How employment affects women's gender attitudes

The workplace as a locus of contextual effects

Iff Ann Banaszak

Department of Political Science, Iowa State University, 503 Ross Hall, Ames, IA 50011, USA

AND

Jan E. Leighley

Department of Political Science, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4348, USA

ABSTRACT. This paper explores how women's employment context affects their attitudes towards the women's movement. Previous research finds a relationship between employment and gender attitudes. We examine three mechanisms which might account for this relationship: the social status of some occupations provides specific benefits which cause women to adopt more non-traditional attitudes; employment experiences such as entering the workforce and working in a non-traditional occupation increase feminist attitudes; and, the social networks and context acquired through employment alter traditional sex-role attitudes. A regression analysis of survey data from South Bend, Indiana, finds that experiences in male-dominated jobs and social networks with employed women significantly increase support for the women's movement.

The significance of geographical location for political behavior and attitudes is accentuated in studies of individuals' neighborhood context and social networks (Miller, 1956; Katz, 1957; Putnam, 1966; Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1968; Weatherford, 1982; Huckfeldt, 1986; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987, 1988; MacKuen and Brown, 1987; Kenny, 1989). One of the most consistent findings in contextual analyses of voting behavior, for example, is that individuals who reside in working-class neighborhoods are more likely to vote for working-class parties (Miller, 1956; Butler and Stokes, 1974; Segal and Meyer, 1974; Langton and Rapoport, 1975). The consistency of these findings is especially surprising in light of MacKuen and Brown's observation that only two-thirds of the 1980 American National Election Study respondents report socializing with a neighbor (MacKuen and Brown, 1987). Since individuals are not as tightly embedded in the neighborhood as one might expect, this finding suggests that contextual effects are not restricted to the neighborhood alone, as previous studies of geographical context presume.
Because individuals spend at least as much, if not more, time at work as in their neighborhood, we expect that, for some political attitudes, the work context may be significant as well. Our primary interest below is to cast the general question of the workplace as a locus of contextual effects more specifically in terms of how women's work experience affects their gender attitudes. We chose this particular political attitude because previous research consistently finds that women's non-traditional attitudes toward gender roles result from work experience (Chandler, 1972; Mason and Bumpass, 1975; Welch, 1975; Welch and Sigelman, 1982; Thornton, Alwin and Camburn, 1983; Klein, 1984; Andersen and Cook, 1985; Poole and Zeigler, 1985). Klein (1984), for example, argues that women develop a feminist consciousness through personal non-traditional life circumstances, two of which are occupation and having an employed mother. She finds that employed women are more likely to be feminist than are women who work at home.

In addition to commenting on the workplace as an alternative source of contextual effects, we also consider which particular characteristics of that work experience have the greatest impact on gender attitudes. 'Work experience' necessarily entails a host of changes in a woman's life, any one of which might affect gender attitudes. We consider three alternative mechanisms of attitude change: the social status associated with employment, employment experiences, and women's social networks.

Network characteristics and contextual influence

The traditional approach in studies of social context is to supplement individual-level measures with aggregate measures of the social context. So, for example, in addition to individual characteristics such as education or income, contextual-level characteristics—such as the average education or partisanship of the neighborhood—individually influence the individual's party identification or vote choice (Miller, 1956; Putnam, 1966; Segal and Meyer, 1974; Krassa, 1985; Huckfeldt, 1986). The implicit assumption in these studies is that the social context influences individual behavior either through direct interaction (as in social persuasion) or, more generally, through observation of contextual norms.

As one might expect, network influence is structured by the nature of the relationships within the network (Granovetter, 1973; Gans, 1974a, 1974b; Laumann and Pappi, 1976) as well as the character of those individuals with whom the individual interacts. Partisanship is most often cited as the network characteristic affecting individuals' policy positions and candidate evaluations (Weatherford, 1982; MacKuen and Brown, 1987). Moreover, Weatherford (1982) finds that the effect of partisanship is enhanced when politics are regularly discussed within the network. Though both the Weatherford (1982) and MacKuen and Brown (1987) studies rely on neighborhood networks, neither presumes that such effects are restricted to neighborhood networks alone; in fact, both comment that their findings of the impact of neighborhood networks demand that networks outside of the immediate geographical environment be considered.

