The Influence of Feminism on Self-Silencing and Friendship Quality in Women’s Same-Sex Friendships

by

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF FEMINISM ON SELF-SILENCING AND FRIENDSHIP QUALITY IN WOMEN’S SAME-SEX FRIENDSHIPS

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This study examined how pro-feminist attitudes influenced self-silencing and friendship quality in women’s same-sex friendships (n = 226). In the whole sample of women, stronger pro-feminist attitudes were related to less self-silencing. In the self-identified feminist women’s sub-sample (n = 143), their friendships with other feminist women were of higher quality than their friendships with non-feminist women. However, stronger pro-feminist attitudes were related to better friendship quality for both types of friendships. Overall self-silencing and the divided self mediated the positive relationship between pro-feminist attitudes and friendship quality for these self-identified feminist women. The strength of the relationship between self-silencing and friendship quality differed for self-identified feminist women’s friendships with feminist and non-feminist women. Self-silencing was more negatively correlated with friendship quality for self-identified feminist women’s friendships with non-feminist women. These findings helped to elucidate an understanding of the influence of pro-feminist attitudes and self-silencing in different relational contexts.
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Introduction

Previous research on women’s friendships has focused on comparisons of women’s and men’s friendships in several different areas, such as stability, intimacy, satisfaction, beliefs about friendship and self-disclosure (Benenson & Christakos, 2003; Demir & Orthel, 2011; Dindia & Allen, 1992; Hall, Larson & Watts, 2011; Holmstrom, 2009; Jones, 1991; Parker & de Vries, 1993; Roy, Benenson & Lilly, 2000; Walker, 1994; Zarbatany, Conley & Pepper, 2004) and the importance of friendship to both men and women (Sias & Bartoo, 2007). There have been fewer studies that have examined the dynamics within women’s friendships. This study was conducted to elucidate how feminist attitudes, feminist identity and self-silencing influence women’s same-sex friendships. Self-silencing refers to the suppression of true thoughts, beliefs and desires, based on what is deemed inappropriate by gender norms that are transmitted through culture (Jack, 1991). Feminist identity refers to one’s beliefs about gender equality and whether or not one self-identifies as a feminist (Downing and Roush, 1985). Previous research has explored the correlations between feminist identity and self-silencing (Witte & Sherman, 2002), as well as between self-silencing and friendship quality (Theran, 2010). Extending this research, the current study examined how self-identified feminist women’s self-silencing differed when interacting with a friend of similar or different feminist identity. There is a need for further research on how self-silencing and feminist identity interact because they may both influence the quality of female friendships, which are critical to women’s physical and mental health (Van der Horst & Coffe, 2012). The following sections will outline research on feminist identity, self-silencing and friendship that is relevant to the current study.
**Feminist Identity**

Several studies examining feminist identity have found that many women can be classified as egalitarians (Yoder, Tobias & Snell, 2011). These are women that hold feminist beliefs, but do not adopt the label of a “feminist”. Williams and Wittig (1997) found that almost two-thirds of women could be classified as egalitarian. Studies have repeatedly found that only a small percentage of women self-identify as feminists (Williams & Wittig, 1997; Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000; Liss, O’Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001). Research has been conducted to investigate the reasons that women may be unwilling to identify as feminists. Lack of exposure to feminism (Zucker, 2004), little experience with or recognition of sexism (Aronson, 2003; Liss & Erchull, 2010), belief that gender inequality no longer exists (Crossley, 2010; Liss & Erchull, 2010), belief that labeling is unimportant and that identifying as a feminist will not help change gender inequality (Ramsey et al., 2011) have all been cited as explanations for why women avoid feminist labels.

Another theory that explains why women avoid feminist labeling that has received substantial attention is that this avoidance is due to the negative stereotypes associated with feminism (Burn et al., 2000; Myaskovsky & Wittig, 1997; Williams & Wittig, 1997). Common stereotypes associated with feminism are physical unattractiveness, hatred of men, homosexuality, extreme or radical behaviour and negative personal characteristics (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007; Houvouras & Carter, 2008; Crossley, 2010). Crossley (2010) found that these negative stereotypes of feminists exist across cultures. Roy, Weibust & Miller (2007) conducted an experimental study to examine the effects of stereotyping on feminist identification. They found that negative
and no stereotype conditions resulted in women being two times less likely to identify as feminists than women who had been in the positive stereotypes condition. There were no differences in the results found in the negative and no stereotype conditions. The authors speculated that this was because feminism is generally negatively stereotyped and thus, the no stereotype condition actually encompassed negative stereotypes. Nelson et al. (2008) and Leaper and Arias (2011) also found that negative stereotypes prevented women from adopting a feminist label. Related to this, Ramsey et al. (2008) found that all women, including those who self-identified as feminist, believed feminists were viewed negatively by others. These negative perceptions of feminists have the potential to affect the way women perceive and interact with others of varying feminist identity. Anastosopoulos and Desmarais (in press) found that both men and women, even those who identified as a feminist or had feminist attitudes, were less likely to become friends with a woman who identified as a feminist or acted like a feminist than one who did not. Thus, women’s identification as a feminist and endorsement of feminist attitudes may be problematic for their friendships.

**Feminist Identity and Relationships with Others**

Studies have been conducted to examine the influence feminist identity may have on relations with others and on women’s friendships. A few studies found that feminism had no influence in these areas. Yakushko (2007) examined the influence of feminist identity development on positive relations with others and found that feminist identity had no influence. Saunders and Kashubeck-West (2006) found that feminist identity had no influence on positive relations with others once psychological well-being variables were controlled for. Saldana (2009) investigated whether the personal growth that occurs
during feminist identity development allows women to be more intimate in their same-
sex friendships. For this study, mutuality was assessed as a type of intimacy, based on the
participant’s ratings of their own behaviours and their perceptions of their friend’s. The
results of this study found that feminist identity was not a unique predictor of mutuality
within women’s same sex friendships.

However, several studies have found that feminism influences women’s same-sex
friendships (Cherniss, 1972; Seiden & Bart, 1975; Rose & Roades, 1987). Studies
carried out by Cherniss (1972), Seiden and Bart, (1975) and Rose and Roades (1987)
revealed that women believed that feminism had made their friendships closer and more
valued. Feminists in the Rose and Roades’ study further described how feminism had
strengthened their friendships by enabling them to share common interests and discuss
private experiences with each other.

Although Anastosopoulos and Desmarais (in press) found that feminist women
were less likely to be friends with other feminist women than with non-feminists, Rose
and Roades (1987) and Taylor (1994) found that feminist women tended to be friends
with other feminist women. About forty-two percent of feminists in the study by Rose
and Roades stated that they would not be friends with non-feminist women. The high
degree of perceived similarity among feminist women and their friends is likely to be
associated with higher relationship quality when compared to feminists in mismatched
friendships (i.e. where one friend is feminist and the other is a non-feminist). This is
supported not only by the qualitative studies of Cherniss (1972), Seiden and Bart (1975)
and Rose and Roades (1987), but also by a body of quantitative literature. This
quantitative work has found perceived similarity in several domains to be associated with
relationship and friendship quality (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008), including perceived similarity in communication, social skills, personality, attitudes, values and role orientations (Burleson, 1994; Burleson & Samter, 1996; Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Johnson, 1989; Linden-Andersen et al., 2009; Morry, Kito, Mann & Hill, 2013; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988).

As the studies reviewed in this section demonstrate, the majority of research in this area suggests that feminist identity may be positively related to relationship quality. However, these studies have generally found this to be the case when there is a high degree of similarity between female friends (i.e. when they are both feminist). Thus, there is a need to further study the contexts in which feminist identity may or may not be positively related to friendship quality. It is possible that in friendships mismatched on feminist identity, feminist identity and the expression of pro-feminist beliefs could be problematic. The current study examined friendships between women who differ in their feminist identity and how this influences friendship quality.

Self-Silencing

In her qualitative research on depressed women, Jack (1991) noted that a re-occurring theme from these interviews was that participants engaged in a behaviour she referred to as “self-silencing”. According to Jack, self-silencing occurs when an individual suppresses their true thoughts, beliefs and desires, because of gender norms that are transmitted through culture. It is related to “loss of voice” (Gilligan, 1993), “false self” (Harter, 1997) and “inauthenticity”/"relationship inauthenticity” (Tolman, Impett & Michael, 2006). The term self-silencing and “loss of voice” have been used in very similar ways, but with different populations. Self-silencing is normally used to describe
this behaviour in adults, whereas “loss of voice” is more commonly used to describe this
behaviour in adolescents and children. The terms “false self” and
“inauthenticity”/“relationship inauthenticity” refer to differences between what one
expresses to others and what one actually thinks and feels. They encompass self-silencing
because self-silencing is a behaviour that means one is exhibiting a false self or acting
inauthentically by supressing thoughts, beliefs, or desires. Self-silencing is similar to, but
differs from self-disclosure and self-monitoring in a few fundamental ways. Self-
disclosure refers to sharing personal information with someone else and a person may or
may not be authentic when doing so (Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, Henson & Tolman, 2008). Self-silencing also occurs in a broader range of social interactions and
conversations than ones that consist of sharing personal information about oneself.
Lastly, self-disclosure is not related to an overarching framework of the views one holds
about themselves and their relationships or to the socially approved gender norms that are
thought to influence women’s behaviour in these intimate relationships (Harter, Waters,
Whitesell & Kastelic 1998). Similarly, it is also differentiated from Snyder’s (1974) self-
monitoring theory. Self-monitoring is not associated with socially approved gender
norms, but is context-dependent and involves the continuous searching of situational cues
for socially appropriate behaviour.

