

## Introduction

Ecofeminism is a feminist philosophy, and Ecofeminism's history stems from Francoise d'Eaubonne's book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, which explores the connections between the domination of nature and the domination of women. The most common ecofeminism viewpoint is understood in the sense that humans view themselves as above animals and nature, while men view themselves as above women. Following the dualist viewpoint, women are often considered more emotional and uncontrollable than men, similar to wild storms of nature, like hurricanes or tornadoes. Interpretations of ecofeminism are often presented through art, social justice, political philosophy, feminism, religion, and poetry. The environmental philosophy of ecofeminism finds its roots in spirituality and religion.

Most research using word association to measure gender bias is prevalent in the use of occupations. Perceived gender differences can also be noted in the decision-making process of hiring employees. Word embeddings have also been used to study gender bias in occupations.

The aim of the current study was to examine potential gender stereotypes in college students when asked to assign a gender score to a list of various nature terms and occupations. Nature terms were hypothesized to be associated more with femininity than masculinity. Men were expected to be more likely to rate nature terms as feminine and less masculine than women. Participants majoring in arts and humanities were hypothesized to rate nature terms as being more feminine than other majors. Honors students were hypothesized to rate nature terms as more feminine than non-honors students. Religious college students were expected to rate nature terms as more feminine than atheist college students. Whereas traditionally female dominated occupations were expected to be associated with femininity, traditionally male dominated occupations were expected to be associated with masculinity. Associations between gender, nature terms, and occupations were explored. This study has the potential to advance the literature by applying ecofeminism to new concepts such as intelligence and college majors, as well as supporting the foundational disciplines of the theory such as religiosity and gender differences.

