

Do Words Matter in Feminist Fundraising?
An Experiment Assessing the Influence of Linguistic Choices
in Feminist Non-Profit Communications and Their Impact
on Willingness to Donate

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Master Thesis
June 2024

Word Count: 17105

Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of linguistic choices in the external online communication of feminist non-profit organisations (NPOs) on individuals' willingness to donate. It particularly focuses on the effect of feminist references and their connotative power on donor appeal. Given the fact that feminist NPOs increasingly rely on private and individual donations due to possible diminishing government support, this study is particularly relevant in the current right-wing socio-political context in the Netherlands. The online audience of WOMEN Inc., a large feminist NPO in the Netherlands, is taken as a case study within this thesis. The primary research question investigates how specific language used by feminist NPOs influences individuals' willingness to financially contribute to a feminist NPO, after being exposed to this language. This research is grounded on framing theory, which posits that the way information is presented can significantly affect decision-making and behaviours.

Utilising a between-subjects survey experiment conducted via Qualtrics, the study engaged 209 participants who are social media followers of WOMEN Inc., a prominent feminist NPO in the Netherlands. Participants were exposed to one of four donation slogans featuring different references to feminism; gender justice, gender equality, feminism or a control group who were exposed to no reference to feminism. These references to feminism were proxies of the following linguistic framings: advocacy-focused language, future-oriented appeals, negatively connoted words, or a neutral control group. These donation slogans were carefully crafted to test specific hypotheses about the power of language in the context of donation appeals. The analysis employed a one-way ANOVA to compare the mean willingness to donate across these groups, providing a robust statistical framework to assess the impact of different linguistic strategies.

The main hypothesis of this study was that feminist NPOs' word choice in external online communication affects individuals' willingness to donate. Although the findings of this study rejected this hypothesis, because the effect of word choice on WTD was statistically insignificant, this study did find various tendencies and observations in which 'gender equality' is the word that results in the highest mean WTD. The findings thus indicate that a reference to feminism that is a future-oriented appeal enhances WTD, compared to a negatively connoted word like 'feminism', which scored lowest.

These results underscore the importance of strategic linguistic choices in fundraising communications for feminist NPOs. They offer practical insights for enhancing donor engagement and support, suggesting that NPOs should carefully consider the framing of their messages to maximise individual donations. The study concludes with recommendations for future research, including the exploration of qualitative research on the linguistic elements of this thesis and the potential cross-cultural variations in response to different framings. This research contributes to the broader field of nonprofit communication by providing evidence-based strategies for more effective donor engagement.

KEYWORDS: *Willingness To Donate, Feminism, Non-Profit Organisations, Communication, Linguistic Choices*

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Preface

Before delving into the contents of this Master Thesis, I have a few notes I would like to make. After a period of more than 8 months, finalising this thesis is more than an end to the master. It has been a period full of growth and reflection. It has been wonderful working together with my supervisor, Willemijn Dortant. I would like to thank her for guiding me along this process and for all her helpful conversations and notes. Our shared interest for feminism and human rights has really elevated the writing process of this study to a wonderful experience. Secondly, I would like to thank WOMEN Inc., the NPO whose audience is the sample of this study. Whilst also being my employer, they allowed me access to their audience and trusted me wholeheartedly with this research. I am more than content with and thankful for their cooperation and support. I also would like to thank my mother, for it was her who inspired me to become the feminist and woman I am today. She always stands by my side and her support continues to uplift me every day. Lastly, I would like to give my thanks to Lijie Zheng, my second reader who has elevated this study with her constructive feedback and kind words.

1. Introduction

Feminist non-profit organisations (NPOs) have, for a long time, played a large role in achieving feminist progress and agenda setting (Arutyunova, 2017, p. 247). It can hence be said that feminist NPOs play a large role within the feminist movement. Monetary support for feminist NPOs historically stems primarily from corporate and individual donors (Arutyunova, 2017, p. 249-250), because feminist NPOs are being marginalised in the allocation of government funding (Arutyunova, 2017, p. 248). In the wake of a right-wing populist government in the Netherlands¹, which stands unfavourable towards gender equality policies (Van Teutem, 2023, para3), it is not unlikely that the financing possibilities from Ministries in the Netherlands will decrease for feminist NPOs (K. Straver, personal communication, March 4, 2024). As a result, the reliance on private and individual donorship for feminist NPOs is becoming even more pressing.

Research acknowledges the versatility and oftentimes unpredictable motivations behind individual donorship. A paper by Hladká and Hyánek (2015, p. 358) distinguishes individual internal variables as being motives for donating, while simultaneously categorising external variables as determinants for charitable behavior. Firstly, it must be clear that unlike public funding, individual monetary support cannot be explained as a consequence of government responsibilities. Secondly, although one's political ideology *could* play a role in an individuals' decision to support an NPO, this does not necessarily need to be the case. Instead, research stresses the versatility of individuals' motives for donation, with Hladká and Hyánek discussing three main different forces driving individual donations: altruistic, egoistic and investment motives (Hladká & Hyánek, 2015, p. 366), but this list of potential explanatory factors is considered not exhaustive. As a result, it becomes interesting to research what variety of factors, known and unknown, constitute donor willingness amongst non-government parties and individuals, especially in a Dutch context.

Previous research suggests that linguistic choices in NPO communication as alternative factors determine the appeal of NPOs amongst (prospective) donors (Bhatia, 1998, p. 107; Smith & Berger, 1996, p. 222; Yilmaz & Blackburn, 2022, p. 41). Bhatia (1998, p. 107) stresses how various rhetorical and linguistic devices are used in fundraising discourse, and Smith and Berger (1996, p. 222) argue that the ways in which appeals are framed, affect how people make decision judgments. Yilmaz and Blackburn (2022, p. 41) also find that message framing impacts donation intentions. These studies together hint upon the notion that linguistics in NPO communication influence donor appeal.

Considering the presumed influence of linguistics on donor appeal, one should take a closer look into the realm of feminist rhetoric particularly. Literature asserts that the feminist movement and references to feminism in general, are often negatively connoted (Adichie, 2014, p. 3, 11; Anderson et al., 2009, p. 216). This notion makes it compelling to look at the process of feminist

¹ The political parties that have formed a coalition agreement are PVV (Party For Freedom), VVD (Party For Freedom and Democracy), BBB (Farmer Citizen Movement) and NSC (New Social Contract)

donor attraction through a linguistic lens, specifically anticipating a presumable reversed effect of charged word choices on donor appeal. The linguistic theories adopted in this research will be the following; how NPOs position themselves as advocates in a social cause (Lentz et al., 2021, p. 21), the inclusion of future-oriented appeals in external communication (Gleasure, 2023, p. 1) and the exploitation of semantic framing in public outreach (Su et al., 2024, p. 924). These theories are all linguistic choices NPOs can make in their communication that might influence one's willingness to donate. This research will therefore specifically question:

To what extent do linguistic choices in feminist NPO external online communication influence one's willingness to donate amongst private donors?

The focus on online communication derives from the insight that feminist NPOs have remarkably increased the accessibility of the feminist movement. Online communication connects feminists with different backgrounds from all around the world via the use of social media (McCann et al., 2019a, p. 295). Especially for young women, online activism through social media is a key form of participating in the feminist movement and ideas (Schuster, 2013, p. 8). Social media have a large potential for highlighting sexism along with being able to have discussions online about feminist issues, defining a fourth wave of feminist practice (Guillard, 2016, p. 609; Turley & Fisher, 2018, p. 7). Moreover, online communication and using social media have monetary benefits for NPOs, as research has established that messaging via social media and opting to use online donations allows NPOs to reach most individual donors (Shier & Handy, 2012, p. 219). While the use of social media by feminist organisations brings many opportunities, Edwards et al. (2020, p. 606) argue that purposeful utilisation of social media platforms remains complicated for feminist NPOs. Choosing the right social media platform to exploit and to communicate feminist political messages varies on the organisations' history, identity, and purpose, besides the political, legal and funding context on which the survival of the organisation depends. As social media are both open for everyone to use yet surveillant in nature, criticisms and hate of the opposed political organisations or individuals can backfire on feminist organisations and silence their voice rather than amplify it. These challenges make online communication through social media for feminist organisations a double-edged sword (Edwards et al., 2020, p. 606). Thus, as using online communication and social media has both benefits and risks for feminist NPOs, it is important to understand how feminist NPOs can successfully utilise social media in their donor attraction for financial survival.

Regarding the societal relevance of this thesis, with both public and private funding being fluctuating external factors that follow the tides of political and societal differentiations in favouritism, feminist NPOs' financial stability tends to be fragile (Carroll & Stater, 2009, p. 963; Chang & Tuckman, 1994, p. 288; Omura & Forster, 2014, p. 255). As gender diversity and inclusion (GDI) policies are deemed 'nonsense' by 2023 elections' winning right-wing party leader Wilders,

governments and organisations might decrease their funding for feminist NPOs in the Netherlands in the near future (Van Teutem, 2023, para3). In the coalition agreement of the four right-wing parties in the Netherlands, which will form the government, gender diversity and inclusion policies are not even mentioned, thus it can be assumed that supporting feminist organisations in monetary ways is not amongst the main points of focus for the upcoming government (Bureau Woordvoering Kabinetsformatie, 2024; Euronews, 2024, para2). Research shows that in the presence of eroding government funding, NPOs tend to revert to and rely even more than usual on individual donors and donors in the private sector (Hou et al., 2009, p. 215). In times when governments reduce their grant giving, the sustainability of NPOs is prone to erode (Omura & Forster, 2014, p. 255). As feminist NPOs are already underfunded compared to other civil society organisations in the current context; with a prospect of further decreasing public donorship arising, the quest for strategic and long-term funding streams in the private domain becomes salient. This to assure that these NPOs can continue to have long-term, positive impact in the realm of feminist advocacy, withstanding their dependency on governmental benevolence (Arutyunova, 2017, p. 248-249). To minimise the risks related to disappearing or cut down funding streams, organisations should understand how to optimise their external communication towards a diversification of funding streams, particularly in an attempt to secure private, i.e. individual and business, investments (Carroll & Stater, 2009, p. 962; Chang & Tuckman, 1994, p. 273, p. 288). Gaining insights into how to address certain groups of private donors, through various references of feminism in feminist NPO communication, and thereby increasing their willingness to donate, can help to rebrand feminism strategically with the result of improving the financial longevity of feminist NPOs.

In terms of academic relevance, donor appeal of NPOs has been mainly researched in relation to framing of purpose statements in NPO donation outreach (Ein-Gar & Levontin, 2013, p. 207). It has been established that the way donation outcomes are framed, matter for individual donation intentions (Ye et al., 2015, p. 480). Secondly, donor appeal has been studied as a consequence of the use of *emotional* language, and *exclusive/inclusive* language in donor solicitation (Paxton et al., 2020, p. 1051; Yilmaz & Blackburn, 2022, p. 32). These research endeavours have successfully established that both framing and linguistic choices in NPOs' communication influence (potential) donors' perception and appreciation of NPOs, which consequently affects the ultimate decision of an individual to donate to a certain cause (Bhatia, 1998, p. 107; Gleasure, 2023, p. 1; Lentz et al., 2021, p. 1). This study adds to previous research by expanding the previously found effect of 'language' on donor behaviour from the limited focus on 'framing' and 'emotional appeal' therein, with -in the current study- a consideration of 'word-connotation'. Thus, this study looks at the effect certain references to feminism can have of willingness to donate, as a result of their connotative power. This is done by measuring particularly the appeal of feminist references amongst potential donors, and their willingness to donate to a feminist NPO, after being exposed to such references. As the popularity of online donations and donor reach-out is increasing, it is crucial that

more academic research is done on the power of linguistic choices of feminist NPOs on willingness to donate, to fill the knowledge gap on online donor appeal, so NPOs can better understand and evoke online donor behaviour (Koksal et al., 2022, p. 1).

2. Theoretical Framework

To contextualise this thesis, this section delves into previous studies and theories that anticipate the branding of NPOs, particularly focusing on different linguistic choices within feminist NPO communication. Hypotheses derive from the expected relation between linguistic choices of NPOs and willingness to donate amongst the public, which will provide the foundation for the empirical research within this study. The research model and hypotheses of this study are visualised in Table 1 and Diagram 1.