Jack (1991) conceptualized the Silencing the Self theory, which explains
women’s self-silencing in intimate relationships. The main premise of this theory is that
women engage in this behaviour due to gender norms that they learn through culture,
socialization and stereotypes about women. These gender norms include the idea that
women should put the needs of others above their own, judge themselves by external
standards and please others. Jack stated that while conducting these interviews it was apparent that “these current collective ideas about femininity form a constant background” (pp. 26) and that her participants “critically regard the woman’s feminine, authentic self as an object and discount its values and worth” (pp. 133).

She postulated that women experience a divided self, where one part of their identity wishes to be authentic, but another part of their identity analyzes themselves from an outside perspective that is based on gender norms and societal pressures. The latter part of their identity informs women that to conform to these expectations they must silence themselves. This part of their identity overrides their desire to be authentic because they believe that by silencing themselves and conforming to these standards, they will avoid conflict and maintain their intimate relationships.

Negative emotions arise during self-silencing because, due to the divided self, women believe this behaviour maintains relationships, but they are also aware that it reinforces inequality in relationships. Jack noted that the women she interviewed described the resentment, hopelessness, defeat, despair and resignation they felt for being unable to express their true thoughts and feelings. They were also angered by the unbalanced nature of their relationships.

The Silencing the Self theory incorporates aspects of the self-in-relation theory to explain why self-silencing makes women vulnerable to depression. The self-in-relation theory proposed that the primary way in which women make sense of their experiences is through their personal relationships (Chodorow, 1978). Jack (1991) discusses this notion and posits that self-silencing may contribute to depression due to the negative emotions
that arise from self-silencing, lack of intimacy in the relationships and the loss of self that is experienced.

Based on the interviews Jack conducted, the Silencing the Self Scale was developed to measure women’s beliefs about themselves and about their relationships (Jack, 1991). These are the four categories in the scale: “externalized self perception (judging the self by external standards), care as self-sacrifice (securing attachments by putting the needs of others before the self), silencing the self (inhibiting one’s self-expression and action to avoid conflict and possible loss of relationships) and the divided self (the experience of presenting an outer compliant self to live up to feminine role imperatives while the inner self grows angry and hostile)” (Jack & Dill, 1992, pp. 98).

**Self-Silencing, Feminist Identity and Gender Role Orientation**

Jack (1991) proposed that women self-silence because of gender norms and cultural expectations, but did not examine the link between self-silencing and related constructs with feminist identity or gender role orientation. However, other authors have begun to examine these relationships. Taylor (1994) found no differences in the extent to which lesbian/bisexual feminist, heterosexual feminist and non-feminist women rated themselves as being their real selves during their interactions with other women. In response to qualitative questions about their friendships, women from all three groups indicated that they wanted to be more authentic in their friendships. A study by Witte and Sherman (2002) examined the relationship between feminist identity development and self-silencing. The Downing and Roush (1985) model of feminist identity development was used, which examines feminist identity stages and attitudes. The stages of feminist development are passive acceptance, revelation, embeddedness-emanation, synthesis and
active commitment. The passive acceptance stage occurs when women are unaware of
gender inequality and often believe that traditional gender norms are beneficial for them.
The revelation stage is theorized as when women become aware and critical of gender
inequality. Embeddedness-emanation occurs when, due to the realization of gender
inequality, women begin to identify strongly with other women. The synthesis stage
consists of the development of a positive feminist identity. Lastly, the active commitment
stage is when women believe it is important to work for social change and become
revised version of the Feminist Identity Development scale that included the original first
four stages, but omitted the active commitment stage. When depression scores were not
controlled for, they found that the passive acceptance and revelation subscales were
associated with more overall self-silencing. The embeddedness-emanation and the
synthesis subscales were not significantly associated with overall self-silencing. Several
of the Silencing the Self subscales were also associated with feminist identity
development when depression scores were not controlled. Passive acceptance and
revelation were positively associated with externalized self-perception, silencing the self
and the divided self. Synthesis was negatively associated with silencing the self.

Witte and Sherman’s study supported the notion that a relationship exists between
feminist identity and self-silencing, but it was independent of context. It did not examine
how a woman’s self-silencing may change depending on who she was interacting with
and was examined for women’s romantic relationships. The current study explored self-
identified feminist women’s women self-silencing when interacting with either a feminist
or non-feminist female friend.
The relationship between gender role orientation, self-silencing and constructs related to self-silencing has also been explored. Studies have found that feminine gender socialization is related to lower levels of voice (Harter, Waters, Whitesell & Kastelic 1998; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002). Hart and Thompson (1995) examined the association between gender role socialization and self-silencing, but found that femininity was negatively associated with the divided self. Harter, Waters, Whitesell and Kastelic (1998) also found that the relationship between voice and gender role orientation was specific to particular contexts. Feminine girls had significantly lower levels of voice than girls of other gender role orientations in public (with teachers and classmates in school), but not privately (with parents and close friends). In contrast to this, Theran (2009) found no relationship between level of voice with peers and feminine gender role orientation. However, Theran did find that masculinity predicted level of voice with peers. Other studies have also found that masculinity or instrumentality are negatively associated with self-silencing (Hart & Thompson, 1995; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002). These findings may also be related to the negative relationship between pro-feminist attitudes and self-silencing, as some research has indicated that feminist women or women in the later stages of feminist identity development have androgynous role orientations (Rickard, 1989).

The Importance of Authenticity and Friendships

Previous research has found that the friendships an individual has contribute to their physical and mental health (Van der Horst & Coffe, 2012). These contributions are due to associated increases in subjective well-being, increases in social trust, reductions of stress, and provisions of social support. The associations with better physical and
psychological health include a longer life, increased optimism and increased resilience (Taylor et al., 2000). It has also been suggested that friendship is associated with increased physical and mental health by providing individuals with the knowledge and capacity to adopt healthy behaviours and attitudes (Hammer, 1983; Seeman & Sayles, 1985). In terms of social support, friendships provide both “general social support”, which refers to help with daily hassles and “targeted social support”, which refers to difficult events in one’s life (Sias & Bartoo, 2007). Several studies have found that friendships are critical in coping with traumatic or stressful life events (Lowenthal & Haven, 1968; Pennebaker & O’Heeron, 1984). These studies have found that friends are often the ones that are first contacted in these instances and are the most frequently contacted compared to other individuals.

Authentic relationships have been cited as particularly important for physical and psychological well-being. Relational culture theory posits that “all psychological growth occurs in relationships” (Jordan, 2013, pp. 73). Jordan describes the inauthenticity that results from silencing the self as incompatible with having truly positive, growth enabling relationships. Jack (1991) hypothesized that self-silencing in relationships and the association of this with reduced relationship quality predisposes women to depression. Based on the associations between authentic relationships and psychological well-being, there is a need for continued research on self-silencing in relationships.

**Self-Silencing and Relationship Quality**

Brown and Gilligan (1993) conducted a five-year, qualitative study of girls’ development. A re-occurring theme that they noted from their interviews was the self-silencing that these girls engaged in, which Brown and Gilligan referred to as “loss of
voice”. Based on these interviews, they proposed that the two choices girls faced were to self-silence and maintain their relationships by preventing conflicts from arising or to be authentic and possibly lose their relationships by voicing conflicts.

Jack (1991) noted that women self-silenced in the hope of maintaining relationships by preventing conflicts from arising, as Brown and Gilligan had also found. However, Jack noted that a re-occurring theme in the interviews she conducted was the negative effects this self-silencing had not only on the women, but also on their relationships. She proposed that instead of relationship maintenance or the reduction of conflict, self-silencing actually led to decreased intimacy in relationships and disengagement with these relationships.

