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**YOUNG AND FEMINIST**  
**NEGOTIATING 'IDENTITIES' IN THE 1990s**

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Arts in Sociology at  
Massey University

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences of seven young feminist women in relation to a feminist poststructuralist understanding of 'identity' and subjectivity. A review of both the local and international literature reveals a dearth of material about young feminist women and their experiences. Semi-structured, multiple, in-depth interviews are analysed to explore how the young women in this study:

- understand feminism and what it means to be feminist
- develop their feminist 'identities'
- negotiate their feminism in their family relations
- understand the conflicts and contradictions that arise in this situation.

Significant findings include the complexity and multiplicity of the ways the young women's feminist identities develop, their commitment to feminism and its imperative to achieving change, and the ways the women make sense of the contradictions in their actions to enable them to construct and maintain a coherent sense of self.

Two interesting aspects of this study are its critique of feminist poststructuralism in light of the concept of 'sense-making' and its engagement with the principles of feminist research, in particular, an exploration of issues arising from the decision to include the researcher as a participant in the study.

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