This chapter starts with a paragraph on theories about NPOs and their financial stability, before continuing to talk about what constitutes branding and how branding influences the public's willingness to donate. Then, the following section explains the relation between 'linguistic choices' and willingness to donate, because previous research has established that framing and linguistic choices in NPOs' communication influence the perceptions of branding and this in turn results in various donor acquisition results (Bhatia, 1998, p. 107; Gleasure, 2023, p. 1; Lentz et al., 2021, p.1). More specifically, paragraph 2.3 looks at positioning of NPOs as advocates for a social cause, language use that is future-oriented and language that is negatively connoted. These three concepts result in three different operationalisations, which lead to two sub-hypotheses as these hypotheses rank the three different operationalisations. Lastly, various control variables that can influence willingness to donate are discussed, accounting for correlations between donation intentions and demographic determinants that have been observed in the past. The acknowledgement of such predefined relations as explanatory factors is important, and control over such factors should be exerted to minimise the influence of confound variables on the main hypotheses tested.

2.1 Non-profit organisations

A non-profit organisation (NPO) is an organisation that operates for a socially beneficial purpose and does not aim to make a profit (Kenton, 2024, para1). NPOs can receive donations from individuals, corporations, and government entities (Kenton, 2024, para4) for specific projects or for their general survival. WOMEN Inc. is a feminist NPO in the Netherlands, specifically, they are a non-governmental organisation (NGO). NGOs are organisations that aim to improve social and political problems locally, nationally, or internationally and they work independently of governments (Folger, 2024, para11, para12). Often, NGOs have a non-profit character. WOMEN Inc. is an NGO with a non-profit character because they work on macro level with governments, on meso level with organisations and professionals, and on micro level with awareness campaigns for the public (WOMEN Inc., 2023, para7; 2024a, para2). NGOs also work on a larger scope, for example a national or global scope, than NPOs, which is the case for WOMEN Inc. as it is a big feminist foundation in the Netherlands which operates on a national level (AsianNGO, 2001, para7). Therefore, this study uses the more overarching term NPO, because feminist organisations can be

both NGOs or NPOs, and to not exclude any feminist organisations from the theories built on in this research.

NPOs' financial stability is often fragile, as it is influenced by both public and private funding, which are external factors that can fluctuate (Carroll & Stater, 2009, p. 963; Chang & Tuckman, 1994, p. 288; Omura & Forster, 2014, p. 255). Research shows that when government funding erodes, NPOs tend to rely more than usual on individual donors (Hou et al., 2009, p. 215) and the sustainability of NPOs becomes more at risk (Omura & Forster, 2014, p. 255). The financial stability of feminist NPOs faces an enhanced risk compared to other civil society organisations, as feminist organisations are comparatively most underfunded (Arutyunova, 2017, p. 248-249).

While the previous section described the general funding experiences of NPOs, looking particularly at the Netherlands, we see a similar landscape. Dutch feminist organisations are often majorly dependent on funding from governments, for example WOMEN Inc. is dependent on government funding for 60% of its total funding streams (K. Straver, personal communication, March 4, 2024; WOMEN Inc., 2024a, para3). For WOMEN Inc., one of the major government funders is the Directorate Emancipation, which is part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The objectives, priorities and funding choices of this Directorate depend on the allocation of available budgets within the Ministries (K. Straver, personal communication, March 4, 2024) and can change alongside shifts in the political climate. This means that the funding quest of WOMEN Inc. is a good case study to investigate what effects language has on donor appeal to ensure financial longevity despite a changing political landscape.

2.2 Branding of NPOs

This paragraph defines branding in order to later relate this concept to linguistic choices of NPOs and their subsequent effects on willingness to donate. Branding can be identified as the process through which organisations, companies, products, or services are given meaning (Andrivet, 2024, para4). This is done by creating and shaping a brand in consumers' minds, for example consumers associate certain words or colours with a specific brand. The aim of branding is that consumers recognise a brand, and ultimately start to prefer a specific brand over competitors (Andrivet, 2024, para4).

In both the for-profit sector, as in the non-profit sector, branding is of importance, yet it has different functions in both sectors. As the for-profit sector aims to generate profit, create, and maintain a competitive advantage, to increase their market share and to maximise profits for shareholders, their branding is aimed to achieve these goals (Norwich University, n.d., para2). For NPOs, this is different, as they do not have a monetary aim, yet want to achieve a socially beneficial purpose and are moreover focused in their branding on raising funds and spreading their message (Kenton, 2024, para1). Nevertheless, in a socio-political environment where funding opportunities

are scarce, also NPOs have started to adopt more explicit funding recruitment strategies in which implicit competition with others NPOs is present (Omura & Forster, 2014, p. 255).

NPOs' branding is important for the longevity and survival of NPOs, as the various aspects of branding influence individuals' willingness to donate, which is especially crucial in a context wherein NPOs compete over limited funding (Hou et al., 2009, p. 215; Omura & Forster, 2014, p. 255). Many definitions exist of which aspects of NPOs' branding influence donor intention (Gregory et al., 2019, p. 585; Rios Romero et al., 2023, p. 452). Gregory et al. (2019, p. 585) propose a brand choice model in which brand salience and brand attitude influence brand choice intention. Brand salience is defined by them as the accessibility or prominence of a brand in one's memory, which is more an associative process, for example the implicit attitudes one has towards a brand. On the contrary, brand attitude is defined as one's attitude towards a brand, which is an evaluative process, for example the explicit evaluative judgments one has towards a brand (Gregory et al., 2019, p. 584). Moreover, Rios Romero et al. (2023, p. 452) propose a new framework that centres the donors' perspective of NGO brand equity, which consists of brand familiarity, brand association and commitment (Rios Romero et al., 2023, p. 452). This framework is novel in its aim to centre the perspective of donors, instead of the brands' perspective. The concept of brand familiarity is about recall, brand strength and brand identification, whereas brand association is about authenticity, reputation and differentiation and brand commitment refers to both attitudinal and emotional commitment.

The communication strategy of NPOs is important to branding as it influences the public perception of the NPOs' brand image (Huang & Ku, 2016, p. 80). In order to gain a competitive advantage in the contending context in which many causes exist that strive for social change, feminist organisations should maintain and promote their organisational identities as an asset or even as an objective worth investing in (D'Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2013, p. 1447). One way to do this is by aligning the organisational identity, image, and organisational culture in an attempt to communicate a consistent message about what the organization aims to bring about which can be achieved through the process of branding (D'Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2013, p. 1448).

According to Hou et al. (2009, p. 215), the brand personality, image, and awareness of NPOs directly correlate with individuals' willingness to donate. Their study furthermore suggests that two aspects of non-profit brand equity they examined, namely brand personality and brand awareness, have the potential to enhance donors' self-perception. This enhancement of donors' self-perception is found in this study to positively influence intention to donate (Hou et al., 2009, p. 225). Furthermore, this research underscores the importance of conveying a distinct non-profit brand image to individual donors, as an alignment of the organisation's objectives and values significantly influences consumers' supportive behaviour toward NPOs (Hou et al., 2009, p. 225).

Transcending the concept of brand image is brand purpose, which displays the NPOs' higher purpose in external communication towards potential donors. When effectively communicated,

meaning the target audience can relate to the purpose displayed, brand purpose contributes to long-term brand relationships (Mirzaei et al., 2021, p. 188, p. 196, p. 197), which will result in a loyal and recurring donor-base for NPOs.

Thus, branding is vital for the survival of NPOs, as it is related to an individuals' willingness to donate. Many definitions and aspects of branding for NPOs exist, and these theories provide a background framework on which this study will build by looking specifically at language used in branding efforts. Focusing on NPOs' communication strategy as a part of their branding, it influences the publics' perception of the NPO (Huang & Ku, 2016, p. 80). This in turn influences individuals' willingness to donate, therefore the following section delves further into the linguistic choices NPOs can make in their communication and what this means for willingness to donate.

2.3 Linguistic choices of NPOs

Delving into specifically which linguistic choices NPOs can make in their communication strategy, as part of their branding, this paragraph explains the overall effect of various linguistic choices of NPOs on audiences, as well as its subsequent effect on willingness to donate. Research points to the specific role of linguistic choices of NPOs in branding and donor acquisition (Gleasure, 2023, p. 1; Lentz et al., 2021, p.1). Various rhetorical and linguistic devices are often used in fundraising discourse to achieve donation goals (Bhatia, 1998, p. 107). The way in which appeals are presented, affect how people make decision judgments (Smith & Berger, 1996, p. 222). In fundraising requests for example, donors respond more favourable to positively framed appeals (where possible benefits of donating are emphasised) than to negatively framed appeals (where possible downfalls of not donating are emphasised). This research by Smith and Berger (1996, p. 222, 227) found empirical evidence that framing indeed has a significant effect on response rate, where response rate for positive frames was greater than for negative frames. In this study, response rate is the choice an individual makes to donate or not to donate (Smith & Berger, 1996, p. 222, 227). Moreover, Yilmaz and Blackburn (2022, p. 41) evaluated the impact of message framing and language use on intentions to donate in online fundraising settings. They found that using exclusive language (language that excludes the organisation from the appeal, for example 'with your donation...') combined with potential rewards for donating increased the likeliness that individuals would donate to the organization. In addition, the reverse was also true: using inclusive language (language that includes the organization in the appeal, for example 'with our donations...') combined with potential losses for donating had a positive impact on fundraising. Thus, various linguistic frames of donation appeals influence the intention and choice to donate amongst individuals.

Relating the observation that language influences donation choices and intentions to the case of feminist NPO communication, specifically to feminist linguistic choices, one must acknowledge that different references to feminism exist. Words like 'gender equality' and 'feminism' are often both used to describe the feminist movement (McCann et al., 2019b, p. 339, 341; Yilmaz, 2015, p.

108). There has been a shift in which references are used to describe the feminist movement throughout the years. The term 'gender equality' has been adopted into government policies since 1985 (Yilmaz, 2015, p. 108), and has come into frequent use by feminist organisations since then. The terms 'feminism' and 'gender equality' are often used interchangeably, yet certain terms are found to be more popular throughout different feminist waves (McCann et al., 2019b, p. 339, 341; Yilmaz, 2015, p. 108). As the term 'feminist' and 'feminism' were found to be rather negatively connoted (Adichie, 2014, p. 3, p. 11; Anderson et al., 2009, p. 216), the direct appearance of these words in the description of the 'feminist movement' has put organisations of this nature under linguistic stress. That is, many people, especially men, do not identify with the term 'feminist', yet they report to be supportive of the feminist cause (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018, p. 937). Men, instead, *do* experience resonance with the term 'gender equality' (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018, p. 937).

Given the charged nature of the word 'feminism' itself, one can argue for the need of a new reference to feminism that is not negatively connoted, or neutral (as seems to be the case for 'gender equality'). Yilmaz (2015, p. 108) calls for a new reference to feminism that will undo the negative connotation the feminist movement is charged with. This author proposes the term 'gender justice' as an aspiring concept, a term which highlights the importance of justice between the sexes and different existing genders (Yilmaz, 2015, p. 108). Although this suggestion for re-defining the feminist cause is promising, other scholars counter the idea that 'feminism' as a reference term should be replaced. Adichie (2014, p. 41, 42) for example, advocates for maintained use of the term 'feminist', this to acknowledge the specific gender of those individuals, women, who have historically been excluded and oppressed. According to this author, using more general terms like 'believer in human rights' (2014, p.41, 42) to identify followers of the feminist movement, would not do women historical justice. Adichie's argument can be expanded to references of feminism such as 'gender equality' and 'gender justice', as they might lack the name of the oppressed in the term. Sticking to traditional word use when addressing the 'feminist movement', however stands the risk that only limited resonance with the public is created, and financial support online is elicited amongst only a small population.

Building on this notion that linguistic choices to manifest the purpose and objective of the feminist movement can either positively or negatively affect audiences' resonance with and support of feminist organisations, feminist NPOs can strategize their use of different references to feminism to target their audiences effectively. Effective communication in this case means addressing the public in a relatable manner which will result in empathy and support for the feminist cause (Mirzaei et al., 2021, p. 196). As seen before, different references to feminism can have various effects on various audiences. Therefore, it is crucial that feminist NPOs know their audience, manipulate their communication and linguistic choices regarding references to feminism, to in turn increase donor appeal and intention. The following paragraphs will focus on potential effects of specific linguistic choices within feminist NPO external communication, on willingness to donate. Specifically, the

paragraphs will explain the theories regarding three specific linguistic choices NPOs can make in their communication: positioning advocates in a social cause, future-oriented appeals and negatively connoted words. In line with the previous research, the following hypothesis is drawn:

H1: Feminist NPOs' word choice in external online communication affects individuals' willingness to donate

2.3.1 Positioning advocates in a social cause

Positioning in language as a branding strategy plays a role in the attraction of potential donors (Lentz et al., 2021, p.1). Some NPOs position themselves as social justice advocates, meaning organisations want to educate their audience about the cause they serve. For example, WWF who through their communication explicitly invite the audience to join their movement, and to undertake action themselves to preserve wildlife (Lentz et al., 2021, p. 19). By branding the purpose of social justice, NPOs want to motivate their audience to be advocates for the social cause themselves (Lentz et al., 2021, p. 19). Research underlines that this positioning of an NPO as advocates for a social cause increases overall support for and a positive sentiment towards the NPO, and importantly also increases individuals' willingness to donate (Lentz et al., 2021, p. 21).