Huckfeldt and Sprague's survey of South Bend, Indiana, allows us to address the question of workplace effects because it contains measures on respondents' neighborhood, church and work contexts. Initial analyses of the data on church context confirm the importance of expanding contextual studies beyond the neighborhood. Gilbert (1988), for example, finds that the church context has a significant, though complex, influence on individuals' party identification and voting behavior. As Gilbert notes, such attitudinal effects might be expected given that one of the major functions of churches is the transmission of norms (see also Johnson and White, 1967; Wald, 1987).

Though norm transmission is not an explicit goal of the work context, Finifter (1974)
finds that Republicans on the job respond to minority status by interacting more with other Republicans. In addition, Republicans are less likely to express their partisan opinions when talking to Democrats at work. That individuals are responsive to majority political opinions in the work environment—or at least some work environments—suggests that the workplace, in addition to the neighborhood and church contexts, influences individuals’ political attitudes. Cumulatively, these findings suggest that contextual effects are structured by patterns of social interaction and that the work context provides social interaction which significantly influences individuals politically.

As for gender attitudes, several mechanisms might account for the relationship between employment and gender attitudes. According to Klein (1984), non-traditional gender attitudes result from the status which accompanies employment; both she and Welch (1975) find that women in high-status occupations have slightly more feminist views than women in low-status occupations. Thus, women in higher-status positions enjoy specific material, social and political benefits which cause them to adopt non-traditional attitudes.

An alternative mechanism by which employment may affect gender attitudes relates to employment experiences: entering the workforce and working in a non-traditional occupation. The first argument is that women who enter the workforce respond to this ‘atypical’ experience by abandoning traditional sex role attitudes (Klein, 1984). We add to this argument a more detailed feature of the employment experience, and that is whether women are employed in jobs which are dominated by men. Male-dominated professions could trigger more non-traditional attitudes among these women by providing negative experiences, such as barriers to entry or sexual discrimination (Thornton, Alwin and Camburn, 1983). Therefore, women may respond to such experiences by adopting more non-traditional gender attitudes.

The relationship between employment and gender attitudes may also reflect that employed women have social networks which differ from those of unemployed women. Employed women are more likely to meet other women who hold non-traditional attitudes or who are more supportive of the women’s movement. Housewives, on the other hand, are likely to interact with women holding more traditional gender attitudes. In essence, the mechanism here is not work per se, but the social network which may be altered by employment.

In each case, we assume that employment status, employment experiences or social networks influence attitudes, though the opposite is also possible: women’s political attitudes may affect later life-style choices. For example, women may choose high-status jobs because of their non-traditional gender attitudes or they may select their political discussion partners because they share non-traditional attitudes. There are several reasons why we choose to use employment and networks as causal factors influencing gender attitudes, rather than vice-versa. Previous studies which have explored the direction of causality have generally determined that ideology has little effect on employment (Spitzer and Waite, 1981; Thornton, Alwin and Camburn, 1983; Waite, Goldsheider and Witsberger, 1986). Using an 18-year panel study, Thornton, Alwin and Camburn (1983) find some evidence that sex role attitudes influence employment status, although the stronger influence was in the other direction. A comparison of standardized coefficients shows that employment affects gender attitudes far more than gender attitudes influence employment. There is no other literature which suggests that the choice of an occupation is influenced by gender role attitudes.

In addition, we believe that previous gender attitudes influence choices in careers and friends in only a minor way, if at all. Career decisions result from a host of factors: education, job opportunities, economic necessity and location, to name a few. While social networks are more likely to be affected by an individual’s ideology (cf. Finifter, 1974), questions of gender
and gender politics are rarely as salient as other political questions. Therefore, it seems highly unlikely that women will choose their political discussion partners on the basis of their support for the women’s movement. Instead, if political considerations are at work, we would expect the discussion partner choice to reflect similarities in partisanship or broader ideological values rather than gender issues alone. Therefore, we assume that employment and social context affect gender attitudes and not vice-versa.

Because no contextual models of gender attitudes have been examined, previous studies have not distinguished between the effects of status, experience and context. That is, models of gender attitudes typically emphasize employment status (employed or housewife), but do not include any measures of the employment (i.e., contextual) experience. Other demographic variables associated with non-traditional gender attitudes—such as education, income, mother’s employment status, marital status, age and race—similarly suggest contextual cues for gender attitudes (Welch, 1975; Spitzer and Huber, 1980, 1982; Klein, 1984; Chapman, 1985; Poole and Zeigler, 1985).