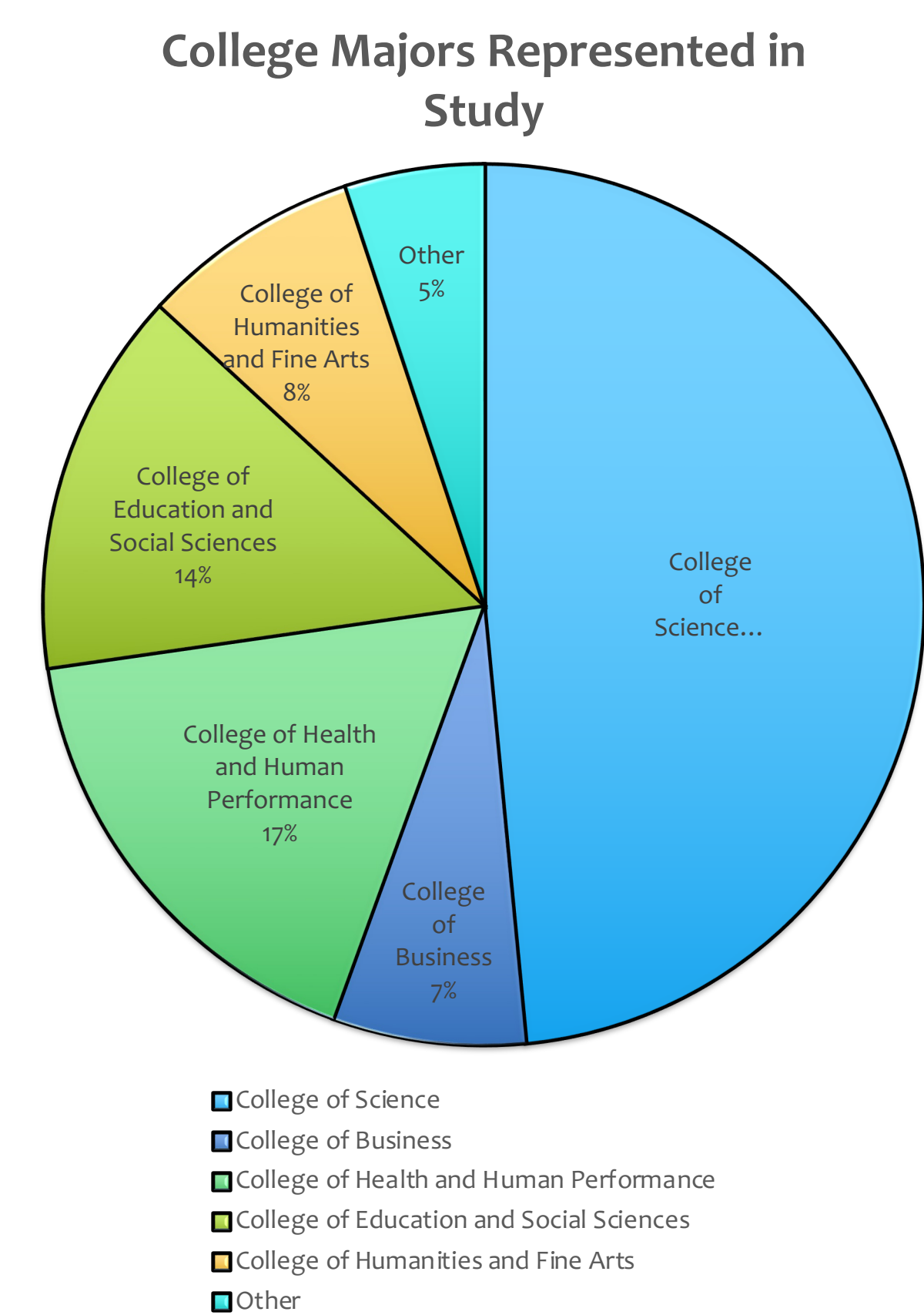
## Method

### Participants

Approximately 106 college students participated in this study. The sample was 10% male and 89% female, with ages ranging from 18 to 60 years ( $M_{age} = 19$  years, 4 months,  $SD = 4.143$ ) old. The sample was predominately White (79%).

### Procedures & Measures

To measure associations with nature terms, a list of both nature terms and human-made terms were presented in a survey. For each item, participants provided two ratings, one rating how masculine they considered the terms and another rating how feminine they considered the term.



## Method

### Gender Associations and Nature Terms

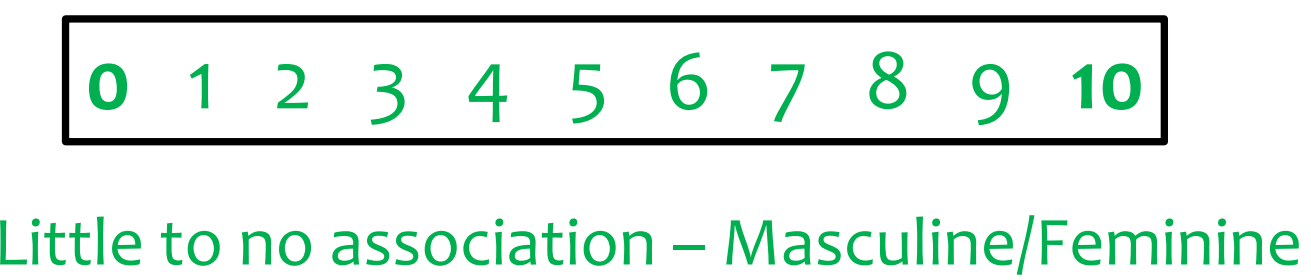
Participants responded to these items on a 11-point response scale ranging from 0 = "Little to no association" (low masculinity, low femininity) to 10 = "Masculine" or "Feminine."

### Gender Associations and Occupations

To measure gender associations with occupations, careers were selected from previous research in the public domain. Occupations were determined from research on the most male and female typed occupations.

### Religiosity

To measure religiosity, a version of the Religiosity Questionnaire was utilized. Participants were instructed to indicate how important religion was to their life on a seven-point scale ranging from 1=" Not at all" to 7=" Very."