Since then, research has examined how self-silencing may affect aspects of relationships besides intimacy and engagement. Studies in this area have begun to examine the association between self-silencing and relationship quality. The results of these studies have been aligned with Jack’s conclusions, finding self-silencing to be associated with negative outcomes in romantic relationships (Thompson, 1995; Remen, 1999; Harper & Welsh, 2007). Harper and Welsh (2007) examined the relationships between self-silencing, communication quality, depressive symptomatology and relationship satisfaction among adolescent heterosexual couples. It was found that there was significantly less communication in general and less collaborative problem-solving during conflicts among men and women categorized as high self-silencers than among men and women who self-silenced less. Couples also participated in a video interaction task. Each member was asked to review the task after it had been recorded and rate their behaviour and their partner’s behaviour. It was found that partners of high self-silencers
reported significantly more negative emotions during the interaction tasks, such as feelings of discomfort and frustration, than partners of individuals with lower levels of self-silencing. In this study, self-silencing among females was significantly associated with perceptions of decreased relationship quality, although this was not the case for male participants. However, Thompson (1995) and Remen (1999) found that women’s self-silencing was negatively associated with not only their ratings of relationship satisfaction, but their male partner’s ratings of relationship satisfaction as well.

Fewer studies have examined self-silencing within the context of friendship. However, theoretical models of friendship expectations have included a category known as “symmetrical reciprocity”, which is comprised of “loyalty, authenticity, trustworthiness and support” (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Self-silencing is relevant to this category and these models of friendship expectations because of its relationship to authenticity. Empirical results have demonstrated that symmetrical reciprocity, encompassing authenticity, is an expectation for same-sex friendships and this expectation is higher among females than males (Hall, 2012). Based on these findings it is expected that the violation of these expectations of authenticity would be associated with lower friendship quality in women’s friendships. A recent study provided support for this prediction. Thera (2010) used a sample of eighth grade girls to examine the association between relationship authenticity and perceptions of friendship quality. Participants were asked to base their ratings of friendship quality on their relationship with their closest friend (sex of the friend was not specified). As predicted, the results found that inauthenticity was related to decreased friendship quality.
The purpose of the current study was to assess the association between pro-feminist attitudes, self-silencing and relationship quality in women’s friendships that were matched or mismatched, based on their feminist identities. Although self-silencing may be problematic for some relationships, it is likely that there are relationships in which it may be beneficial by preventing conflicts, as believed by the girls in the study by Brown and Gilligan (1993) and women in the study by Jack (1991). This study examined cases where self-silencing may lead to higher relationship quality and cases where it may lead to lower relationship quality.

**Rationale and Hypotheses**

Some previous research has found that feminist identity development is associated with women’s levels of self-silencing (Witte & Sherman, 2002). This study attempted to replicate this result. The first hypothesis was as follows:

Hypothesis 1 – Pro-feminist attitudes will be negatively correlated with self-silencing.

The following hypotheses (2-5) were examined using only the participants who self-identified as feminists.

Based on literature that indicates that perceived similarity of values and beliefs between friends is positively associated with friendship quality, the second and third hypothesis were:

Hypothesis 2 – Matched friendships (i.e. one in which the participant self-identifies as a feminist and believes their friend identifies as a feminist) will have higher friendship quality than mismatched friendships (i.e. one in which the participant self-identifies as a feminist, but believes her friend does not identify as a feminist).
Hypothesis 3- In self-identified feminist women’s matched friendships endorsement of pro-feminist attitudes will be positively correlated with friendship quality. In self-identified feminist women’s mismatched friendships endorsement of pro-feminist attitudes will be negatively correlated with friendship quality.

Theran (2010) stated that “there is a need for continued research on authenticity in relationships, including a special emphasis on context” (p. 518). Some previous research has found that feminist women or women who do not endorse traditional gender roles are less likely to self-silence than those that do. However, these studies have not examined how self-silencing may change, depending on who these women are interacting with. This study examined the self-silencing of self-identified feminist women when interacting with a friend who they believe does or does not identify as feminist and how this is associated with friendship quality. Although recent research in this area has found that self-silencing is associated with decreased friendship quality, girls in the study by Brown and Gilligan (1993) and women in the study by Jack (1991) believed that self-silencing would reduce conflict and maintain relationships. For this study, it was predicted that self-silencing would enhance friendship quality for women with feminist beliefs when interacting with a non-feminist friend. The fourth and fifth hypotheses for this study were:

Hypothesis 4 – For self-identified feminist women, self-silencing will mediate the relationship between pro-feminist attitudes and friendship quality.

Hypothesis 5 – The mediations between pro-feminist attitudes and friendship quality by self-silencing will be moderated by the type of friendship. Specifically, self-silencing and
friendship quality will be negatively correlated in self-identified feminist women’s matched friendships and positively correlated in mismatched friendships.

In order to examine if the results of the Witte and Sherman (2002) study would be replicated, all feminist identity subscales, self-silencing subscales and overall self-silencing were used to examine Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2-5 were examined using only the passive acceptance, active commitment, silencing the self and the divided self subscales, in addition to overall self-silencing and friendship quality. The passive acceptance and active commitment subscales were used to assess pro-feminist attitudes (which were indicated by low scores on the passive acceptance subscale and high scores on active commitment). Only these two subscales were examined because they are considered to be the subscales that measure developed feminist attitudes and beliefs, whereas the other subscales are considered to measure transitional stages in identity development (Downing and Roush, 1985).

The silencing the self and divided self subscales were examined because they were the subscales that were most relevant to the conceptualization of self-silencing used in this study. The externalized self-perception and care as self-sacrifice subscales assess gender and cultural norms that cause self-silencing. The silencing the self and divided self subscales assess self-silencing as a behaviour and the levels of it that are occurring within relationships.
Methodology

Participants

In total, 226 female students from the University of Guelph participated in this study. The majority of participants (80%) selected White/European to describe their ethnicity. Ten percent selected Asian, 5% selected other, 3% selected Aboriginal, 1% selected Latin American, 1% selected Arab and 0.5% selected African. Forty-five percent of participants responded that they were not affiliated with any religious group, 28% selected Catholic, 13% selected other, 8% selected Protestant, 2% selected Jewish, 1% selected Muslim, 1% selected Hindu and 1% selected Buddhist. The age range was 17-43 years old, with a mean age of 19. The majority (56%) were first year university students.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from the University of Guelph psychology department participant pool and undergraduate classes. First, potential participants completed a pre-screening survey to determine if they were eligible to complete the study. The first question of the pre-screening survey asked them if they did or did not identify as a feminist (with a yes or no response option). The second question asked them if they had a female friend who they thought identified as a feminist, if they had a female friend who they thought did not identify as a feminist or if they did not know if any of their female friends identified as a feminist or not. For this item they were asked to check all of the response options that applied to them. Women were eligible to participate if their responses to the first pre-screening item indicated that they did or did not identify as a feminist and their responses to the second pre-screening item indicated that they had a female friend who they thought did or did not identify as a feminist. Women were only
considered ineligible if their response to the second pre-screening question was that they did not know if any of their female friends were feminists or not.

If they were eligible to participate, women were told which of the friends they had listed in the pre-screening (either the feminist or the non-feminist one, if they had listed both) they should rate for the study and emailed a link to the study on Lime Survey. At the beginning of the Lime Survey questionnaire, they were asked to read and agree to the conditions outlined in a consent form. Participants completed the Feminist Identity Composite, rating their own feminist attitudes and behaviours. Then they completed the Silencing the Self Scale and the Friendship Qualities Scale, based on their relationship with the friend they were asked to rate. Lastly, they completed a demographics questionnaire. Students from the participant pool who completed the study were compensated with class credit and those from other undergraduate courses were entered into a raffle for a prize.

**Measures**

**Pre-Screening.** The pre-screening survey consisted of two items. The first item was used to determine the feminist identity of the potential participant. This was assessed through one item, which asked “Do you identify as a feminist?”, with a yes or no response option. The second item assessed the feminist identity of the potential participant’s friend. This was assessed by the question “Do you have a female friend who you believe identifies as a feminist or who does not identify as a feminist?” and to select any of the following response options that applied: 1) I have a female friend who I believe identifies as a feminist, 2) I have a female friend who I believe does not identify as a feminist and 3) I don’t know if any of my female friends identify as a feminist or not.
**Feminist Identity Composite.** This is a 33-item survey designed to assess feminist attitudes and beliefs (Fischer, Tokar, Mergl, Good, Hill & Blum, 2000). These items were divided into passive acceptance, revelation, embeddedness-emanation, synthesis and active commitment subscales. They were scored on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The passive acceptance subscale consisted of 7 items, such as “I like being a traditional female”. The revelation subscale consisted of 8 items, such as “I never realized until recently that I have experienced oppression and discrimination as a woman in this society”. The embeddedness-emanation subscale consisted of 4 items, such as “I am very interested in women's studies”. The synthesis subscale consisted of 5 items, such as “I enjoy the pride and self-assurance that comes from being a strong female”. Lastly, the active commitment subscale consisted of 9 items, such as “I want to work to improve women's status”.