Translating this notion to the case of feminist NPO communication, feminist NPOs can decide to characterize themselves as advocates for the social cause of equal opportunities for all people, regardless of sex or gender. By framing the feminist cause as a fight for 'gender justice', feminist NPOs can subsequently activate their audience to join the movement and undertake action in their own lives to work towards gender equality. Yilmaz (2015, p. 108) presents the term 'gender justice' as an aspiring concept in the broader scheme of feminist NPOs' social mission. Although gender equality is inherent to the concept of 'gender justice', gender justice as a term encompasses more objectives than gender equality alone, such as "equity, balance, a higher understanding of fair treatment, and liabilities between men and women" (Yilmaz, 2015, p. 108). The term 'gender justice' thereby becomes an aspiring term that surpasses solely 'gender equality' and thus can motivate a broad an inclusive audience to not only aim for gender equality, yet for the higher understanding of justice amongst genders. 'Gender justice' as a reference to the feminist movement is thus a manifestation of a rather neutral linguistic choice that can encourage a broad public, regardless of its gender, for social action. Derived from the idea that NPOs can position themselves as general social justice advocates (Lentz et al., 2021, p. 19), using the word 'gender justice' in external communication, feminist NPOs position themselves as advocates in the cause of gender justice and motivate their audience to act accordingly. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1a: Gender justice generates higher willingness to donate than 1) gender equality and 2) feminism (and 3) no word)

2.3.2 *Future-oriented appeals*

Appeals are the ways in which NPOs ask for financial support, which includes the communication of a mission statement, and the convincing of an audience that this mission statement is worth their financial investment (Kindful, 2021, para1). As discussed in section 2.3, other research has examined the relationship between various forms of appeals in relation to donation willingness or intention. Appeals that have often been examined are emotional appeals (Paxton et al., 2020, p. 1051) and positively or negatively framed appeals (Smith & Berger, 1996, p. 222, 227)

A study by Gleasure (2023, p. 3) found another way in which language positively influences donations: through future-oriented appeals. In this context, a future-oriented appeal is text through which individuals focus on anticipated future events (Gleasure, 2023, p. 3), for example ‘Imagine a future in which...’. A past-oriented appeal refers to text in which individuals direct their attention towards the historical pathways that have shaped present circumstances (Gleasure, 2023, p. 3), for example ‘Because of historical oppression ...’. Past research has examined past- and future-oriented appeals as being a fixed perspective of a donor, in which for example certain individuals tend to adopt a future orientation across a range of decision-making scenarios (Gleasure, 2023, p. 3, 4). Other research has shown that the use of future oriented framing language can cause individuals to assume a future orientation (Gleasure, 2023, p. 4). Therefore, organisations can make use of future-oriented appeals or past-oriented appeals in their communication, through framing language. Moreover, research has shown that as opposed to past-oriented appeals, future-oriented appeals, as communicated by an organisation, are found to increase fundraising as they move individuals to act (Gleasure, 2023, p. 1). This preference and interest for individuals towards future-oriented appeals is explained by the author through the impact text has on individuals’ motivation. Individuals are, according to the author, motivated by the tangible impact of their donations, which is accomplished through a future-oriented appeal (Gleasure, 2023, p. 15).

Drawing from this research and relating it to feminist NPO communication and the terms used in this study, a feminist NPO can choose to adopt a future-oriented appeal in their communication to hope to move individuals to act and to anticipate future events. In the case of feminist communication, a reference to feminism that can be seen as an operationalisation of a future-oriented appeal can be ‘gender equality’. ‘Gender equality’ can be seen as a future-oriented appeal since this reference names the desired outcome of the feminist movement in prospective times and thus refers to an anticipated future event. By mentioning the anticipated future event within the feminist movement, gender equality, it is expected that individuals are motivated by the tangible impact of their donations. H1b is drawn from this, yet is discussed after the following section, because it also refers to the term ‘feminism’ which is discussed in section 2.3.3.

2.3.3 *Negatively connoted words*

Different words have different connotations, which consequently has different effects on the perception of the communicator (NPO) as a brand (Mirzaei et al., 2021, p. 196). In developing brand relationships between the NPO and its audiences, thus potential donors, it is crucial that the concepts that the NPO communicates are relatable to and in line with the target audience (Mirzaei et al., 2021, p. 196). As Mirzaei et al. argue, to achieve this NPOs must build brand positioning through adopting a higher brand purpose, which then in turn is found to have a greater potential to resonate with target audiences and will result in a loyal donor-base for NPOs (Mirzaei et al., 2021, p. 197).

To predict what references to the feminism movement will generate the highest willingness to donate, we need to look closer at the various connotations references to the feminist brand purpose have. We will compare the three terms already mentioned before in anticipation of their connotative power: 'gender justice', 'gender equality' and 'feminism'. Lastly, we will discuss a scenario in which donation appeal is exempt from references to the feminist cause.

Research has established that semantic framing matters immensely in donation appeals (Su et al., 2024, p. 924). Semantics looks at the relationships between words and how different people can draw different meanings from word, for example the word 'crash' can mean many things; an accident, a drop in the stock market, or showing up to a party uninvited (StudySmarterUK, n.d., para3). Semantics, and semantic framing, affect donation through narration techniques (Hsu et al., 2023, p. 553, 558). Narration techniques are literary devices like style, metaphors, and hyperboles (Landis, 2024, para1), among which is word choice. Word choice is a strategic approach to incorporate linguistic cues, more specifically semantic cues, to convey specific meanings to influence the audience. Semantic cues are thus a part of linguistic cues, and they provide the explicit meanings of words. Word choice, as a form of semantic framing, thus plays a crucial role in conveying meanings that can evoke or diminish sympathy towards the recipient of the message (Hsu et al., 2023 p. 555).

Exemplifying different connotations of different words, the word 'feminism' has long been negatively connoted, and feminists have been stereotyped as man-haters, bra-haters and always angry (Adichie, 2014, p. 3, p. 11; Anderson et al., 2009, p. 216). This is especially found to be true for men, while the term 'gender equality' as opposed to 'feminism' is found to be less stigmatising by men than the term 'feminist' (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018, p. 937). More on gender as being a control variable in section 2.3.2. Choosing to use an often negatively connoted word like 'feminism' in external communication is expected to be a semantic cue that diminishes sympathy towards the feminist organisation, and thus negatively influences donation willingness. On the contrary, research has shown, the word 'gender equality' is less negatively connoted than the word 'feminism' (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018, p. 937), hence making the use of this word in communication rather neutral, and presumably causing a higher likeliness individuals will be willing to donate.

In an attempt to completely neutralize communication, NPOs could decide to only mention a mission statement in donation appeals and no reference to feminism at all. Yet, it is assumed that due to the lack of a specific reference to feminism, one's willingness to donate is lowest, as the donation appeal will lack specificity and clarity on the outcome of one's contribution (Ye et al., 2015, p. 480). Integrating the prediction for the effects of the connotative power 'gender equality', 'feminism' and the lack of a reference at all on willingness to donate, the following prediction is formulated:

H1b: Gender equality generates higher willingness to donate than 1) feminism (and 2) no word)

2.4 Control variables influencing willingness to donate

Linguistic choices of NPOs are the main focus in this study, being the independent variable in this study, meaning that linguistic choices of NPOs are hypothesised to have an effect on individuals' willingness to donate. Yet, other factors can also have effects on willingness to donate which are important to take into account when researching the influence of linguistic choices of NPOs on willingness to donate. Acknowledging these predefined relations as explanatory factors is of importance, as controlling these factors minimises the influence of confound variables on the main hypothesis tested. This section thus discusses which variables, based on insights from previous studies, can also influence willingness to donate, and thus will be taken into this study as being control variables.

2.4.1 Gender

The main aim of feminism is to achieve equal rights for women in the social, political, and economical context (Crowe, 2011, p. 49). The realisation that feminism mostly focuses on women's rights, results in men concluding that the movement is against them (Crowe, 2011, p. 49). Besides, feminists are often connoted as being men-haters (Adichie, 2014, p. 11; Anderson et al., 2009, p. 216), leading to many people, amongst which are both men and women, holding negative perceptions of feminism and of people who identify as feminists. An implicit negativity bias towards feminists exists, as research has found that within a study on the implicit attitudes towards feminism, participants are slower to associate good words than bad words with 'feminist' (Jenen et al., 2009, p. 19). Especially men are found to withhold them from identifying as a feminist, whereas the term 'gender equality' is found to be experienced as less stigmatising (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018, p. 937).

In addition, the propensity to donate to an NPO increases when an individual is likely to benefit from its services (Srnrka et al., 2003, p. 82). As the concepts sex, gender, sexual, woman, feminine and feminist are very much intertwined (Steiner, 2008, p. 8; Üstün & Süren, 2022, p. 153), the expectation exists that more women than men identify with feminist NPO goals' values, which is expected to have a positive influence on willingness to donate amongst women. As a result of men identifying less with the feminist mission statement, it is expected that this is negative for the willingness to donate amongst men.

While the above research mostly focuses on the distinction between men and women and their perceptions of feminism or feminist communication, cis-gendered people are not the only existing gender identities. Trans people have long been excluded within feminism (Koyama, 2000, p. 735), with terms such as TERF, trans-exclusionary radical feminists, rising in recent years, this increasingly excludes trans people from the feminist movement (Pearce et al., 2020, p. 883). Through the historical exclusion of trans people within feminism, the expectation exists that trans people are less willing to donate to a feminist NPO than women are.

Thus, because the expectation exists that both men and trans people are less willing to donate to a feminist NPO, gender is taken into this study as a control variable.

2.4.2 Age

Adding to demographic variables that can influence willingness to donate, besides gender, age is also taken into account in this study as a control variable. Research has identified a positive relationship between age and donation behaviour to charitable organisations. An early study examined this relationship in a naturalistic research setting and found that elderly people donated more money than younger people (Midlarsky & Hannah, 1989, p. 350). Specifically, this study found an increase from the youngest ages (starting at the age of 5), until a plateau in the middle-adult years, and then found that people of 65 years and above donated more frequently than any other group of people under the age of 65 did (Midlarsky & Hannah, 1989, p. 350). Other research also found that age positively influenced donation amount (Lee & Chang, 2007, p. 1177). Yet, research regarding age and support for the feminist movement showed that people of older age are more likely to have a more conservative stance towards feminism (Fitzpatrick Bettencourt et al., 2011, p. 863). Acknowledging that the feminist mission statement resonates more with younger individuals, the expectation arises that people of a higher age are less willing to donate to a feminist NPO. Therefore, this research also takes age into account as being a control variable on willingness to donate.

2.4.3 Attitude towards feminism

Another factor that can influence one's willingness to donate to a feminist NPO, is one's attitude towards feminism. If an individual thinks negatively of feminism's contributions to society, it can be expected that they are less willing to donate to a feminist NPO than someone who thinks positively of feminism and its contributions to society. Psychological involvement of individuals with an NPO has been researched with regards to donation intentions, and the level of involvement with the cause and the NPO has been found to be positively linked to donation intentions (Cao & Jia, 2017, p. 460). The expectation thus exists that people with a negative attitude towards feminism are less willing to donate to a feminist NPO than people with a positive attitude towards feminism. Therefore, one's attitude towards feminism is taken as a control variable in this study.

2.4.4 Donation habits

Moreover, one's previous donation habits can influence one's willingness to donate to a feminist NPO. Generally, research has found that previous donation habits are a predictor of future donation behaviour, because previous donation behaviour drives both donation decisions and donor generosity (Brady et al., 2002, p. 937). Thus, someone who donates often to charities and NPOs is expected to also score high in this present study on willingness to donate, whereas someone who never donates to charities and NPOs is expected to score lower in this study on willingness to donate. Therefore, one's donation habits is taken into this study as a control variable.

