



Contextual Determinants of Feminist Attitudes: National and Subnational Influences in Western Europe

Author(s): Lee Ann Banaszak and Eric Plutzer

Source: *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (Mar., 1993), pp. [145]-157

Published by: [American Political Science Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2938962>

Accessed: 13/08/2013 13:55

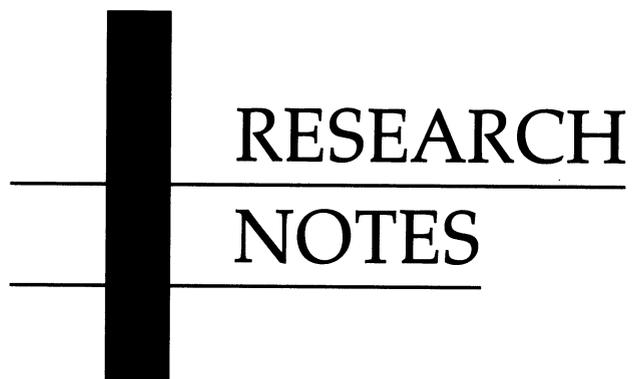
Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Political Science Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Political Science Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>



RESEARCH
NOTES

CONTEXTUAL DETERMINANTS OF FEMINIST ATTITUDES: NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL INFLUENCES IN WESTERN EUROPE

LEE ANN BANASZAK and ERIC PLUTZER *Iowa State University*

We augment the survey-based studies of attitudes toward feminism with comparative, contextual perspectives emphasizing the importance of social structure and culture. In doing so, we are able to assess the relative merits of two very different structural theories. Most researchers implicitly assume a simple linear effect of social context on attitudes. On the other hand, some early works on American conservatism suggest to us that status discontent may be a better explanation. We explicate these two approaches and derive a series of testable hypotheses for each. We then examine the validity of these theories utilizing data from nine European nations.

As gender politics became increasingly important in the politics of the Western democracies, researchers have become interested in understanding why some individuals endorse, and others oppose, the efforts of the women's movement to enhance the legal and economic status of women. By far, the largest number of studies have examined attitudes within particular nations, focusing on individual-level traits, such as education, marital status, employment, and religion (Andersen and Cook 1985; Conover and Gray 1983; Davis and Robinson 1991; Klein 1984; Plutzer 1991; Tedin et al. 1977; Wilcox 1991). They find, typically, that men and women in the United States and Western Europe are more likely to endorse feminist goals, support the women's movement, or show high levels of feminist consciousness if they are highly educated, have little religious involvement, and live in families where women work in the paid labor force.

On the other hand, some authors have conducted historical and comparative studies of nations that attempt to explain aggregate levels of profeminist sentiment by referring to various aspects of a nation's social structure or institutions. For example, comparative studies of the emergence of women's movements (generally case studies or comparisons among two or three nations) have emphasized the importance of structural features of Western societies and labor markets (e.g., Chafetz and Dworkin 1986; Dahlerup 1986). Norris (1984) and Klein (1987) provide the most extensive of these comparative studies; they compare public opinion toward feminism in the 10 member nations of the European Economic Communities. Unfortunately, analysis of 10 or fewer nations does not afford the possibility of weighing several theoretical explanations against one another; in statistical terms these models are underidentified for lack of a sufficient number of data points or degrees of freedom.

In addition, the cross-national studies mask a large amount of internal variation within countries. To give just one example, Norris (1987) ranks France as one of the most favorable nations in terms of female participation in the labor force. Yet a close examina-

tion shows some regions in France with female labor participation rates lower than the lowest-ranked nations. To illustrate, the Eurostat (1984) *Yearbook of Regional Statistics* reports that the percentage of women employed full-time varied greatly within each nation. In France, female employment rates ranged from 15% in Corsica, to 31% in Alsace, to 43% in the region encompassing Paris. Thus, national social indicators provide only a poor approximation of the immediate impact of social structure on individuals.

Yet, the cross-national findings compel us to re-examine the individual-level survey results. They clearly suggest that several key aspects of social structure may be crucial to attitude formation. In particular, in nations where women's participation in the economy is high, support for feminist goals is also high. In addition, the literature also suggests that low religiosity, ease of divorce, and other characteristics of modernity are associated with profeminist sentiment. The implication of structural theories such as these is that in principle, cross-national variation in support of feminism can be explained by the effects of several aspects of social structure and culture.

We take an intermediate approach that augments the survey-based method with comparative contextual data on social structure and culture. This allows us to supplement individual-level explanations with structural theories of attitude formation. In so doing, we are able to assess the relative merits of two very different structural theories. On the one hand, theories of social context suggest that individuals are influenced by their environment, producing a simple linear effect of social context on attitudes. On the other hand, some early works on American conservatism suggest to us that status discontent may be a better explanation (Gusfield 1963; Hofstadter 1963). Theories of status discontent suggest that individuals react against the social context especially when the context is viewed as hostile to their own status. We shall explicate these two approaches and derive a series of testable hypotheses for each, then examine the validity of these theories utilizing data from nine European nations.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

The basic tenet of the contextual approach is that the social composition of society has important consequences for political attitudes and behavior. Tingsten's study of 56 Stockholm election districts provides a classic example (Tingsten 1963): he found that working-class voters were especially likely to support Socialist parties when they constituted a majority of their election district. Huckfeldt (1986) reviews this and other contextual studies, all of which point to the fact that the social composition of one's neighborhood or region has a direct effect on political behavior and election outcomes.

Klein (1987) advances an analogous position, arguing that changes in the political economy in the West required the increased participation of women in the paid work force.¹ As the sexual division of labor changed, there were corresponding changes in family structure (e.g., smaller families) and family roles. The end result, Klein argues, was a "new definition of womanhood" which was necessary, although not sufficient, for the rise of feminist consciousness and activism. Thus, societal characteristics are a critical component of political socialization.

Individuals' support of gender equality, Klein states, is partly related to "exposure to nontraditional experiences" (1987, 35). An individual's exposure comes not only from contextual effects but from personal experiences (individual-level effects), as well; and there is now substantial evidence of such effects at the individual level. Studies show, for example, that female employment experience is associated with profeminist attitudes among women (Banaszak and Leighley 1991; Davis and Robinson 1991; Klein 1984; Wilcox 1991), their husbands (Davis and Robinson 1991; Klein 1984; Plutzer 1991; Smith 1985) and their children (Powell and Steelman 1982).

