

## THE DIFFUSION OF FEMINIST IDEOLOGY

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According to Converse, the ideas/beliefs of an ideology are diffused in packages—i.e., diffusion necessarily involves constraint. However, a person may become aware of these “packages” and the substance of an ideology of which they are a part without accepting them. Consequently, diffusion produces an increase in both awareness and constraint with the former increasing more than the latter. Diffusion may also take two forms. The ideology may be accepted by more members of the same social class from which the movement’s leaders were recruited (horizontal diffusion); or the ideology may spread beyond the confines of the original class to attract the support of the less advantaged (vertical diffusion).

We apply this model of diffusion to the feminist movement in the United States for the period 1972 to 1976. The weight of our evidence indicates that significant horizontal as well as vertical diffusion has occurred. It appears that as the general public became more aware of feminist ideas and beliefs, support for these ideas and beliefs increased along with the constraint between various measures of them.

Social scientists are in general agreement that political activity is class linked, even when such participation is undertaken in support of an egalitarian ideology. As Oberschall (1973, p. 155) concludes: “It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the upper and middle strata in society supply the substantial bulk of opposition leaders [for] all manner of social movements in proportions far above that of their percentage in the population at large.” Such conclusions, however, do not address the question we are interested in here: the *diffusion* of an egalitarian ideology. Social movements are characteristically begun by an educated elite and, although the first proponents of the ideologies that form the basis of these movements are generally not likely to suffer personally from the existing inequities of society, it is possible that their ideology will be diffused (especially in an era of mass instant communications) to a larger body of potential adherents.

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The idea of diffusion was classically discussed by Converse (1964, p. 211). As an ideology moves beyond the "miniscule proportion" responsible for "creative synthesis," it tends to "be diffused in 'packages,' " which consumers come to see as " 'natural' wholes. . . ." Such a "package" is more or less *constrained*—that is, it is more or less possible to predict a person's attitude on one component part from knowledge of another component part.

But to know "what goes with what" does not necessarily require that person know *why* the ideas/beliefs go together; a person can know that a set of ideas do go together but not know the rationales for such conjunction. Furthermore, a person may become *aware* of these "packages" and the substance of an ideology of which they are a part without *accepting* them. Converse's model suggests that diffusion can increase both awareness and constraint and that the former will increase more than the latter.

Diffusion may take two forms. First, the ideology might be accepted by more members of the same social class from which the movement's leaders were recruited. Second, it might spread beyond the confines of the original class and attract the support of the less advantaged (i.e., there might be *horizontal* as well as *vertical* diffusion). The latter form of diffusion traditionally has been difficult for change-oriented movements to accomplish.

However, in either form, diffusion does not necessarily result in the dissemination of the original "pure" ideology. As social movements mature, they frequently modify their demands to adjust to estimates of the probability of success. Yesterday's extremists become today's moderates (Gamson, 1975). Additionally, just as organization breeds counterorganization, competing ideologies will emerge. In some cases, such competing ideologies do not appeal to the same social classes as do the original protest movements; in other cases, the same constituency is the object of the competing ideology. In either case, the result is generally to change the original ideology.

Freeman (1975, p. 90) believes that the feminist movement initially attracted upper strata women for reasons somewhat in contrast to the notions of Oberschall. She argues that the higher participation rates among relatively wealthy, educated women might have been channeled into other organizations had it not been for the fact that such women were in fact more likely to feel the greatest deprivation, to suffer most directly from discrimination. The demographic arguments Freeman advances—growth of women in the work force, increased education of women, decline of birth-rates, and an increase in the number of single women—lead her to conclude that ". . . middle class, college educated women . . . are subject to the greatest strain" (p. 31).

Thus, unlike the leaders of other protest movements (as, for example, the leadership of the pre-revolutionary Communist Party in the Soviet Union),

the leaders of the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, Freeman believes, were tangibly damaged by their gender. Additionally, such women lacked a "justifying myth." Less privileged women could accept male dominance more easily. The evidence of economic discrimination against women supports Freeman's ideas. The average professional woman's income is 68 percent of the average professional man's (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1980, p. 77). Although women are being professionally trained at an accelerated rate, and nearly half of all adult women are employed outside the home, the discrimination persists.

The feminist movement in the United States thus provides a particularly apt opportunity for examining the extent to which ideologies spread from an active elite to the remainder of an elite—and to a passive population beyond. The situation in the 1970s has been ideal for the diffusion of feminist ideology: more women are getting more education, more women are employed, and economic discrimination persists. Whatever may have been the social origins of the leaders of the women's movement, we should expect some spread to the less advantaged. Such expectations are, of course, buttressed by the substantial media attention given to various aspects of the feminist movement. *The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility of vertical and horizontal diffusion by examining panel data collected by the Center for Political Studies of the University of Michigan in 1972, 1974, and 1976.*

During this period the Equal Rights Amendment was introduced, ultimately generating substantial conflict over ratification. Abortion was legalized, legislation designed to implement federal funding of abortions was passed and later modified by the Hyde amendment, which, in turn, was challenged in the courts. Additional controversies developed over the implementation of Title IX and affirmative action. The Supreme Court, which had initiated the semi-strict scrutiny doctrine for sex-related laws in 1971, continued to apply the doctrine in numerous cases throughout the period. In brief, the problem of equity for women was "front and center" from 1972 to 1976.

#### METHOD

In order to explore the extent of vertical and horizontal diffusion we will rely primarily on three items from the 1972, 1974, and 1976 Survey Research Center panel study: The women's equal role seven-point scale; the women's liberation "feeling thermometer;" and a set of five attitude questions.

We will discuss each in turn. Beginning in 1972, the Center for Political Studies included in its National Election Studies a set of questions that asked

respondents to place themselves, important political figures and various groups along a women's equal-role seven-point scale. The end points of the scale were labeled "women and men should have an equal role" and "women's place is in the home."<sup>1</sup> The seven-point scale responses can be used in two ways. First, the respondent's self-placement can be used as a measure of the extent that she/he agrees with the statements "women and men should have an equal role" and "women's place is in the home," which should in turn be related to the extent to which the respondent accepts or rejects feminist ideology. Secondly, the respondent's perceptions of the attitudes of the various groups and individuals can be used as a measure of her/his degree of *awareness* of feminism.