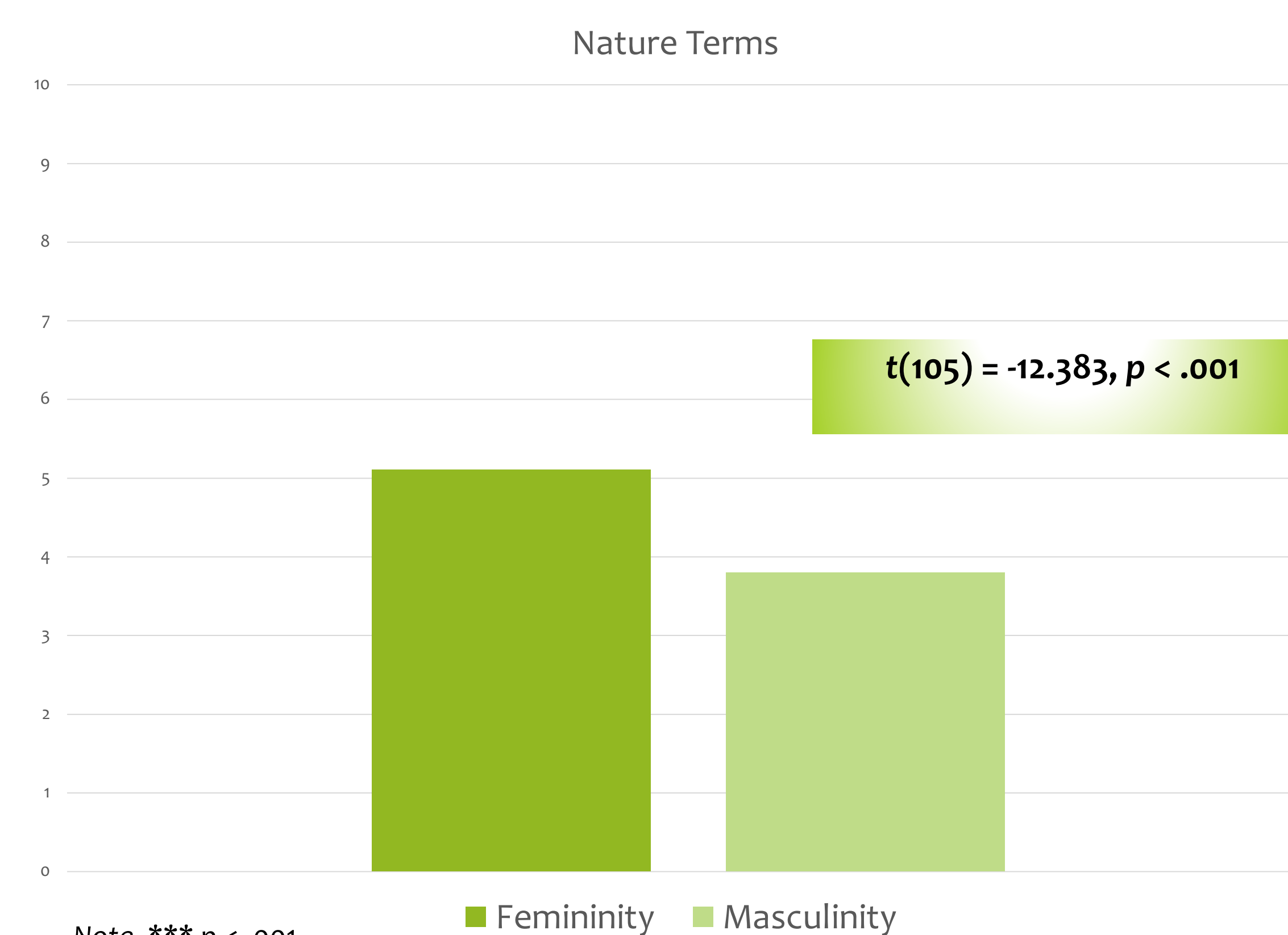
## Results

**Table 1**  
Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

|                                       | Overall M (SD) |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Masculinity of Nature Terms           | 3.80 (1.55)    |
| Femininity of Nature Terms            | 5.10 (1.63)    |
| Masculine Occupations and Masculinity | 7.20 (1.32)    |
| Masculine Occupations and Femininity  | 4.93 (1.30)    |
| Feminine Occupations and Masculinity  | 3.66 (1.45)    |
| Feminine Occupations and Femininity   | 7.77 (1.36)    |

Mean scores above five were considered relatively strong in association to gender. Mean scores below five were considered relatively weak in association to gender.

