

DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF THE ATTITUDES TOWARD FEMINISM AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT (FWM) SCALE

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This article outlines the development and testing of the Attitudes Toward Feminism and the Women's Movement (FWM) Scale, a brief measure of affective attitudes toward the feminist movement. Thurstone's (1959) method of equal-appearing intervals was used initially to create the final 10-item summated rating (Likert) scale. Establishment of internal consistency reliability and construct (convergent and discriminant) validity was determined on a sample of 117 female and male college students. Results suggested a highly internally consistent and valid attitudinal measure. Additional evidence for the validity of the FWM is discussed in terms of research in which it has been successfully used.

Attitude theory typically defines attitude as a tendency to locate some entity or "attitude object" along an evaluative dimension of unfavorability/favorability, expressed in the three components of affect, cognitions, and behavior (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). The attitude object in the present study—feminism and the women's movement—has been credited with important gains in personal, political, and economic power for women. However, a concurrent and vicious backlash (Faludi, 1991) has also linked the feminist movement to the downfall of the American family and a rise in personal and societal discontent. Thus, it appears that this attitude

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object might lend itself particularly well to the measurement of diverse affective attitudes.

However, in reviews of the measurement of attitudes toward feminism, women's roles, and other related constructs (Beere, 1990a, 1990b; Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Enns, 1987), several inadequacies have been noted. Probably the most serious limitation is in definitional inadequacy. The literature contains a confusing mixture of attitudinal assessments of women's or gendered roles and social behavior, for which there are a number of valid and reliable measures, and attitudinal assessments of feminist philosophy and politics or the feminist movement per se, for which there appear to be few established measures. This definitional confusion is further reinforced in the empirical literature by studies using attitudinal measures that are idiosyncratic to a particular sample or research question and for which psychometric information is seldom provided, making it difficult to interpret and generalize results (e.g., Carroll, 1984; Ferree, 1983; Figueira-McDonough, 1985; Korman, 1983; Plutzer, 1988; Rowland, 1986; Wilcox, 1989).

Related to definitional confusion is the existence of a "ceiling effect" on many well-established instruments. Such instruments may not adequately discriminate at the most liberal ends of the ideological continuum in the context of the rapid social change that has occurred since the instruments were developed (Beere, 1990a, 1990b). Indeed, it has been suggested that measures of liberal gender role ideologies may have lost much of their predictive power as such ideologies increasingly characterize the general population; scales are thus needed that tap the most explicitly profeminist attitudes of the ideological continuum (Fassinger, 1985, 1990). Other limitations noted in existing instruments are excessive length and superfluous detail, the susceptibility of the measures to social desirability response bias, and weak evidence of construct validity, such as the use of differences between women and men alone as evidence (Beere, 1990a, 1990b; Enns, 1987).

In terms of existing scales, most tap various aspects of gender role attitudes or beliefs about women and men; examples are King and King's (1986, 1990) Sex Role Egalitarianism Scale (SRES-BB), Belk and Snell's (1986) Beliefs About Women Scale, and the widely cited Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Other instruments, such as the Attitudes Toward Feminism Scale (FEM) (Smith, Ferree, & Miller, 1975) purport to measure attitudes toward feminism, but actually measure attitudes toward the *beliefs* of feminism, translating into items that tap cognitive attitudes toward women's or gendered roles (see Basow & Campanile, 1990, and Branscombe & Deaux, 1991, for such use of the FEM Scale). Measures also have been developed to operationalize Downing and Rousch's (1985) stage model of feminist identity formation (Bargard & Hyde, 1991; Rickard, 1989), and thus tap an important developmental process. One of the few attempts found in the literature to

specifically assess attitudes toward feminism was a study of attributions and rhetorical impact of the term "feminist" (Berryman-Fink & Vanderber, 1985). Related attempts also have been made to determine attributions and stereotypes regarding use of the title "Ms." (Dion, 1987; Dion & Cota, 1991).