It is theoretically possible that observed cross-national differences are caused entirely by varying numbers of citizens in each nation having *personal* exposure to nontraditional experiences. Yet the empirical literature rules this out. We have elsewhere shown that substantial cross-national differences remain after statistically controlling for a comprehensive set of individual-level predictors (Banaszak and Plutzer n.d.).

At present, then, we cannot account for cross-national differences in profeminist support with individual-level effects alone. In addition, we have a growing literature suggesting that exposure to a society that is structurally and culturally nontraditional fosters profeminist beliefs. Thus, we will examine the applicability of contextual theories to the formation of feminist values and the stronger argument that contextual variables can account for all observed cross-national differences in feminism.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND STATUS DISCONTENT

A rather different causal process is suggested by theories of status politics. Two early proponents of theories of status politics, Hofstadter (1963) and Gusfield (1963) explain several strands of right-wing politics in the United States as emerging from groups that experience a loss of prestige or status in the society. In essence, it is a theory about traditional groups that lose status as the society around them becomes more modern; their reaction is retrenchment and support of extremely conservative positions. With respect to women's political sentiments and behaviors, Duverger claims that housewives will cling more strongly to traditional views in areas where many women have acquired nontraditional life-styles (1955, 128).

According to this literature, then, status discontent should be restricted to those with traditional life-styles in the least traditional settings. We are therefore led to predict that antifeminism will be high among traditional married individuals but especially high when they live in areas with high divorce rates. We should expect full-time homemakers to be especially conservative in areas where large proportions of women work, and so on.

However, it is possible that status discontent operates in two directions. Although virtually all previous theoretical treatments focus on conservative outcomes, we have elsewhere suggested a parallel argument that predicts leftward shifts (Banaszak and Plutzer n.d.). For those exposed to nontraditional experiences such as divorce, a university education, or female labor force participation, the effect on feminist consciousness could be enhanced in traditional settings where such life-styles constitute a small minority. Conversely, this approach suggests that feminist sympathies may be suppressed in areas where women's gains are already substantial (perhaps due to complacency). This approach has not been tested previously, and we shall formally evaluate it here.

DIMENSIONS OF TRADITIONALISM AND WOMEN'S STATUS

We must ask, then, what specific structural variables affect people's political socialization or status discontent and might explain national differences in profeminist attitudes? The theoretical literature on this point is rather thin; but the various works point to the same key variables: women's educational attainment and opportunities, women's labor force participation, role options beyond traditional wife and homemaker, and religiosity/secularization.

Education. A number of authors point to women's educational opportunities as crucial in the evolution of feminism. Chafe (1977) notes that early waves of

U.S. feminism coincided with the growth of women's colleges. Lipman-Blumen (1984) argues that education is not only an important resource for women but inhibits traditional gender myths from being accepted by men.

In addition, Guttentag and Secord (1983, 32) argue that high levels of female achievement in higher education create a pool of women who can act as a bulwark against institutions that advance traditional and sexist norms. Huber and Spitze (1983), however, argue that education functions primarily as an antecedent variable to women's labor force participation. If Huber and Spitze are correct, educational attainment should have no net impact after statistically controlling for the labor force participation.

Women's Labor Force Participation. Several authors suggest that women's labor force participation also influences gender role attitudes, support for feminism, and participation in the women's movement. (Chafetz and Dworkin 1986; Dahlerup 1986; Gerson 1987; Klein 1987; Lipman-Blumen 1984; Norris 1987). Labor force participation initiates these changes in several ways. First, women's labor force participation increases women's economic resources, dispels myths about women's inability to participate, and increases their power in family life. In addition, as more women enter the labor force, the society as a whole becomes infused with stories of discrimination leading to acknowledgements of existing inequalities. Finally, large numbers of women in the labor force create new social networks that permit the sharing of experiences among women, the expansion of women's networks, and the development of gender consciousness.

Divorce Rates. Klein (1987) suggests that divorce rates indicate movement from traditional to modern family life. Plutzer (1988) argues that the experience of divorce itself, with women having increased reliance on their own earnings and having to play multiple parental and familial roles, fosters profeminist sentiment directly. At the aggregate level, a large number of women experiencing divorce effects the number of people confronting gender-based obstacles. Although divorce tends to hurt women economically and help men (Weitzman 1985), the option for women to leave an unsatisfying or violent marriage is generally viewed as an indicator of freedom from rigid patriarchal family norms.

Religiosity. Himmelstein (1986) and Mayer and Smith (1985) point to religion as a system-level factor having implications for politics and gender attitudes. With few exceptions, Western religious institutions have advanced and reenforced traditional gender norms that include separate and subordinate positions for women. These have been used by lay members to justify unequal social arrangements, as well. Thus, the process of secularization necessarily weakens an important antifeminist force and should promote profeminist view in the society.

We should note that these four dimensions are not indicators of a common factor. In the preceding paragraphs, we have suggested that each is related to feminism by a distinctive causal mechanism. Moreover, at the national level, these four traits appear to display statistical independence (Norris 1987). Although we do not claim that this list exhausts the inventory of potential contextual influences, these four dimensions do tap into the major influences suggested to date and will, therefore, constitute our empirical focus.

DATA AND METHODS

In order to assess these rather different predictions we have constructed a data set combining survey data with social indicators collected at the subnational level (usually provinces or an equivalent administrative unit). In this way, we have a measure of the local social structure hypothesized to affect each person surveyed.

We start with data from the 1983 Euro-barometer that we have examined (Banaszak and Plutzer n.d.), as have others (e.g., Klein 1987; Norris 1987; Wilcox 1991). This permits us to begin with baseline multivariate models of individual-level effects comparable to much of the literature. The Euro-barometer 19 survey, done in 1983, focuses on the role of women in society and is part of an ongoing survey series conducted by the Commission of the European Communities within member nations.

Since the national sample sizes are not proportional to the actual relative sizes of the national populations, we weight the data as recommended by the principal investigators (Rabier, Riffault, and Inglehart 1984). This weight adjusts the national samples to produce pooled male and female subsamples that are representative of the European Community. Pooling national samples makes sense in the present analysis, for the strong contextual hypothesis is that the nations differ only in their social structure. Pooling samples permits us to see whether any residual national differences remain after controlling for the effects of social structure.