The exclusion of contextual measures from analyses on gender attitudes is especially unfortunate in that theories of gender attitudes and consciousness turn on social experiences. For example, these theories argue that women who work outside the home are typically more gender-conscious than housewives because of the different context to which the employed woman is exposed. Employment provides women not only with an income, but also with additional social contacts and information sources. Similarly, education, another variable consistently related to gender consciousness, typically enhances an individual’s cognitive abilities, but also affects the educational composition of her social acquaintances as well. Yet the models which are used to evaluate these arguments include only individual-level measures.

Characteristics of women’s occupational prestige, employment experience and social networks are examined below in order to assess how employment affects women’s attitudes on gender issues. More specifically, we expected to find that

1. women in high-status jobs hold more non-traditional gender attitudes than those in low-status jobs;
2. employed women’s gender attitudes are more non-traditional than those of women who are not in the paid workforce;
3. women in non-traditional occupations will possess more non-traditional gender attitudes; and
4. women whose social networks consist of employed individuals will adhere more strongly to non-traditional gender attitudes.

Data set and measures

The South Bend data set consists of three waves of panel data on 1254 respondents as well as information on up to three individuals named by each respondent as political discussants. The South Bend sampling design reflects an interest in understanding both the effects of context and social interaction. For this reason, the sample was not selected to be representative of the population of South Bend nor of the US population as a whole. Instead, 17 neighborhoods were purposively chosen to provide the greatest variation possible in social status and ethnic background. These neighborhoods were intensively sampled to allow individual measures to be aggregated into neighborhood contextual measures.

Concern with the generalizability of the findings below should be tempered by the fact that the women in South Bend are quite similar to the women in the 1984 American National Election Study sample (see Appendix 1). In particular, the attitudes of women in
South Bend toward the women's movement resemble those of the national sample. The largest discrepancy between the samples is in the percentage of married women; 50.83% of the national sample compared to 67.75% of the South Bend women. This difference is due, in part, to the different age distribution of the two samples; the mean age of the national sample is 44.4, compared to 50.25 in South Bend.

While the South Bend data set provides rich measures of women's work contexts, it includes only one gender-related attitude item: how close the woman feels toward the women's movement. This question was included in a series where the respondent described her relationship to various groups, with possible answers ranging from very close to very far. Though this question has only been studied in conjunction with other items measuring gender consciousness (c.f., Gurin, 1985), we believe that it reflects at least in part the extent to which a woman holds non-traditional gender attitudes. For example, we would seriously doubt that a woman who holds extremely traditional gender attitudes would feel very close to the women's movement. At the same time, we expect that women who hold more non-traditional attitudes will feel closer toward the women's movement because to some degree the movement reflects non-traditional positions on women's issues. This is consistent with Miller et al. (1986), who argue that an individual's group consciousness can be measured by how strongly she supports the politically active groups which represent her interests.

The independent variables which are of primary interest include measures of occupational prestige, as suggested by Klein (1984) and Welch (1975); features of employment experience, which indicate the direct impact of the work environment on individuals; and measures of the employment characteristics of the respondent's social network, which test for the indirect effect of work experience through social persuasion.

Occupational prestige is measured by three variables. The first two are dummy variables, coded 1 when women are employed in professional or managerial occupations, as specified by the US Census occupation codes. The omitted category includes all other occupations as well as housewives. If Klein's (1984) status argument is valid, then we expect the professional and managerial dummies to be significantly related to support for the women's movement, controlling for the work experience and social context variables discussed below.

A third characteristic of the prestige which is associated with employment is the extent of supervision on the job: how often the respondent's supervisor is around. We expect that the more autonomy the woman has on the job, the more likely she is to support non-traditional roles for women and, therefore, the women's movement.

Two measures of employment experience are included. The respondent's employment status, central to analyses of gender attitudes, is measured using a series of three dichotomous variables. These indicate whether the respondent is a housewife who does not work outside the home, is currently unemployed or temporarily laid off work, or is a student. The omitted category in the analysis contains those who are currently working or are retired. The definition of working individuals includes housewives who work only part-time.