However, despite the availability of some of these related scales, it seems clear that a valid and reliable instrument is needed that explicitly measures affective reactions to feminism and the women's movement, and that is brief, easily used, and not subject to social desirability effects. This study outlines the development and validation of an instrument that measures subjective feelings toward the attitude object "feminism and the women's movement." The attitude object is deliberately nonspecific as to type of feminism (Enns, 1993), because it is assumed that affective reactions to feminism can be largely independent of cognitive knowledge of specific philosophical or political principles. The scale described here has been used by a number of researchers (discussed below). The purpose of this article is to make available detailed information regarding scale development and psychometric properties investigated to date, to facilitate the use of the scale by other researchers.

METHOD AND RESULTS

The development of this instrument proceeded in two phases: (a) development and testing of equal-appearing intervals (Thurstone, 1959) and summated rating (commonly termed Likert) scales, and (b) establishment of reliability and validity of the summated rating scale. Because the majority of instrument validation research in the related area of gender roles and attitudes toward women has been undertaken either initially or exclusively with undergraduate college students, the work reported here also used mostly undergraduates. This population was deliberately selected to provide consistency in interpretation and to permit comparison to other relevant instruments and empirical studies; however, it should be noted that validation research on noncollege populations is also needed in this area.

Construction of the Equal-Appearing Intervals Scale

In constructing affective attitudinal scales, it is critical to ensure that scale items are evenly distributed across the entire range, including the extremes, of evaluative (un)favorability. Although unfortunately seldom used, Thurstone's (1959) equal-appearing intervals scaling methods are particularly useful in achieving the necessary attitudinal range. These methods allow the researcher to develop and refine item pools empirically, as compared to theoretically or intuitively, using a few "expert" raters.

The result is more psychometrically sound instruments, whatever form these scales may ultimately take.

Thus, the first step in the present study was to use equal-appearing intervals scaling methods (Thurstone, 1959) to generate a pool of items that could be clearly discriminated along a continuum of (un)favorability. Using strategies outlined by Edwards (1957) and Thurstone (1959), an original item pool of 84 attitude statements was generated. These statements were constructed by the researcher, adapted from magazines and books, borrowed from other attitudinal scales, and generated through ideas and written statements from professional colleagues and students. Items were designed to reflect a wide range of affective attitudes and were constructed using established measurement criteria regarding language, grammar, and ambiguity (Edwards, 1957; Schuman & Presser, 1981).

Consistent with recommendations by Edwards (1957) regarding the preliminary sorting of items, the 84 items regarding feminism and the women's movement were put onto cards and sorted by eight male and female volunteer expert raters (two undergraduates, five graduate students, and one faculty member). The items were sorted into nine "equal-appearing intervals" or categories ranging from *extremely unfavorable* (category 1) to *neither favorable nor unfavorable* (category 5) to *extremely favorable* (category 9). In establishing an item pool using the equal-appearing intervals scaling method, expert raters are individuals representative of the population to which one intends to generalize, that is, those who encompass the (presumed) full range of attitudinal (un)favorability. Of the eight raters used in the initial sort, four verbally described themselves as being profeminist (two extremely so), one moderately profeminist, two nonfeminist, and one antifeminist.

After the initial sorting of the attitude statements, frequencies, proportions, cumulative proportions, medians, scale values, and Q-values (an index of the lack of consensus, or ambiguity, of the item) were computed according to methods outlined in Edwards (1957). A total of 18 items were selected for the final version of the equal-appearing intervals scale; items selected were those demonstrating the greatest consistency in category assignment, and containing the lowest Q-values (ranging from .50 to 1.0 in the selected items). The final equal-appearing intervals scale thus consisted of 18 items, two statements for each of the nine categories, ranging from *extremely unfavorable* (category 1) to *extremely favorable* (category 9), to which respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement.