The European Community nations included in the present analysis are Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. For a variety of reasons we reluctantly exclude respondents from Greece in the present study (a decision also reached by Wilcox 1991). In personal communications with us, several researchers expressed concern about the validity of the Greek data, since Greek men and women rate as most feminist on our measure but near the bottom on several variables concerning women's occupational roles. More importantly, we were unable to construct regional indicators for several of our key contextual variables because of missing data on some measures and an incompatibility of regional definitions between the Euro-barometer and Eurostat's (1984) *Yearbook of Regional Statistics*. This made it impossible to

match regional data with most Greek respondents precisely.

Dependent Variable

Attitudes toward feminism are measured by a scale created by summing the answers to six questions concerning the women's movement and its goals. Respondents were asked to locate themselves on a four-point scale (scored here from 0 to 3), ranging from *completely disagree* to *completely agree* with the goals of (1) fighting against prejudiced people who would like to keep women in a subordinate role, (2) obtaining "true equality between women and men in their work in careers," (3) persuading political parties give women equal opportunities to be party leaders or candidates, (4) arranging gender equality in responsibilities for child care, and (5) organizing "women into an independent movement to achieve a radical transformation of society." In addition, answers to a question asking if respondents had a unfavorable or favorable opinion of the women's movement (also scored from 0 to 3) are included, as well. Appendix A contains the exact wording of these questions. Possible scores range from 0 for those taking the antifeminist position on all six questions to 18 for those consistently supporting the women's movement. For the 3,196 men and 3,230 women aged 18 or older who had valid scores on the profeminism scale, the means were 10.9 (s.d. = 3.65) and 11.8 (s.d. = 3.62) respectively.

The scale has high internal consistency, as demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha equal to .72, and has high predictive validity, as indicated by a strong positive association with women's reported membership in feminist organizations. (Over 87% of members, and 84% of those who would consider membership, score above the mean on the feminist goals scale). Exploratory factor analyses also suggest that these six items represent a single dimension (for details, see Appendix B). In light of the fact that studies have produced similar findings even when the content of scale questions only partially overlapped (compare, e.g., Banaszak and Leighley 1991; Davis and Robinson 1991; and Plutzer 1988), we feel that the present measure is an adequate measure of feminist support.²

Individual-level Independent Variables

Our set of individual-level variables is culled from the extant literature. In order to undertake a stringent test of the contextual and status discontent hypotheses, we want to be certain to include all known individual-level predictors of feminist support. We therefore employ measures of age, education, employment, income, marital status, number of children, attitudes toward women working, partisan preference, and urbanization in our analysis.

Religiosity, party affiliation, urbanization, marital status, and women's employment status are all measured by a series of dummy variables. Religiosity is

coded as two dummy variables representing answers to the question, "Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are a religious person, not a religious person, or a convinced atheist?"—the omitted category being atheists.³ Political party affiliation is coded 1 if respondents indicated their intent to cast a vote for a leftist party in the next election.⁴ Urbanization is measured by two dummy variables indicating whether the respondent lives in a rural area or a medium-size town—the omitted category being citydwellers.

For women, marital status is measured by a series of dummy variables representing respondents who are married, divorced or separated, widowed, and never married (with the latter category the omitted group in regression models). Women's employment statuses are coded as dummy variables representing whether the respondent works full-time, part-time, is unemployed and looking for work, or is not in the labor force (the omitted category).

As in our other study (Banaszak and Plutzer n.d.), we use a somewhat different classification scheme for men. It combines marital status and spouse's employment status. Men can be (1) single, (2) divorced, (3) widowed, (4) cohabitating, (5) married with wife working full-time, (6) married with wife working part-time, (7) married with wife looking for paid employment, or (8) married with wife not in the labor force. In combining marital status and spouse's employment, we essentially classify men by the traditionalism of their family life-style.

Education is measured by a nine-category variable denoting the age that the respondent finished full-time schooling. It is coded from 1, for leaving school at 14 and under, 9, for those studying until 22 years old or beyond. In addition, the number of children under 16 who are living at home is included as an indicator of traditional family life-style. We also have a measure of family income that groups respondents into national income quartiles. Finally, we incorporate the respondent's age and a series of dummy variables representing each of the nations in the study and Northern Ireland (France omitted). Northern Ireland is separated from Great Britain because its culture and context differs considerably from that of Britain.

Because commitment toward women working outside the home influences feminist support in both women and men (Banaszak and Plutzer n.d.; Gerson 1987) we also include a measure of the respondent's preferences toward women's employment. This attitudinal variable asks men, "If you had the choice, would you prefer your wife be in paid employment?" and asks women whether they would prefer to work if they had the choice. In a sense, the variable measures both men's and women's ideal role of the woman of the house.

Measures of Social Context

We utilize four measures of local culture and social structure. Two are derived from statistics reported in

Eurostat's (1984) *Yearbook of Regional Statistics*. Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Community and reports social and economic indicators at the level of 116 "administrative units." These usually correspond to official civil subdivisions, such as *Länder*, provinces, and the like. These regions vary substantially in size and population, averaging about three million people each. Although more precise estimates of the effect of social structure might be derived from data based on towns or neighborhoods, these represent the finest level of analysis possible at present. Compared to an analysis of nations, these provide more homogeneous social settings and sufficient cross-region variation (because of a large enough number of units) to undertake multivariate analyses.

The first social context measure is the ratio of the female economic activity rate to the corresponding rate for men. The sex-specific activity rates are computed as the number of women and men employed full-time divided by the total adult female and male populations, respectively. The logic of using a female-to-male ratio of rates is that female activity rate may reflect national unemployment trends, as well as women's status. The rate ratio provides an indicator of women's economic participation relative to men's.

In a similar fashion, we calculate a female-to-male rate ratio of third-level students. This second context measure indicates the relative status and opportunities for women to pursue college-level education and training.

The last structural measures are the regional divorce rates and religiosity levels. Because these could not be derived from archival sources at the regional level, they are calculated from Euro-barometers 9–18 (1978–82). We pooled these 10 surveys and aggregated individuals according to region of residence. This allowed us to calculate regional rates based on answers from a total of over 125,000 individuals. Therefore even in very small regions, we were able to compute divorce rates and religiosity measures from a large number of respondents. The average regional sample size from which the divorce rate is calculated was 1,480, with the contextual variable for 95% of the respondents based on regional samples of 242 or more. Because the religiosity item was not asked on a regular basis, the regional samples for this measure were somewhat smaller, but still large enough for fairly reliable measurement. The contextual measures of religiosity were based on an average of 336 individual respondents with 90% based on 54 or more individuals.