In 1972, 1974, and 1976 a "feeling thermometer" (a 0° to 100° scale ranging from very cold and unfavorable to very warm and favorable feeling) question was asked about the women's liberation movement.<sup>2</sup> Presumably, the "warmer" a person feels about women's liberation, the greater the extent to which the person accepts feminist ideas and beliefs.

In 1972, 16 attitude questions concerning the role of women in politics, the home, and the workplace were asked. In 1976, eight attitude questions were asked, five of which were identical to ones asked in 1972. The number of pro-feminist responses to these five questions will also be used to measure the level of acceptance of feminism.<sup>3</sup>

The respondents' perceptions of where the candidates and groups stood on the seven-point scale in 1972 were used to divide the panel into two groups: those who were minimally aware of feminism and those who were not. This was done by scaling the data using the method developed by Aldrich and McKelvey (1977). This method assumes that the candidates/groups (or more generally stimuli)

. . . occupy true positions on an issue continuum, and . . . the information that the citizen gives . . . on his perceptions of the candidates is derived from this true position in a two step process. In the first stage, we assume that there is a random disturbance in the citizen's perception of the candidate. . . . The second stage consists of the voter taking what is in his head, i.e., his perceptions, and reporting them to the interviewer. Here, we assume, since there is no common metric for placing the candidates on a scale, that the positions where the citizen reports that he sees the candidates may be an arbitrary linear transformation of his perception of the space. (113)

The least squares estimate of the true positions of the stimuli is essentially a principal components solution and the respondent parameters—a weight and an intercept term—are estimated by regression. The respondent's *scaled position* on the underlying continuum is found by applying the linear transformation to the respondent's reported position.<sup>4</sup>

A major drawback of the method is that no constraint is placed upon the

TABLE 1. The 1972-74-76 Panel Study.

	Number of Respondents
Total panel	1320
Locate self	1269
Missing data	625
Stimuli at same point	126
Scalable data	518
Positive weights	429

respondents' estimated weights—they can be either positive or negative. A negative weight means, in effect, that the respondent perceives the stimuli in a "mirror image" space. An example of a negative weight respondent in 1972 would be a person who placed herself/himself at 1 (the equal role or egalitarian end), Wallace at 2, Nixon and the Republican Party at 4, the Democratic Party at 5, and McGovern at 7 (the place is in the home or traditional end). If this ordering of stimuli were exactly *reversed*, then it would be consistent with the configuration recovered on the underlying issue continuum (see Table 2). This reversal or mirroring is precisely what a negative weight achieves. Therefore, when the respondent's linear transformation is applied to her/his reported position, this has the effect of mapping her/him onto the *conservative* side of the underlying issue continuum. This "backwards seeing" respondent then contributes to a better fit to the "true" space.

For purposes of this analysis, only those respondents with positive weights in 1972 will be included in the aware portion of the panel. This has the effect of excluding four groups: those who cannot locate themselves on the scale; those who cannot locate all the stimuli on the scale; those who locate all the stimuli in the same place on the scale; and those who see the stimuli in "mirror image."

Clearly, respondents who perceive the scale "backwards" or are unable to place themselves or one or more of the stimuli—Nixon, Wallace, and two major parties—on the scale are less aware of women's rights issues than a person who can locate herself/himself and order the stimuli coherently across the scale. The respondents who located all the stimuli in the same place have to be excluded from the aware portion because there is no variance in their perceptions, and weights cannot be estimated for them. This filtering divides the total panel of 1,320 into 429 aware and 891 unaware respondents. Because we are primarily interested in individual change over time, missing data in 1974 and/or 1976 reduce the actual number of aware and unaware respondents to between 285 and 305 and between 670 and 750 respectively, depending upon the items we are using. Table 1 breaks down

the panel data along these lines, and Table 2 displays the 1972 scaled locations of the stimuli.

Unfortunately, we cannot perform a similar analysis on the seven-point scale data in 1976—which would allow us to directly measure the change in awareness over the period—because the response task in 1976 was quite different; the only stimuli in common in the two years were the two major political parties. Accordingly, in what follows we will be forced to measure the change in awareness indirectly. For example, by comparing the rates of change of support for feminism as well as the rates of change in constraint for the unaware and aware groups, we will be able to infer changes in awareness as well.

#### ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT MEASURES

We will test the concepts of awareness and horizontal and vertical diffusion by examining the changes in the level of support for feminism over the 1972-1976 period as well as the changes in the level of constraint as measured by the Pearson correlations between the thermometer, seven-point scale, and the number of pro-feminist responses to the attitude questions. We begin with a comparison of the aware and unaware groups controlling for education. (We use education—specifically high school or less, some college, and college—as a surrogate for social class when we test for horizontal diffusion.)<sup>5</sup>

A reasonable speculation is that support for feminism should be higher among the aware than the unaware in each education category, but, given the increase in activity related to women's issues that took place from 1972 to 1976, that these differences should decrease over the period. In addition, in any particular year, the support for feminism should increase with an increase in the level of education. We will test these speculations with Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 3 displays the means and standard deviations of the women's liberation feeling thermometers for 1972, 1974, and 1976 by awareness and education. As can be seen, in each education category in each year the mean thermometer value is highest for the "aware" group. The mean values increase sharply from 1972 to 1974 for all categories, but then decline slightly from 1974 to 1976. A comparison of the total columns of the table shows that the gap in support between the aware and unaware narrowed during the period (from about 6.5 to 2.5). However, our speculation that support should increase with education in any given year is only partially supported by the data.

The changes that take place in the standard deviations in Table 3 are of particular interest. Without exception, they decline slightly from 1972 to

TABLE 2. Scaled Stimuli Locations for 1972.