Construction of the Summated Rating Scale

The construction of the equal-appearing intervals scale had successfully generated a list of items empirically demonstrated to include the entire range of attitudinal (un)favorability, thus forming a preliminary item pool

appropriate for the construction of the more common and easily used summated rating scale (as outlined by Edwards, 1957). For the preliminary form of the summated rating scale, the attitude statements used were 16 of the 18 items developed for the Thurstone scale. (To eliminate neutral responses, the two items representing category 5, *neither favorable nor unfavorable*, were eliminated from the attitude statement list for this scale.) These 16 items were randomly listed with a 5-point rating scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Because there were equal numbers of favorable and unfavorable statements on the preliminary form, for eight of the items the *strongly agree* response merited a score of 5 (most favorable), and eight items were reverse-scored so that the *strongly disagree* response indicated the most favorable attitude (obtaining a score of 5). Again consistent with recommendations by Edwards (1957) regarding initial scale development, this preliminary form was administered to 10 new volunteer respondents (six undergraduates, two graduate students, and two university staff members) who verbally self-reported a range of feminist attitudes.

As outlined by Edwards (1957), means were computed for each respondent's total responses, and the top and bottom 25% (two respondents each) were used as criterion "groups" for final item selection; their means were 4.69, 4.06 for the "high group" and 2.88, 2.50 for the "low group." Means, standard deviations, and *t* values were computed for each of the 16 statements in both the high and low groups. A total of six items had *t* values that did not adequately discriminate between the two criterion groups and were therefore eliminated from the final scale; *t* values ranged from 1.41 to 2.0, as compared to *t* values for acceptable items ranging from 2.83 to 7.07. The final 5-point summated rating scale thus contains the 10 items that most adequately discriminated between individuals endorsing profeminist and antifeminist attitudes. Six items represent favorable attitude statements and four items represent unfavorable statements, randomly ordered on the final scale.

As recommended by Edwards (1957), an additional step was added to determine the consistency between these two scales and their relation to direct self-statements of attitudes toward the feminist movement. A single-item scale was constructed asking respondents to "rank your attitude toward feminism and the women's movement by placing an X in the category that best describes your attitude" on a 9-point continuum, ranging from *unfavorable toward the women's movement* (1) to *neutral toward the women's movement* (5) to *favorable toward the women's movement* (9).

The three scales were administered with the equal-appearing intervals (Thurstone) and summated rating (Likert) scales in counter-balanced order, to 12 undergraduate psychology students who volunteered to participate. Because the Thurstone and Likert scales were based on different point-value scales, computations were added to equate the two scales. Specifically, the mean Likert score 3.525 was multiplied by a constant, C

= 1.8 ($9/5 = 1.8$, translating the 5-point scale into a 9-point scale). In the administration of the three attitudinal scales, there appeared to be a strong consistency among the mean attitudes tapped by all three scales ($M_s = 6.35 [SD = .78]$, $6.35 [SD = .72]$, $6.25 [SD = 2.0]$, respectively), suggesting that the three scales produce equivalent affective attitudinal scores. Upon questioning, respondents reported that the scales were adequate in tapping their attitudes and that they could think of nothing to add that might improve them. Because the overall goal of the study was to develop and test a brief, easily scored, multi-item measure of the attitude object, subsequent reliability and validity studies were conducted on the 10-item summated rating scale, labeled the FWM.

Reliability and Validity of the FWM Scale

Although small samples were appropriate to the initial phases of instrument development (Edwards, 1957), subsequent work included larger samples to establish the reliability and validity of the 10-item FWM scale. Summaries of findings related to reliability and construct validity of the instrument are presented below, as well as brief mention of empirical research in which the FWM has been successfully used.

Reliability. In terms of reliability, the internal consistency of the instrument was of primary concern in the present study. Although a test-retest reliability coefficient of .81 for a modified version of the FWM was found by Enns (1987) in a sample of 50 undergraduate women over a 2-week period, the wide attitudinal fluctuations common in college students render test-retest data somewhat inconclusive in this population. This variability may be especially relevant to feminist attitudes, where women's studies courses and other college experiences are likely to exert strong influence. Therefore, preliminary reliability of the instrument was assessed by evaluating its internal consistency.