Fischer et al. (2000) found Cronbach’s alphas of 0.75 for passive acceptance, 0.80 for revelation, 0.84 for embeddedness-emanation, 0.68 for synthesis and 0.77 for active commitment. The values for Cronbach’s alpha for this sample were 0.68 for passive acceptance, 0.78 for revelation, 0.84 for embeddedness-emanation, 0.72 for synthesis and 0.80 for active commitment.

**Self-Silencing.** Self-silencing was assessed using Jack’s Silencing the Self Scale (1991). The original items were intended to assess self-silencing in romantic relationships and were adapted for this study to measure self-silencing in friendship (for example, modifying the item “I think it's better to keep my feelings to myself when they do conflict with my partner's” to “I think it's better to keep my feelings to myself when they do conflict with my friend’s”). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1
(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale consisted of four subscales. The externalized self-perception subscale consisted of 6 items, such as “I tend to judge myself by how I think other people see me”. The care as self-sacrifice subscale consisted of 9 items. An example of an item from this subscale is “Caring means putting the other person’s needs in front of my own”. The silencing the self subscale consisted of 9 items, such as “I don’t speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know they will cause a disagreement”. The last subscale, the divided self, consisted of 7 items, such as “I feel I have to act in a certain way to please my friend”.

Cronbach’s alphas found during the scale development when Silencing the Self was tested on a sample of undergraduate women were 0.75 for externalized self-perception, 0.65 for care as self-sacrifice, 0.78 for silencing the self, 0.74 for the divided self and 0.86 overall. Cronbach’s alphas for the sample in this study were 0.73 for externalized self-perception, 0.66 for care as self-sacrifice, 0.81 for silencing the self, 0.79 for the divided self and 0.88 for overall self-silencing.

Friendship Qualities Scale. This scale is designed to assess friendship quality, with subscales that measure closeness, security, help, companionship, and conflict (Bukowski, Hoza & Boivin, 1994). The questionnaire consisted of 23 items, scored on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The closeness subscale consisted of five items, such as “When I do well on something my friend is happy for me”. The security subscale consisted of five items, an example of which is “If there is something bothering me I can tell my friend about it even if I can’t tell other people”. The help subscale consisted of five items, such as “My friend would help me if I needed it”. The companionship subscale consisted of four items, such as “My friend thinks of fun
things for us to do together”. The conflict subscale consisted of four items, such as “My friend and I disagree about many things”.

This scale was developed for use in adolescent populations, but has been used in university and young adult populations. Saferstein, Neimeyer and Hagans (2005) found that reliability estimates were similar when used among these age groups. This was also found in the current study, as the reliability estimates from this sample were close to those that were found during the development of the scale. Reliability estimates calculated during the development of the scale were 0.73 for companionship, 0.76 for conflict, 0.80 for help, 0.74 for security and 0.86 for closeness. An estimate of the reliability of the overall scale was not provided. Cronbach’s alphas for these subscales in the current study were 0.69 for companionship, 0.73 for conflict, 0.87 for help, 0.79 for security and 0.86 for closeness. The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale overall was 0.89.

**Demographics.** This questionnaire asked participants about their age, race/ethnicity, educational level and religious affiliation.

**Analyses**

The average scores of participants on the Feminist Identity Composite (FIC) subscales were as follows: passive acceptance ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.64$), revelation ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.64$), embeddedness-emanation ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 3.44$), synthesis ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.53$) and active commitment ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.52$). The majority of participants (63%) self-identified as feminists. Among these self-identified feminist participants, 64% rated their matched friendships and 36% rated their mismatched friendships.

Little MCAR’s test was used to analyze the pattern of data missing from this dataset. This test indicated that less than 5% of the data was missing from any of the
variables and that the data that was missing was completely at random. Pairwise deletions were used for missing data. Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted to test if the data met assumptions of normality. These tests were significant for the majority of the variables in the study (passive acceptance, embeddedness-emanation, synthesis, active commitment, self-silencing, overall self-silencing and overall friendship quality), indicating that assumptions of normality had been violated. Due to the non-normality of the data, a conservative statistical approach was taken and non-parametric tests were used for the analyses.

**Feminist Attitudes and Self-Silencing**

The first hypothesis, that pro-feminist attitudes would be negatively associated with self-silencing, was examined using Spearman correlations for the subscales of the FIC and the subscales and total scores of the Silencing the Self scale (see Table 1). Passive acceptance was positively correlated with overall self-silencing and all the self-silencing subscales, except for externalized perception. Revelation was positively associated with overall self-silencing and all the self-silencing subscales. The third FIC subscale, embeddedness-emanation, was negatively correlated with two self-silencing subscales (care as self-sacrifice and silencing the self). Both the synthesis and active commitment subscales were negatively associated with overall self-silencing and two subscales (the divided self and silencing the self).

**Friendship Quality in Matched and Mismatched Friendships**

Self-identified feminist women’s friendships were categorized as matched or mismatched based on their response to the item that asked if their friend identified as a feminist or not. If they responded that their friend identified as a feminist, they were
classified as a matched pair. If they responded that their friend did not identify as a
feminist, they were categorized as a mismatched pair.

The Mann-Whitney Test for independent samples revealed that there was a
significant difference between the friendship quality of matched and mismatched
friendships ($U = 1739$, $z = -2.56$, $p = 0.01$), with matched friendships having higher
friendship quality (Mean rank = 78.60) than mismatched friendships (Mean rank =
60.09).

**Feminist Attitudes and Friendship Quality in Matched and Mismatched Friendships**

In matched friendships, passive acceptance was negatively correlated with overall
friendship quality ($r_s = -0.18$, $p = 0.04$). Active commitment was positively associated
with overall friendship quality ($r_s = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$).

In mismatched friendships, passive acceptance was not related to friendship
quality ($r_s = -0.15$, $ns$). Active commitment was positively correlated with friendship
quality ($r_s = 0.35$, $p = 0.005$).

**Mediations**

Bivariate correlations (see Table 2) provided a preliminary account of which self-
silencing measures could mediate the relationships between passive acceptance, active
commitment and friendship quality for self-identified feminist women’s friendships. The
divided self and overall self-silencing were examined as mediators of the relationship
between passive acceptance and friendship quality. The silencing the self subscale was
also tested as a mediator of the relationship between active commitment and friendship
quality. Mediations were assessed using a macro developed by Preacher and Hayes
(2004, 2008), which applies a bootstrapping procedure. Bootstrapping is a re-sampling
technique that is recommended for mediations where the variables are not normally distributed. A bootstrap of 5000 re-samples was used for all mediation tests.

The first model examined was the relationship between passive acceptance and friendship quality, mediated by the divided self. An estimate of the indirect effect of passive acceptance on friendship quality was –0.06, with a bias-corrected, 95% confidence interval of –0.13 to –0.01. Since this interval did not contain zero, the indirect effect of passive acceptance on friendship quality was significant, which suggested that the divided self mediated this relationship.

The next model examined was the relationship between passive acceptance and friendship quality, mediated by overall self-silencing. An estimate of the indirect effect of passive acceptance on friendship quality was –0.04, with a bias-corrected, 95% confidence interval of –0.10 to –0.01. This interval did not contain zero, which suggested that mediation was occurring.

Lastly, the silencing the self subscale was examined as a mediator of the association between active commitment and friendship quality. An estimate of the indirect effect of active commitment on friendship quality was 0.02, with a bias-corrected, 95% confidence interval of –0.01 to 0.08. This interval contained zero, which indicated that the indirect effect of active commitment on friendship quality was not significant. This suggested that the silencing the self did not mediate this relationship.

**Moderated Mediation**

Moderated mediation analyses were used to examine if the relationship between the mediator and the outcome variable differed based on the type of friendship that was being rated. As with the mediation analyses, these were assessed using a macro
developed by Preacher, Rucker and Hayes (2007) that utilized a bootstrapping technique. A bootstrap of 5000 re-samples was used for each moderated mediation analysis. Continuous variables used to create the product terms that examined the moderations were centered prior to the analyses.

The first model that was examined was the mediation of passive acceptance and friendship quality by the divided self, moderated by the type of friendship. In the first step of this analysis, the divided self was regressed on passive acceptance ($\beta = 1.26, p = 0.02$). In the next step, a multiple regression was run where friendship quality was predicted from the divided self ($\beta = -0.04, p < 0.001$), type of friendship ($\beta = -0.18, p = 0.01$), passive acceptance ($\beta = -0.05, ns$) and the interaction between the divided self and type of friendship ($\beta = -0.03, ns$). The non-significant interaction indicated that type of friendship did not moderate the relationship between the divided self and friendship quality.

