

**THE ATTITUDES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN  
ACADEMIC VERSUS VOCATIONAL  
ORIENTATIONS TOWARD FEMINISM GOALS**

**BY**

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IN ACADEMIC VERSUS VOCATIONAL  
ORIENTATIONS TOWARD FEMINISM GOALS

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in Psychology

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by  
Gwynn Blalock Kerns

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Gwynn Blalock Kerns entitled "The Attitudes of High School Students in Academic versus Vocational Orientations toward Feminism Goals." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Elizabeth H. Stokes  
Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:

Wayne E. Stamps  
Dean of the Graduate School

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The evidence that sex role stereotypes exist has been amply supported by various studies of consensual beliefs about the differing characteristics of men and women. Many of these studies have shown the stereotypes to be persistent (Fernberger, 1948), widely accepted (Lunneborg, 1968; Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968; Seward, 1946), and highly traditional (Komarovsky, 1950; McKee & Sheriffs, 1957).

The types of perceptions of sex roles have been studied with an emphasis on possible causal factors. Vogel, Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz (1970) investigated sex role perceptions with regard to employment of the mother. They found that both men and women with employed mothers perceive significantly smaller differences between masculine and feminine roles than do men and women with homemaker mothers, a finding consistent with that of Hartley (1964). They also found that maternal employment tends to raise the estimation of one's own sex with respect to those characteristics such as assertiveness, constructive aggression, and striving for achievement and excellence that are seen as socially desirable for the opposite sex.

Tavris (1972), in a study based on a questionnaire published in Psychology Today, found that among males

religion seems to be a particularly significant factor in sex-role perceptions. Of the male respondents, forty percent of those identifying themselves as atheistic or agnostic supported the feminist movement, while only nine percent of Catholic males and fifteen percent of the Protestants supported feminist aims and equalizing of task differentiations in the home. Again, fifty-one percent of the atheists saw Women's Liberation Movement members as well adjusted and healthy, while forty-five percent of the Catholics viewed them as neurotic because of discrimination.

Lipman-Blumen (1972), in examining the family background of women having traditional sex role perceptions and those having contemporary role perceptions, found no significant relationship between parents' income, education, occupation, and their daughter's ideology. Dempewolf (1972) made a similar finding concerning females, but her study indicated that the education of the mother of males was a correlate of attitudes toward feminism.

Anne Steinmann (1963), in a study of the concept of the feminine role of fifty-one middle-class American families, made several findings concerning possible causes of sex-role perceptions contrasting a more modern or contemporary role perception (self) with the more traditional role (other). She found that both mothers, daughters, and fathers felt that the ideal feminine role was made up of approximately equal parts of other-oriented and self-oriented elements.

Significantly, both mothers and daughters conceived men's ideal woman as significantly more other-oriented than was the father's actual conception of the ideal woman. She found causal implications in that those girls who were close to both parents were significantly more other-oriented than those girls who were close to neither parent. This other-orientation held true for those who rated their parents' marriage as happy, too. She also found middle children more self-oriented than either the youngest or oldest children in a family. In looking at vocational aspirations, Steinmann found that those who planned to teach, enter social work, research, or other professions, to be more self-oriented than those who planned to be secretaries. She additionally found that mothers who had never been employed were more other-oriented than those who had been employed, or were presently employed.

However, a more recent survey, conducted by McCall's magazine (1976) among women subscribing to or reading their periodical, indicated that nearly three-fourths of the women responding felt their lives had been changed in some way by the resurgence of material concerning feminism. The results of a study by Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, and Broverman (1968), concerning sex-role stereotypes and self-concepts in college students, supported the assertion that sex-role stereotypes continued to be clearly defined and held in agreement by both college men and women. They also

found that "both men and women agreed that a greater number of the characteristics and behaviors stereotypically associated with masculinity are socially desirable than those associated with femininity" (p. 292).

The results of a study by Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, and Vogel (1970) confirmed their hypotheses that clinical judgments about the characteristics of mental health of individuals would differ as a function of the sex of the person judged, and that these differences would parallel stereotypic sex-role differences, and that behaviors and characteristics judged healthy for an adult, sex unspecified, which are presumed to reflect an ideal standard of mental health, would resemble behaviors judged healthy for women. In looking for possible explanations for these findings, they speculated that for a woman to be judged healthy, from an adjustment viewpoint, she must conform to the behavioral norms for her sex, even though these norms are generally less socially desirable and considered less healthy for the competent, mature male.