	Nixon	McGovern	Wallace	Dem.	Rep.	I*	$\sigma^{2b}$
Position	-.033 <sup>c</sup>	-.455	.831	-.316	-.027	-.322	.382
SD	.384	.44	.566	.367	.372	1.467	

\*Mean position of respondents.

<sup>b</sup>Estimated average squared deviations of the observed from the true candidate positions.

<sup>c</sup>Stimuli positions are constrained to have a mean of one and a sum of squares equal to one.

TABLE 3. Mean Thermometer Values for Aware and Unaware Groups by Education.

	Aware				Unaware			
	High School	Some College	College	Total	High School	Some College	College	Total
	1972							
Mean	50.1	47.7	50.3	49.2	41.6	42.8	47.7	42.7
SD	26.8	26.8	21.9	25.3	29.2	26.1	26.7	28.0
n	92	106	101	299	385	214	88	687
t	2.54*	1.56	.731	3.444*				
	1974							
Mean	59.2	54.3	56.0	56.4	50.3	51.3	53.1	50.9
SD	25.5	24.0	20.2	23.4	27.4	24.5	25.0	26.2
n	92	106	101	299	385	214	88	687
t	2.83*	1.10	.877	3.124*				
	1976							
Mean	56.8	53.4	54.4	54.8	53.2	51.2	51.6	52.4
SD	21.5	22.6	17.2	20.6	22.2	19.4	18.8	20.9
n	92	106	101	299	385	214	88	687
t	1.40	.900	1.063	1.663**				

\*All t values were computed for two-tail tests of the equivalence of the respective means for the aware and unaware groups.

\*Significant at the .01 level.

\*\*Significant at the .1 level.



1974 and then decline moderately from 1974 to 1976. This decline in the standard deviations suggests that people moderated their opinions on feminism over the period—especially from 1974-1976 when support appears to have leveled off. Very low supporters became less low; very high supporters became less high.

Table 4 displays the percentage of pro- and anti-feminist responses to the five attitude questions in 1972 and 1976 by education and awareness. Invariably, support for feminism increased from 1972 to 1976. In each education category for the two years, the aware group had a higher percent of pro-feminist responses, and, within each year, support tended to increase with education in a much clearer pattern than that found in Table 3. Finally, the gap between the aware and unaware did narrow as predicted but only slightly—from 12.8 percent to 11.8 percent.

Table 5 shows the distribution of the respondents across the seven-point women's equal role scale broken down by awareness and education. Because of the tendency of respondents to "pile up" on points 1, 4, and 7—what Aldrich (1973, p. 15) called the "circus tent" effect—we have collapsed points 2 and 3 into one point and points 5 and 6 into one point thereby producing a five-point scale. Comparing points 1 and 2-3 with points 5-6 and 7, support for an equal role for women increases within each year in both the aware and unaware groups. With only one exception, in each education category, the aware group had a higher percentage at point 1 than the unaware group each year; if points 1 and 2-3 are combined, this holds without exception. Conversely, the unaware had a higher percentage at point 7 than the aware for each education category in each year. In addition, if the gap between the aware and unaware is taken to be the sum of the absolute values of the differences between each of the seven points on the scale, then the gap fell from 32.5 in 1972 to 31.4 in 1974 to 24.5 in 1976.

The pattern of the changes in the distributions shown in Table 5 reinforces that found in Table 3. A clear movement away from the extremes is evident in the distributions of Table 5, with support for feminism peaking in 1974. Point 7, the most anti-feminism point, drops off steadily from 1972 to 1976 for each level of education for both the aware and unaware. Most noteworthy in this regard is the sharp drop in anti-feminist sentiment among the high school educated; declining from 26 percent to 9 percent for the aware, and from 28 percent to 19 percent for the unaware. In general, an inspection of the total columns shows that among the aware, point 7 drops sharply, while points 4 and 5-6 gain modestly.

In sum, our three measures of support for feminism all increase from 1972 to 1976. This increase in support peaked in 1974 and a moderating trend which was in evidence from 1972 to 1974 accelerated between 1974 and 1976. In addition, the gap between the aware and unaware groups narrowed on all three measures.

TABLE 4. Total Pro- and Anti-Feminist Responses to Five Attitude Questions for Aware and Unaware Groups by Education.

		High School				Some College				College							
		1976		1972		Aware 1976		Pro 1972		Anti 1972		1976		Pro 1972		Anti 1972	
Pro	1972	33.4	11.5	44.9	38.2	12.0	50.2	13.9	35.9	49.8	100.0	502	48.0	8.6	56.6		
Anti	1972	19.1	36.0	55.1	13.9	35.9	49.8	52.1	47.9	100.0	502	15.4	28.0	43.4			
		52.5	47.5	100.0	52.1	47.9	100.0	52.1	47.9	100.0	502	63.4	36.6	100.0	488		
						Total											
		1976		1972		Aware 1976		Pro 1972		Anti 1972		1976		Pro 1972		Anti 1972	
		40.2	10.6	50.8	16.0	33.2	49.2	56.2	43.8	100.0	1409						



TABLE 5. Distribution of Responses on Women's Equal Role Seven-Point Scale by Awareness and Education.

	Aware						Unaware		
	1972			1974			HS	SC	COLL TOTAL
	HS*	SC	COLL TOTAL	HS*	SC	COLL TOTAL			
Equal Role									
1	34.5	40.2	34.7	36.6	28.7	30.9	40.6	30.7	
2,3	13.8	19.6	39.6	24.8	12.0	20.1	18.9	15.1	
4	13.8	17.6	11.9	14.5	20.6	24.1	20.8	21.6	
5,6	11.5	12.7	10.9	11.7	10.9	10.8	12.3	11.0	
7	26.4	9.8	3.0	12.4	27.8	14.1	7.5	21.5	
Place in home N	87	102	101	290	433	224	86	743	
Equal role									
1	36.9	41.6	39.4	39.4	30.5	35.8	33.7	32.4	
2,3	14.3	24.8	38.4	26.4	16.5	18.8	22.8	17.9	
4	19.0	16.8	9.1	14.8	21.3	22.5	26.7	22.3	
5,6	19.0	10.9	13.1	14.1	13.0	20.4	13.9	13.9	
7	10.7	5.9	0.0	5.3	18.7	7.1	3.0	13.5	
Place in home N	87	102	101	290	433	224	86	743	
Equal role									
1	39.1	30.4	38.6	35.9	27.9	29.9	38.4	29.7	
2,3	16.1	27.5	34.7	26.6	16.2	27.2	27.9	20.9	
4	18.4	22.5	14.9	18.6	23.3	20.5	16.3	21.7	
5,6	17.2	13.7	11.9	13.4	14.1	17.0	14.0	14.9	
7	9.2	5.9	0.0	5.5	18.5	7.6	3.5	13.5	
Place in home N	87	102	101	290	433	224	86	743	