The divorce rate is simply the percentage of those from a given region who identify themselves as divorced. The religiosity context measure is coded as the mean within an area based on answers to a question asking respondents, "Do you personally feel, irrespective of how often you go to church, that your religion is of great importance, some importance, or only of little importance in your life?"—coded 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

In addition, we computed several cross-product

interaction terms as suggested by the status discontent theory outlined above.

Statistical Methods

We estimated a series of ordinary least squares regression models in which the profeminism scale is the dependent variable. Each model is estimated separately for men and women on theoretical grounds (since Klein [1984] argues that feminist consciousness develops differently in men and women) and in order properly to specify the regression models for men that require a measure of *spouse's* employment status. Our first model includes only individual-level variables plus the dummy variables denoting nation. The second model adds the four measures of social context. Succeeding models add one interaction term each. Although only a model with all hypothesized interaction terms is correctly specified, we report these intermediate models because multicollinearity is often a problem with interaction terms. In such cases, inspection of intermediate models is often helpful. In the present case, however, the fully specified model produces interaction estimates virtually identical to those in the more comprehensive models. Finally, all significant interactions are included in a final model.

RESULTS

The results from the statistical analysis for women are reported in Table 1. The first model simply includes individual-level main effects. The findings are nearly identical to results reported by Wilcox (1991), and we report them without further comment except to note that the national differences reflected in model 1 are not substantially changed from a model without any individual-level regressors.

We turn first, then, to an exploration of the influence of structural variables in the absence of interaction effects. These can be found in Table 1 column 2. The first important finding is that the addition of the context measures does not alter the significance or sign of any individual level effects in model 1; that is, the individual-level effects identified by previous researchers are not spurious due to the effects of individual's social environments.

We find that three of the four contextual measures are significant predictors of scores on the profeminism scale. The nonsignificant variable is the mean religiosity of the region. We note that we also found no effect of a similarly constructed measure of average frequency of church attendance.

Women's educational achievement in a respondent's region has a positive effect on profeminist beliefs. Living in areas where women's college enrollment approaches that of men increases a woman's feminist beliefs after taking into account the positive effect of her own educational attainment.

We were somewhat surprised, however, to find that the extent of women's employment and the

TABLE 1

Regression of Profeminism Scale, Female Subsample

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	MODELS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Intercept	12.028*	11.363*	11.381*	9.082*	11.883*	10.413*	9.492*	8.872*
Country								
Belgium	-.225	-.403	-.410	-.460	-.395	-.395	-.464	-.458
Netherlands	-1.367*	-1.520*	-1.534*	-1.670*	-1.505*	-1.506*	-1.683*	-1.673*
West Germany	-.061	.527	.511	.487	.524	.536	.463	.469
Italy	-.188	-.424	-.446	-.456	-.427	-.439	-.484	-.493
Luxembourg	.289	.177	.170	.141	.173	.185	.124	.129
Denmark	.116	-.208	-.195	-.136	-.243	-.216	-.162	-.168
Ireland	-.067	-.586	-.596	-.711	-.574	-.592	-.720	-.723
Great Britain	-1.430*	-1.175*	-1.159*	-1.208*	-1.159*	-1.156*	-1.178*	-1.166*
Northern Ireland	-1.617	-1.680	-1.663	-1.775	-1.666	-1.683	-1.752	-1.754
Education Level	.162*	.174*	.174*	.891*	.175*	.173*	.990*	.987*
R is religious	-.812*	-.868*	-.874*	-.887*	-.870*	.366	-.899*	-.089
R is not religious	-.289	-.349	-.355	-.360	-.342	-.327	-.358	-.344
Currently married	-.061	-.037	-.025	-.011	-.062	-.040	-.005	-.007
Cohabiting	.581	.673	.675	.746	.609	.667	.671	.668
Divorced or separated	.357	.486	-.067	.577	.438	.479	.037	.041
Widowed	-.285	-.203	-.183	-.133	-.213	-.198	-.119	-.117
Number of children under 16	.006	-.005	-.009	-.005	-.006	-.005	-.011	-.011
Woman works full-time	.459*	.492*	.498*	.479*	-.917	.495*	-1.425*	-1.413*
Woman works part-time	.295	.314	.303	.317	-1.041	.314	-1.528*	-1.518*
Woman looking for work	.523*	.547*	.577*	.518*	-.806	.549*	-1.295*	-1.284*
Should woman of house work?	.677*	.646*	.633*	.636*	.672*	.648*	.657*	.658*
Exact age	-.031*	-.030*	-.030*	-.030*	-.029*	-.030*	-.029*	-.029*
Intends to vote for Left party	.516*	.518*	.520*	.499*	.519*	.516*	.499*	.498*
Family income quartiles	.085	.107	.107	.108	.113	.107	.117	.117
Rural place of residence	.145	.020	.007	.021	.031	.025	.026	.029
Medium-size town	.473*	.390*	.388*	.392*	.390*	.394*	.390*	.393*
Female-to-male activity rate ratio 1982	—	-2.464*	-2.520*	-2.444*	-3.958*	-2.479*	-4.517*	-4.515*
Female-to-male student rate ratio 1979	—	4.630*	4.604*	10.383*	4.689*	4.791*	11.222*	11.307*
Divorce rate 1979-82	—	-19.706*	-21.477*	-20.502*	-19.949*	-20.024*	-22.502*	-22.675*
Mean religiosity (hi = not religious)	—	.005	.040	-.077	.020	.367	-.038	.199
Divorced × divorce rate	—	—	22.491†	—	—	—	19.848	19.459
Education × student rate ratio	—	—	—	-1.637*	—	—	-1.860*	-1.854*
Active × activity rate	—	—	—	—	3.284*	—	4.450*	4.426*
Religious × Religiosity mean	—	—	—	—	—	-.507	—	-.333
Adjusted R-squared	.159	.164	.164	.168	.165	.164	.171	.171

Note: Omitted categories for dummy variable sets are *France, not in labor force, single, atheists, and citydwellers.*

Sources: For individual level variables, Euro-barometer 19 (Rabier, Riffault, and Inglehart 1984); for contextual variables, Euro-barometer cumulative file and *Yearbook of Regional Statistics* (Eurostat 1984).