In establishing reliability, the FWM was administered to 117 undergraduate psychology students at a large eastern public university. The sample contained 76 women and 41 men, with approximately 16% African-American/Black students, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 17% Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 57% Caucasian/White, and 5% Mideastern, foreign, or other. Thirty-two different academic majors were represented in the sample, and most participants (52%) were first-year students, with 24%, 14%, 9%, and 1% being sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students, respectively.

The mean score on the FWM for this sample was 35.17 (out of a possible 50) and the standard deviation was 6.61. Table 1 contains the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the FWM. As can be seen in the table, the full-scale reliabilities are quite high (.899 for men, .865 for women, and .890 for the total sample), with most (approximately 70%) individual item-total

Table 1
Reliability coefficients for FWM Scale

| Item | Item-Total Correlations | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | Men (n = 30) | Women (n = 61) | Total Sample (n = 91) |
| The leaders of the women's movement may be extreme, but they have the right idea. | .894 | .628 | .754 |
| There are better ways for women to fight for equality than through the women's movement. | .389 | .529 | .502 |
| More people would favor the women's movement if they knew more about it. | .636 | .257 | .418 |
| The women's movement has positively influenced relationships between men and women. | .434 | .594 | .513 |
| The women's movement is too radical and extreme in its views. | .718 | .648 | .684 |
| The women's movement has made important gains in equal rights and political power for women. | .692 | .603 | .677 |
| Feminists are too visionary for a practical world. | .702 | .649 | .689 |
| Feminist principles should be adopted everywhere. | .572 | .619 | .644 |
| Feminists are a menace to this nation and the world. | .746 | .583 | .667 |
| I am overjoyed that women's liberation is finally happening in this country. | .742 | .764 | .779 |
| Full Scale | .899 | .865 | .890 |

Note: The *ns* are less than sample totals due to missing or incomplete data.

correlations above .60. It should be noted that full-scale reliabilities for the other instruments used to establish construct validity (described below) ranged in this sample from .67 to .94, indicating that the FWM is well within the highest levels of reliability in this particular sample. Indeed, only one other scale, with a coefficient of .94 for 25 items, was higher. In terms of individual items, the lowest value (.418) was found for item 3, "More people would favor the women's movement if they knew more about it," with the particularly low item-total correlation for women (.257) probably accounting for the low value in the total sample. Item 10, "I am overjoyed that women's liberation is finally happening in this country," represented the highest value in this sample in terms of item-

total consistency. Overall, results indicate acceptable internal consistency reliability of the FWM.

Validity. Because research involving the FWM Scale has provided some preliminary information regarding predictive and concurrent validity (see below), the validation portion of the present study focused on establishing the convergent and discriminant validity of the FWM Scale (as outlined by Campbell & Fiske, 1959). The instruments used to establish convergent validity included the short form (25 items) of the AWS (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973), a short form (25 items) of the SRES-BB (King & King, 1990), the 20-item FEM (Smith et al., 1975), and two additional one-item scales. The first of these was a 9-point Likert item indicating attitudinal unfavorability/favorability toward the women's movement (used in the development phase, described previously), and the other was an item assessing subjective identification with feminism and the women's movement—"I consider myself a feminist and supportive of the women's movement"—rated on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree (cf. Enns, 1987).

As assumed in establishing convergent validity, all correlations between the FWM and these instruments were expected to be positive. The FWM was expected to correlate strongly with the single item measuring attitudinal favorability toward the women's movement, and moderately with the single-item measuring subjective identification with feminism as well as with the three measures of attitudes toward women's and gendered roles (FEM, AWS, SRES-BB). Although the latter three scales often have been used in previous research as measures of feminist attitudes, they appear more appropriately to measure gender role ideologies—that is, the perceived appropriateness of specific social roles and behaviors for women and men in contemporary society—rather than agreement with feminism per se. Thus, they were used here for comparative purposes, where correlations were expected to be positive but moderate. More liberal ideologies toward women's roles are almost certainly related to more positive attitudes toward feminism and the women's movement; however, egalitarian and feminist attitudes are not synonymous (King & King, 1986, 1990). In addition, it was likely that this relationship would be mitigated by the possible "ceiling effects" of the older measures (AWS, FEM) of gender role attitudes.