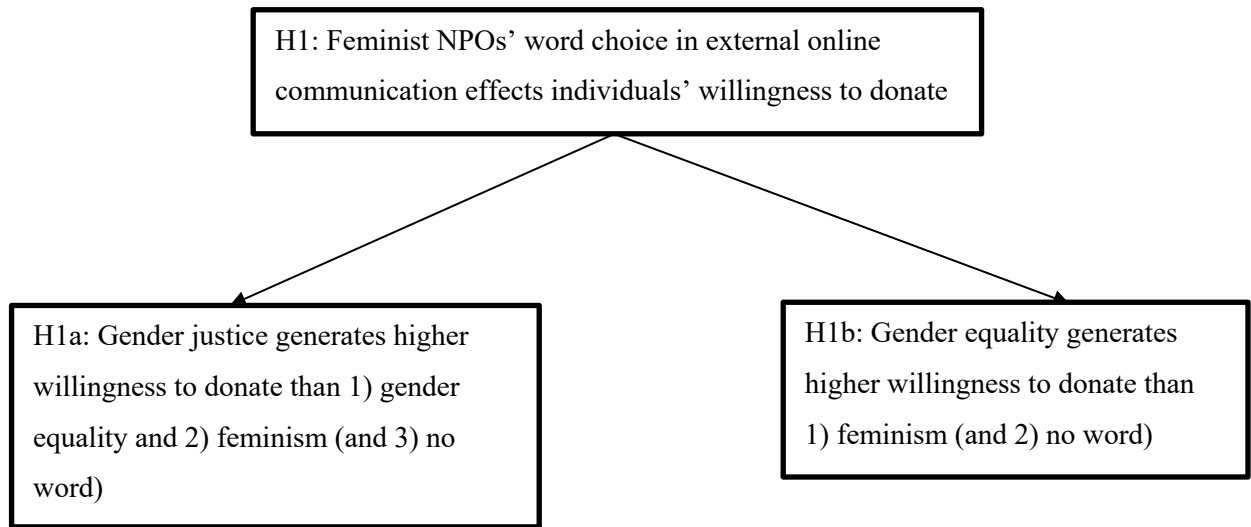
2.4.5 Negative connotation feminism

As research in chapter 2.3.3 of this study shows, specifically the word feminism is often negatively connoted. Yet, the endorsement of this negative connotation may very well vary per person, even per gender identity or age group. Thus, the hypothesis that the negatively connoted word 'feminism' generates the lowest willingness to donate compared to the other words (H1b), might well not be true for everyone. Therefore, it is interesting to take the variable 'holds negative connotation towards feminism' as a control variable in this study, as the extent to which this predisposition is held might have an effect on willingness to donate, regardless of the independent variable of word choice in this study.

Table 1: Research model

| Variable | Description |
|----------------------------|---|
| Independent Variables (IV) | Word Choice <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gender Justice- Gender Equality- Feminism- No word |
| Dependent Variables (DV) | Willingness to Donate (measure of 3 items) |
| Control Variables | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Age- Gender- Donation Habit- Attitudes towards feminism- Negative connotation of feminism |

Diagram 1: Hypotheses



3. Method

3.1 Justification of method

The method employed in this study was an online survey experiment. The effects of NPOs' word choice on individuals' willingness to donate were investigated. A one-way ANOVA was conducted with the independent variable (IV) being the NPOs' word choice, operationalised in three distinct ways: (1) positioning as advocates in a social cause (gender justice), (2) the use of a future-oriented appeal (gender equality) and (3) the use of a negatively connoted word (feminism). A control group was added in which none of these words were present. The dependent variable (DV), willingness to donate, was initially measured through a set of three questions, and a factor analysis was executed to see if any of the three items overlap and could be grouped.

To ensure comprehensive data collection, this study employed a survey experiment design. This method allowed for the systematic manipulation of the independent variable, NPO's word choice, while controlling for various variables that are expected to influence the dependent variable, Willingness to Donate, including gender, age, donation habit, attitude towards feminism, and perception of negative connotations surrounding feminism. The inclusion of these control variables allowed for the isolation of the effects of NPOs' word choice on willingness to donate from other potential influences, without the control variables influencing the effects observed between the IV and DV.

In the survey experiment, participants were exposed to a slogan, in which one of the three word options that were expected to influence one's willingness to donate was shown, or none was shown at all. This operationalisation is further explained in section 3.3. This experimental step of the survey allowed for direct observations of how different word choices in the communication of NPOs regarding references to feminism, impact individuals' willingness to donate.

The design for analysis chosen was a between-subjects design; thus, each participant was only exposed to one randomly selected operationalisation of the NPOs' word choice, and independent responses to the control condition were compared. All participants were exposed to the same survey, the only differing factor was whether participants were exposed to slogans a, b, c, or d. As Qualtrics allowed for equal distribution of the slogans, participants were evenly distributed among one of the four slogans that represented the various test conditions, during the time the survey experiment was open for responses. Afterward, results were compared between different groups of participants (Charness et al., 2012, p. 1). These groups existed of roughly the same size, because after data cleaning no entirely equal distribution amongst the four conditions remained. More on this and on the final sample in paragraph 3.4. The groups created within the dataset differed in only one controlled condition: which slogan they had been exposed to (a, b, c, or d). The advantages of a between-subjects design, as opposed to a within-subjects design, are that it prevents carryover effects and fatigue effects, and it takes little time for participants to complete, as the experiment is short and participants are exposed to only one condition. Because participants were only exposed to one

condition, this prevented carryover effects in the sense that participants could have guessed what the experiment entailed in the case of exposure to multiple conditions. This would, as a result, have had a potentially negative influence on the results of the study. A between-subjects design was also expected to have a positive effect on the internal validity of the study as it reduces confounding, and prevents carryover effects, yet more participants are required to improve statistical rigor (Bhandari, 2023, para4). Internal validity refers to how accurately the findings of a study demonstrate the genuine causal connection between variables, without any interference from confounding variables or biases.

This study was executed in an online experiment format. This allowed for the establishment of a large sample, which results in high statistical power, and they are also cost and time-efficient (Reips, 2000, p. 89), which was practical given the scope and available time of this study. The experiment was anonymous, which minimised social desirability bias, which could occur in the form of participants feeling the need to give socially desirable answers, regarding feminism and their donation habits for example, anonymisation thus constituted authentic answers (Grimm, 2010, p.1). While the experiment enabled manipulation of specific conditions, namely word choice of NPOs, this method also allowed the findings of the study to be generalizable to a broader population, for example, the more general audience of any Dutch feminist NPO (Mullinix et al., 2015, p. 109).

An alternative statistical analysis that was considered was linear regression, which could have examined the relationship between NPOs' word choice and individuals' willingness to donate, yet this method assumes the relationship between the predictor and outcome to be linear, which was not the case. Thus, the between-subjects survey experiment design coupled with a one-way ANOVA analysis enabled a rigorous examination of the relationship between NPOs' word choice and individuals' willingness to donate, shedding light on effective strategies for fundraising efforts in the non-profit sector. Specifically, the one-way ANOVA allowed for the analyses of group means, which was helpful in the context of participants being grouped into four groups, being the four conditions they were exposed to.

3.2 Sample

3.2.1 Main sample

This study required a minimum sample of 200 participants, constituting at least 50 participants per operationalisation, this is to ensure valid data collection and to enable observations of causal relationships and patterns. There was one main sample group established in this research, which included individuals within the social media followers base of WOMEN Inc., which is a big feminist non-profit organisation in the Netherlands. WOMEN INC. works on a macro level with governments, on a meso level with organisations, and a micro level with awareness campaigns for the public (WOMEN Inc., 2023, para7; 2024a, para2). They have a large social media following on Instagram and LinkedIn and their online communication is accessible to all Instagram and LinkedIn

visitors. In the Netherlands, WOMEN Inc. has amongst other accomplishments, achieved the introduction of the women's quota and the expansion of paid partner leave (WOMEN Inc., 2024b, para10), demonstrating the relatively large influence of the organization on gender politics within the Netherlands. WOMEN Inc. operates through awareness campaigns to the public and lobby activities towards politics. In communicating with their audience, they predominantly operate online, to inform their audience about gender equality, or lack thereof in the Netherlands. Followers of WOMEN Inc. were chosen as a target population because it was assumed that followers of WOMEN Inc. already have a positive predisposition towards and an interest in the topic of feminism, and therefore qualify as a realistic potential donor base. This present research was interested in examining what might trigger these audiences to make the step from unpaid followership towards monetary support, because of exposure to different references to feminism. This sample, followers of WOMEN Inc., can moreover also be considered representative of followers of other Dutch feminist NPOs, yet it is required to note this sample is little representative of people outside of the feminist population.

Followers of WOMEN Inc. could easily be invited for research participation through a social media post of WOMEN Inc., as consuming the social media content of WOMEN Inc. is the usual way in which their follower base is informed about information and news regarding feminism. The researcher of this thesis was at the time of the sampling period also employed at this organisation, allowing for the simplification of participant solicitation. Yet, it should be noted that this research was conducted independent of the organisation, meaning the organisation did not influence the direction of the study, or the questions being asked in the survey. Instead, the researcher came up with the questions of the survey themselves whilst drawing from literature, and the researcher and the organisation were not in contact regarding the contents of the survey throughout the process. The organisation merely allowed access to their audience as being the sample group of this study.

The method of sampling for this thesis was convenience sampling, which is a non-probability form of sampling. The online experiment was posted twice in the first instance on the Instagram channel of WOMEN Inc., in the form of an Instagram Story on Saturday April 6th, 2024, at 5 PM, and on Tuesday April 16th, 2024, at 3 PM because these are days and times when WOMEN Inc. observes the highest interaction with their social media followers. The Instagram Story disappeared after 24 hours as an inherent characteristic of the stories feature. In consultation with the social media manager of WOMEN Inc., an Instagram Story was considered to be the best way to reach possible participants, because a link could be embedded in the Story directly where people can directly click on it to go to the survey. Additionally, the survey was posted on the LinkedIn channel of WOMEN Inc., to reach a broader audience than solely Instagram followers and to reach a diverse population in terms of age. As the social media manager of WOMEN Inc. recommended, their LinkedIn followers are generally older than their Instagram followers. Combining recruitment through Instagram with LinkedIn would allow for the generation of a more representatively distributed sample in terms of age. The survey was shared on LinkedIn on Tuesday April 16th 2024,

as Tuesday is a day on which the LinkedIn followers of WOMEN Inc. are active. The survey experiment was distributed both on Instagram and LinkedIn through an anonymous link, therefore it could not be tracked which respondents were recruited via which platform. Participants ultimately self-selected if they want to participate in the study (Stratton, 2021, p. 373).

The language of the survey experiment was Dutch because WOMEN Inc. operates in the Netherlands and solely communicates in Dutch, to improve the understandability of the survey experiment for the Dutch-speaking sample. This survey experiment, therefore, through its language, excluded followers of WOMEN Inc. who do not speak Dutch from participating, yet because WOMEN Inc. communicates solely in Dutch, this group was assumed to be small. The item regarding willingness to donate, which was derived from a previous study on willingness to donate amongst different mobile devices (Chung & Hair, 2021, p. 1464) was translated into Dutch.

The first draft of the Dutch survey experiment was tested among a test population of 10% of the minimum number of participants of the final study, which resulted in 35 participants. In this pilot, a question was added to the end of the survey experiment to ask for feedback about whether the survey experiment was unclear or could have been formulated better. This feedback was then evaluated and implemented in the final survey experiment. The most remarkable improvement was changing the slogans to rectify both a linguistic error ('speeding up' (reference to feminism) was changed into 'contribute to' (reference to feminism) as one cannot speed up a movement). The slogan was also adapted to include more of a mission statement in the slogan regarding the feminist NPO. Furthermore, the pilot showed that the control question after the exposure to the slogan was unclear to participants, therefore this question was formulated more clearly in the final survey experiment. The control question was changed from 'Which word have you just read in the slogan?', to 'Which word have you just literally read in the slogan? None of these words is also a possibility.'.

3.2.2 Pilot sample

As paragraph 4.3.2 explains, during the analysis of this study, the need arose for another sample group: a pilot sample of non-followers. The goal of this sample was to see if the research results would differ among the main sample and the pilot sample. If the pilot sample would result in different results, the sample would be expanded. This sample was sampled through convenience sampling as well, and the same survey was sent to them, except from the parts about WOMEN Inc. in the donation slogans. The main demographics of the pilot sample are displayed in Table 3 in paragraph 4.1.2.

3.3 Data collection & measures

The survey experiment was conducted through an online tool called Qualtrics, measuring the following concepts: control variables: age, gender, attitude towards feminism, donation habit, negative connotations of feminism, the IV which was one of four slogans, the operationalisation of

the linguistic choices in feminist NPO external communication, a control question to check if participants noticed the word in the slogan, and lastly the DV, willingness to donate which constituted of three questions. The survey experiment, both the original in Dutch and the translated version in English for the replicability of this study, can be found in Appendix A (Dutch) and Appendix B (English).