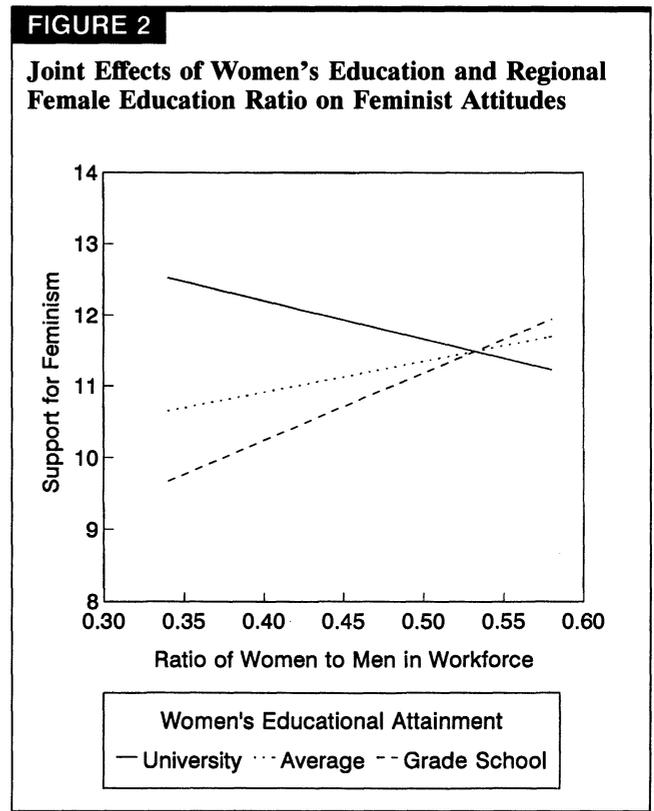
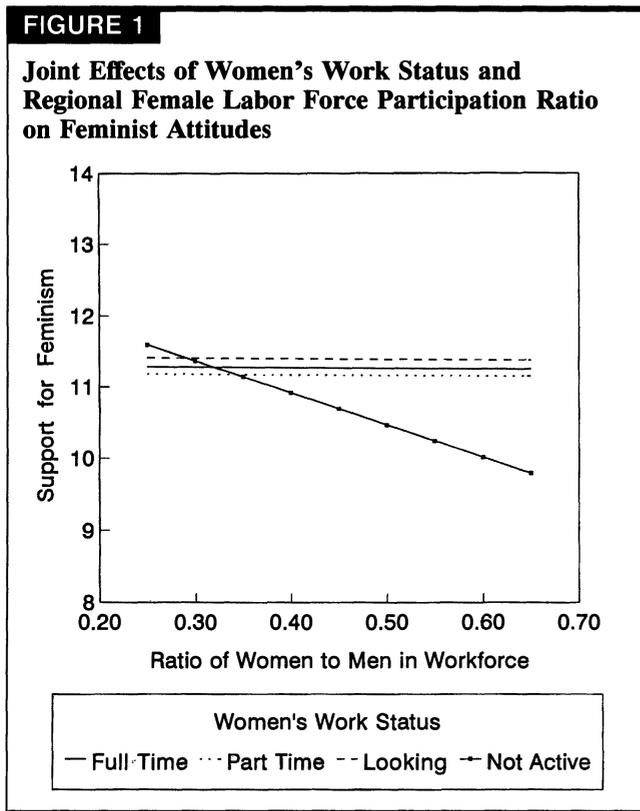
* $p < .05$, two-tailed test.

† $p < .05$, one-tailed test.

regional divorce rate are negatively associated with the dependent variable. According to this analysis, individuals less frequently support feminist goals when they live in an area where a large percentage of women work or where there is a high divorce rate. Diagnostic calculations (not reported here) show that these negative findings are neither a result of multicollinearity among context measures nor created by inclusion of the various individual-level variables. The same results are obtained when employment rate

and divorce rate are entered singly into the initial model. Nor, as we shall see, are the signs of these coefficients altered when the interaction terms are entered into the model. In short, these findings are robust and resisted our several attempts to explain them away statistically. We also note that while three contextual measures explain some of the variance in profeminism scores, the explanatory power of nation is undiminished.

Models 3-6 each adds a single interaction term to



model 2. The estimates for model 3 show that religiosity is not a significant predictor either as a main effect or in interaction with individual religiosity. Model 6 shows that the negative effect of regional divorce rate does not vary between the divorced and the not divorced. On the other hand, models 4 and 5 show that the effect of women's employment and women's educational attainment depend on the corresponding individual traits. Model 7 includes both the interaction terms that were significant individually; and we shall elaborate on the signs and interpretations of the interactions based on the estimates from this final model. We note, however, that contextual effects and interactions do not explain away national differences in any of the models.

The only way to understand the signs and magnitudes of the interaction and individual-level effects (which change substantially with the inclusion of interactions) is to examine the cumulative effect of individual, context, and interaction. To facilitate this, we have calculated these cumulative effects for each interaction set while holding the values of all other variables constant at their mean values. These calculations are represented graphically in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 shows how the effect of regional rates of female labor force participation differ among women depending on their own employment status. In particular, the overall regional levels of female employment make no difference for women in the labor force but have a marked effect on women completely outside the labor market. The pattern is consistent

with the status discontent hypothesis: domestic women become increasingly conservative as more of their female neighbors become economically active.

The results from this model also help us make sense of the overall negative effect of women's activity rate seen in model 2. Since the majority of women in Western Europe are not economically active, their negative reaction to women's entry into the labor force drives the main effect of this variable when we do not include an interaction term.

The effect of education is very different from the effect of female participation in the paid labor force. Women with little education are likely to exhibit high levels of feminist support when living in an area where relatively many women enter universities or advanced technical schools. However, the interaction term is negative, indicating that the effect of context decreases as women's own level of education increases. Figure 2 shows how the predicted level of profeminism varies according to regional rates of female college enrollment for three groups of women: those with only a grade school education (leaving school before age 14), those with university education (leaving at 22 or older) and those at the mean value (leaving school at about the age of 17). When we look at women who have completed many years of schooling, we find that living in an area with many well-educated women actually reduces their support for feminism slightly. However, the great majority of women never achieve that level of education, so the general effect of the educational opportunity for women is to raise women's support for feminism.