Steinmann, Fox, and Levi (1964) conducted a study of college women's self-concept compared with their concept of ideal woman and man's ideal woman. The data obtained indicated that women perceived themselves and their ideal woman as basically alike, with equal components of active and passive orientations, but women perceive men's ideal woman as significantly more passive and accepting of a subordinate role in both personal growth and place in the family structure.

The studies cited thus far show very definitely the presence of sex-role biases present in both males and females in the American society. More rapid change has taken place, however, in this century in the concept of women's roles than in all the past history of humanity. Clara Thompson (1949) comments on this change when she writes:

The official attitude of the culture toward women has been and still is to the effect that woman is not the equal of man. This has led to the following things: until very recently woman was not offered education even approximately equal to that given a man; when she did secure reasonably adequate education, she found more limited opportunities for using the training than did a man; woman was considered helpless, partly because she had no choice but to be economically dependent on some man.

The assumption of woman's inferiority was a part of the prevalent attitude of society and until very recently was accepted by both sexes as a biological fact. Since there is obvious advantage to the male in believing this, he has proved much more resistant to a new point of view on the matter than have women. Women, at the same time, have had difficulty in freeing themselves from an idea which was part of their life training.

For some (women) the alternative of marriage with economic dependence, or independence with or without marriage, presents a serious conflict.

Also under the influence of tradition and prejudice many women are convinced that their adequate sexual fulfillment, including children and an adequate self development, are not to be reconciled. (p. 151)

Small wonder that young and older women alike find themselves confused amid the conflicting and contradictory practices and beliefs brought about by social expectations and social forces.

The present study examines the import all this confusion and contradiction hold for the high school counselor in trying to help the high school girl make career and life style decisions.

Goldberg, Gottesdiener, and Abramson (1975) illustrated the views of many college age men and women toward the feminist movement. The subjects were asked to pick an unattractive or attractive person as a member of the movement. Both males and females indicated a significant preference for the unattractive person as depicting their image of a feminist. It seems likely that this sort of imagery will also be reflected in high school students' ideas of a woman seeking roles other than the traditional wife, mother, or teacher.

Different people have varying ideas of the meanings of the term "feminism." In the present study it will mean those attitudes toward women which aid in the change of their

role and status in the direction of equality with men.

The U. S. Department of Labor (1970) has data showing that one-half of the girls in high school today will work full-time for up to thirty years and that ninety percent of these girls will be employed at significant intervals over this time. The statistics also show that women are most frequently employed in poorer paying jobs. The obvious contradiction here then is that women are naively preparing themselves vocationally and psychologically for roles which are contrary to those she will actually assume. There are clear economic and emotional tolls which this poor planning will surely take. Present statistics show that one out of three marriages will end in divorce. Add to this the possibility of widowhood, the fact of being forced into the work world is immediately apparent. Self-fulfillment and need for a career later on should also be considered as well as the fact that one might have to work.

A study by Matthews and Tiedeman (1964), exploring attitudes toward marriage and a career and their effects on young women's life styles, noted a drop in career commitment from junior to senior high school from thirteen to three percent. From this and other data, they concluded that, "The imminent possibility of marriage seems to have an effect on the relationship of life style and attitudes toward career and marriage which is not noticeable in the other two stages examined, an earlier one and a stage in which marriages occur" (p. 383). They also found that

women apparently structure their lives on the idea that, since men find use of their intelligence an unattractive quality in women, it would be better to accept this and plan either not to have a career or to have one acceptable in a traditional sense.

Komarovsky (1946), in his study of women college seniors, found that these women faced mutually exclusive expectations of their adult sex roles, particularly that of homemaker as contrasted with that of career woman as a result of cultural conflict.

Many traditionalists today feel that the break-up of the home in present American society can be laid at the feet of the modern woman for "leaving the hearth." Might this not be instead a very natural result of the ambiguities, contradictions, and inconsistencies felt by the woman as she feels the need to function competently in the roles of wife, mother, glamour-girl, and status-symbol of her husband? This, coupled with the data distributed by the U. S. Department of Labor as cited earlier, might provide a more realistic, though less simplistic, explanation of the problem.

A female is often in the position today, because of society's conflicting demands on her, of being "damned if she does, and damned if she doesn't." If she accepts the stereotyped roles and stays home ignoring the self-fulfillment needs to sacrifice for her family, how stable and free from anxiety and bitterness is she? If, on the other hand,

she decides to work, but still cannot rid herself of these stereotypes of what she should be, the ensuing guilt will often keep her from the very fulfillment she seeks.

The present study, then, seeks to see what attitudes high school students today have toward the general aims of the feminist movement, and to compare the viewpoints of those students in vocational orientations with those students in academic orientations. The obtained results should be an aid to the high school counselor in helping girls see reality in light of their abilities, feelings toward themselves, and their proposed career choices in view of the very real probability of their being employed a major part of their lives.

#### HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

These hypotheses were formulated and were tested by statistical analyses of the data collected. Upon the Feminism II Scale being administered, it was hypothesized that there would be:

1. No significant difference between the scores of the female students in an academic curriculum and female students in a vocational curriculum.
2. No significant difference between the scores of the male students in an academic curriculum and male students in a vocational curriculum.

## CHAPTER II

### PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

#### Method

##### Description of the Instrument

The instrument used in the present study was the Feminism II Scale, developed by Dempewolff (1972). The Feminism II Scale is designed to identify various aspects of attitudes toward feminism. The Feminism II Scale consists of 56 items with four possible responses: 1) Agree very much, 2) Agree a little, 3) Disagree a little, and 4) Disagree a lot. Each item on the scale has a "mate" item of similar content which was worded so that agreement with the statement would be scored in the opposite direction of its "mate" statement. The internal consistency reliability of the total test was estimated by the Spearman-Brown formula  $r = k\bar{r}/1 + (k-1) F$ , where  $k$  was the number of items in the scale and  $\bar{r}$  was the mean intercorrelation for all items. The internal consistency was .96, indicating excellent reliability. Also, a parallel-forms reliability estimate was obtained using the matched halves of the Feminism II Scale and yielding an estimate of .98 for the total scale.

##### Subjects

The subjects selected for the study were all seniors in high school at Dickson County Senior High School, a

large rural high school in Tennessee. The classes chosen for the study were a second period home economics class of 19 vocational curriculum girls, a second period shop class of 22 vocational curriculum boys, and a second and a fourth period English class with 24 boys and 19 girls in an academic curriculum.

### Procedure

Permission was granted by the administration and English teachers at Dickson County Senior High School to administer the Feminism II Scale to the students in the classes mentioned previously. The study was introduced to the participants as an attitude survey. Instructions were printed on a separate page which each student received with the scale (see Appendix A) and which the administrator read aloud to the classes also.

The statements used for the Feminism II Scale are arranged so that an individual can indicate one of four responses: 1) Agree very much, 2) Agree a little, 3) Disagree a little, and 4) Disagree a lot. Each item was scored from one to four, with four being agreement with a feminist position. Thus, the range of possible scores on the Feminism II Scale was 56 to 224.

### Analysis of Variance on Feminism II Scores

Analysis of variance was employed to test the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference on the Feminism II Scale scores made by the academic girls' group

and those made by the vocational girls' group and the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference on the scores made by the academic boys' group and those made by the vocational boys' group.

TABLE 1

Analysis of Variance on the Academic Girls' Group  
and the Vocational Girls' Group

Source	SS	df	MS	F	D
Total	3467.40	37	----	---	---
Between Groups	1021.28	1	1021.28	15.031*	.05
Within Groups	2446.12	36	67.95	---	---

\*p .05

The analysis of variance on the two girls' groups revealed that there was a significant difference at the .05 level of confidence between the academic girls' group and the vocational girls' group. Since a significant difference between these two groups was found to exist at the .05 level of confidence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

TABLE 2

Analysis of Variance on the Academic Boys' Group  
and the Vocational Boys' Group

Source	SS	df	MS	F	D
Total	6391.153	45	----	---	---
Between Groups	346.740	1	346.740	2.524	.05
Within Groups	6044.413	44	137.373	---	---

The analysis of variance on the two boys' groups revealed that there was no significant difference at the .05 level of confidence between the academic boys' group and the vocational boys' group. Since no significant difference between these two groups was found to exist at the .05 level of confidence, the null hypothesis was accepted.

#### Subjective Observations

Dempewolf (1972) divided the heavily loaded items included in the Feminism II Scale into six factorial groups. These are Factor I, dealing with equality and freedom of action; Factor II, dealing with traditional customs and conduct for women; and Factor III, emphasizing the passivity and vulnerability of women in the marital relationship and their being primarily responsible for care of the children. Factor IV deals with women's lack of fitness and ability to handle objective legal and business affairs. Factor V deals

with women's participation in what have traditionally been masculine fields and male involvement in traditional feminine tasks, particularly in the home. Factor VI is concerned with the concept of economic equality for women.

When the present author tallied the total agreement responses (4 points) and the total disagreement responses (1 point) on these items for the four groups, certain tendencies were noted. Both vocational groups reacted strongly in opposition to Factor II, the area concerned with the traditional role of women in areas concerned with courtship, grooming, or marriage. Though the other two groups did not respond as strongly here, this was for all groups the area which showed the most disagreement with the feminist attitudes. The academic girls' group was the only group who agreed in more instances with the feminist attitude on these items than they disagreed and yet it was for them also the area in which the disagreement concentration was strongest.