The second moderated mediation that was examined was the mediation of passive acceptance and friendship quality by overall self-silencing, with the association of overall self-silencing and friendship quality differing based on the type of friendship. In the first step of this analysis, overall self-silencing was regressed on passive acceptance ($\beta = 5.10, p = 0.02$). A multiple regression was run where friendship quality was predicted from overall self-silencing ($\beta = -0.01, p = 0.008$), passive acceptance ($\beta = -0.06, ns$), type of friendship ($\beta = -0.25, p = 0.001$) and the interaction between overall self-silencing and type of friendship ($\beta = -0.01, p = 0.03$). The significant interaction indicated that type of friendship moderated the relationship between overall self-silencing and friendship quality. To investigate this further, analyses were conducted that examined the indirect
conditional effects of overall self-silencing for matched and mismatched friendships. It was found that the conditional indirect effects of overall self-silencing were non-significant for matched friendships, demonstrated by the confidence interval containing zero ($\beta = -0.02$, CI: -0.07 to 0.01). However, the conditional indirect effects were negative for mismatched friendships, ($\beta = -0.08$, CI: -0.17 to –0.02).

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine how pro-feminist attitudes influenced women’s self-silencing and how these factors influenced friendship quality for self-identified feminist women’s same-sex friendships. The results indicated that in the whole sample of women, pro-feminist attitudes were negatively associated with women’s self-silencing. Within the sub-sample of self-identified feminist women, it was found that although matched friendships had higher friendship quality than mismatched friendships, pro-feminist attitudes measured by the active commitment subscale were associated with higher friendship quality for both types of friendships. In this sub-sample of self-identified feminist women’s same-sex friendships, overall self-silencing and the divided self mediated the relationship between passive acceptance and friendship quality. When examined by friendship type, it was found that overall self-silencing had a more negative association with friendship quality in mismatched friendships than in matched friendships. In matched friendships overall self-silencing was not associated with friendship quality. The strength of the relationship between the divided self and friendship quality was not moderated by friendship type.
**Feminist Attitudes and Self-Silencing**

The first hypothesis of this study predicted that pro-feminist attitudes would be negatively associated with self-silencing. This was supported by the results. This prediction was based on the theory of self-silencing, which posits that by rejecting the pressure to subscribe to conventional gender norms, women are able to act more authentically. This prediction was also based on the empirical results from a previous study that examined the relationship between feminist identity development and self-silencing (Witte & Sherman, 2002). Almost all of the associations found in the study by Witte and Sherman were also found in the present study. Both the current study and the study by Witte and Sherman found positive associations between passive acceptance and silencing the self, the divided self and overall self-silencing. Witte and Sherman also found a correlation between passive acceptance and externalized self-perception, which was not found in the current study. Positive correlations between revelation and overall self-silencing and all the self-silencing subscales were found in both studies, except for care as self-sacrifice, which was not found in the study by Witte and Sherman. The relationship between synthesis and the silencing the self subscale was also found in each study.

Some other correlations between pro-feminist attitudes and self-silencing were not found in the study by Witte and Sherman, but were found in the current study. This included a positive correlation between passive acceptance and care as self-sacrifice, as well as revelation and care as self-sacrifice. It also included negative associations between embeddedness-emanation, care as self-sacrifice and silencing the self. Lastly, correlations between synthesis, the divided self and overall self-silencing were found in
this study, but not in the previous one. Overall, the results of the current study more strongly supported the hypothesis that pro-feminist attitudes would be negatively correlated with self-silencing than in the previous study by Witte and Sherman.

In addition to these differences, the Feminist Identity Scale does not contain the active commitment subscale. Correlations between active commitment and self-silencing were not examined previously. When examined in this study, negative associations were found between active commitment and silencing the self, the divided self and overall self-silencing levels.

A greater number of correlations were found between pro-feminist attitudes and two of the Silencing the Self subscales (self-silencing and the divided self) than the other subscales. This supports the idea that these two subscales were most relevant to this study and that it was appropriate that they were the subscales used for the rest of the analyses. These two subscales contained items that measure self-silencing behaviours and the negative emotions that result from self-silencing. The other two subscales measure how much a participant endorses cultural and traditional gender norms that are presumed to cause self-silencing. It is possible for there to be fewer or weaker correlations between pro-feminist attitudes and the subscales that measure causes of self-silencing, without affecting the correlations between pro-feminist attitudes and the subscales that measure actual self-silencing. This could suggest that there could be other factors that explain how pro-feminist attitudes are related to self-silencing that are not part of the Silencing the Self scale and were not addressed in this study.

As outlined by Witte and Sherman, the correlations between feminist identity and self-silencing are consistent with the theory of these constructs. The passive acceptance
subscale is characterized by women accepting and conforming to gendered stereotypes. In order to do this, many women have to silence their true thoughts and beliefs. This explains why greater endorsement of passive acceptance items was associated with greater self-silencing. The correlations between the other subscales of this measure and the self-silencing scale are consistent with the notion that as women reject these gender norms and develop more pro-feminist attitudes, they self-silence less.

It is possible that some of these correlations may have been found in this study and not the previous one because of the different measures used. The FIC was used in this study, whereas the Feminist Identity Scale (FIS) was used in the study by Witte and Sherman. The FIC has been found to have greater internal consistency than the FIS (Moradi & Subich, 2002). They are conceptually similar, in that they both attempt to measure feminist attitudes based on Downing and Roush’s five-stage model of feminist identity development. However, the items used in some subscales were different, which could have affected the differences in correlations observed between the two studies. Since the FIS does not have an active commitment scale, active commitment items from the Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) are part of the synthesis scale. This may account for the differences in correlations found in the synthesis scale between the two studies.

It may also be possible that the differences in these correlations may have been due to differences in the samples used. The sample in the study by Witte and Sherman was from a Catholic university and the participants had higher mean ratings on the passive acceptance subscale and lower mean ratings on the other feminist attitude subscales than the participants in the current study. This indicates that, on average, the
participants in the current study were more feminist than the ones in the study by Witte and Sherman. The larger number of feminist women in this sample may have inflated the correlations that were observed in the predicted direction and thus, pro-feminist attitudes were more negatively associated with self-silencing in the current study. The results from this study found that feminist women are less likely to self-silence than non-feminist women, even across different relational contexts. However, it may be possible that non-feminists do not consistently self-silence across contexts, but that not enough were included in the sample to detect this. If this was the case and a larger number of non-feminists had been included in the sample, negative correlations between pro-feminist attitudes and self-silencing may have been weaker or may not have been in the predicted direction.

The original version of the Jack’s (1991) Silencing the Self Scale was used in Witte and Sherman’s study. The items pertained to self-silencing with the participant’s partner or more generally “within intimate relationships”, whereas in the current study, these items were worded to measure self-silencing in women’s same-sex friendships. The differences between the correlations found in each study could mean that the relationship between pro-feminist attitudes and self-silencing differ across relationship types. Based on the higher number of correlations found between pro-feminist attitudes and self-silencing in the current study, this would seem to suggest that the associated between pro-feminist attitudes and self-silencing is stronger within friendships than in romantic relationships.

The low internal consistency of the passive acceptance (0.68) and care as self-sacrifice should also be noted (0.66). These subscales may not be accurately measuring
the constructs that they were designed to measure. Witte and Sherman (2002) also had a low Cronbach’s alpha for their passive acceptance scale and care as self-sacrifice subscales. In reference to the low passive acceptance internal consistency score they stated, “Low reliability coefficients tend to limit the power in finding an effect, which was not the case for the present study. Hence, the effect may have been more robust than what was found in the present study” (pp. 1082). However, it is also possible that the correlations that were found were due to error and not because of an existing relationship between these subscales and the other variables. Based on this, the findings and interpretations of relationships between these two subscales and other variables in this study may be questionable.

**Feminist Attitudes and Friendship Quality**

The second hypothesis, that friendship quality would be greater in self-identified feminist women’s matched friendships when compared to mismatched friendships, was supported. The results were consistent with previous literature on the relationship between perceived similarity and friendship quality, which has indicated that perceiving friends as similar to oneself is associated with higher friendship quality (Montoya, Horton & Kirchner, 2008).

The third hypothesis, that pro-feminist attitudes would be associated with greater friendship quality in matched friendships, but not in mismatched friendships, was partially supported. This hypothesis was supported by the results in matched friendships, where there was a small, negative correlation between passive acceptance and friendship quality and active commitment was related to higher friendship quality. The results for mismatched friendships did not support this hypothesis. In these relationships, passive
acceptance was unrelated to friendship quality and active commitment was related to higher friendship quality. Although the findings from the second hypothesis supported the perceived similarity and friendship quality literature, the findings from the analyses conducted to test the third hypothesis are inconsistent with this body of literature (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008).