\*HS = High School  
 SC = Some College  
 COLL = College

The increase in the level of support recorded in all three measures strongly suggests that constraint should increase from 1972 to 1976 as well. Furthermore, given the increasing controversies about the Equal Rights Amendment, affirmative action, and abortion described earlier, we would expect that the increase in constraint from 1972 to 1976 should be greatest among the unaware group. Finally, because support and education are related, it seems natural to assume that constraint should increase with education in both groups.

Table 6 displays the correlations between the feeling thermometer, the number of pro-feminist responses to the five attitude questions, and the seven-point scale location for the three years. A total of 294 of 429 of the aware group (68 percent) answered all the questions on all three measures, compared with 647 of 891 of the unaware group (73 percent). Because the attitude questions were not asked in 1974, only the correlation between the feeling thermometer and the seven-point scale is shown for that year. The mean value rows in 1972 and 1976 are the sums of the absolute values of the three correlations for the respective subgroups. Overall, one is struck by the uniformly high correlation values in Table 6. Evidently the panel as a whole had the ability to arrive at an "understanding of why two ideas go together" (Converse, 1964, p. 212). A comparison of the mean values in the total columns of the table show that the increase in constraint was substantially greater for the unaware group. Our speculation that education and constraint are related within each year holds up less well, however. In three cases out of four, the mean value was lowest for the high school educated; but in only one case out of four was the mean value highest for the college educated.

The largest jump in constraint occurred in the college educated unaware group (from .39 to .55) whereas the only drop in constraint occurred in the college educated aware group. Interestingly, the mean correlation for the college educated unaware was actually higher than that for the college educated aware group in 1976. This strongly suggests that considerable horizontal diffusion took place among the college educated portion of the panel. This conclusion is buttressed by a reexamination of the standard deviations shown in Table 3. The largest drop in a standard deviation value from 1972 to 1976 occurred in the college educated unaware group. The only other substantial change in constraint occurred in the high school educated unaware group. Constraint for this group jumps from .32 to .42. This appears to be a clear-cut case of vertical diffusion. The slight increase registered by the same college unaware group seems somewhat anomalous in light of the much greater increases for the college and high school groups. We will return to this point below.

Judging from the correlations between the thermometer and the seven-

TABLE 6. Constraint by Awareness and Education.

	Aware				Unaware			
	HS	SC	COLL	TOTAL	HS	SC	COLL	TOTAL
72THR/7PS <sup>a</sup>	-.25 <sup>b</sup>	-.54	-.57	-.43	-.30	-.40	-.16	-.32
72THR/Att	.35	.56	.57	.49	.31	.36	.63	.37
7PS/Att	-.66	-.59	-.40	-.57	-.37	-.42	-.39	-.41
72 MEAN	.42	.56	.51	.50	.32	.39	.39	.37
74THR/7PS	-.68	-.54	-.58	-.59	-.50	-.40	-.57	-.48
76THR/7PS	-.53	-.57	-.43	-.51	-.39	-.35	-.38	-.37
76THR/Att	.37	.55	.57	.48	.39	.42	.57	.41
7PS/Att	-.43	-.59	-.46	-.51	-.48	-.43	-.70	-.50
76 MEAN	.44	.57	.49	.50	.42	.40	.55	.43
N	89	105	100	294	354	208	85	647

<sup>a</sup>THR stands for thermometer, 7 PS stands for seven-point scale, and Att stands for the attitude questions.

<sup>b</sup>All entries are Pearson correlations between the indicated variables.

point scale, constraint, like support, appears to have peaked in 1974. In every group, the correlation between the thermometer and the seven-point scale increased or stayed the same from 1972 to 1974, then, with one exception, decreased from 1974 to 1976.

Why did support and constraint both apparently peak in 1974? As we noted earlier, the period of 1972 to 1976 during which these shifts occurred was one of major efforts by feminist organizations—but it was also a period of major efforts by their equally active opponents. Phyllis Schlafly is especially notable in this regard. Before 1972, Schlafly (the author of *A Choice Not an Echo*, a book promoting Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential candidacy) was not widely known outside of Republican conservative circles. Beginning in late 1972, Schlafly had begun an aggressive campaign to prevent ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Through the use of her newsletter, *The Eagle Forum*, and the STOP-ERA Organization, she became nationally known by mid-1974. She subsequently expanded her activities to include opposition to abortion, which she views as being closely tied to the Equal Rights Amendment, and opposition to any revision of the social security system that would change the present method of dependent's benefits; she regards such revisions as a "plan to drive all wives and mothers out of the home and into the workforce."<sup>6</sup>

The ideological competition between feminists and the anti-feminists galvanized into action by Schlafly could be contributing to the marked moderating effect observed from 1974 to 1976. For example, respondents may have associated the end points of the seven-point scale with the competitors, and, if they regarded either or both as strident, may have resulted in the respondents placing themselves farther away from the end points than they might have otherwise done in the absence of this competition. Furthermore, Schlafly's tactic of linking the Equal Rights Amendment to unrelated issues could be introducing noise into the relationships between the measures of support we are using in this paper.

Clearly, Phyllis Schlafly and her followers are competing with feminists for the same constituency. In what follows, we will try to gauge the effects of this competition by comparing the changes in constraint and support among working women, housewives, and men.

#### THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK

A reasonable guess is that employed women are more in sympathy with feminist goals than women who do not work. Although one might argue that housewives should be the most outraged among women (given the role of the family in maintaining traditional male-female relationships) previous evidence does not support this idea. Feminism may actually be viewed as a

*threat* to the traditional working husband/homemaking wife family structure (an idea Phyllis Schlafly and the Mormon Church actively promote).

Viewed in this light, alterations in the traditional roles of men and women, whether or not such alterations are implied by feminist ideology, may possibly be viewed as a threat to self-esteem by some. That 42 percent of the women interviewed in a 1977 CBS/*New York Times* poll saw the women's movement as a major cause of family breakdown suggests this view might be widespread.<sup>7</sup> If it is so, we should expect working women, irrespective of the dignity and remuneration of their jobs, to be more aware of and receptive to feminist ideology. Indeed, a clear majority of working women list economic necessity as their reason for working, as opposed to seeking employment for intrinsic satisfaction (*Public Opinion*, January-February 1979, p. 30).

Table 7 arrays the attitudes of the aware and unaware housewives, working women, and men across the seven-point scale in 1972, 1974, and 1976. A total of 290 of the aware and 718 of the unaware located themselves all three years.<sup>8</sup> In 1972, housewives were much less aware of feminism than either working women or men (approximately 16 percent, 30 percent, and 36 percent of those locating themselves within each category all three years, and 13 percent, 26 percent, and 30 percent of *all* those in each category respectively). As expected, not only are working women more aware of feminism than housewives, they also react more favorably to it. Over one-half of the aware working women located themselves at the position of extreme equality, point 1, in 1972 as opposed to approximately 43 percent of housewives and 28 percent of men. At the extreme traditional end of the scale, substantially more aware housewives (25 percent) as compared to working women (8 percent) and men (11 percent) are located. The unaware for all three groups in 1972 are much less supportive of feminism than their aware counterparts. However, from 1972 to 1976, the gap (as measured by the sum of the absolute values of the difference between the respective points) between the aware and unaware working women and men respectively *narrows* each year, while with housewives the reverse is true—it *widens* each year. Unaware housewives changed the least over the four year period.

The moderating effect noted in Table 5 shows up clearly here as well. Working women, both aware and unaware, are especially noteworthy in this regard. Although a higher percentage of aware working women than men or housewives placed themselves at the position of extreme equality in 1976, 10 percent fewer did so than in 1972. A similar effect, although less drastic, can be seen for unaware working women.

Table 8 displays the means and standard deviations for the aware and unaware housewives, working women, and men for 1972, 1974, and 1976.



TABLE 7. Distribution of Responses on Women's Equal Role Seven-Point Scale by Awareness and Sex.

	Housewives		Working Women		Men		
	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaware	Aware	Unaware	
			1972				
Equal role	1	43.1	22.3	50.6	33.5	28.4	35.6
	2,3	15.9	13.3	23.4	13.7	27.9	17.2
	4	6.8	23.2	14.3	26.9	16.6	19.8
	5,6	9.0	11.2	3.9	11.0	15.9	10.6
	7	25.0	30.0	7.8	14.8	11.2	16.8
Place in home	44	233	77	182	169	303	
				1974			
Equal role	1	52.3	23.6	48.7	39.6	31.7	34.7
	2,3	13.6	19.6	28.9	15.6	28.7	18.0
	4	11.4	22.1	10.5	22.2	17.7	22.4
	5,6	15.9	17.0	7.9	12.7	16.5	12.3
	7	6.8	17.7	3.9	9.9	5.5	12.6
Place in home	44	233	77	182	169	303	
				1976			
Equal role	1	38.7	25.8	40.3	30.2	33.1	32.3
	2,3	20.5	13.7	31.2	23.0	26.1	25.7
	4	4.5	23.6	16.9	23.6	23.1	17.2
	5,6	27.3	15.5	7.8	15.4	12.5	14.2
	7	9.1	21.9	3.9	7.7	5.3	10.6
Place in home	44	233	77	182	169	303	

TABLE 8. Mean Thermometer Values for Aware and Unaware Groups by Sex.

	Aware			Unaware		
	Housewives	Working Women	Men	Housewives	Working Women	Men
1972						
Mean	46.3	55.5	47.3	39.5	42.8	45.8
SD	26.6	24.3	24.1	27.9	27.9	27.8
N	44	77	168	210	179	293
t	1.476	3.455*	.583			
1974						
Mean	58.0	60.4	53.5	50.0	48.0	52.7
SD	26.8	20.3	23.0	24.3	25.7	27.7
N	44	77	168	210	179	293
t	1.942**	3.745*	.316			
1976						
Mean	55.3	59.2	51.5	49.4	53.6	53.2
SD	23.7	19.3	20.0	20.2	20.3	21.3
N	44	77	168	210	179	293
t	1.700***	2.046**	.841			

\* All *t* values were computed for two-tail tests of the equivalence of the respective means for the aware and unaware groups.

\*Significant at the .0001 level.

\*\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*\*Significant at the .1 level.

Because of the very small number of nonworking nonhousewives, the overall totals of Table 3 are almost exactly the same as those for Table 8, so they are not repeated here. The greatest increase in support from 1972 to 1976 was registered by unaware men (7 degrees). Among the aware, working women registered the highest support and dropped off by only 1 degree from 1972 to 1976.

Table 9 shows the percentage of the pro- and anti-feminist responses to the five attitude questions in 1972 and 1976 by awareness and the three sex categories. The same pattern evident in Tables 7 and 8 appears here as well. Working women, both aware and unaware, are the most supportive of feminism. Support increases within all groups with the housewives increasing the most within both the aware and unaware categories.

Breaking down Tables 7, 8, and 9 by education produces few surprises. Generally speaking, support for feminism increases within each subgroup by education. The relationship between education and feminism, however,

TABLE 9. Total Pro- and Anti-Feminist Responses to Five Attitude Questions for Aware and Unaware Groups by Sex.