TABLE 2
Regression of Profeminism Scale, Male Subsample (2,483)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	MODELS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Intercept	11.931	8.554	8.556	7.665	6.026	8.894	6.332*	5.239
Country								
Belgium	-.339	-.123	-.123	-.112	-.159	-.101	-.137	-.124
Netherlands	-.701*	-.294	-.293	-.279	-.468	-.327	-.510	-.494
West Germany	-1.273*	-.728*	-.728*	-.714	-.814	-.705	-.791*	-.774*
Italy	-.812*	-.405	-.405	-.411	-.422	-.397	-.414	-.423
Luxembourg	-.050	.156	.156	.166	.164	.162	.171	.182
Denmark	.226	-.212	-.212	-.204	-.169	-.236	-.195	-.184
Ireland	-.881	-.325	-.326	-.331	-.268	-.332	-.275	-.283
Great Britain	-.764*	-.290	-.290	-.253	-.294	-.262	-.263	-.220
Northern Ireland	-1.604	-.919	-.920	-.917	-.887	-.992	-.890	-.889
Education level	.082*	.083*	.083*	.082*	.766*	.083*	.785*	.794*
R is religious	-.435	-.406	-.406	-.912	-.410	-.400	-.404	-1.173
R is not religious	-.509*	-.496*	-.496*	-.479*	-.505*	-.478*	-.486*	-.466
Cohabiting	.387	.388	.387	.361	.390	.427	.433	.401
Divorced or seperated	-.964*	-.939	-.920	-.932	-.866	-.928	-.853	-.778
Widowed	.099	.113	.113	.109	.127	.109	.123	.117
Number of children under 16	-.232*	-.228*	-.228*	-.227*	-.232*	-.233*	-.237*	-.237*
Wife emp full-time	.762*	.714*	.714*	.707*	.709*	-.731	-.885	.884
Wife emp part-time	.422	.389	.389	.386	.418	-.984	-1.095	-1.090
Wife looking for work	1.464*	1.450*	1.450*	1.443*	1.398*	.014	-.187	-.186
Wife not in labor force	.497	.497	.497	.491	.514	.490	.506	.499
Should woman of house work?	.786*	.792*	.792*	.792*	.815*	.806*	.831*	.831*
Exact age	-.037*	-.038*	-.038*	-.038*	-.038*	-.038	-.038*	-.038*
Intends to vote for Left party	1.114*	1.124*	1.124*	1.125*	1.126*	1.103*	1.104*	1.105*
Family income quartiles	-.042	-.036	-.036	-.038	-.029	-.033	-.025	-.027
Rural place of residence	-.176	-.197	-.198	-.189	-.189	-.188	-.179	-.169
Medium-size town	.132	.160	.160	.167	.144	.150	.132	.138
Female-to-male activity rate ratio 1982	—	-1.170	-1.168	-1.220	-1.124	-2.022	-2.063	-2.110
Female-to-male student rate ratio 1979	—	5.710*	5.707*	5.847*	10.995*	5.729*	11.162*	11.391*
Divorce rate	—	-3.777	-3.765	-4.312	-4.565	-3.927	-4.752	-5.356
Mean religiosity (hi = not religious)	—	.482	.481	.835	.586	.466	.571	.992
Divorced × divorce rate	—	—	-.902	—	—	—	—	-3.348
Religious × religiosity mean	—	—	—	-.551	—	—	—	-.659
Education × student rate ratio	—	—	—	—	-1.573*	—	-1.616*	-1.638*
Active × activity rate ratio	—	—	—	—	—	3.369†	3.715*	3.692*
Adjusted R-squared	.111	.112	.112	.112	.117	.113	.118	.118

Note: Omitted categories for dummy variable sets are *France, not in labor force, single, atheists, and citydwellers.*

Sources: for individual level variables, Eurobarometer 19 (Rabier, Riffault, and Inglehart 1984); for contextual variables, Eurobarometer cumulative file and *Yearbook of Regional Statistics* (Eurostat 1984).

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

† $p < .05$, one-tailed test.

The men's results are presented in Table 2. As with the female subsample, the first equation is a baseline model of individual effects and yields results virtually identical to those reported by previous studies. Model 2 adds the main effect of the four measures of social structure. The only one of these variables to achieve statistical significance is the ratio of female to male college enrollment. Its effect is in the same direction as that for women: the more women enrolled in higher education in a man's region of

residence, the more supportive he is likely to be of the feminist agenda. Again, this effect is above and beyond the effect a man's own educational attainment.

The most important finding here is perhaps that the cumulative effect of the nine national dummy variables, evaluated by a joint F-test, is now insignificant. (In model 1, $F = 4.49$ with 9 and 2,456 degrees of freedom; in contrast, the corresponding F for model 2 is an insignificant .79 with 9 and 2,452

degrees of freedom). Only the variable denoting West Germany achieves significance—and then not in every model tested.

When we add the interaction effects one at a time, we find that both the religion and divorce interaction terms are insignificant in all models. The activity rate interaction is significant in a one-tailed test in model 6. This should be interpreted with caution, since we did not have a strong hypothesis predicting the sign of this variable. However, in the models that include other interactions (i.e., models 7 and 8), this variable becomes consistently significant even though the joint F-test of it and its constituent main effects remains insignificant. Thus, we report these estimates for the record only and note that the pattern is virtually identical to that reported for women: men married to full-time homemakers seem to react against the increased female labor force participation by expressing antifeminist attitudes; others seem to be unaffected.

Only the interaction between men's personal educational attainment and the regional ratio of female to male college enrollment achieves statistical significance. As in the case of women, the interaction is negative, indicating that the effect of female college enrollment is greatest on the men with the lowest levels of education. The combined pattern of effects approximates that illustrated in Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

Previous studies of feminism identified several aspects of social structure as being important in the development of feminist consciousness or profeminist sentiment among men and women. In its strongest versions, this hypothesis argues that observed national differences are caused entirely by corresponding differences in women's status and opportunity structure. Yet these same studies focused entirely on either individuals or on nations and were, therefore, unable to test these contextual theories rigorously.