It may be possible that self-identified feminist women’s matched friendships have higher friendship quality than mismatched friendships because feminism benefits both types of friendships, but is slightly more beneficial for matched friendships. This interpretation would be consistent with the findings from this study that pro-feminist attitudes in the active commitment subscale were correlated with higher friendship quality for both types of friendships, but that there was also a small correlation indicating that pro-feminist attitudes in the passive acceptance subscale were related to higher friendship quality for matched friendships. This may also mean that the benefits of feminism on different types of friendship vary depending on the type of pro-feminist beliefs, as the passive acceptance and active commitment subscales measure different pro-feminist attitudes. Low scores on the passive acceptance scale indicate rejection of traditional gender norms, whereas high scores on the active commitment scale indicate belief in equal opportunities for both genders and commitment to work for social change. It appears that rejecting traditional gender norms is more critical to friendship quality in self-identified feminist women’s matched friendships than in mismatched friendships. There was some variability in the passive acceptance scores of self-identified feminist women (the range for this subscale was 1-3.83; SD = 0.58). This indicates that although these women self-identified as feminists, some did endorse traditional gender norms. The
endorsement of these values might make these women feel that they are not as feminist as
their feminist friend. This may lead them to self-silence about these traditional beliefs or
lead to conflict if they discuss these traditional beliefs with their more feminist friend.

The finding from the current study suggests that pro-feminist attitudes are
beneficial to both matched and mismatched friendships. Although inconsistent with the
body of literature on perceived similarity and friendship quality, this is somewhat
consistent with results from research conducted by Rudman and Phelan (2007) that found
feminism was beneficial to several aspects of romantic relationships. Male and female
participants rated their perceptions of their partner’s feminism and the association
between this and several relationship health variables were investigated. It was found that
women who had a partner that they perceived to be a feminist had better relationship
quality, stability and equality than those with non-feminist partners, regardless of the
participants’ levels of feminism. It should be noted that although the current study found
that pro-feminist attitudes were associated with higher friendship quality, this was only
examined from the self-identified feminist women’s perspectives and attitudes. Future
research could examine how participants’ perceptions of their friend’s feminist attitudes
influence friendship quality to determine if these associations are consistent with those
found by Rudman and Phelan for romantic relationships. Future research could also
examine the influence of feminist attitudes on friendship quality from the perspectives of
both women in the friendship. If future research in this area does find that feminism is
beneficial for women’s friendships from the perspectives of feminist women’s friends or
from the perspectives of both women in mismatched friendships, this information may
help to promote the positive aspects of feminism and combat negative perceptions of feminists.

Some studies have found that pro-feminist attitudes are associated with increased self-esteem and higher psychological well-being (Hurt et al., 2007; McNamara & Rickard, 1989; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Usher & Fels, 1985, Yakushko, 2007). Higher self-esteem has been found to be associated with aspects of children’s friendships that are related to higher friendship quality, such as intimacy, trust, loyalty, affection and emotional support (Berndt & Perry, 1986; Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Parker & Asher, 1993). It is possible that these associations exist in young adult friendships as well. Thus, pro-feminist attitudes may be indirectly beneficial to friendships because greater self-esteem or well-being mediates this association. This would be consistent with the finding by Saunders and Kashubeck-West (2006) that active commitment was positively correlated with positive relations with others, but was not a significant predictor of positive relations with others when examined in a multiple regression with psychological well-being.

**Mediations**

The fourth hypothesis was that among self-identified feminist women, self-silencing would mediate the relationships between pro-feminist attitudes (passive acceptance or active commitment) and friendship quality. This hypothesis was partially supported by the results. Overall self-silencing and one subscale, the divided self, mediated the relationship between passive acceptance and friendship quality. The relationship between active commitment and friendship quality was not mediated by the self-silencing subscale. As discussed in the previous section, future research could
examine other possible mediators, such as self-esteem and psychological well-being, to elucidate the relationship between active commitment and friendship quality in both self-identified feminist women’s matched and mismatched friendships.

The significant mediations suggest that, for self-identified feminist women’s friendships, it is not necessarily the similarity or dissimilarity of feminist attitudes that is related to lower friendship quality among mismatched friendships. Instead, it is suggested that women who endorse traditional gender norms are less authentic within these friendships and experience a divided self. The divided self is accompanied by the experience of negative emotions. Jack (1991) described women as feeling upset and resentful for having to suppress their true thoughts and feelings. They were also described as being upset by the nature of their unbalanced relationships. Women who self-silence can experience a divided self because they do not express these negative emotions and instead maintain an outward façade of satisfaction and compliance. It is these negative emotions and lack of authenticity that are related to lower relationship quality. This interpretation is consistent with literature in this area (Theran, 2010; Witte & Sherman, 2002).

These findings also suggest that the divided self is an especially critical subscale to examine when investigating how self-silencing influences relationships. Previous studies have focused on the relationship between overall levels of self-silencing/inauthenticity and relationship quality, but less attention has been paid to the influences of the divided self, specifically on friendship quality. Self-silencing negatively influences relationship quality, but the impact may be greater when accompanied by the negative emotions that arise when someone is presenting a divided self.
Moderated Mediation

The results did not support the fifth hypothesis. This hypothesis stated that the relationship between pro-feminist attitudes and friendship quality would be mediated by self-silencing and moderated by friendship type. For these analyses, pro-feminist attitudes were examined through low scores on the passive acceptance scale (i.e. greater rejection of traditional gender norms). The variability in the passive acceptance scores of self-identified feminist women (as mentioned in the Feminist Attitudes and Friendship Quality section above) demonstrated that this subscale could be used to examine the strengths of these pro-feminist attitudes. The relationship between passive acceptance and friendship quality was mediated by the divided self, but not moderated by the type of friendship. The relationship between passive acceptance and friendship quality was mediated by overall self-silencing, and type of friendship moderated the pathway between overall self-silencing and friendship quality. However, this moderated mediation was not in the predicted direction. When this moderation was explored further, it was found that self-silencing had a more negative association with friendship quality in mismatched friendships, whereas the relationship between self-silencing and friendship quality was not significant in matched friendships.

These results are inconsistent with the perceived similarity literature (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008), which would suggest that the acceptance of traditional gender norms measured by passive acceptance subscale should be associated with higher friendship quality with friends that also have non-feminist beliefs. However, the results in this study suggest that even in friendships with non-feminist women, acceptance of traditional gender norms was related to lower friendship quality. The inconsistency of
these results with the perceived similarity literature may be due to the fact that this literature does not account for self-silencing within friendships. The effects of self-silencing that are related to non-feminist beliefs may be more harmful to friendship than the effects of dissimilarity between friends. Thus, although these results are inconsistent with literature that suggests greater perceived similarity is related to greater friendship quality, they are consistent with the literature that suggests self-silencing has negative relational outcomes (Theran, 2010). These results could also be seen as consistent with the interpretation of results found in support of the second hypothesis, which seemed to indicate that pro-feminist attitudes are beneficial to self-identified feminist women’s friendships, regardless of the feminist identity of the friend.

These results suggest that authenticity is even more important for high friendship quality in mismatched friendships than in matched friendships. This could be a factor that accounts for the results seen in the second and third hypotheses. Those results indicated that matched friendships had higher relationship quality than mismatched friendships, but not because of dissimilarity in feminist attitudes in mismatched friendships. Instead, the effects of self-silencing may be more harmful in mismatched friendships and may result in lower friendship quality. However, the negative emotions that arise from experiencing a divided self appear to be equally harmful in both matched and mismatched relationships.

Self-silencing might be more harmful for mismatched friendships because matched friendships are based on shared interests and activities, as well as authenticity. This is consistent with Rose and Roades’ study (1987), where women described how feminism had strengthened their friendships because it gave them shared interests.
However, because of the commonalities shared by these women, authenticity may become less important for higher friendship quality. In some mismatched friendships where the women have less in common, authenticity may become increasingly important in determining friendship quality. Future research could explore this by examining the relative importance of aspects of friendships and contributions of these aspects to overall friendship quality. It is also possible that the directionality of the relationships between variables is such that the higher friendship quality experienced due to similarity in matched friendships buffers against some of the negative effects of inauthenticity. Inauthenticity may be more harmful in mismatched friendships where the quality of friendships are already lower and more fragile, based on dissimilarity.