The greatest agreement with the feminist attitudes among all the groups was shown in the responses to Factor I, the area concerned with equal ability and freedom of action for women. This covered political, intellectual, and economic spheres, and focuses on questions of competence, privileges, responsibilities, and leadership for women. The vocational boys' group was the only one showing more disagreement than agreement with this factor, with the overall tally showing four times the agreement to

disagreement. The second greatest area of agreement was with a similar factor, Factor VI, which dealt with economic equality. It may be speculated here that the agreement shown in these two areas could be attributed to the fact that there has been so much written and shown in the popular media about equal pay for equal work and like issues publicized concerning the Equal Rights Amendment that this has made an impression on even high school age persons.

Another observation the present author made is that the total response pattern of the boys' academic group was toward a middle ground of number two and number three responses and few total agreement (four) and few total disagreement (one) responses. Interestingly enough, and probably for this reason, in several instances the vocational boys' group showed greater agreement (based only on four or one responses) with the feminist attitude than did the academic boys' group.

On almost every factor, the academic girls' group showed twice the favorable responses toward feminism as compared to those of the vocational girls' group.

As a matter of interest, analyses of variance were further seen between other combinations of the four groups. An analysis of the data showed a significant difference between the academic boys' group and the vocational girls' group and between the vocational boys' group and vocational girls' groups. No significant difference was found between

the academic boys' and academic girls' groups or, somewhat surprisingly, between the vocational boys' and academic girls' groups.

### CHAPTER III

#### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study was concerned with the attitudes of high school students toward the role of women in the world today. The study sought to measure these attitudes by the use of the Feminism II Scale, an attitude scale developed for this purpose. It further sought to discover whether differences existed between the scores made on the scale by female students in an academic curriculum and female students in a vocational curriculum, and between the scores obtained on the scale by male students in an academic curriculum and male students in a vocational curriculum.

The hypotheses tested by the study were the following:

1. There is no significant difference between the scores of female students in an academic curriculum and female students in a vocational curriculum as measured by the Feminism II Scale.
2. There is no significant difference between the scores of male students in an academic curriculum and male students in a vocational curriculum as measured by the Feminism II Scale.

The results of the Feminism II Scale administered to these groups of students were analyzed employing analysis of variance and the .05 level of confidence as the criteria for determining significance. The results of the statisti-

cal analysis of the data allowed the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. There was a significant difference at the .05 level of confidence between the vocational and academic girls' groups tested by the Feminism II Scale.
2. There was no significant difference at the .05 level of confidence between the vocational and academic boys' groups tested by the Feminism II Scale.

The conclusions of this study indicate that while there evidently is little difference in the attitudes of high school males in vocational as contrasted with academic curriculum, the attitudes of female high school students in an academic curriculum seem to be more sympathetic to the goals and feelings of feminism than those female high school students in a vocational curriculum.

The results of this study hopefully will be considered by high school counselors in working with high school girls in vocational planning and perhaps in consciousness-raising groups within the guidance programs. It may well be as this study suggests, that vocational girls in particular may be preparing themselves for an unrealistic situation. Decision making and career planning units could be presented either in individual classes or in larger assembly programs which include recent data on how many married women are presently employed outside the home and suggesting the need to prepare for the exigency even though they may hope not to have to

seek employment. Specific career opportunities outside the traditional secretary-teacher role should be explored in these presentations. The guidance counselor should also be sure that his or her office is well equipped with information about a variety of jobs, with data about the available market for persons in these fields in the particular community, training required for them, and information related to obtaining this training. The hopeful aspect of this study may be reflected in the attitudes shown on the Feminism II Scale by the academic girls' group and the two boys' groups, indicating that they are not as accepting of the economic and social stereotypes as are the vocational girls' group.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

1. Further research is recommended to study attitudes toward feminism of subjects from a metropolitan area as contrasted with subjects from a rural area as studied here.
2. Further research is recommended in the area of analyses of the various factors briefly investigated in the present study.
3. Further research is recommended to study the attitudes toward feminism among different generations.
4. Further research is recommended in the area of attitude-change studies. A pre- and posttest of the Feminism II Scale could be administered in conjunction with consciousness-raising group experience.

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## Appendix A

## Instructions for Feminism II Scale

On the next page is a social attitude scale consisting of many statements which people might make about their attitudes on certain issues. Please read each item and determine to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement. If you are very much in agreement, fill in the circle in the AA column of the answer sheet. If you agree a little, fill in the circle in the A column. If you are in slight disagreement, fill in the circle in the D column. And if you disagree a great deal, fill in the circle in the DD column.