		Housewives				Working Women				Men				
		<i>Aware</i>				<i>Aware</i>				<i>Aware</i>				
		1976				1976				1976				
		Pro	Anti		Pro	Anti		Pro	Anti	Pro	Anti		Pro	Anti
Pro	1972	37.1	10.2	47.3	47.6	9.6	57.2	36.8	10.7	36.8	10.7	47.5	36.8	10.7
Anti		18.5	34.2	52.7	15.9	26.9	42.8	15.6	36.9	15.6	36.9	52.5	15.6	36.9
		55.6	44.4	100.0 (205)*	63.5	36.5	100.0 (353)	52.4	47.6	52.4	47.6	100.0 (774)	52.4	47.6
		<i>Unaware</i>				<i>Unaware</i>				<i>Unaware</i>				
		1976				1976				1976				
		Pro	Anti		Pro	Anti		Pro	Anti	Pro	Anti		Pro	Anti
Pro	1972	23.5	11.0	34.5	28.3	12.1	40.4	25.0	13.0	25.0	13.0	38.0	25.0	13.0
Anti		18.7	46.8	65.5	17.4	42.2	59.6	19.0	43.0	19.0	43.0	62.0	19.0	43.0
		42.2	57.8	100.0 (1201)	45.7	54.3	100.0 (904)	44.0	56.0	44.0	56.0	100.0 (1631)	44.0	56.0

\*Total number of responses. Divide this number by 5 to get the approximate number of respondents in each category.

TABLE 10. Constraint by Awareness, Education, and Sex.

	Aware				Unaware			
	HS	SC	COLL	TOTAL	HS	SC	COLL	TOTAL
1972	.47*	.51	.65	.55	.35	.39	.26	.37
	<i>Working Women</i>							
1976	.45	.63	.62	.59	.45	.44	.37	.44
N	15	34	26	75	80	54	22	156
1972	.63	.51	.54	.58	.37	.47	.38	.41
	<i>Housewives</i>							
1976	.68	.39	.31	.53	.47	.55	.65	.51
N	21	10	11	42	122	44	20	186
1972	.34	.57	.43	.44	.23	.33	.42	.29
	<i>Men</i>							
1976	.28	.51	.47	.43	.34	.30	.64	.34
N	44	56	61	161	129	99	36	264

\*Mean of absolute values of the correlations between the seven-point scale, the five attitude questions, and the thermometer.

is not necessarily a "single cause." Indeed, there appears to be a cumulative effect at work. If one asks: of all the possible combinations of awareness, employment, and education, which produces the most and least sympathy with feminist ideology, the answer is clear. The most supportive subgroup is the college educated, aware working women. The least supportive subgroup is, in an exact mirror image, the women with only a high school education, who are unaware and are housewives.

Displayed in Table 10 are the mean constraint values for the three sex categories for 1972 and 1976 broken down by awareness and education. Comparing Table 10 with Table 6 reveals some interesting patterns. Considering first the total columns, within each sex category, the increase in constraint was highest for the unaware group, thereby narrowing the gap between the aware and unaware. The largest gain in constraint was registered by the unaware housewives, followed by unaware working women and unaware men. For the aware group as a whole, the mean constraint value was the same in 1972 and 1976 (.50). However, Table 10 reveals that constraint actually increased for working women, decreased for housewives, and remained nearly the same for men, thus producing no overall net change.

Table 10 shows that the horizontal diffusion within the college educated that we noted in Table 6 was the greatest for housewives (up .27) followed

by men (up .22) and working women (up .11). In contrast, the vertical diffusion among the high school educated in Table 6 is spread almost evenly across the three sex categories. Finally, the puzzling slight increase in the some college aware group that we noted in Table 6 can be seen as resulting from a drop in constraint on the part of the some college unaware men. If they are removed, the increase would have been considerably larger but still smaller than the increases for the other two education categories.

The relationship between education and constraint is uneven in Table 10. Except for aware housewives and unaware working women, the high school educated within each group had a lower mean constraint value than the college educated. For aware housewives and unaware working women in 1976 the relationship between constraint and education was actually negative—as education increased, constraint decreased. In the case of the housewives, this inverse relationship has to be interpreted with caution due to the small *n*'s (21, 10, and 11, respectively). Although counterintuitive, the inverse relationship for working women also cannot bear much interpretational weight because the spread of the mean values, .08, is small.

Overall, the picture that emerges from Tables 7 to 10 is a clear increase from 1972 to 1976 in the support for feminist ideas among working women. Working women, in both the aware and unaware groups, were the most supportive of feminism on all three measures. The three measures taken together also reveal that among the aware, housewives were more supportive of feminism than men, whereas for the unaware, the reverse is true; men were more supportive than housewives.

Given the increases in constraint shown in Table 10, awareness clearly increased as well. This is especially true for women. As we discussed above, unaware housewives and working women had greater increases in constraint than unaware men, and working women registered the only gain among the aware. Considering the competition between feminists and anti-feminists discussed in the previous section, this increase makes a great deal of sense.

This competition apparently had less of an impact upon men. Taken together, men were much more volatile (i.e., they changed their positions more from year to year) on all three support measures than women. This is certainly implied by the fact that men, both aware and unaware, had the lowest levels of constraint in both 1972 and 1976. Cross-tabulating the 1972, 1974, and 1976 seven-point scale locations of the panel respondents reveals that men were much less stable than women. For example, 28 percent of working women and 32 percent of housewives located themselves at the same position in all three years while only 23 percent of men did so. If those people in each group that changed consistently—that is, became either monotonically less or more feminist—are added in, then the percentages

become 81, 75, and 66 respectively.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, given their lower constraint values and greater volatility, men became aware of feminism at a lesser rate than women did from 1972 to 1976.

#### FEMINISM AND SATISFACTION

The high support and constraint levels reported above for aware working women with college and some college levels of education is certainly consistent with Freeman's relative deprivation hypothesis discussed in the introductory section. If the idea of relative deprivation is correct, these women felt discrimination more acutely and hence became more dissatisfied, with such dissatisfaction perhaps leading to increased desire for egalitarian treatment in the marketplace. A CPS question on satisfaction with life should provide some evidence of the extent to which this support for feminism is related to life satisfaction over the four year period.