These findings may also be explained by examining overall authenticity in friendships. Friendships where the self-identified feminist does endorse some traditional gender norms and is prone to self-silencing, but is friends with a non-feminist who self-silences frequently may have a friendship that has lower authenticity overall. This may be more harmful to relationship quality than in a friendship where one woman is a self-identified feminist, but does endorse some traditional gender norms and self-silences, but is friends with a feminist who self-silences less. This matched friendship will have more overall authenticity than in the mismatched friendship, based on the authenticity exhibited by each friend. Research on self-silencing and authenticity has generally examined it from the perspective of the participant. Future research could address this possible interpretation and broaden the self-silencing literature by examining overall authenticity in relationships based on the contributions of the participant and their friend.
Lastly, it is also possible that qualitative differences in self-silencing in mismatched and matched friendships may contribute to the more harmful effect self-silencing has in mismatched friendships. Women in this sample may endorse some traditional gender norms that are associated with self-silencing, while still identifying as feminists and likely having greater pro-feminist beliefs than their non-feminist friends. This might mean that in mismatched friendships, feminist women may have to self-silence about issues that are more central to their core principles and beliefs. Comparatively, the types of issues that feminist women self-silence about in matched friendships may be more superficial or inconsequential. This may also help explain why self-silencing is more harmful for mismatched friendships, but the divided self is equally harmful to both matched and mismatched friendships. The divided self measures how well the participant believes the friend knows their true self and the negative emotions that the participant feels when self-silencing. It could be that the issues that were self-silenced about would affect these relationships differently, but that being angry, resentful and feeling as though a friend does not really know one’s true self would have the same negative effects in any type of friendship.

The interpretation that feminism may restrict topics of discussions and negatively affect friendship quality in mismatched friendships may seem contradictory to the idea that pro-feminist attitudes are beneficial to these friendships. However, given that the rejection of traditional gender norms (low scores on passive acceptance) was still associated with less self-silencing and better friendship quality, it is possible that pro-feminist attitudes can have both positive and negative influences on friendship. Pro-feminist attitudes may be beneficial to friendship in ways (e.g. through higher self-esteem
or psychological well-being) that override some of the other negative effects they may have on mismatched friendships. Given that the passive acceptance scale had a smaller correlation with friendship quality than the active commitment scale, it is also possible that the positive effects of the pro-feminist attitudes measured in the active commitment scale override the effects of the attitudes measured in the passive acceptance scale.

It should be noted that the zero-order correlation between passive acceptance and friendship quality for self-identified feminist women’s mismatched friendships was non-significant. Despite this, the mediation models between passive acceptance and friendship quality that were analyzed for the feminist sub-sample, with the divided self and overall self-silencing as mediators, were significant. The moderated mediation model, with overall self-silencing as the mediator, was significant among mismatched friendships. As described by Walters (2013), the correlation of a variable with two other variables that were not correlated with each other indicates the strength of the mediator variable.

**Other Limitations and Future Research**

The sample used was a limitation of this study. The participants were relatively young (with an average age of 19) and Caucasian. The results of this study may differ across different populations, especially since previous studies have found that gender norms and self-silencing patterns differ across ethnic groups. Previous research has found that African-American girls have lower levels of self-silencing across contexts when compared with Caucasian girls (Theran, 2009). Thus, the relationships found in this study between feminist identity and self-silencing may be similar to the relationship between African-American ethnic identity and self-silencing. African-American girls have also cited authenticity as important for the closeness of their relationships (Way, 1995). Thus,
the mediations and mediation models in the current study may be applicable to African-American girls, with ethnic identity as the predictor variable in place of the feminist identity predictor that was used in the current study.

However, there are cultures where the effects of self-silencing for women differ from the effects of self-silencing for North American women. Previous research on self-silencing among Indian women found that self-silencing was not related to relationship adjustment in their marriages (Gratch et al., 2006). The findings from the current study would not be generalizable to this population or similar ones. Lastly, there are also cultures in which the gender norms that govern self-silencing in North American culture do not exist and self-silencing is less common. Women who participated in a study on self-silencing in Caribbean immigrants in Canada and the United States described how women in the Caribbean are encouraged to express their feelings and not to suppress anger or other negative emotions (Jack & Ali, 2010). Based on these gender norms, the notion of self-silencing and the findings from the current study may not be applicable to a Caribbean population or other similar ethnic groups.

Although this study addressed women’s self-silencing, some studies have been conducted that have examined men’s self-silencing (Duarte & Thompson, 1999). Some studies have found that masculinity is related to higher levels of voice (Hart & Thompson, 1995; Smolak & Munstertieger, 2002), but others have found that self-silencing is higher among men than among women (Gratch, Bassett, & Attra, 1995 Haemmerlie, Montgomery, Williams, & Winborn, 2001). It is postulated that men self-silence in accordance with gender norms of masculinity that emphasize independence (Jack & Ali, 2010; Remen et al., 2002). It is possible that, similar to women’s self-
silencing, men’s self-silencing is associated with lower friendship quality. However, although both men and women’s self-silencing may be related to lower friendship quality, the goals that men and women hope to achieve by self-silence are different. Whereas men may self-silence to achieve autonomy, women engage in self-silencing to maintain a relationship or prevent conflict.

Another limitation of this study was that all the data was collected using self-reports. This may have been problematic because these measures may have been susceptible to social desirability biases. This could be addressed in future research by including a measure of social desirability or by using observational assessments of self-silencing and friendship quality. This has been used in previous studies examining the relationship between self-silencing and romantic relationship quality, but has not been used for studies investigating self-silencing in friendships (Harper & Welsh, 2007).

The methodology used to categorize self-identified feminist women’s friendships as matched or mismatched may have been problematic. Friendships were categorized as matched or mismatched based on the participant’s feminist self-identification and their perception of whether or not their friend identified as a feminist. Self-identified feminist women who indicated that they thought their friend also identified as a feminist were categorized as matched. Self-identified feminist women who indicated that they thought their friend did not identify as a feminist were categorized as mismatched. However, there is a body of literature that has found that it is typical for women to endorse pro-feminist attitudes and beliefs, but not to self-identify as feminists (Williams & Wittig, 1997; Yoder, Tobias & Snell, 2011). It is possible that participants correctly indicated their friend did not self-identify as a feminist, but that this friend actually did have pro-
feminist beliefs, which were not accounted for in this study because perceived or actual feminist beliefs of the friend were not measured. Thus, it is possible that in terms of their feminist identity, the participant and her friend self-label differently, but actually do have very similar pro-feminist beliefs. This would be problematic because this pair would have been coded as mismatched in this study, based on the identification questions, when it may have been more accurate to categorize them as matched. This could potentially account for the positive correlations between pro-feminist attitudes and friendship quality among self-identified feminists rating non-feminist friends.

The finding that the divided self influences friendship quality may also have clinical implications. Clinicians may be able to use this information to help their clients foster pro-feminist attitudes and positive friendships. Clinicians could discuss the inaccuracy of the belief that acting inauthentically within friendships will be beneficial to these relationships. They can describe how acting inauthentically, but presenting a façade of compliance, may cause women to experience negative emotions that are harmful to these relationships. Clinicians can also discuss more generally how pro-feminist beliefs and the rejection of traditional gender norms may be beneficial to women’s friendships, independently of self-silencing behaviours.

**Conclusion**

This study examined the relationships between pro-feminist attitudes, self-silencing and friendship quality in self-identified feminist women’s matched and mismatched friendships. It was found that pro-feminist attitudes were associated with higher friendship quality for both self-identified feminist women’s matched and mismatched friendships. In this sub-sample of feminist women, the divided self and
overall self-silencing mediated the relationship between passive acceptance and friendship quality. When the mediations were analyzed by type of friendship, it was found that the relationship between overall self-silencing and friendship quality was more negative for mismatched friendships than for matched ones. The type of friendship did not moderate the strength of the relationship between the divided self and friendship quality. Overall, the results of this study suggest that pro-feminist attitudes may be beneficial for friendships. They also suggest that self-silencing and the divided self that results from suppressing one’s thoughts and feelings may be harmful to friendships, especially friendships between dissimilar women. Future research should examine how this information can be used to enhance women’s relationships and well-being.
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Williams, R., & Wittig, M. (1997). “I’m not a feminist, but…”: Factors contributing to the discrepancy between pro-feminist orientation and feminist social identity. Sex Roles, 37(11-12), 885-904.


Yakushko, O. (2007). Do feminist women feel better about their lives? examining


Appendices

Pre-Screening Survey

Thank you for your interest in the study. To determine whether or not you are eligible we need you to answer the following questions and send this back to adainow@uoguelph.ca. If you are eligible you will receive another email with a link to the study.

Please indicate or highlight your answers to the questions below:

1) I identify as a feminist.

Yes  No

2) Do you have a female friend who you believe identifies as a feminist or who does not identify as a feminist? (Please highlight any that apply, e.g. if you have a friend who identifies as a feminist and one who does not, please highlight both response options.)

I have a female friend who I believe identifies as a feminist.

I have a female friend who I believe does not identify as a feminist.