There are no right or wrong answers, since this is a measure of individual attitudes. Please read the items carefully, and answer to the best of your ability. You may be undecided about some items, but try to respond in a way which comes closest to your feelings about the statements. Don't spend too much time on one item, but rather, try to answer as best as you can. Your answers on this scale are anonymous. However, if any question offends you, you may skip it.

Thank you. You may begin.

## Appendix B

## Feminism II Scale

Please answer in appropriate circle on answer sheet:

AA-Agree very much  
D -Disagree a little

A -Agree a little  
DD-Disagree a lot

1. Women should feel free to compete with men in every sphere of economic activity.
2. Management of property and income, acquired by either husband or wife, should rest with both husband and wife.
3. The sex of a boss or supervisor is unimportant provided he or she is competent.
4. The husband should be favored by law in the disposal of family property or income, provided he is the sole wage earner.
5. It is better to have a man as a boss or supervisor than a woman.
6. The influx of women into the business world, in direct competition with men, should be discouraged.
7. Married women with very young children should work outside the home if they wish.
8. A woman could be just as competent as a man in a high political office.
9. A woman should take her husband's last name at marriage.
10. If a woman with an infant continues to work outside the home, she is neglecting her maternal duty.
11. Sex is no indication of fitness or lack of fitness to enter any type of occupation.
12. In general women should stay out of political positions.
13. Parental responsibility for care of young children should usually be in the hands of the wife.
14. Women should not compete in football or baseball, even against other women.

AA-Agree very much  
D -Disagree a little

A -Agree a little  
DD-Disagree a lot

15. The intellectual leadership of a community should mostly be in the hands of men.
16. A woman should be able to officially retain her own last name after marriage.
17. Women should take more responsibility for solving the intellectual and social problems of the day.
18. Both husband and wife should be equally responsible for the care of young children.
19. Because of their physical limitations, women should be advised to choose less strenuous types of occupations.
20. Society should be prepared to provide day care centers so any woman who wants to hold a job can do so.
21. A woman should be allowed to play major league baseball if she can compete.
22. Society should not be expected to provide day care centers for working women.
23. There should be many more women in graduate school even if it means keeping some men out.
24. The use of obscene language is more unbecoming for a woman than for a man.
25. It is only fair for a school which offers professional training to limit the number of female students in favor of males.
26. Men should usually help a woman with her coat and open the door for her.
27. Men should have a equal chance for custody of children in a divorce.
28. Husband and wife should share responsibility for economic support of themselves and their children.

AA-Agree very much  
D -Disagree a little

A -Agree a little  
DD-Disagree a lot

29. When on a date, the woman should usually open doors by herself rather than letting the man do it for her.
30. Women workers have abilities equal to those of men workers for most jobs.
31. Objections which one might have to the use of obscene language should bear no relation to the sex of the speaker.
32. Women would be happier in the long run if they could adjust to their role as housewives.
33. A woman should usually have custody of the children after a divorce.
34. Generally speaking, men are more fit to run business and industrial enterprises than are women.
35. Women can control their emotions enough to be successful in any occupation.
36. Many women need fulfillment which they don't obtain from being a wife and mother.
37. It should usually be the duty of the husband to support his wife and family.
38. Every police department should have policewomen with equal authority and responsibility to that of men on the force.
39. A woman should not expect to go to the same places or to have the same freedom of action as a man.
40. Police duty is a job that should usually be done by men.
41. The husband should usually initiate sexual relations with his wife.
42. The needs of a family should come before a woman's personal ambitions.

AA-Agree very much  
D -Disagree a little

A -Agree a little  
DD-Disagree a lot

43. Many women are too sensitive to be good at certain occupations.
44. A woman should have the same freedom and the same restrictions as a man.
45. A daughter in a family should have the same privileges as a son.
46. A woman earning as much as her escort should bear equally the expense of common entertainment.
47. Women should feel free to enter occupations requiring aggressiveness rather than remaining in jobs calling for compliance.
48. The initiative in courtship should usually come from the man.
49. Women should accept the intellectual limitations of their sex.
50. A woman should almost always let her date pay for whatever they do together.
51. A wife should often take the lead and suggest sexual intercourse if she wishes it.
52. Women have equal intelligence with men.
53. It is foolish for a woman to enter certain occupations that detract from her femininity.
54. For her own safety, parents should keep a daughter under closer supervision than a son.
55. It is natural if a woman's career is as important to her as her husband and children.
56. Women should ask men out for dates if they feel like it.