Second, respondents' occupations are coded for the percentage of men in that occupational category, to represent degree of male dominance in the profession. This requires matching the respondent's occupation code with the percentage of men employed in that occupation category according to national level census materials (US Bureau of the Census, 1980: 196–205) with higher numbers indicating a greater number of men in the occupation.

Finally, the impact of the individual's social context on attitudes toward the women's movement is explored using two indicators. The first measure is derived from the characteristics of the respondent's discussion partners; specifically, it is the number of employed
female discussion partners. Respondents could name up to three discussion partners; since the sex of the discussion partners is not asked, we coded their first names by sex (see Appendix 2) and then coded their employment status (employed/not employed).

The second social context indicator is the proportion of women in the respondent’s neighborhood who work full-time. Due to the sampling design of the South Bend study, a sufficient number of respondents was drawn from each neighborhood so that estimates of the neighborhood contexts could be made. This variable measures the extent to which the respondent is situated in a context where the norm is for women to be employed. We hypothesize that exposure to such a norm increases support for non-traditional gender attitudes, including closeness to the women’s movement.

Also included in the model are several other variables often associated with supportive attitudes toward women’s liberation. Education is measured by the number of years of formal schooling. Income is the total reported family income for 1983, grouped into eight categories running from low to high income. Mother’s employment is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent’s mother was employed outside the home when the respondent was growing up. The respondent’s marital status is coded as a series of two dummy variables: individuals who have never been married and individuals who are either divorced, separated or widowed. The omitted category consists of all respondents who are currently married. Finally, the age of the respondent is measured in number of years, while race is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent is white.

Findings

Table 1 presents the results from a multivariate regression analysis of women’s attitudes toward the women’s liberation movement. Overall, the results indicate that the effect of employment on gender attitudes results from women’s exposure to non-traditional work environments and interaction with other employed women rather than occupational prestige or neighborhood employment norms. The two dummy variables indicating whether women were in professional or in managerial occupations were unrelated to gender attitudes. Moreover, the woman’s job autonomy does not affect gender attitudes: women who were closely supervised were no more or less likely to feel positive about the women’s liberation movement.

Individually, none of the employment status variables (whether the respondent is a student, unemployed or an unemployed housewife) is significant; a joint F-test performed for the three employment status dummies was also insignificant (\(F(3,590) = 2.33\), where the test statistic for \(p < 0.05\) = 2.6). Simply being employed therefore does not in itself bring women to support the women’s movement. Thus, the evidence suggests that neither employment alone, nor the prestige of being employed in higher-status occupations, nor the autonomy which comes with these jobs influences women’s gender attitudes.

Instead, the employment variable which is critical in the development of non-traditional gender attitudes is that of male occupational dominance. We find that the percentage of men in the woman’s occupation has a significant effect on support for the women’s movement but that the strength of the relationship is even stronger than that reported by Thornton, Alwin and Camburn (1983). This suggests that women who work in non-traditional occupations have employment experiences which stimulate positive attitudes toward the women’s movement.

The social network argument is also supported by the results in Table 1: the greater the number of employed women in a woman’s discussion network, the more positive her feelings toward the women’s movement. Therefore, women’s gender attitudes are affected
TABLE 1. OLS regression estimates of attitudes toward the women’s movement (female respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.821</td>
<td>0.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional occupation</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>0.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial occupation</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>-0.162</td>
<td>0.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife (unemployed)</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>0.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>0.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>0.450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male dominance</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed female discussion partners</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood female employment</td>
<td>-1.687</td>
<td>0.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>-0.363</td>
<td>0.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated, widowed or divorced</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>-0.461</td>
<td>0.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed mother</td>
<td>-0.158</td>
<td>0.117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 589

$R^2 = 0.068$

$F = 2.615$

1 Significance at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test.
2 Significant at the 0.01 level.

not only by the context of their employment, but also indirectly through other women’s employment experiences. Although we have no direct evidence of women’s social networks changing as a consequence of employment, these findings imply that a newly employed woman will become more positive toward women’s issues should she engage in political discussion in the work context. In any case, the analysis suggests that employment per se is not required to change gender attitudes since housewives who discuss politics with non-traditional (i.e., employed) women are also more supportive of the women’s movement.