The absence of longitudinal attitudinal data prevents the type of genuinely causal analysis these theories ultimately require, but our cross-sectional data permit a much better assessment of these approaches than has been attempted before. We find that the evidence yields a somewhat more complex picture than we anticipated. We shall discuss our results, emphasizing their implications for the refinement of contextual theories of gender politics.

The results of our analysis of men's attitudes are easiest to interpret. Regional levels of women's enrollment in higher education are associated with profeminist opinions, and the effect is strongest among men with low and modest levels of education themselves. Moreover, these differences in women's education rates render the combined effects of the *nation* variables statistically insignificant, explaining

away virtually all observed cross-national variation in men's support of feminism. Women's labor force participation, on the other hand, produces neither a progressive or reactive response from men.

In contrast to the findings for men, neither contextual variables nor interaction effects substantially reduced the effects of the nation on women's attitudes. This is a contrast we cannot explain and certainly merits attention in future work. Among the most surprising findings for women is that in areas where women's participation in the paid labor force was highest, individuals tended to adopt the most conservative values. This pattern, it turns out, is due to a conservative reaction on the part of those women who are not in the paid labor force. This appears to be a classic example of status politics, with those being left behind by rapid social change adopting an especially conservative posture.

We should point out that our estimates *do* confirm that individual participation in the labor force is associated with profeminist attitudes, so the effect of these structural changes is to provide "consciousness-raising" experiences for women who enter the labor force. However, the effect of an individual's paid employment is the same, regardless of the prevailing extent of female employment. Regional variation in women's employment is relevant only for nonactive women. These individual and contextual processes tend to cancel each other out, for simple zero-order correlation between regional female employment rate and profeminism is very small ($r = .10$).⁵

The total effect of women's educational achievement, on the other hand, has a strong and positive effect on individual's attitudes toward feminism. As in the case of labor force participation, women at the highest levels of achievement do not become even more feminist as local female enrollments increases. Yet the effect of local educational context is pronounced for women who lack university or professional training. Our findings show that education's main positive impact is not, as some have suspected, as a catalyst for women's entry in the work force. Rather, it appears to have a *direct* effect of its own. The literature offers only a few hints as to the precise social processes that might account for this finding.

One possibility is that women of high educational achievement represent more successful role models than women who enter the labor force. Given the barriers to women's advancement in the corporate world, this would not be terribly surprising. Comparative case studies using qualitative or social-psychological methods might shed some light on this question. Yet the role model perspective cannot easily explain why women's education's has a nearly identical influence on men.

Alternatively, Guttentag and Secord (1983) argue that educational opportunities for women create a cadre of women with the resources to counter those who advance and reenforce traditional gender roles or otherwise block women's opportunities. Similarly,

a large pool of educated women can use their resources to create public support for the women's movement—its organizations and goals. Whatever the mechanism, it is clear at both the individual and aggregate level that women's access to higher education is the most important structural variable related to profeminist support by men and women.

The somewhat different effects of education and labor force participation also have some interesting consequences for political conflict. Education's tendency to move both the educated (through individual effects) and the less educated (through contextual effects) in the same direction promotes feminist goals with a minimum of conflict. Women's entry into the labor force, on the other hand, amplifies differences in feminist attitudes. In regions where large numbers of women are in the labor force, individual effects will increase feminist support among employed women but decrease it among those who are committed to domestic life-styles. Thus, areas where women have made the greatest gains in employment should be those where gender politics is most divisive and competitive.

This leads to a final question: Why has women's entry into paid labor force not led to uniformly profeminist attitudes as we find for women's entry into higher education? Part of the answer may be economic competition. Equal access to higher education poses no immediate economic threat to men and wives of male breadwinners. Yet as women press for equal pay, businesses may be unwilling or unable to pay men a "family wage" capable of supporting a family. Thus, the life-style and economic security of full-time homemakers may be materially threatened by other women's economic gains.

On the other hand, part of the answer may lie in the fact that the quality of women's employment remains well below that of equally qualified men. Women tend to have limited upward mobility, limited access to mentors or inside information, and lower pay. Moreover, feminism has had its most visible impact in the professions, rather than in industrial and clerical labor, where the great majority of women work. Most employed women occupy low-paying jobs with limited opportunities for upward mobility. These "gains" by women may provide neither positive role models nor a cadre of women with resources that can be used for political ends. The current character of "women's work" may therefore blunt its potential positive impact on other women.

Our findings suggest that the context of social structure is important in shaping the conflict surrounding the contemporary women's movement and the advancement of feminist goals. Moreover, individuals' reactions to their social environment depends on their own status. Further pursuit of contextual theories of political conflict is clearly warranted; and the results suggest a need for reassessing the political implications of women's increasingly strong

presence in the paid labor forces of the Western democracies.

APPENDIX A

We present the original variable numbers, mnemonics, and exact wording of items comprising the Profeminism Scale.

V111 "What is your opinion of movements which have come about recently whose aim is the liberation of women?" (OPINMVT) Responses were recoded to 3 = *very high opinion*, 0 = *very bad opinion*.

Responses to the following statements were recoded to 3 = *completely agree*, 0 = *disagree completely*: "Do you agree or disagree with the aim to

V113 fight against prejudiced people who would like to keep women in a subordinate role both in the family and in society?" (AIMFIGHT)

V114 obtain true equality between women and men in their work in careers?" (AIMJOBEG)

V115 persuade the political parties to give women the same chances as men of reaching responsible positions in the parties and of becoming candidates in elections?" (AIMPOLEQ)

V116 arrange things so that when a child is unwell it could be either the father or the mother who stays home to care for it?" (AIMCARE)

V118 organize women into an independent movement to achieve a radical transformation of society?" (AIMCHANG)

APPENDIX B

Table A-1 summarizes exploratory factor analysis and item analysis for Profeminism Scale items.

EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS		ITEM ANALYSIS	
PRINCIPAL COMPONENT	EIGEN-VALUE	VARIABLE	FACTOR LOADING
1	2.594	V111 OPINMVT	.652
2	.967	V113 AIMFIGHT	.647
3	.741	V114 AIMJOBEG	.752
4	.635	V115 AIMPOLEQ	.714
5	.594	V116 AIMCARE	.638
6	.470	V118 AIMCHANG	.520

Note: Cronbach's alpha = .721; standardized alpha = .728; alpha if V118 is removed = .716. V118 is the logical candidate to remove from the scale because it has the lowest factor loading and item-to-total correlation. We retain the item because its presence tends to increase the reliability.

