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Abstract

This report explores group-based responses to the 1985 Pilot Study items relating to women's issues. Sears and Huddy find no clear evidence for a "gender gap" in responses to the Pilot Study items. In fact, they find that cleavages exist among subgroups of women, based on perceived closeness to women as a group. Sears and Huddy attempt to uncover the theoretical basis for this intra-group political divisiveness. They find that no one theory of group dynamics can explain the data. First, the authors' analysis does not support the social identity approach. Specifically, beliefs concerning status interdependence among women have a blanket main effect, and are not differentiated by perceived self-identity. Sears and Huddy also find that the impact of status and economic interest on political attitudes vary in a way contrary to group interest theory. While self-identified "workers" and "homemaker" do not take vastly different political stands, the determinants of these opinions differ across the two groups. Other theories of group dynamics, however, lend some insight into the nature of the cleavages among subgroups of women. The performance of thermometer ratings of feminists and the women's movement, in determining support for women's issues, indicates support for both the social identity and symbolic politics approach. Sears and Huddy conclude the report by discussing strategies to improve the performance of the experimental group norm items in ongoing survey efforts.