The proportion of employed women in the respondent’s neighborhood does not influence her attitudes toward the women’s movement. The insignificance of neighborhood women’s employment status suggests that the neighborhood may not be the relevant locus of contextual effects for gender attitudes. In fact, the greater contextual impact on a woman’s attitudes toward feminism may be from the work context, where the woman is more likely to be exposed to feminist ideas, rather than from the neighborhood. This interpretation underscores the importance of examining contexts other than the neighborhood.

The insignificance of neighborhood women’s employment status may also be a function of differences in measurement between the two social context variables. The number of employed female discussants is a concrete measure of social interaction while neighborhood women’s employment status is an aggregate contextual measure. Attitudes on gender issues, unlike those of party identification, may rely much more on direct social interaction
for persuasive information than on the general transmission of norms which might occur through the casual observation of neighbors. This may explain why the number of employed female discussion partners is significant in the analysis while the percentage of neighborhood women employed is not.

As reported in Table 1, only two of several demographic variables were also significant in the analysis: education and race. Women with higher educational levels were more likely, while whites were less likely, to be supportive of the women's movement. Conversely, income, age, mother's employment and marital status are unrelated to attitudes toward the women's movement, with the two dichotomous marital status variables both separately and jointly insignificant ($F(2, 590) = 1.406$ and at $p < 0.05$, $F = 3.00$).

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to examine several alternative mechanisms by which employment influences women's attitudes toward the women's movement. We argued that work may influence women's attitudes through three different mechanisms: occupational prestige, direct employment experiences, and social context and networks. This analysis indicates that only employment experience and social context, particularly the work-related social context, are important in explaining women's attitudes toward the women's movement.

We find no evidence to support the argument that the status or prestige which comes with employment makes women more supportive of the women's movement. Neither the professional and managerial occupation variables, nor indicators of non-participation in the workforce nor the measure of women's occupational autonomy affected women's gender attitudes. Thus, we conclude that previous findings on differences in gender attitudes between women in high- and low-status jobs are a function not of occupational prestige but instead of the different nature of the employment experience for the two sets of women.

The two factors which did significantly affect women's attitudes toward the women's movement were context measures: the percentage of men in the respondent's occupation and the number of discussion partners who were working women. While both of these variables are context variables, the percentage of men in the respondent's occupation also indicates a characteristic of the work environment. It seems highly unlikely that women in male-dominated jobs are being persuaded to support the women's liberation movement through the arguments of their male colleagues. Nor are male-dominated occupations likely to be a place where the norm is support for the women's movement. Instead, it seems likely that women in male-dominated jobs are led to stronger support for the women's movement through the experiences they have. Experiences with discrimination, for example, are probably more common in male-dominated occupations.

The significance of women's political discussion partners indicates that social networks and social interaction are indeed important; when a woman's social network includes more employed women, her gender attitudes will change. On the other hand, gender attitudes are not transmitted through observation of neighborhood norms. Were this the case, then we would have found women in neighborhoods with a high proportion of employed women favoring the women's movement. Consequently, contextual effects on women's gender attitudes are a function of specific social interaction and the information which is conveyed therein, not simply an indirect influence of social norms.

Contextual analyses have often ignored the mechanism by which aggregate characteristics of individuals' neighborhood, church, or work environments influence them. This analysis has displayed how specific features of interaction can be measured and considered as alternative mechanisms. When the question of contextual effects is approached in this
manner, we verify that social influence is driven by social interaction and not simply the transmission of neighborhood or employment norms.

Finally, this analysis provides empirical support for the conjecture that contextual effects occur outside the local neighborhood. Contextual analyses—thus far almost entirely limited to the neighborhood environment—must therefore move beyond the neighborhood to investigate the very real effects of employment experience. In doing so, the question of which political attitudes might be influenced by, or be immune to, the workplace as a political context might also be addressed.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Eric Plutzer for comments on earlier drafts of this paper. In addition, we also are indebted to Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague for their provision of and assistance with the South Bend data. This data set was collected in part under National Science Foundation Grants SES-8319186 to Washington University, St. Louis, SES-8318899 to University of Notre Dame and SES-8415572 to Indiana University. The 1984 National Election Study data were made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Notes