Before starting the experimental survey, all participants were informed about the subject, duration, voluntary nature, and anonymity of their contribution. Participants could disagree with these terms, after which they were excluded from participating in the experiment. Age was measured with an open question asking participants to fill in their age in years. Participants under the age of 18 were automatically excluded from further participation in the survey experiment because, for ethical reasons, this study only included over-age people. Gender identity was measured using a single categorical item with an expanded list of response options, drawing from research by Fraser (2018, p. 3). The statement towards participants was: 'I Identify most as ...'. The answer options were cis male, cis female, trans man, trans woman, non-binary and other, namely. This last answer option allowed participants to fill in their gender identity when it was not listed. The choice for a categorical list to measure gender identity was made because through previous studies, it was assumed to minimise missing data, while also aiming to be inclusive of various existing gender identities (Fraser, 2018, p. 5). Then, participants were introduced to the next part of the survey experiment with a short introduction about feminism to give all participants the same definition before starting the further questions. For the control variables, participants were asked to choose one of the answers in response to the control variables questions, depending on which answers suited them the most. The statement measuring attitude towards feminism was: 'Feminism contributes positively to society'. Answer options ranged from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree' on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The 5-point Likert-type scale was chosen as this allowed participants to, in a simple manner, choose an answer that ranged between completely disagreeing to completely agreeing, while also allowing for a neutral answer option. Participants were then asked about their donation habit, which was introduced as being 'the frequency with which one donates money to charities or organisations'. Answer options ranged from 'I never donate to charities' to 'I always donate to charities' on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Participants were also asked about their connotations towards feminism with the statement: 'Feminism generally has a negative connotation.' Answer options ranged from 'Completely disagree' to 'Completely agree' on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Then, the survey moved on to measure the independent variable of this study. Linguistic choices in feminist NPO external communication were operationalised as advocates of a social cause (gender justice), future-oriented appeal (gender equality), and negatively connoted word (feminism). These words translate in Dutch to: *genderrechtvaardigheid*, *gendergelijkheid* en *feminisme*. There also was a control group in which none of these words were shown in the slogan. As discussed in chapters 2.3.1, 2.3.2, and 2.3.3, these three words were chosen as operational definitions of the

broader concept of NPOs' word choice. As both 'gender equality' and 'feminism' are frequently used references to feminism in feminist NPO communication, and the word 'gender justice' is an alternative reference to feminism that feminist NPOs could use more often in their communication, this made these words suitable operationalisations for the broader concept of NPOs' word choice. These terms were taken from various channels of online communication of WOMEN Inc., and integrated into slogan texts that form the test conditions of this research. The word 'gender justice' was not taken directly from the communication of a feminist NPO, but was drawn from literature, because this is a reference to feminism that NPOs could use more in their communication (Yilmaz, 2015, p. 108). According to Yilmaz (2015, p. 108), the term 'gender justice' is an aspiring term that includes equality but also transcends men's and women's social roles and practices. This term can be an alternative reference to feminism that triggers willingness to donate amongst a broader audience.

One text was developed that was systematically altered with the presence of one of the three references to feminism, or none, being the control group. Participants were presented with one out of the four slogans. These were: A) 'Donate now and support WOMEN Inc. in its fight for equal opportunities and contribute to gender justice in the Netherlands', B) 'Donate now and support WOMEN Inc. in its fight for equal opportunities and contribute to gender equality in the Netherlands', C) 'Donate now and support WOMEN Inc. in its fight for equal opportunities and contribute to feminism in the Netherlands' and D) 'Donate now and support WOMEN Inc. in its fight for equal opportunities'. A control question followed to check whether participants noticed the right word in the slogan, asking: 'Which word have you just read in the slogan?', with the four answer options being the four operationalisations: gender justice, gender equality, feminism, or none. This question ensured that, when answered correctly, participants indeed noticed the word in the slogan, thus they were aware of which word they were exposed to. Participants who answered this control question wrongly ($N = 60$) were excluded from the data set through data cleaning, as this meant that they did not consciously see the word, because they could not recall it, which therefore muddles with the measurement of the effect of word choice on WTD. This control question thus ensured that the effect of word choice on WTD was isolated, as only participants who could recall the word they saw were included in data analyses.

The dependent variable, willingness to donate (WTD), was then asked via an operationalisation of the concept into three items: 'How willing would you be to donate to WOMEN Inc.?', 'How happy would you be to give to WOMEN Inc.?' and 'How meaningful is it to you to support WOMEN Inc. financially?'. This scale measuring WTD contains three items, as it was adapted from Chung and Hair (2021, p. 1364), who examined WTD amongst different mobile devices, and through this they made a concise scale to measure WTD with high reliability ($\alpha = .93$) (Chung & Hair, 2021, p. 1343, 1348). The original word 'program' was changed to 'WOMEN Inc.' to make the questions more specific to the case of this study and the participants. Participants answer on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from (1) 'Not willing at all' to 'Extremely willing', (2) 'Not

comfortable at all' to 'Extremely comfortable', and (3) 'Not meaningful at all' to 'Extremely meaningful' (Chung & Hair, 2021, p. 1364; Likert, 1932).

Lastly, participants were asked if they wanted to stay informed about the results of the research and if so, if they would want to leave their email address in the open box. This was very much optional for participants, and the only purpose of collecting these email addresses was to be able to send the final version of this study to participants who wish to receive it.

The first distribution of the survey experiment was an Instagram Story, which was online for 24 hours, as is the nature of Instagram Stories. It went live on Saturday, April 6 at 5 pm. Of all of the respondents of this first distribution ($N = 134$), 19.4% (26 respondents) answered the control question wrongly. To better the comprehensibility of the survey and to aim to prevent further high removal rates with the second and third distribution, the control question was rephrased to be: 'Which word have you just literally read in the slogan? None of these words is also a possibility.'. With the second distribution (which consisted of an Instagram Story and a LinkedIn post), unfortunately, of the total respondents ($N = 151$), 22.5% answered the control question wrongly, which is a slight increase in cases that had to be excluded. More on this in the results chapter.

The first distribution resulted in 134 respondents, and the second and third distribution were grouped as they went live quite close to each other and resulted in 152 participants.

3.4 Analysis

The data was first cleaned by deleting missing values. A total of 286 respondents were recorded to have participated in the survey. Data cleaning consisted of excluding underage participants ($N = 3$, 1.05%), participants who did not finish the entire survey ($N = 14$, 4.90%), and participants who answered the control question wrongly with the word they had been exposed to ($N = 60$, 20.98%). After data cleaning, $N = 209$ participants were included in further analysis.

As part of cleaning the data, the different slogans and the corresponding words that participants were exposed to (gender justice, gender equality, feminism, or no word) were grouped together in one variable with different levels, called 'word choice', in which level 1= 'gender justice' ($N = 50$), level 2= 'gender equality' ($N = 59$), level 3= 'feminism' ($N = 58$) and level 4= 'no word' ($N = 42$). This variable integrated the different conditions of the independent variable word-choice for further comparative analysis of the effect of words (or absence thereof) on WTD,

Then the categorical variable of gender was made numerical, in order to run analyses on this variable which was measured categorically. Furthermore, to get a good grasp of the data collected, descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies, were used to calculate the counts of the variable of gender. More on the descriptives regarding gender in paragraph 4.1, where the descriptives of the sample size are explained.

A factor analysis was executed amongst the three items measuring Willingness to Donate (WTD) to see if any of the items overlap and can be grouped. The results of the factor analyses are explained in section 4.2.

Then, a one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to test H1a and H1b, through which H1 could be tested. A one-way ANOVA was conducted because the Independent Variable word choice consisted of three different operationalisations, 'gender justice', 'gender equality', and 'feminism', and also no words were taken into the study as a control group. This study also aimed to execute a two-way ANOVA analysis to test the interaction effect between gender, word choice and willingness to donate, yet this could not be executed. More on this in paragraph 4.4. The control variables were taken into the one-way ANOVA analysis, which was conducted in SPSS through univariate analyses. For all the statistical analyses, the standard significance level of 95% ($p < 0.05$) was applied.

4. Results

4.1 Sample size and demographics

4.1.1 Demographics main sample

Regarding the sample size and demographics of this study, after data cleaning, the total number of participants who were included in further analyses was ($N = 209$). Section 3.5 explains how many participants were excluded from further analysis during data cleaning, and for what reasons they were excluded. In the final sample, the majority of the respondents identified as cis women ($N = 198$, 94.7%). This was very much in line with the follower base of WOMEN Inc, which consists for 95.4% of (cis) women and 4.5% of (cis) men (Y. van Antwerpen, personal communication, May 13, 2024). We can hence conclude that the sample was representative of the gender distribution of the followers of WOMEN Inc. 5 Respondents in this study identified as ‘women’, which made this a separate category as they did not want to identify with either cis woman or trans woman. All of the gender identities that were formed, and the number of participants within each category, are visualised in Table 2.

Table 2: Division of gender identities

| Gender identity | Number of participants | % of total participants |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Cis women | 198 | 94.7% |
| Women | 5 | 2.4% |
| Trans men | 2 | 1% |
| Trans women | 1 | 0.5% |
| Non-binary people | 1 | 0.5% |
| Cis men | 1 | 0.5% |
| Agender | 1 | 0.5% |
| Total | 209 | 100% |

Because the sample consisted of mostly cis women (94.7%) and almost no other gender identities were represented, gender could not be taken into further consideration as a control variable in this study, because there were too few respondents in each category to be able to run valid and reliable analyses on this variable.

Respondents’ age was grouped into age categories to simplify data analysis, instead of executing analyses on individual ages. Of the total included 209 respondents, 50.72% of the respondents ($N = 106$) were in the category of 25-34 years old. The second largest group was 35-44 years old ($N = 56$, 26.79%). The sample as a whole was relatively young ($M = 33$ years and 10 months old, $SD = 9.25$). The youngest respondent was 19 years old, and the oldest respondent was 70

years old. This creates a positively skewed distribution in which most respondents are relatively young, which is in line with the division of age amongst the followers of WOMEN Inc. According to the social media manager of WOMEN Inc., their follower base consists for 42.4% of people between 25-34 years old, 21.9% of people between 18 and 24 years old, 17.5% of people between 35 and 44 years old, and for the remaining 11% of people between 45 and 54 years old (Y. van Antwerpen, personal communication, May 13, 2024). As the follower base of WOMEN Inc. is also relatively young, the positively skewed distribution of age in this sample creates a normal distribution because the skewed distribution is expected amongst the sample.

Looking at the descriptive statistics for the control variables, it is interesting to note that respondents scored relatively high on attitudes towards feminism. The statement presented to participants was 'Feminism contributes positively to society' and participants could answer on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'completely disagree = 1' to 'completely agree = 5' ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.42$). This resulted in a negatively skewed distribution of the variable 'attitude towards feminism'. That this distribution is negatively skewed, meaning most of the participants score high on attitudes towards feminism, is in accordance with the expectation that followers of WOMEN Inc. already have a positive predisposition towards feminism. Respondents' donation habit on average was not very often but also not never ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .93$), which again was tested on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'I never donate to charities = 1' to 'I always donate to charities = 5'. These results were normally distributed. Respondents agreed on average a little with the fact that feminism is negatively connoted ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.21$), answering the statement 'feminism generally has a negative connotation' on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'completely disagree = 1' to 'completely agree = 5'. Therefore, if participants scored high on this question, they very much agreed with the statement that feminism generally has a negative connotation. Yet, because the distribution of the scores within this variable are negatively skewed, it is seen that although the mean is not that high ($M = 2.93$) participants generally find feminism to be negatively connoted.

4.1.2 Demographics pilot sample

This study also included a pilot sample of ($N =$) 36 participants. Before moving on to the analyses regarding this pilot sample, Table 5 visualises the demographics in terms of age and gender for both the main sample and the pilot sample of this study. Table 5 specifically visualises the difference in number of participants of the two samples and thus exemplifies how no statistical inferences can be drawn from the pilot sample.

Table 3: Demographics main sample and pilot sample

| | Main sample | | Pilot Sample | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Number of participants | % of total participants | Number of participants | % of total participants |
| <i>Age demographics</i> | | | | |
| 18-24 years old | 21 | 10% | 19 | 52.8% |
| 25-34 years old | 106 | 50.7% | 9 | 25% |
| 35-44 years old | 56 | 26.8% | 2 | 5.6% |
| 45-54 years old | 17 | 8.1% | 3 | 8.3% |
| 55-64 years old | 7 | 3.3% | 2 | 5.6% |
| 65 years and older | 2 | 1.0% | 1 | 2.8% |
| <i>Gender demographics</i> | | | | |
| Cis women | 198 | 94.7% | 34 | 94.4% |
| Women | 5 | 2.4% | | |
| Trans men | 2 | 1% | | |
| Trans women | 1 | 0.5% | | |
| Non-binary people | 1 | 0.5% | | |
| Cis men | 1 | 0.5% | 2 | 5.6% |
| Agender | 1 | 0.5% | | |
| Total | 209 | 100% | 36 | 100% |

4.2 Factor analysis

Factor analysis was executed amongst the main sample on the three items measuring Willingness to Donate (WTD) to see if any of the items overlapped and could be grouped. The three items which were Likert-scale based were entered into factor analysis using Principal Components Analysis (PCA). The three items measuring WTD together were found to form a one-dimensional scale: Willingness to Donate. Only one component had an Eigenvalue above 1 (Eigenvalue of 2.23), $KMO = .70$, $\chi^2 (N = 209, 3) = 237.23$, $p < .001$. The resultant model explained 74.3% of the variance in Willingness to Donate. The scale had good reliability, Cronbach's alpha = .83. Deleting any of the items only decreased the scale's reliability. Factor loadings of individual items onto the factor found are presented in Table 3. After the factor analysis, a new variable was created, WTD, consisting of the means of the three individual items ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .82$).