I don’t know if any of my friends identify as a feminist or not.
Feminist Identity Composite

The statements listed below describe attitudes you may have toward yourself as a woman. There are no right or wrong answers. Please express your feelings by indicating how much agree or disagree with each statement. (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

1. I like being a traditional female.
   1     2     3     4     5

2. My female friends are like me in that we are all angry at men and the ways we have been treated as women.
   1     2     3     4     5

3. I am very interested in women artists.
   1     2     3     4     5

4. I am very interested in women's studies.
   1     2     3     4     5

5. I never realized until recently that I have experienced oppression and discrimination as a woman in this society.
   1     2     3     4     5

6. I feel like I've been duped into believing society's perceptions of me as a woman.
   1     2     3     4     5

7. I feel angry when I think about the way I am treated by men and boys.
   1     2     3     4     5

8. Men receive many advantages in society and because of this are against equality for women.
   1     2     3     4     5

9. Gradually, I am beginning to see just how sexist society really is.
   1     2     3     4     5

10. Regretfully, I can see ways in which I have perpetuated sexist attitudes in the past.
    1     2     3     4     5

11. I am very interested in women musicians.
    1     2     3     4     5

12. I am very interested in women writers.
    1     2     3     4     5
13. I enjoy the pride and self-assurance that comes from being a strong female.

14. I choose my "causes" carefully to work for greater equality of all people.

15. I owe it not only to women but to all people to work for greater opportunity and equality for all.

16. In my interactions with men, I am always looking for ways I may be discriminated against because I am female.

17. As I have grown in my beliefs I have realized that it is more important to value women as individuals than as members of a larger group of women.

18. I am proud to be a competent woman.

19. I feel like I have blended my female attributes with my unique personal qualities.

20. I have incorporated what is female and feminine into my own unique personality.

21. I think it's lucky that women aren't expected to do some of the more dangerous jobs that men are expected to do, like construction work or race car driving.

22. I care very deeply about men and women having equal opportunities in all respects.

23. If I were married to a man and my husband was offered a job in another state, it would be my obligation to move in support of his career.

24. I think that men and women had it better in the 1950s when married women were housewives and their husbands supported them.

25. It is very satisfying to me to be able to use my talents and skills in my work in the women's movement.
26. I am willing to make certain sacrifices to effect change in this society in order to create a nonsexist, peaceful place where all people have equal opportunities.
   1 2 3 4 5

27. One thing I especially like about being a woman is that men will offer me their seat on a crowded bus or open doors for me because I am a woman.
   1 2 3 4 5

28. On some level, my motivation for almost every activity I engage in is my desire for an egalitarian world.
   1 2 3 4 5

29. I don't see much point in questioning the general expectation that men should be masculine and women should be feminine.
   1 2 3 4 5

30. I feel that I am a very powerful and effective spokesperson for the women's issues I am concerned with right now.
   1 2 3 4 5

31. I think that most women will feel most fulfilled by being a wife and a mother.
   1 2 3 4 5

32. I want to work to improve women's status.
   1 2 3 4 5

33. I am very committed to a cause that I believe contributes to a more fair and just world for all people.
   1 2 3 4 5
**Silencing the Self Scale (Modified)**

Please circle the number that best describes how you feel about each of the statements listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. I think it is best to put myself first because no one else will look out for me.
   1   2   3   4   5

2. I don't speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know they will cause disagreement.
   1   2   3   4   5

3. Caring means putting the other person's needs in front of my own.
   1   2   3   4   5

4. Considering my needs to be as important as those of the people I love is selfish.
   1   2   3   4   5

5. I find it is harder to be myself when I am in a close relationship than when I am on my own.
   1   2   3   4   5

6. I tend to judge myself by how I think other people see me.
   1   2   3   4   5

7. I feel dissatisfied with myself because I should be able to do all the things people are supposed to be able to do these days.
   1   2   3   4   5

8. When my friend's needs and feelings conflict with my own, I always state mine clearly.
   1   2   3   4   5

9. In a close relationship, my responsibility is to make the other person happy.
   1   2   3   4   5

10. Caring means choosing to do what the other person wants, even when I want to do something different.
    1   2   3   4   5
11. In order to feel good about myself, I need to feel independent and self-sufficient.
1 2 3 4 5

12. One of the worst things I can do is to be selfish.
1 2 3 4 5

13. I feel I have to act in a certain way to please my friend.
1 2 3 4 5

14. Instead of risking confrontations in close relationships, I would rather not rock the boat.
1 2 3 4 5

15. I speak my feelings with my friend, even when it leads to problems or disagreements.
1 2 3 4 5

16. Often I look happy enough on the outside, but inwardly I feel angry and rebellious.
1 2 3 4 5

17. In order for my friend to love me, I cannot reveal certain things about myself to her.
1 2 3 4 5

18. When my friend's needs or opinions conflict with mine, rather than asserting my own point of view I usually end up agreeing with her.
1 2 3 4 5

19. When I am in a close relationship I lose my sense of who I am.
1 2 3 4 5

20. When it looks as though certain of my needs can't be met in a relationship, I usually realize that they weren't very important anyway.
1 2 3 4 5

21. My friend loves and appreciates me for who I am.
1 2 3 4 5

22. Doing things just for myself is selfish.
1 2 3 4 5
23. When I make decisions, other people's thoughts and opinions influence me more than my own thoughts and opinions.

1 2 3 4 5

24. I rarely express my anger at those close to me.

1 2 3 4 5

25. I feel that my friend does not know my real self.

1 2 3 4 5

26. I think it's better to keep my feelings to myself when they do conflict with my friend's.

1 2 3 4 5

27. I often feel responsible for other people's feelings.

1 2 3 4 5

28. I find it hard to know what I think and feel because I spend a lot of time thinking about how other people are feeling.

1 2 3 4 5

29. In a close relationship I don't usually care what we do, as long as the other person is happy.

1 2 3 4 5

30. I try to bury my feelings when I think they will cause trouble in my close relationship(s).

1 2 3 4 5

31. I never seem to measure up to the standards I set for myself.

1 2 3 4 5
Friendship Qualities Scale

We want to ask some questions just about you and your friend so we can know what your friend is like. We have some sentences that we would like you to read. Please tell us whether this sentence describes your friendship or not. Some of the sentences might be really true for your friendship while other sentences might be not very true for your friendship (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). We simply want you to read the sentence and tell us how true the sentence is for your friendship.

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My friend and I spend all our free time together.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My friend thinks of fun things for us to do together.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>My friend and I go to each other’s houses after school and on weekends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sometimes my friend and I just around and talk about things like school, sports and things we like.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I get into fights with my friend.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My friend can bug or annoy me even though I ask her not to.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>My friend and I can argue a lot.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>My friend and I disagree about many things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If I forgot my lunch or needed a little money, my friend would loan it to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>My friend helps me when I am having trouble with something.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>My friend would help me if I needed it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>If other people were bothering me, my friend would help me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. My friend would stick up for me if another person was causing me trouble.

14. If I have a problem at school or at home, I can talk to my friend about it.

15. If there is something bothering me, I can tell my friend about it even if something I cannot tell to other people.

16. If I said I was sorry after I had a fight with my friend, she would still stay mad at me.

17. If my friend or I do something that bothers the other one of us, we can make up easily.

18. If my friend and I have a fight or argument, we can say “I’m sorry” and everything will be alright.

19. If my friend had to move away, I would miss her.

20. I feel happy when I am with my friend.

21. I think about my friend even when my friend is not around.

22. When I do a good job at something, my friend is happy for me

23. Sometimes my friend does things for me, or makes me feel special.
Tables

Table 1

*Spearman’s Correlations between Feminist Attitude Subscales and Self-Silencing*

*(n = 226)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Passive acceptance</th>
<th>Revelation</th>
<th>Embeddedness-emanation</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Active commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externalized self perception</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>- 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care as self-sacrifice</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>- 0.15*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>- 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silencing the self</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>- 0.12*</td>
<td>- 0.17**</td>
<td>- 0.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The divided self</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>- 0.05</td>
<td>- 0.18**</td>
<td>- 0.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silencing the self total</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.24**</td>
<td>- 0.08</td>
<td>- 0.12*</td>
<td>- 0.12*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$ (1-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$ (1-tailed)
Table 2

*Spearman’s Correlations between Feminist Attitude Subscales, Self-Silencing Subscales, Overall Self-Silencing and Friendship Quality for Feminist Women*

*(n = 143)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Passive acceptance (1)</th>
<th>Active Commitment (2)</th>
<th>Silencing the self (3)</th>
<th>The divided self (4)</th>
<th>Overall self-silencing (5)</th>
<th>Overall friendship quality (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.22**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.55**</td>
<td>0.78**</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.78**</td>
<td>-0.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$ (1-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$ (1-tailed)