N/A
Impact of class, race and economic status ( <i>M</i> =3.74, <i>SD</i> = .69)	* (+) +	.458 .028 - +	* + +	.594 .003 N/A N/A	-Impact of class -Impact of race**
**Impact of class and impact of race were two separate items for Sandell.					

Socialist Treatment Strategies	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Coalition building to empower individuals and groups ( <i>M</i> =2.39, <i>SD</i> = 1.03)	* N/A	.671 .000 N/A	.605 .002 N/A	.659 .001 N/A	N/A
Support, self-help and advocacy groups aimed at meeting basic needs ( <i>M</i> =3.48, <i>SD</i> = .79)	* +	* (-)	* +	* N/A	Self-help groups
Consciousness-raising to increase interpretation of classism, sexism and other forms of oppression ( <i>M</i> =2.74, <i>SD</i> = .96)	* (+)	.771 .000 +	.700 .000 +	.643 .001 N/A	Consciousness-raising

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

Socialist Treatment Goals	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Allow individuals to meet their needs, but not at the expense of others ( <i>M=3.43, SD = .59</i> )	* N/A	* N/A	* N/A	* N/A	N/A
Encourage coalition building and empowerment of individuals to allow them to change systems of domination ( <i>M=2.267, SD = 1.01</i> )	* -	.608 .002 -	.655 .001 -	.691 .000 N/A	Organizing/ Coalition building
Raise political consciousness, showing links between classism and patriarchy and oppression ( <i>M=2.35, SD = 1.07</i> )	* (+)	.693 .000 +	.756 .000 +	.689 .001 N/A	Raise consciousness

Liberal Problem ID	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Individual deficits ( <i>M=3.39, SD = .78</i> )	* (-)	-.573 .004 -	-.643 .001 -	* N/A	Identify deficits in individual
Links between individual deficits and opportunity structure ( <i>M=3.13, SD = .69</i> )	* +	* (+)	* (+)	* N/A	Identify deficits in opportunity structure
Existence of social-institutional supports ( <i>M=3.70, SD = .47</i> )	* +	* +	* (+)	* N/A	Identify Social/Institutional supports

Liberal Assessment	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Degree of individual deficits ( <i>M=3.48, SD = .59</i> )	* (-)	-.593 .003 -	-.636 .001 -	* N/A	Degree of individual deficits
Degree and impact of blockages in opportunity structure ( <i>M=3.35, SD = .71</i> )	* +	* (+)	* (+)	* N/A	Blocks in opportunity structure
Interplay between individual's deficits and opportunity structures ( <i>M=3.26, SD = .75</i> )	* N/A	* N/A	* N/A	* N/A	N/A
Availability of social-institutional support ( <i>M=3.48, SD = .51</i> )	* +	* (+)	* (+)	* (+)	Social/Institutional support

## Social Workers' Feminist Perspectives: Implications for Practice

Liberal Treatment Strategies	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Individual therapy ( <i>M</i> =3.65, <i>SD</i> =.49)	* +	* +	* +	* N/A	Traditional therapies
Group therapy to deal with personal pathologies ( <i>M</i> =2.83, <i>SD</i> =.94)	* +	* +	* +	* N/A	Group treatment
Advocacy against discrimination ( <i>M</i> =2.87, <i>SD</i> =.87)	* N/A	* N/A	* N/A	.473 .023 N/A	N/A

Liberal Treatment Goals	Liberal Scale Score	Radical Scale Score	Socialist Scale Score	Womanist Scale Score	Sandell (2003)
Correction of individual deficits ( <i>M</i> =3.43, <i>SD</i> =.66)	* (-)	* -	* -	* N/A	Correct Individual Deficits
Open up problematic opportunity structures ( <i>M</i> =2.96, <i>SD</i> =.88)	* +	* (+)	* (+)	* N/A	Open up opportunity structures
Establish support groups to aid clients' fulfillment and validation of choices ( <i>M</i> =2.78, <i>SD</i> =1.13)	* +	* +	* +	* N/A	Validate client choices