Table 4: Factor and reliability analyses for scale for Willingness to Donate

| Item | Willingness to donate |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Willingness to donate | .840 |
| Happiness to give | .849 |
| Meaningful to support financially | .897 |
| <i>Eigenvalue</i> | 2.230 |
| Cronbach's α | .826 |

4.3 One-way ANOVA

4.3.1 One-way ANOVA main sample

The one-way ANOVA compared the effects of word choice on willingness to donate. Word choice is the word a participant was exposed to, which could be (1) 'gender justice', (2) 'gender equality', (3) 'feminism' or (4) no word. The survey was constructed so that all participants were equally distributed among one of the four words which were presented in slogans to participants. After the data cleaning, primarily due to the exclusion of participants who answered the control question wrongly, the number of participants who were exposed to a certain test or control condition (word choice) in the final number of participants were unequal. These were the amounts of participants who were assigned to each slogan condition: 'gender justice' ($N = 50$), 'gender equality' ($N = 59$), 'feminism' ($N = 58$), and no word ($N = 42$). Because the difference in distribution amongst the four level of the variable 'word choice' is not very big, this difference is considered to be not concerning for the validity of this study.

For the participants who were exposed to the slogan containing the word 'gender justice', the mean willingness to donate was moderate ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .76$), although it was not found to be significant. For the participants who were exposed to the slogan containing the word 'gender equality', the mean willingness to donate was high ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .70$), although it was not found to be significant. For the participants who were exposed to the slogan containing the word 'feminism', the mean willingness to donate was moderate as well ($M = 3.25$, $SD = .97$), although it was not found to be significant. For the participants who were exposed to the slogan containing no reference to feminism, 'no word', the mean willingness to donate was high as well ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .78$), although it was not found to be significant. These results showed that the slogan with 'gender equality' resulted in the highest mean willingness to donate amongst this sample, followed by the control group who were not exposed to a reference to feminism, with the second highest mean willingness to donate.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the means of willingness to donate of the four groups and see if word choice has an effect on WTD. Word choice is the word a participant was

exposed to. ANOVA revealed there were no statistically significant differences between group means $F(3, 205) = 1.80, p = .148$. (\neq H1; H1a; H1b). The hypotheses of this study therefore are rejected, and word choice in itself does not have a statistically significant effect on WTD. H1a is also rejected, as gender justice does not generate higher willingness to donate than 1) gender equality and 2) feminism (and 3) no word). H1b is also rejected, as gender equality does not generate higher willingness to donate than 1) feminism (and 2) no word).

Even though no significant differences were found between group means in the main sample, a tendency is found within the group means, in which ‘gender equality’ scores highest on mean WTD, followed by ‘no word’, ‘gender justice’ and lastly ‘feminism’. The practical and theoretical implications of this are further discussed in chapter 5, yet it can already be observed that the slogan containing ‘gender equality’ results in the highest mean WTD, and the slogan containing ‘feminism’ results in the lowest mean WTD. Seeing the word ‘gender equality’ thus is observed to have a positive tendency on WTD, yet this result is not statistically significant. The mean willingness to donate and standard deviations for the main sample of this study are visualised in Table 5.

Table 5: Observed mean willingness to donate after exposure to a reference to feminism (main sample)

| Word choice | Mean willingness to donate (1 = lowest, 5 = highest) | Standard deviation |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Gender justice ($N = 50$) | 3.39 | .76 |
| Gender equality ($N = 59$) | 3.56 | .70 |
| Feminism ($N = 58$) | 3.25 | .97 |
| No word ($N = 42$) | 3.55 | .78 |

4.3.2 One-way ANOVA pilot sample

Afterwards, a pilot study amongst 36 non-followers of WOMEN Inc., was conducted to see if this would result in significant one-way ANOVA results. The positive predisposition of the follower sample towards feminism and their knowing of the feminist NPO could have been possible explanations of the results of the analysis not being statistically significant, as it could be assumed that regardless the words being shown, followers already had a high willingness to donate to the feminist NPO, and word choice therefore did not have an effect on their WTD. Therefore, this study proceeded onto a pilot study amongst non-followers, to see if word choice did have an effect on their WTD, as this sample was assumed to not already have the positive predisposition towards feminism and not know the feminist NPO which was the donation target of the slogan.

For the pilot sample ($N = 36$), the mean age was 29 years and 9 months ($SD = 12.85$), and age is positively skewed, meaning the sample group, although small is relatively young. For the participants of the pilot sample, those who were exposed to the slogan containing the word ‘gender

justice’, the mean willingness to donate was moderate ($M = 2.92, SD = .61$). For the participants who were exposed to the slogan containing the word ‘gender equality’, the mean willingness to donate was moderate as well ($M = 3.07, SD = 1.04$). For the participants who were exposed to the slogan containing the word ‘feminism’, the mean willingness to donate was low ($M = 2.42, SD = .96$). For the participants who were exposed to the slogan containing no reference to feminism, ‘no word’, the mean willingness to donate was moderate ($M = 2.77, SD = .83$). These results showed that the slogan with the word ‘gender equality’ also resulted in the highest mean willingness to donate amongst this pilot sample, followed by the word ‘gender justice’. Similar to the main sample of this study, the slogan containing the word ‘feminism’ resulted in the lowest mean willingness to donate amongst both samples. The mean willingness to donate and standard deviations for the pilot sample of this study are visualised in Table 6.

The aim of this pilot sample was to see whether this would result in significant one-way ANOVA results, therefore after a minimum of 30 participants was reached, this was evaluated. The one-way ANOVA amongst this pilot sample also resulted in no statistically significant differences between group means of WTD $F(3, 32) = .86, p = .473$. Therefore, this sample was not expanded.

Yet, in the pilot sample a similar tendency was found as in the main sample in which ‘gender equality’ resulted in the highest mean WTD, even though not statistically significant. In the pilot sample, ‘gender equality’ is then followed by ‘gender justice’, ‘no word’ and ‘feminism’.

Table 6: Observed mean willingness to donate after exposure to a reference to feminism (pilot sample)

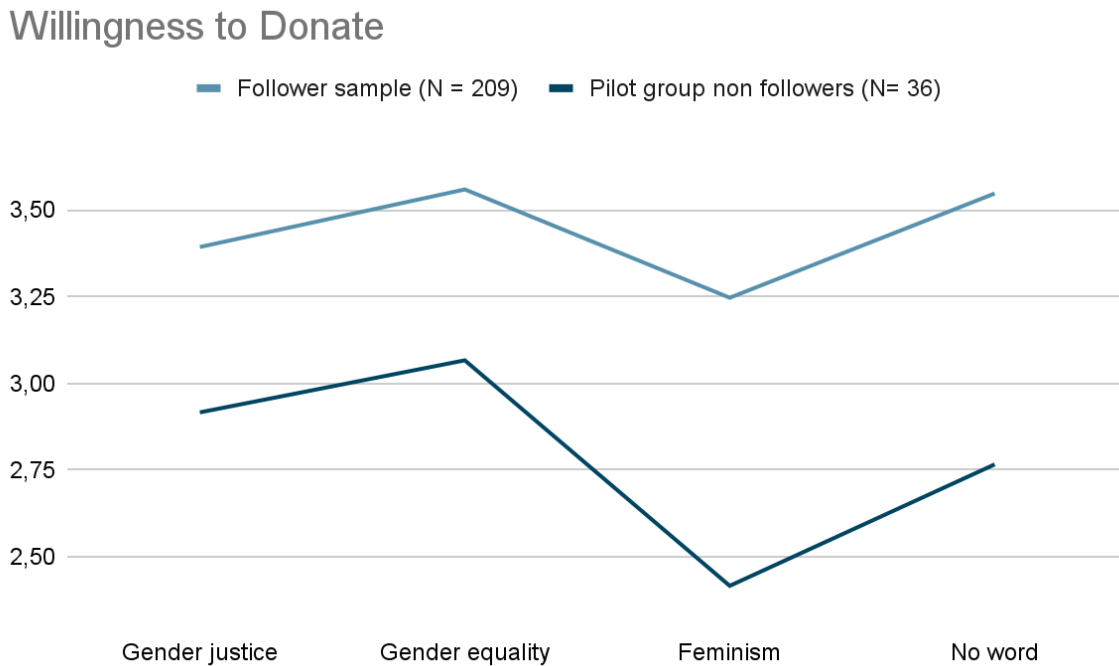
| Word choice | Mean willingness to donate (1 = lowest, 5 = highest) | Standard deviation |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Gender justice ($N = 8$) | 2.92 | .61 |
| Gender equality ($N = 10$) | 3.07 | 1.04 |
| Feminism ($N = 8$) | 2.42 | .96 |
| No word ($N = 10$) | 2.77 | .83 |

4.4 Independent samples t-test main sample and pilot sample

An independent samples t-test was conducted between the main and pilot sample to study if the results between the two samples differed significantly. Independent samples t-test revealed that there is a significant difference between group means of WTD of the follower sample ($M = 3.43, SD = .82$) and the non-follower sample ($M = 2.81, SD = .88$), $t(243) = 4.91, p < .001$, yet no inferences can be drawn as the sample size of the pilot study was too small to have statistical power. The difference observed between the scores on WTD of the follower sample and the non-follower sample, even though it does not have statistical power, is visualised in Graph 1. Even though the pilot group was only small, it can be seen that the follower sample on average scored higher on WTD

than the non-follower sample.

Graph 1: Means Willingness to Donate & Word choice - Follower sample and Pilot sample



4.5 Two-way ANOVA

A two-way ANOVA between gender, word choice and WTD cannot be executed because within the sample, the division between genders is not equal and almost no non-cis women have participated. In analyses, a minimum number of participants is needed within each category of gender to ensure a reliable and valid analysis. This present study lacked a normal division of participants in gender categories and therefore excluded gender from further analyses. The division of gender identities of this study can be found in Table 2 in section 4.1.

4.6 Univariate analysis (control variables)

Additional analyses controlling for age, donation habit, attitudes towards feminism and negative connotation of feminism were executed to control for potential confounding variables. Gender was, again, not taken into this analysis, as the sample consisted for the majority of cis women and little of other gender identities.

After age was taken into the univariate analyses as a control variable, the association between word choice and willingness to donate remained insignificant $F(5) = 1.30, p = .269$. Therefore, it can be argued that age in itself is not a control variable that has a confounding effect on WTD. After controlling for the interaction between attitudes towards feminism and WTD, the association between word choice and willingness to donate became significant $F(4) = 2.88, p = .026$. This means that attitudes towards feminism had a positive effect on WTD in this study, thus it can be said that one's attitude towards feminism positively influenced their WTD to a feminist NPO. After

controlling for interaction between donation habits and WTD, the association between word choice and willingness to donate remained insignificant $F(4) = .84, p = .501$. This means that donation habits did not have an effect on WTD in this study. After controlling for negative connotations of feminism, the association between word choice and willingness to donate remained insignificant $F(4) = .76, p = .554$. This means that negative connotations of feminism did not have an effect on WTD. Thus, the various control variables did not have an effect on WTD, except from attitude towards feminism.

There also was a significant interaction effect between age groups and negative connotations of feminism: $F(12) = 2.49, p = .006$. This was a positive effect, meaning that the higher someone's age, the more they find feminism to be negatively connoted. There also was a significant interaction effect between age groups, donation habits and negative connotations of feminism $F(9) = 2.28, p = .022$. This also was a positive effect, meaning that the higher someone's age, the more frequent someone's donation habits, the more they find feminism to be negatively connoted.