In 1972 and 1976 respondents were asked: "In general, how satisfying do you find the way you're spending your life these days? Would you call it completely satisfying, pretty satisfying or not very satisfying?"<sup>11</sup> Table 11 cross-tabulates the results for working women, housewives and men. Working women had the lowest percentage in the completely satisfied category and the highest percentage in the not very satisfying category in both 1972 and 1976. Overall, working women were the least satisfied with their lives, while housewives were the most satisfied.

Before relating these levels of satisfaction to feminism, we should note that housewives are consistently more satisfied, thus lending credence to the Freeman notion of relative deprivation. It is true (as has been argued by those who dispute findings such as these, for example, those who believe that housewives suffer more mental illness and take more mood altering drugs than do working women [Bernard, 1972]), that surveys may conceal both a more pathological condition and a defensive response. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the Freeman relative deprivation hypothesis, the data make sense. Working women are somewhat less satisfied. Does this relative lack of satisfaction relate to their more feminist sympathies? Apparently this is the case.

Table 12 displays the mean thermometer scores in 1972 and 1976 for working women who reported themselves as "completely," "pretty," and "not very" satisfied with their lives in 1972. Although the differences are small in 1972, satisfaction and feminism are clearly inversely related. However, by 1976, the gaps between the three groups widen dramatically. The "not very" group jumps 15.5 degrees in support while the "completely" group increases by only 3.8 degrees.

Complicating this analysis is the fact that respondents reported different

TABLE 11. Satisfaction with Life.

1972	Housewives			Working Women			Men		
	1976			1976			1976		
	C	P	NV	C	P	NV	C	P	NV
Completely	11.6	14.2	1.0	6.6	11.2	1.5	7.3	14.1	.9
Pretty	9.5	53.1	5.5	11.6	54.1	5.5	11.8	52.4	4.7
Not Very	0.0	2.9	2.2	0.0	6.9	3.1	.2	4.9	3.7
	21.1	70.2	8.7	18.2	72.2	9.6	19.3	71.4	9.3
			(275)						(468)
			100.0			100.0			100.0
									(259)

TABLE 12. Satisfaction with Life by Thermometer Score for Working Women.

	1972 Thermometer	1976 Thermometer	Increase	N
Completely	44.4	48.2	3.8	46
Pretty	46.9	55.0	8.1	175
Not very	48.1	63.6	15.5	25

levels of satisfaction in the two years. This, however, does not change the basic finding of an inverse relationship between satisfaction and feminism among working women. For example, 156 working women reported the same levels of satisfaction in both years.<sup>11</sup> The mean thermometer scores in 1972 for those "completely" satisfied, "pretty" satisfied, and "not very" satisfied with their lives both years were 37.0, 49.0, and 58.1, respectively. The mean scores for 1976 were 50.1, 56.1, and 71.8 respectively. The inverse relationship holds in both years.

It has been argued that working women face a problem of maintaining a house and a job, whereas working men do not. Whatever the norms of shared responsibility, the evidence does seem to suggest that the husbands of working women do *not* share equally in household responsibilities. Indeed, there is ambivalence about working women precisely because of the traditional association between women and the home. Thus, while almost three-fourths of those interviewed by the National Opinion Research Center in 1978 approved of a woman working if her husband was capable of supporting her, only 50 percent of working women did so (*Public Opinion*, December-January 1980, p. 33). Our data allow us to carry the deprivation idea a step further by examining the attitudes of married working women and single working women.

Table 13 compares the mean thermometer scores for working women for 1972 and 1976 by satisfaction. The mean values reported in Table 12 for all working women in 1972 disguised substantial differences between married and single working women. In 1972 feminism and satisfaction were inversely related for married working women, while just the *opposite* was true for single working women—as satisfaction increased so did the mean thermometer score. By 1976, however, single working women had undergone a dramatic about-face—satisfaction and feminism became inversely related.

Single working women are, from the point of view of the deprivation hypothesis, the ideal group to be recruited by feminist organizations. As they became increasingly aware of feminism during this period, they would also presumably become much more sensitive to job discrimination and hence their turnaround becomes quite understandable. As we noted above, given that married working women are usually saddled with traditional



**TABLE 13. Satisfaction with Life by Thermometer Score for Single and Married Working Women.**

	1972		1976	
	Married	Single	Married	Single
Completely	37.7 ( 33)	61.2 (13)	51.1 ( 32)	48.5 (13)
Pretty	47.9 (111)	45.2 (64)	55.1 (113)	56.8 (64)
Not Very	52.7 ( 11)	44.4 (14)	45.0 ( 10)	61.0 (14)

housework as well as their jobs, the inverse relationship between satisfaction and support in 1972 makes sense. By 1976, however, this relationship becomes much less clear. The not-very-satisfied married working women had the lowest, rather than the highest mean, thermometer score. In addition, the gap between the completely and pretty satisfied group narrowed from 10 to 15 degrees. However, because there were only 10 people in the not very satisfied group, these data must be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, it is clearly the case that the inverse relationship between satisfaction and feminism weakened considerably for married working women during the period.

The weight of the data clearly supports Freeman's relative deprivation hypothesis. *It appears that the diffusion of feminist ideology among working women made them more sensitive to discrimination in the marketplace and, as a result, reduced the satisfaction they felt with their lives.*

## CONCLUSION

Diffusion must be considered from several perspectives. From the standpoint of an individual, that person becomes more constrained only if he or she has first become aware of the ideology and then has accepted part or all of its idea-elements and world view. These newly constrained people may be from the same social class as the original proponents—horizontal diffusion—or they may be from a (presumably) lower social class—vertical diffusion. From the standpoint of one of the original proponents of the ideology, she or he may view the ideology as becoming “diluted” (moderated) as it becomes accepted by a widening circle of people. Put another way, as the “church” gets larger, it tends to become bureaucratized and the new members are less strident. If the process of proselytism generates a counter- or anti-ideology that competes with the original for the same constituency, moderation of the original ideology may occur as both ideologies

are diffused. (If the constituencies of two competing ideologies are different, then there is no reason for moderation to occur.)