Notes

The authors thank John Sprague for providing the intellectual stimulus for the approach taken in this study. We also thank Julie Bradley and Vicky Westenfield for their assistance in data management and preparation, Danny Mittleman for preparing the figures, and Linda Powell for her data management and clerical and bibliographic assistance. This research was supported by a research grant awarded to both authors by the graduate college of Iowa State University. Some of the data employed in this paper were made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. These data were originally collected by Jacques-René Rabier, Helene Riffault, and Ronald Inglehart.

1. Similar arguments are also found in studies of women's movements and women's organizations. See, e.g., Chafetz and Dworkin 1986; Dahlerup 1986; Katzenstein and Mueller 1987.

2. A more detailed discussion of the properties of this scale can be found in Banaszak and Plutzer n.d.

3. Unfortunately, Euro-barometer 19 did not ask respondents to identify their religious affiliation. We were, however, able to explore the differences between Catholics and Protestants using data from Euro-barometer 8. Using a gender-roles scale as the dependent variable (the closest proxy for our profeminism scale), we found that religious affiliation made no difference in a sample of all European Community respondents. In light of this finding and of the fact that several studies show religiosity to be far more important than affiliation (the review essay Himmelstein 1986), we feel confident that the omission of religious affiliation from the present analysis is unlikely to bias our findings.

4. A detailed description of the codes in each country is available on request. They are based on Rabier, Riffault, and Inglehart's (1984) party codes. We choose not to include a general measure of left-right ideology, since it may be interpretable as a summary measure of political orientations and therefore determined in part by feminist orientation.

5. This finding does not rule out the possibility that increases in women's labor force participation over time promote profeminist sentiment. Yet it is impossible to examine this theory with the available data.

References

- Andersen, Kristi, and Elizabeth Cook. 1985. "Women, Work, and Political Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 29:606-25.
- Banaszak, Lee Ann, and Jan E. Leighley. 1991. "How Employment Affects Women's Gender Attitudes: The Workplace as a Locus of Contextual Effects." *Political Geography Quarterly* 10:174-85.
- Banaszak, Lee Ann, and Eric Plutzer. N.d. "The Social Bases of Feminism in the European Community." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Forthcoming.
- Chafe, William. 1977. *Women and Equality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chafetz, Janet Saltzman, and Anthony Gary Dworkin. 1986. *Female Revolt: Women's Movements in World and Historical Perspective*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Conover, Pamela Johnston, and Virginia Gray. 1983. *Feminism and the New Right: Conflict over the American Family*. New York: Praeger.
- Dahlerup, Drude. 1986. "Is the New Women's Movement Dead? Decline or Change of the Danish Movement." In *The New Women's Movement*, ed. Drude Dahlerup. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Davis, Nancy J., and Robert Robinson. 1991. "Men's and Women's Consciousness of Gender Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 56:72-84.
- Duverger, Maurice. 1955. *The Political Role of Women*. Paris: UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.
- Eurostat. 1984. *Yearbook of Regional Statistics*. Brussels: Statistical Office of the European Communities.
- Gerson, Kathleen. 1987. "Emerging Social Divisions Among Women: Implications for Welfare State Policies." *Politics and Society* 15:213-21.
- Gusfield, Joseph. 1963. *Symbolic Crusade*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Guttentag, Marcia, and Paul F. Secord. 1983. *Too Many Women? The Sex Ratio Question*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Himmelstein, Jerome L. 1986. "The Social Basis of Antifeminism: Religious Networks and Culture." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25:1-15.
- Hofstadter, Richard. 1963. "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt—1955." In *The Radical Right*, ed. Daniel Bell. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Huber, Joan, and Glenna Spitze. 1983. *Sex Stratification: Children, Housework and Jobs*. New York: Academic.
- Huckfeldt, Robert. 1986. *Politics in Context: Assimilation and Conflict in Urban Neighborhoods*. New York: Agathon.
- Klein, Ethel. 1984. *Gender Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Klein, Ethel. 1987. "The Diffusion of Consciousness in the United States and Western Europe." In *The Women's Movements of the United States and Western Europe*, ed. Mary Katzenstein and Carol Mueller. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lipman-Blumen, Jean. 1984. *Gender Roles and Power*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Mayer, Lawrence, and Roland E. Smith. 1985. "Feminism and Religiosity: Female Electoral Behavior in Western Europe." *Western European Politics* 8:38-49.
- Norris, Pippa. 1987. *Politics and Sexual Equality: The Comparative Position of Women in Western Democracies*. Boulder: Rienner.
- Plutzer, Eric. 1988. "Work Life, Family Life, and Women's Support of Feminism." *American Sociological Review* 53:640-49.
- Plutzer, Eric. 1991. "Preferences in Family Politics: Women's Consciousness or Family Context?" *Political Geography Quarterly* 10:162-73.
- Powell, Brian, and Lala Carr Steelman. 1982. "Testing an Untested Comparison: Maternal Effects on Sons' and Daughters' Attitudes Toward Women in the Labor Force." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 44:349-55.
- Rabier, Jacques-René, Helene Riffault, and Ronald Inglehart. 1984. *Euro-barometer 19: Gender Roles in the European Community*. Ann Arbor: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Smith, Tom. 1985. "Working Wives and Women's Rights: The Connection Between the Employment Status of Wives and the Feminist Attitudes of Husbands." *Sex Roles* 12:501-8.
- Tedin, Kent L., David W. Brady, Mary E. Buxton, Barbara M. Gorman, and Judy L. Thompson. 1977. "Social Background and Political Differences Between Pro- and Anti-ERA Activists." *American Politics Quarterly* 5:395-408.
- Tingston, Herbert. 1963. *Political Behavior: Studies in Election Statistics*. Trans. V. Hammerlaing. Totowa, NJ: Bedminster.
- Weitzman, Lenore J. 1985. *The Divorce Revolution*. New York: Free Press.
- Wilcox, Clyde. 1991. "The Causes and Consequences of Feminist Consciousness Among Western European Women." *Comparative Political Studies* 23:519-45.

Lee Ann Banaszak and Eric Plutzer are Assistant Professors of Political Science, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011.