5. Conclusion

As the analyses concluded, the hypotheses of this research are rejected because overall NPOs' word choice does not have a statistically significant effect on individuals' WTD (H1). The hypotheses were rejected due to the fact that no significance was observed, despite the predicted direction of assumed effects being present. H1 is rejected, as word choice in itself does not have a statistically significant effect on WTD. H1a is rejected because gender justice does not generate higher willingness to donate than 1) gender equality and 2) feminism (and 3) no word). H1b is also rejected, as gender equality does not generate higher willingness to donate than 1) feminism (and 2) no word).

Yet, there are some mentionable findings that have both theoretical and practical implications which will be discussed in section 5.1 and 5.2. Lastly, the research question of this thesis will be answered, and the results will be synergized to share the insights this research has brought forward.

5.1 Key findings

5.1.1 Main findings main sample

For the main sample of this study (followers), the expectation was that WTD was highest when individuals would be exposed to the word gender justice (1), as an operationalisation of positioning of NPOs as advocates in a social cause, and lowest when individuals would be exposed to no word (4). Furthermore, the expectation was that exposure to the word gender equality (2), as an indicator of the inclusion of future-oriented appeals, would result in the second best WTD, and exposure to feminism (3), as a proxy of exploiting semantic framing, would result in the third best word for WTD. The one-way ANOVA resulted in insignificant results, yet while word choice thus did not have a statistically significant effect on WTD, certain tendencies were observed. The tendencies observed still differed from the expectations and H1a and H1b were still rejected. The mean WTD was highest for exposure to the word gender equality (2), second highest for exposure to no word (4), third for exposure to the word gender justice (1) and last for exposure to the word feminism (3). This observed tendency, which also was not statistically significant, is not in line with the expected effect of exposure to the words on WTD, which was expected to be 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the different references to feminism.

Drawing back to theory, the tendency found that the word 'gender equality' positively influences WTD, is in line with the notion that this word is a future-oriented appeal, as this was found to positively influence fundraising. In the present study, the reference to feminism 'gender equality', advocates for a desired outcome of the feminist activism, and thus refers to an anticipated future event. As discussed before, research has found that future-oriented appeals increase fundraising, because these appeals move individuals to act (Gleasure, 2023, p. 1). The results and tendencies observed from this experimental study, although statistically insignificant, confirm this

theoretical notion.

It is surprising that the control group, where individuals were exposed to a slogan with no specific reference to feminism, has the second highest positive influence on WTD in the one-way ANOVA, as this slogan included no specific reference to feminism, and only explained the mission of the NPO and asked people to donate. The expectation was that simply using a mission statement in the donation appeal and no reference to feminism, would result in the lowest WTD, as this lack of reference to feminism would make the donation appeal neither negatively nor positively connoted. Previous research established that references to feminism influence the audience's resonance with and support for that movement (Mirzaei et al., 2021, p. 196). Thus, through the lack of a specific reference to feminism, it was expected that WTD would be the lowest, as this makes the donation appeal very broad and not framed (Ye et al., 2015, p. 480). We could however explain the non-anticipated positive yet insignificant effect of exposure to no word on WTD, in the context of the positive predisposition the follower sample already had towards feminism. Due to their positive stance towards feminism, and their followership of the feminist NPO, it can be assumed that participants of this study already were generally quite willing to donate to the feminist NPO, and that the specific reference to feminism used, whether that be 'gender equality' or no word, would not have an impact on their WTD. Thus, individuals who were exposed to no reference to feminism, still had the second highest WTD. This positive effect is thus explained by the positive predisposition towards feminism of the sample.

Even though the results were insignificant, certain tendencies in the data were observed, which are discussed in this section. Exposure to 'gender justice' and 'feminism' in the donation appeal resulted in the lowest WTD scores amongst the sample of followers. Being exposed to the word 'feminism' in feminist NPO communication scoring lowest is in line with literature regarding negative connotations of the word 'feminism' and that this negatively impacts WTD (Adichie, 2014, p. 3, p. 11; Anderson et al., 2009, p. 216; Conlin & Heesacker, 2018, p. 937). A possible explanation for the word 'gender justice' resulting in low WTD is the fact that this word is relatively little used within feminist NPO communication (Yilmaz, 2015, p. 108) and thus is assumed to be lesser known amongst the followers of a feminist NPO, the sample of this study. This novelty of the term can act repelling towards followers of a feminist NPO, as research has established that communication should be relatable to and in line with the target audience (Mirzaei et al., 2021, p. 196), which can explain the lower WTD for this word. The word 'gender justice' also is a reference to feminism that aspires not only for gender equality, but for justice, aiming for "equity, balance, a higher understanding of fair treatment, and liabilities between men and women" (Yilmaz, 2015, p. 108). Because this term is very aspiring, it is possible that it acts repelling to followers of this feminist NPO, as the term may not match their psychological involvement with the cause. As research has established, psychological involvement has been found to be positively linked to donation intentions (Cao & Jia, 2017, p. 460). The term 'gender justice', which positions NPOs as advocates in a social

cause, can therefore through both its novel character and aspiring aim, act repelling to followers of a feminist NPO and because of this, result in a lower WTD.

5.1.2 Main findings pilot sample

As the sample size of the non-follower pilot sample was very small, this does not allow for statistical inferences. Yet, certain observations are made which are elaborated on in this paragraph. A similar tendency for the different words and the resulting WTD as in the follower sample, was found in the pilot sample amongst non-followers, in which gender equality (2) shows the highest mean for WTD, followed by gender justice (1), no word (4) and feminism (3). Even though the pilot group was only small, a significant difference was observed between group means for the follower and non-follower sample of WTD, yet because the pilot sample size was very small, no conclusions can be drawn from this. This observed tendency that the follower sample overall score higher on WTD than the non-follower sample allows for more research to investigate this. This observed tendency is in line with the expectation of this study, as the follower sample already had a positive predisposition towards feminism, therefore they are expected to have a higher WTD towards a feminist NPO, than non-followers without the positive predisposition towards feminism. Research regarding semantic framing and the presentation of appeals has established that semantic framing and word choice affect donation appeals (Hsu et al., 2023, p. 553, 558; Smith & Berger, 1996, p. 222; Su et al., 2024, p. 924). Therefore, this study expected to find a statistically significant effect of word choice on non-followers' WTD. The lack of this effect can be explained by the overall absence of a statistically significant effect of word choice on WTD found in the main sample of this study. More on this in section 5.3.

5.1.3 Interaction effects

Besides the main findings, various interaction effects were found. Firstly, a significant positive interaction effect was found between attitudes towards feminism and willingness to donate. This was expected, as mentioned, as participants with a positive attitude towards feminism are more likely to have a positive predisposition towards feminism, and therefore have a higher WTD for a feminist NPO. This is in line with the theory regarding psychological involvement that argues that the level of involvement of an individual with a social cause is positively linked to donation intentions (Cao & Jia, 2017, p. 46). More on practical implications for NPO communicators in section 5.2.

Interestingly, this research also found a significant positive interaction effect between age groups and negative connotations of feminism (such as feminists being men-haters and hateful people), meaning that the higher someone's age, the more they express that according to them, feminism is a negatively charged word. This is in line with research from Fitzpatrick Bettencourt et al. (2011, p. 863) who found that people of older age are more likely to have a more conservative

stance towards feminism, which needs to be taken into consideration with feminist NPO communication.

Furthermore, this research also found a significant positive interaction effect between age groups, donation habits and negative connotations of feminism, meaning that the higher someone's age, the more they donate to social causes, and the more they find feminism to be a negatively charged word. This is in line with the expectation derived from theory that older people generally donate more money than younger people do, regardless of the cause (Midlarsky & Hannah, 1989, p. 350), and this builds on the previous finding that an interaction effect exists between age and negative connotations of feminism.

Thus, these interaction effects show that participants with a positive attitude towards feminism are more willing to donate. Moreover, it shows that the higher someone's age, the more they express that they find feminism to be a negatively charged word. Lastly, the observed interaction effects show that the higher someone's age, the more frequent their general donation habit (to other social causes), and the more they find feminism to be a negatively charged word.

5.2 Practical implications

The results of this study have practical implications for NPO communicators, although statistically insignificant, they show that when communicating to followers, WTD is observed to be highest when the word 'gender equality' is used in the mission statement, or when the mission statement does not mention a reference to feminism at all. WTD is observed to be lowest for the words 'gender justice' and 'feminism', and thus are best avoided in feminist NPO communication that aims to achieve a high WTD. When aiming to reach non-followers of the NPO, feminist NPO communicators can take into account that the words 'gender equality' and 'gender justice' result in the highest WTD amongst that sample, although more research needs to be done with a larger sample size of non-followers to allow for statistical inferences.

The results of this study also confirm that one's psychological involvement with a social cause significantly positively influences one's willingness to donate. This was observed through the significant positive interaction effect between attitudes towards feminism and WTD found in this study. Feminist NPOs can make use of this fact by focusing on getting individuals psychologically involved in the feminist cause, through for example tailoring communication to target potential donors with various levels of psychological involvement with the social cause (Cao & Jia, 2017, p. 469). Different communication styles work differently on donors with low psychological involvement with the social cause than people with high psychological involvement with the social cause.

Furthermore, this research shows that older people find feminism to be more negatively connoted than younger people do. Therefore, in their communication, feminist NPOs can take this into account when aiming to reach an older audience. Possibly trying to eliminate these negative

connotations can be a strategy feminist NPOs can adopt in this scenario. This is especially fruitful for feminist NPOs because this research confirmed that older people generally donate more money than younger people do.

5.3 Synergizing the results

The research question this thesis poses is the following: To what extent do linguistic choices in feminist NPO external online communication influence one's willingness to donate amongst private donors? The results of the survey experiment have shown that linguistic choices in feminist NPO external online communication do not influence one's willingness to donate, because the effect was statistically insignificant in both the main sample and the pilot sample. Because no significance was observed, this study cannot say anything about the extent in which linguistic choices in feminist NPO external communication influence willingness to donate. Yet, as discussed, the tendencies perceived can be helpful for feminist NPO communicators to know which words result in a higher WTD (no word and gender equality) and which result in a lower WTD (gender justice and feminism). Overall, the results show that amongst the pilot sample of non-followers ($N = 36$), the WTD was lower than for the sample of followers ($N = 209$), this result was significant, yet because of the small sample size of the pilot sample, no inferences can be drawn from this. Yet, this observed difference in WTD between followers and non-followers, could be explained by the found significant positive interaction effect of attitude towards feminism on WTD.

The lack of significant results of word choice on WTD, through which H1, H1a and H1b were rejected, can be explained further by contextualising this research. The research was executed amongst a sample of followers of a feminist NPO within the Netherlands, which is a liberal country (Fondapol, 2011, para18). Through this, feminism can thrive more, resulting in the follower sample naturally having a more positive predisposition towards feminism. This might be a possible explanation for the fact that word choice does not significantly influence WTD in the sample, as their WTD is already quite high and through their positive predisposition towards feminism, they are already willing to donate to the feminist NPO in question. This explanation can also hold true for the pilot sample of non-followers, as they also resided in the Netherlands and thus through the liberal character of the country already might have had a positively predisposition towards feminism.

This research has contributed insights into which different Dutch references to feminism tend to result in a higher or lower WTD amongst both a follower sample and a non-follower pilot sample. Although the results were insignificant, the tendencies observed show that the follower sample has an overall higher WTD to a feminist NPO than the non-follower pilot sample. Interestingly, a similar tendency was perceived amongst both samples in which 'gender equality' was the best performing word on WTD. Also, this research found that attitude towards feminism had a positive effect on WTD amongst the main follower sample. Age also was found to positively influence WTD to a feminist NPO amongst the follower sample. This research has also contributed

various practical implications for communicators within feminist NPOs. More insights into the critical discussion of this research and recommendations for future research are made in chapter 6.

6. Discussion

6.1 Limitations and recommendations

This present study has revealed various interesting insights that have theoretical and practical implications regarding feminist NPOs' word choice and willingness to donate. Yet, because of time and capacity restrictions of this study, this study has some limitations that will be discussed in this section. Furthermore, recommendations for future research that are derived from these limitations as well as from the conclusions, are made in this section.

Firstly, this study was executed amongst a sample within the Netherlands and focused merely on Dutch feminist NPOs' communication. Therefore, the context of this study was restricted to the Netherlands with its liberal character and positive predisposition towards feminism (Fondapol, 2011, para18). This made the present study very limited in language, context and culture, which can have possible interesting effects on WTD. As mentioned, it is possible that through the liberal character of the respondents, who all spoke Dutch and follow a Dutch feminist NPO, combined with their positive predisposition towards feminism, their WTD already was high prior to the experiment. This can explain why the exposure to different references to feminism did not have an overall significant effect on their WTD.