1. While this analysis focuses specifically on women’s feelings toward the Women’s Liberation Movement, we use the more general term of ‘gender attitudes’ to refer to the underlying beliefs that the individual has regarding women’s role in society and attitudes toward governmental policies which affect ‘women’s’ roles. We conceptualize this underlying dimension as ranging from traditional to non-traditional, with the former emphasizing women’s ‘supportive’ or secondary roles and the latter emphasizing women’s autonomy. Since the data set did not provide adequate measures of the underlying dimension, we must assume that women’s reaction to the Women’s Liberation Movement reflects the underlying values. Furthermore, because this is a strong assumption, we do not make any claims that women’s reactions toward the Women’s Movement necessarily reflect feminism as a political or social ideology.

2. For a more extensive description of the South Bend study, see Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987, 1988).

3. For conflicting evidence, see Thornton and Freedman, 1979.

4. We group widowed, divorced and separated because the exit of the spouse (by choice or otherwise) places women in new social and economic situations. In addition, attempts to break marital status, particularly the widowed and divorced or separated, into finer categories showed that an increased number of categories did not provide any additional information in explaining attitudes toward the women’s movement.

5. Other indicators of women’s job autonomy—such as whether her hours are fixed or flexible, whether she is a supervisor, or whether she feels she has autonomy—were included in previous analyses but were also insignificant.

6. We also considered the possibility that including a six-point measure of ideology in the model would reduce the effect of the social network and work experience variables and significantly raise the $R^2$ in Table 1. While adding this variable increased the $R^2$ to 0.109, its inclusion did not alter the sign or magnitude of the estimates for the variables in Table 1. In addition, all the variables which are significant in Table 1 retained their significance at the $p < 0.05$ level with a one-tailed test.

We chose not to report this model because we had no theoretical justification for including ideology in a model of gender attitudes and because we believe the causality works in the opposite direction: attitudes toward the women’s movement influence political ideology and not vice-versa. A table of model estimates which includes the ideology measure is available from the authors upon request.
References


How employment affects women's gender attitudes


Appendix 1

A comparison of the South Bend sample and the American National Election Study (1984)

The following tables indicate for each sample the distribution of females on relevant demographic and attitudinal measures.

### TABLE 1. Women's closeness to the women's movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling thermometer</th>
<th>NES (%)</th>
<th>South Bend 5-Point Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–25</td>
<td>9.98</td>
<td>Very far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–44</td>
<td>9.68</td>
<td>Somewhat far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–55</td>
<td>23.42</td>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56–74</td>
<td>31.62</td>
<td>Somewhat close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75–100</td>
<td>25.30</td>
<td>Very close</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2. Women's employment status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NES (%)</th>
<th>South Bend (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>52.02</td>
<td>45.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily laid-off</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>12.89</td>
<td>22.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>22.77</td>
<td>24.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Women’s education (years of formal schooling)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>NES (%)</th>
<th>South Bend (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0—8</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9—11</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>38.52</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13—16</td>
<td>29.83</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 16</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Women’s marital status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>NES (%)</th>
<th>South Bend (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>50.83</td>
<td>67.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>15.01</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>12.23</td>
<td>10.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>16.44</td>
<td>17.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2

Information on the coding of discussion partner’s sex

Since the respondents in the South Bend data set were not asked the sex of their discussion partners, we coded the first names of the discussion partners given by the respondents. The first names were coded independently by the two co-authors and disagreements were then resolved. Besides coding for male and female, we coded as missing those names which did not discriminate the sex of the discussion partner. The coding followed two basic principles. Names which are predominantly one-sex names such as Carol and Michael were coded that sex, and names which do not belong to either sex predominantly (such as Pat and Chris) were considered ambiguous and therefore assigned the code for missing data.

Out of a total of 4185 first names, there was a 94 percent agreement rate on the first coding. Of these, only 18 cases represented complete disagreement of sex (where one coder coded the name female and the other coded the name male) and most of these can be attributed to coder error. In other cases, one coder coded the name as ambiguous and the other coded it as a specific sex. If on discussion of these cases, one coder still believed the name to be ambiguous, it was coded as such. When the coding was completed, only seven percent of the names were coded as missing because the sex of the discussion partner could not be identified.