

# Sex and ethnic group effects on attitudes toward women

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Two popular measures of attitudes toward women, the short version by Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) and the Smith, Ferree, and Miller Feminism (FEM) were administered to 208 women and 106 men who identified themselves as Caucasian, American of Japanese ancestry, Chinese, Hawaiian and part Hawaiian, and other. The two scales correlated highly with each other. The sex and ethnic identity main effects were statistically significant on both scales, and the AWS yielded a significant Sex by Ethnic Identity interaction, while the FEM did not.

Measures of attitudes toward women hold promise for research workers in terms of eliminating potential bias in hypothesis formulation and data collection, for teachers in terms of proper presentations to students, and for clinicians in terms of delivering nonsexist services. In the same manner as sex is a major concern, so is ethnic identity, and the present work draws the two together.

Among leading measures of attitudes toward women are the Attitude Toward Women Scale (AWS) (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) and attitudes toward Feminism (FEM) (Smith, Ferree, & Miller, 1975). Both draw heavily on Kirkpatrick's (1936) work. The present paper extends and continues that of Doyle (1975), who found a substantial correlation (.87 with 76 subjects) between the Kirkpatrick and the Spence and Helmreich (AWS) scales.

## METHOD

The material used included the 20-item FEM and the brief version, 25-item AWS (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973). Subjects responded to both on an identical 5-point rating sheet (IBM 503).

The subjects were students from one vocational educational class, one history class, and four undergraduate psychology classes. They were asked to mark their major ethnic group, and the following distributions (listed total, male, and female, respectively) were obtained: total sample—314, 106, 298; Caucasian—67, 31, 36; Americans of Japanese ancestry—168, 48, 120; Chinese—31, 10, 21; Hawaiian or part Hawaiian—12, 7, 5; other—36, 10, 26.

## RESULTS

The correlation between AWS and FEM was .80 for the total sample, .71 for the 106 males, and .82 for the 208 females. The correlation between AWS and FEM was significantly higher among women than among men ( $p < .05$ ) (McNemar, 1962, p. 140, Formula 10.6), a finding different from the literature and requiring replication.

Separate 5 (ethnic identity groups) by 2 (sex)

analyses of variance were computed for AWS and FEM. For AWS the sex main effect was significant beyond the .01 level [ $F(1,304) = 6.85$ ], while the sex main effect for FEM was significant beyond the .0001 level [ $F(1,304) = 25.42$ ]. Women had more favorable scores than men on both scales. The ethnic main effect was significant for both scales at the .001 level [ $F(4,304) = 8.03$  for AWS;  $F(4,304) = 7.01$  for FEM]. The Sex by Identity interaction was significant at the .05 level for the AWS [ $F(4,304) = 2.38$ ], but nonsignificant for the FEM scale [ $F(4,304) = .95$ ].

Ranking the means for each sex on the AWS, it was observed that for both sexes the Caucasians were the most favorable toward women of the five groups, Hawaiians and part Hawaiians were the least favorable, and those identifying themselves as "other" ethnic groups were at the middle. The Sex by Ethnic Identity interaction was associated with male Americans of Japanese ancestry being the next-to-the-least favorable group of males, while female Americans of Japanese ancestry were the next-to-the-most favorable group of females. The reverse was true among subjects of Chinese ancestry, where the males were the next-to-the-most favorable group among males and the females were the next-to-the-least favorable group among women. Another way of stating this is that the difference between American men and women of Japanese ancestry was 12.0, with women more favorable than men, while the direction of the difference was reversed, with men of Chinese ancestry being more favorable (2.6) toward women than were the women of Chinese ancestry.

## DISCUSSION

It is clear that there are significant ethnic identity differences in attitudes toward women as measured by the AWS and the FEM scales. The AWS was sensitive to an interaction between sex and ethnic identity, while the FEM scale was not. If this interaction is robust, it may indicate an interesting research opportunity to study conditions leading to favorable and unfavorable attitudes toward women by men and women, namely, the study of people of Chinese and Japanese ancestry who share the common general milieu of Hawaii.

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