Executing similar research to this present study or replicating this study in a context that is different from the Dutch context can provide insights into cultural and linguistic differences in the effect of feminist NPOs' word choice on willingness to donate. Research can be done with a similar follower sample in a different country, with perhaps even a different religious background to examine whether cultural differences play a role in the examined effect between feminist NPOs' word choice and willingness to donate. People with a Christian background are for example found to have a more conservative stance towards feminism, which can in turn impact WTD and how they perceive feminist NPOs' word choice (Ali et al., 2008, p. 46).

Secondly, only a small pilot sample amongst non-followers was executed. This was because of the lack of statistically significant results in that pilot sample as well as in the regular sample. Yet, the differences between the follower and the non-follower sample were significant. But because of the small sample size of the pilot (non-follower sample), the present study was prevented from comparing and contrasting the pilot sample with the followers sample in depth. Future research could replicate the non-followers sample with a larger sample size, so the non-followers sample and the followers-sample can be further compared and contrasted. This could lead to possibly interesting results regarding NPOs' word choice and WTD. Future research can examine whether the significant result perceived in this study, that overall WTD is higher amongst a follower sample than amongst a non-follower pilot sample, is also true in a bigger sample size, where statistical inferences can be made.

Thirdly, because gender was divided very homogeneously within the main sample of this study, it was excluded as a variable from further analyses. This prevented possible conclusions to be

drawn regarding the effect between gender and WTD or between gender and NPOs' word choice. Future research could ensure reaching a diverse array of gender identities to ensure that gender can be taken into account in further analyses. This can enable research to examine the effect gender has on WTD and can perhaps also examine whether different people with different gender identities have different perceptions of various references to feminism. As the theoretical framework of this study established, men-hating negative connotations around feminism exist (Adichie, 2014, p. 11; Anderson et al., 2009, p. 216), and more men than women identify as feminists, thus, the expectation still exists that gender influences individuals' willingness to donate to a feminist NPO (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018, p. 937).

Fourthly, this study was a quantitative study and it thus examined patterns and effects between the variables. Yet it did not provide the deeper insights into the reasoning behind willingness to donate and perceptions of feminist NPOs' word choice that qualitative research would have. Future qualitative research can focus on gaining more understanding into the perceptions of participants of different references to feminism and can thus help understand the motivations behind willingness to donate. For example, executing interviews amongst both a follower and a non-follower sample can result in interesting insights regarding how different people, with different attitudes towards feminism, make donation decisions and which references to feminism they prefer and why. Because this study found that one's attitude towards feminism positively influences one's WTD, future research can focus more on understanding what constitutes one's attitude towards feminism, and how NPO communicators can influence this, as this is of great influence on WTD.

Future qualitative research can also specifically look at what in mission statements without references to feminism (operationalised in this study as 'no word') constitutes a high WTD. Additionally, qualitative methods can examine why the word 'gender equality' results in a high WTD amongst followers, adding to existing research on connotations of the word 'gender equality' (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018, p. 937).

Lastly, this present study used the measure of willingness to donate, instead of alternative measures like actual donation amounts. This could have led to a difference in results, as a gap exists between giving intention and giving behaviour (Nguyen et al., 2022, p. 216). Future research could change this measure into actual donation amounts, to combat the existing gap between intended giving behaviour and actual giving behaviour within research.

Moreover, further research should be done on the conclusions drawn from the perceived tendencies of this present study. Although not statistically significant in this present study, perhaps future research can examine further exactly which mission statement without a reference to feminism works best (no word) versus the word gender equality. Taking the gender aspect into this can be very interesting as well, as research has shown that gender can be a possible control variable in this context.

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Appendix A: Dutch version of the survey

Introductie/ informed consent

Onderzoeker: Iris Daleweij

Instituut: Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam

Datum: 4 april 2024

Je bent uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek uitgevoerd door Iris Daleweij, een student aan Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, als onderdeel van haar Master Media & Business scriptie. Je deelname wordt sterk gewaardeerd, je input is erg waardevol voor dit onderzoek. Voordat je besluit of je wilt deelnemen, neem alsjeblieft een moment om de volgende informatie zorgvuldig door te lezen. Als je vragen of opmerkingen hebt, neem contact op met de onderzoeker via 637520id@eur.nl

Dit onderzoek is onderdeel van een scriptie over de donatie-intentie van de Nederlandse bevolking. Gezien het feit dat WOMEN Inc. een non-profitorganisatie is, en jij hen volgt op sociale media, word je benaderd voor dit onderzoek.

Als je akkoord gaat met deelname, word je gevraagd om vragen over persoonlijke gegevens en donatiegedrag te beantwoorden en vervolgens zal je een tekst zien. Deelname is vrijwillig en de geschatte benodigde tijd bedraagt ongeveer 3 minuten.

Deelname brengt geen risico's met zich mee. Alle persoonlijke informatie wordt geanonimiseerd en vertrouwelijk bewaard. Deelname is vrijwillig, en je mag op elk moment uit het onderzoek stappen.

Als je nog vragen of opmerkingen hebt, neem contact op met Iris Daleweij via 637520id@eur.nl.

Door verder te gaan met het onderzoek, geef je aan dit toestemmingsformulier te hebben gelezen en akkoord te gaan met vrijwillige deelname.

Start experiment

De eerste sectie van het onderzoek bevat een aantal algemene vragen over je leeftijd en genderidentiteit. Kies een van de antwoorden uit de mogelijkheden.

1. Wat is je leeftijd in jaren?
 - a. ... Open antwoord
2. Ik identificeer mij het meeste als:
 - a. Cis man
 - b. Cis vrouw
 - c. Trans man
 - d. Trans vrouw
 - e. Non-binair
 - f. Anders, namelijk... (open antwoord)

De volgende sectie van het onderzoek richt zich op jouw donatie gewoonten en percepties over feminisme. Feminisme is de overtuiging in gelijke rechten en kansen voor vrouwen op politiek, economisch en sociaal gebied, en streven naar gendergelijkheid tussen mannen en vrouwen. Kies een van de antwoorden, welke het meeste bij je aansluit.

3. Feminisme draagt positief bij aan de maatschappij
 - a. Helemaal mee oneens
 - b. Gedeeltelijk mee oneens
 - c. Neutraal
 - d. Gedeeltelijk mee eens
 - e. Helemaal mee eens
4. Wat is je donatie gewoonte? Je donatie gewoonte gaat over hoe vaak je geld schenkt aan goede doelen of organisaties.
 - a. Ik doneer nooit aan goede doelen
 - b. Ik doneer zelden aan goede doelen
 - c. Ik doneer soms aan goede doelen
 - d. Ik doneer vaak aan goede doelen
 - e. Ik doneer altijd aan goede doelen
5. Feminisme heeft over het algemeen een negatieve bijklank
 - a. Helemaal mee oneens
 - b. Gedeeltelijk mee oneens
 - c. Neutraal
 - d. Gedeeltelijk mee eens
 - e. Helemaal mee eens

Je krijgt nu een slogan te zien. Lees deze rustig door. Vervolgens komen hier nog een aantal vragen achteraan. Daarna is het onderzoek klaar. (Toegevoegd voor niet volgers: WOMEN Inc. is een bestaande feministische non-profit organisatie in Nederland.)

6. Donatie slogan. [Exposure to slogan: mensen krijgen dus of a of b of c of d te zien]
 - a. Doneer nu en steun WOMEN Inc. in haar strijd voor gelijke kansen en draag bij aan genderrechtvaardigheid in Nederland
 - b. Doneer nu en steun WOMEN Inc. in haar strijd voor gelijke kansen en draag bij aan gendergelijkheid in Nederland
 - c. Doneer nu en steun WOMEN Inc. in haar strijd voor gelijke kansen en draag bij aan feminisme in Nederland
 - d. Doneer nu en steun WOMEN Inc. in haar strijd voor gelijke kansen
7. Welk woord heb je zojuist letterlijk gelezen in de slogan? Geen van deze woorden is ook mogelijk.
 - a. Genderrechtvaardigheid
 - b. Gendergelijkheid
 - c. Feminisme
 - d. Geen
8. Hoe bereid ben je om aan WOMEN Inc. te doneren?
 - a. Helemaal niet bereid
 - b. Weinig bereid
 - c. Neutraal
 - d. Tamelijk bereid
 - e. Uiterst bereid
9. Hoe fijn zou je het vinden om geld aan WOMEN Inc. te geven?
 - a. Helemaal niet fijn
 - b. Weinig fijn
 - c. Neutraal
 - d. Tamelijk fijn
 - e. Uiterst fijn
10. Hoe betekenisvol is het voor je om WOMEN Inc. financieel te ondersteunen?
 - a. Helemaal niet betekenisvol
 - b. Weinig betekenisvol
 - c. Neutraal
 - d. Tamelijk betekenisvol
 - e. Uiterst betekenisvol
11. Wil je op de hoogte blijven van de resultaten van het onderzoek? Laat hier dan je e-mailadres achter. Dit hoeft uiteraard niet.

a. Open antwoord

Je antwoorden zijn opgeslagen. Bedankt voor je deelname, je deelname is erg waardevol voor het onderzoek. Mocht je geïnteresseerd zijn in de resultaten van het uiteindelijke onderzoek, neem dan contact op met Iris Daleweij via 637520id@eur.nl.

Appendix B: English version of the survey

Introduction/Informed Consent

Researcher: Iris Daleweij

Institution: Erasmus University Rotterdam

Date: March 29, 2024

You are invited to participate in a research conducted by Iris Daleweij, a student at Erasmus University Rotterdam, as part of her Master's thesis in Media & Business. Your participation is highly appreciated; your input is invaluable for this research. Before deciding whether to participate, please take a moment to carefully read the following information. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at 637520id@eur.nl.

This research is part of a thesis on the donation intentions of the Dutch population. Given that WOMEN Inc. is a non-profit organization, and you follow them on social media, you are approached for this research.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about personal information and donation behavior, and then you will see a text. Participation is voluntary, and the estimated time required is approximately 3 minutes.

Participation carries no risks. All personal information will be anonymized and kept confidential. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact Iris Daleweij at 637520id@eur.nl.

By continuing with the research, you indicate that you have read this consent form and agree to voluntary participation.

Start experiment

The first section of the study contains some general questions about your age and gender identity.

Choose one of the answers from the options.

1. What is your age in years?
 - a. Open answer
2. I identify most as:
 - a. Cis male
 - b. Cis female
 - c. Trans man
 - d. Trans woman
 - e. Non-binary
 - f. Other, namely... (open answer)

The next section of the study focuses on your donation habits and perceptions of feminism.

Feminism is the belief in equal rights and opportunities for women in political, economic, and social spheres, and the pursuit of gender equality between men and women. Choose one of the answers that best fits you.

3. Feminism contributes positively to society
 - a. Completely disagree
 - b. Partially disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Partially agree
 - e. Completely agree
4. What is your donation habit? Your donation habit refers to how often you donate money to charities or organizations.
 - a. I never donate to charities
 - b. I rarely donate to charities
 - c. I sometimes donate to charities
 - d. I often donate to charities
 - e. I always donate to charities
5. Feminism generally has a negative connotation
 - a. Completely disagree
 - b. Partially disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Partially agree
 - e. Completely agree

You will now see a slogan. Please read it carefully. Then there will be several questions following it. After that, the research will be complete. (Added for the non-followers: WOMEN Inc. is an existing feminist non-profit organisation in the Netherlands.)

6. Donation slogan. [Exposure to slogan: people will see either a or b or c or d]
 - a. Donate now and support WOMEN Inc. in its fight for equal opportunities and contribute to gender justice in the Netherlands
 - b. Donate now and support WOMEN Inc. in its fight for equal opportunities and contribute to gender equality in the Netherlands
 - c. Donate now and support WOMEN Inc. in its fight for equal opportunities and contribute to feminism in the Netherlands
 - d. Donate now and support WOMEN Inc. in its fight for equal opportunities
7. Which word have you just literally read in the slogan? None of these words is also a possibility.
 - a. Gender justice
 - b. Gender equality
 - c. Feminism
 - d. None
8. How willing would you be to donate to WOMEN Inc.?
 - a. Not willing at all
 - b. Slightly willing
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat willing
 - e. Extremely willing
9. How happy would you be to give to WOMEN Inc.?
 - a. Not comfortable at all
 - b. Slightly comfortable
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat comfortable
 - e. Extremely comfortable
10. How meaningful is it to you to support WOMEN Inc. financially?
 - a. Not meaningful at all
 - b. Slightly meaningful
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat meaningful
 - e. Extremely meaningful
11. Would you like to stay informed about the results of the research? If so, please leave your email address here. This is, of course, optional.

a. Open answer

Your responses have been saved. Thank you for your participation; your contribution is highly valuable to the research. If you are interested in the results of the final research, please contact Iris Daleweij at 637520id@eur.nl.