For the establishment of discriminant validity, instruments used were the short form (24 items) of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), the short form (20 items) of Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale (RDS; Troidahl & Powell, 1965), and the (33-item) Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-CSDS; Crowne & Marlowe, 1961). Low positive correlations were expected between the FWM and the three subscales of the PAQ, based on prior research (e.g., Belk & Snell, 1986) and to ensure that the FWM does not tap personal gender role

Table 2
Correlations of FWM Scale with other instruments to
establish convergent and discriminant validity

| <i>Instruments</i> | <i>Correlations with FWM Scale</i> | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| | <i>Men</i> (<i>n</i> = 30-41) | <i>Women</i> (<i>n</i> = 61-76) | <i>Total Sample</i> (<i>n</i> = 91-117) |
| Convergent | | | |
| AWS (Attitudes Toward Women Scale) | .747** | .724** | .766** |
| FEM (Attitudes Toward Feminism Scale) | .717** | .640** | .712** |
| SRES-BB (Sex Role Egalitarianism Scale/Form BB) | .667** | .598** | .677** |
| Subjective identification with feminism (single item) | .654** | .680** | .712** |
| Attitudinal favorability toward women's movement (single item) | .730** | .786** | .789** |
| Discriminant | | | |
| PAQ (Personal Attributes Questionnaire) | | | |
| M-Scale | -.104 | .156 | .024 |
| F-Scale | .453** | .170 | .347** |
| M/F-Scale | -.070 | .104 | -.025 |
| RDS (Rokeach Dogmatism Scale) | -.057 | -.252 | -.232* |
| M-CSDS (Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale) | .483** | -.207 | .092 |

* $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

characteristics instead of subjective feelings about feminism. In addition, a low negative correlation was predicted between dogmatism (Troidahl & Powell, 1965) and the FWM, consistent with past findings that have documented a negative relationship between authoritarianism and pro-feminist attitudes (e.g., Pawlicki & Almquist, 1973; Whitehead & Tawes, 1976; Worell & Worell, 1977). Finally, a negligible relationship was expected between the FWM and the M-CSDS, which would suggest that the FWM is not susceptible to social desirability influences, and again consistent with prior research (e.g., Belk & Snell, 1986).

The results of the validation study largely support the above predictions. Correlations between the FWM and other instruments used in establishing construct validity are provided in Table 2. As can be seen in the table, significant positive correlations were found between the FWM and all of

the measures used to establish convergent validity. These results indicate, as expected, that profeminist attitudes, as measured by the FWM, are moderately and positively related to measures of liberal ideologies regarding women's and gendered roles and identification as a feminist, and most strongly related to a single item directly assessing attitudinal favorability toward the women's movement.

In terms of discriminant validity, low but negative correlations were found, as expected, between the FWM and the RDS; however, the correlation for the total sample was statistically significant despite its low value ($-.232$), suggesting that dogmatism is inversely related to feminist attitudes. Correlations of the FWM with the subscales of the PAQ were quite low, although the *F*-scale correlations with the FWM were statistically significant for men and for the total sample; in addition, two of the subscale correlations (*M* & *M/F* scales) were negative for the male sample on the FWM, and the *M/F*-scale correlation with the total sample was also negative. Overall these results regarding the PAQ suggest that, for men, "feminine" or expressive gender role characteristics are positively related to profeminist attitudes. The FWM also exhibited relatively low correlations with the *M*-CSDS (.092 for the total sample), as predicted. However, the correlation for women was negative (suggesting an inverse relationship between profeminist attitudes and social desirability), whereas it was significant and positive for men, suggesting a positive (unexpected) relationship between profeminist attitudes and social desirability motivations for men.