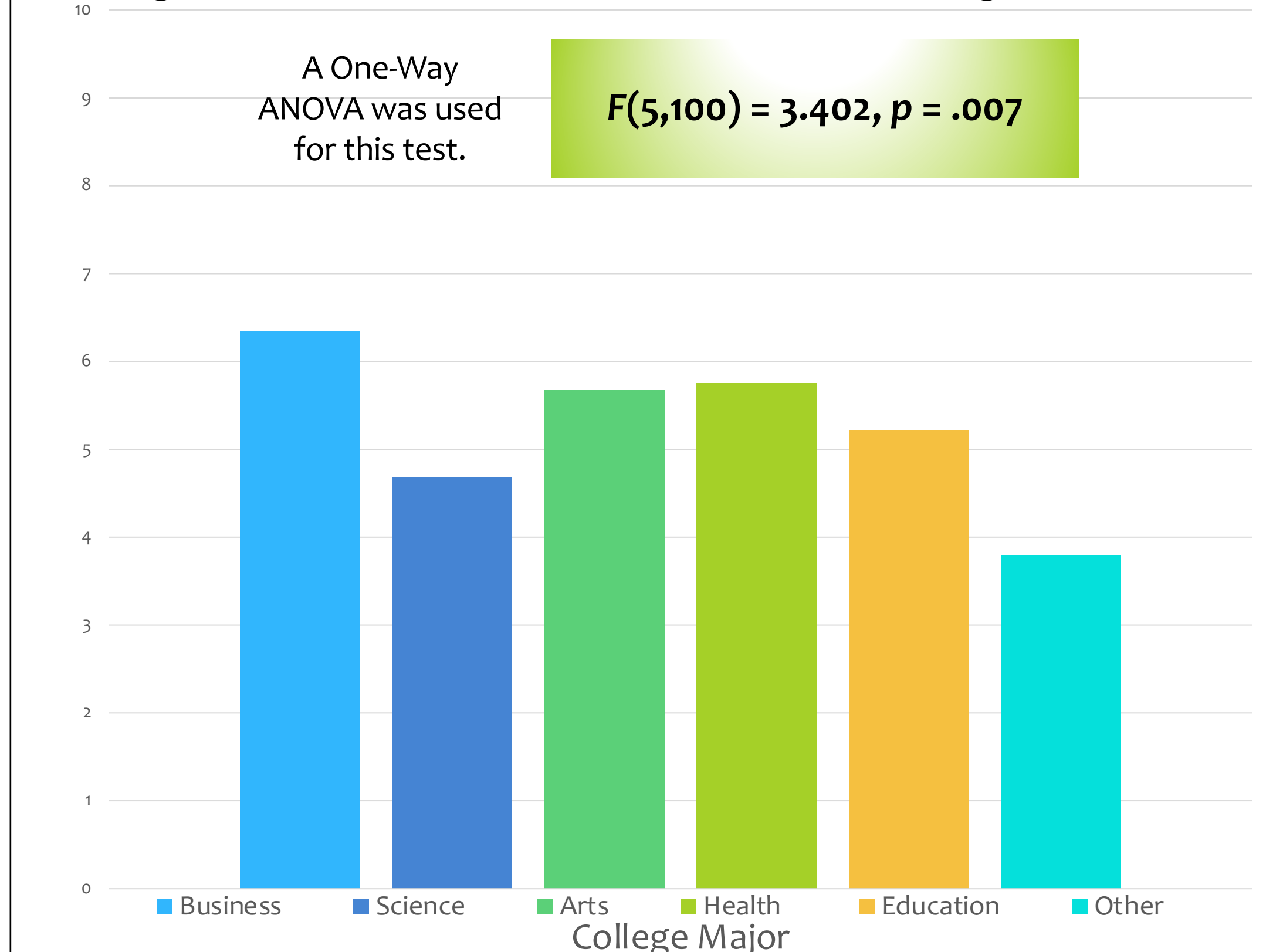
**Figure 2:** Nature terms are hypothesized to be associated more with femininity than masculinity.



Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Results

**Figure 2:** Nature & Femininity Differences in College Major



Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Based on the results of this analysis, participants in the college of business ( $M = 6.34, SD = 1.04$ ) had slightly higher associations between nature and femininity compared to the other majors. To determine how college majors differed from one another, least significant difference (LSD) post hoc comparisons were conducted. Based on these comparisons, participants in the college of business ( $M = 6.34, SD = 1.04, p = .006$ ) and college of health and human performance ( $M = 5.75, SD = 1.75, p = .013$ ) had higher associations to nature and femininity than other majors. Participants in the college of health and human performance ( $M = 5.75, SD = 1.75, p = .014$ ) had a higher association to femininity compared to participants within the "other" category. Post hoc tests indicated that there is a marginally statistically significant trend towards the college of arts and humanities ( $M = 5.67, SD = 1.18$ ) when compared to scores from participants in the college of science ( $M = 4.68, SD = 1.61, p = .80$ ).

## Discussion

Results from the current study provide some support for the current hypotheses. For example, overall nature terms were viewed as more feminine than masculine and supports to literature of the environmental theory of ecofeminism. Also consistent with expectations, in the current study traditionally masculine professions were more commonly associated with masculinity and traditionally feminine occupations were more commonly associated with femininity. These findings are consistent with previous research and literature. Inconsistent with expectations, men did not associate nature and femininity more often than women, instead associating these ideas similarly to women. Inconsistent with expectations, there was little to no difference in the association of nature terms to femininity between students within the honors program and non-honors students. Inconsistent with expectations, religious participants did not associate nature terms with femininity more often than atheist participants. Inconsistent with expectations, participants majoring in disciplines grounded in business had the highest association between nature and femininity.

Even though there was no hypothesis regarding human-made terms and associations to masculinity, findings indicated that human-made terms were more strongly associated with masculinity than femininity.

Ecofeminism has been studied across different disciplines but, forging a convergence between environmental philosophy and scientific research is new and compelling study.