Additional evidence for validity. In addition to the reliability and validity established in the present study, the FWM Scale also has been successfully used in other empirical work (previously abbreviated as ATF). It has been used most frequently by Enns and her colleagues (Enns, 1987; Enns & Hackett, 1990; Hackett, Enns, & Zetzer, 1992) in studies of non-feminist and profeminist women's reactions to nonsexist, liberal feminist, and radical feminist therapy. Enns (1987) also investigated the psychometric properties of the FWM in her samples using several of the same instruments used in the present study and found similar results: Convergent validity coefficients ranged from .36 (for involvement in activities associated with feminism) to .62 (for subjective identification with feminism); discriminant validity coefficients were .23 (for gender roles) and $-.24$ (for dogmatism).

Enns (1987) also modified the FWM by eliminating one item that was nondiscriminating in her sample and masked content by embedding her 9-item FWM Scale in 22 additional items regarding current social issues. Enns administered this instrument to 38 graduate students in psychology, randomly assigned to complete either the long (masked) or short (modified 9-item) form. Mean scores for women and men were not significantly different on either version, suggesting that masking did not appreciably

influence the manner in which individuals reacted to the questionnaire. It should be noted, however, that in the sample used in the present study, the 9-item modified and masked FWM exhibited a lower reliability (.85) than the original 10-item version, with nine of the items showing item-total correlations of less than .60. This information, combined with the lower convergent validity coefficients found by Enns (1987) for the modified version, suggests that the original 10-item version of the FWM is preferable, especially when masking content is not necessary.

In the counseling studies of Enns and colleagues (Enns & Hackett, 1990; Hackett et al., 1992), which examined the interaction between counselor and client feminist orientation of several hundred participants, the FWM has consistently distinguished between feminist and nonfeminist women and men. The FWM Scale also has been used in several other empirical studies to tap profeminist attitudes and their relation to a number of psychological variables.

For example, in the vocational area, Fassinger (1985, 1990) and O'Brien and Fassinger (1993) have found feminist orientation (as measured by the FWM) to be a significant predictor variable of college and high school women's nontraditional career choices and lifestyle plans, beyond the influence of liberal gender role attitudes (as measured by the AWS) alone. Farber (1993) found feminist attitudes (as measured by the FWM) to be a significant predictor of career orientation/salience in a sample of adult female graduate students and clinical trainees. O'Brien (1993, personal communication) found that profeminist attitudes (as measured by the FWM) correlated significantly with several measures of career self-efficacy and career salience, as well as with attitudinal independence from mothers in a sample of female high school seniors. In addition, correlations of the FWM Scale with measures of affectivity suggested that the FWM indeed provides an index of evaluative judgment of a specific attitude object, rather than affective response tendencies alone. Williams (1993) did not find feminist orientation (as measured by the FWM) to be a significant predictor of career self-efficacy in a sample of young men and women, and postulated age/developmental effects in mediating the relationship between these variables in younger adult populations. Finally, Ormerod (1991, 1993) has used the FWM in a study of college women's self-efficacy expectations in regard to coping with sexual harassment (1991), and in a confirmatory factor analysis of career, family, and feminist attitudes of a sample of upperclass and graduate college women (1993); in both studies, Ormerod found the FWM to be a reliable and valid measure of feminist attitudes.

DISCUSSION

In preliminary testing, the 10-item FWM Scale has been found to be a reliable and valid measure of affective attitudes toward feminism. As

such, it can be used by those needing a very brief measure to identify individuals expressing a range of profeminist positions, without the problem of ceiling effects found in many existing instruments or the confusion with measures of women's or gendered roles. Although, at the empirical level, the FWM Scale is likely to produce results somewhat similar to other related measures (as well it should, according to the principles of convergent validity; Campbell & Fiske, 1959), the brevity of the FWM and its straightforward assessment of affective responses to feminism suggest its unique contribution to the attitudinal assessment literature regarding women's issues. The FWM Scale also has been successfully used in empirical studies ranging from vocational development to counseling preferences, demonstrating its relevance to a wide variety of issues. Additional psychometric evaluation of the FWM Scale is, of course, needed, especially using populations who are not college students; in addition, the issue of social desirability effects should be explored, particularly in relation to men. Overall, however, preliminary work suggests that the measure is usable and useful as a feminist attitudinal measure.

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