In the case of feminist ideology, the weight of our evidence indicates that considerable horizontal as well as vertical diffusion has taken place. If the CPS panel study is representative of the population, then it appears that as the general public became more aware of feminist ideas and beliefs, support for these ideas and beliefs increased along with the constraint between various measures of them.

This support has limits, however. In 1972 twenty-two states ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, in 1973, eight ratified, while in 1974, 1975, and 1976, only three, one, and none ratified respectively. The apparent political demise of the Equal Rights Amendment is due to the emergence of a strong grass-roots anti-feminist movement led by Phyllis Schlafly. The Equal Rights Amendment, prior to the development of significant opposition, seemed to many like a good idea whose time had come. Thus, it was treated as a noncontroversial technical issue and was ratified by many states (e.g., Texas) by voice vote with only perfunctory discussion. Schlafly and her followers were able to change the Amendment from a technical to a social issue and thereby changed the nature of the debate.

That the anti-feminists were successful in blocking ratification is not surprising given the fact that the 15 states which have not ratified are, with one exception (Illinois), *conservative* southern and western states. Consequently, the strength of the anti-feminists should be assessed with some caution. Judging from the many indicators which we have examined, the competition between the two movements has had the effect of *consolidating* feminist support which had previously been tentative and soft. While it is true that a slight drop-off in support for feminism among some groups occurred between 1974 and 1976, this was more than offset by the drawing away from the extremes on the issues. Indeed, in relative terms, extreme anti-feminism experienced the sharpest losses. In sum, as it is the case with most social movements, maturity led to moderation.

#### NOTES

1. "Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men running business, industry, and government. Others feel that women's place is in the home. Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about this?"
2. "I'll read the name of each person and I'd like you to rate that person with what we call a feeling thermometer [Interviewer: Show respondent booklet, page 12]. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorably and warm toward the person, ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorably toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward a person you would rate them at 50 degrees. If we come to a person you don't know much about, just tell me and we'll move on to the next one."

3. The five attitude questions were variables 844, 846, 850, 852, and 854 in 1972 and 3,802, 3,804, 3,808, 3,809, and 3,811 in 1976 respectively. For each of the five attitude questions, respondents were presented with two statements and were asked "which of these two statements do you agree with the most?" We will list the five questions by their 1972 variable numbers with our coding of pro-/anti-feminist.

VAR 844: "Many qualified women can't get good jobs; men with the same skills have much less trouble." (PRO)

"In general, men are more qualified than women for jobs that have great responsibility." (ANTI)

VAR 846: "Women can best overcome discrimination by pursuing their individual career goals in as feminine a way as possible." (ANTI)

"It is not enough for a woman to be successful herself; women must work together to change laws and customs that are unfair to all women." (PRO)

VAR 850: "It's more natural for men to have the top responsible jobs in a country." (ANTI)

"Sex discrimination keeps women from the top jobs." (PRO)

VAR 852: "The best way to handle problems of discrimination is for each woman to make sure she gets the best training possible for what she wants to do." (ANTI)

"Only if women organize and work together can anything really be done about discrimination." (PRO)

VAR 854: "By nature women are happiest when they are making a home and caring for children." (ANTI)

"Our society, not nature, teaches women to prefer homemaking to work outside the home." (PRO)

4. Formally, let  $Y_j$  denote the  $j^{\text{th}}$  ( $j=1, \dots, J$ ) stimuli's position on the underlying dimension where

$$\sum_{j=1}^J Y_j = 0 \text{ and } \sum_{j=1}^J Y_j^2 = 1$$

In the first stage, the  $i^{\text{th}}$  ( $i=1, \dots, n$ ) respondent's perception of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  candidate,  $Y_{ij}$ , is denoted by  $Y_{ij} = Y_j + u_{ij}$  where  $u_{ij}$  is a random variable representing perceptual error. In the second or reporting-to-the-interviewer stage, the reported candidate positions,  $X_{ij}$ , are assumed to be a linear transformation of the perceived positions:  $c_i + w_i X_{ij} = Y_{ij} = Y_j + u_{ij}$ . A Lagrangean multiplier problem is set up in order to estimate the candidate locations, the  $Y_j$ , and the respondent parameters, the  $c_i$  and  $w_i$ . The  $Y_j$  turn out to be the eigenvector corresponding to the highest nonzero eigenvalue of the  $J$  and  $J$  matrix.

$$\sum_{i=1}^n X_i (X_i' X_i)^{-1} X_i' - nI \text{ where } X_i = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & X_{i1} \\ \cdot & \cdot \\ \cdot & \cdot \\ 1 & X_{iJ} \end{bmatrix}$$

The estimated  $Y_j$  is then returned to the  $c_i + w_i X_{ij}$  expression, and the  $c_i$  and  $w_i$  can then be estimated by simple linear regression.

5. It is true that education and occupation are related for women as they are for men; the more you learn the more you earn. Still, women who are highly educated (as indicated by college graduation) are far less likely than men of similar education to end up in more desirable occupations. For example, only 9 percent of women college graduates are classified as "managers or administrators," compared to one-fourth of college educated men. In fact, women pay a substantial "gender tax." Seven percent of women with only a high school education are in managerial jobs; thus a college education only results in a slight increase. For men, the relationship is more dramatic, 15 percent of the high school graduates are managers and 25 percent of the college graduates are.

The point of this is to introduce the idea of using education as an additional variable in explaining the attitudes of women toward equality. Even though rewards of education are less apparent for women, they do exist. Educated women are somewhat more likely to end up in better jobs. Thus, using education as a surrogate for more complex indicators of social class is preferable for women.

6. For her views on abortion, see her Eagle Forum flyer, *The Abortion Connection*. For a more extensive discussion on her views of changes in the Social Security system, see the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, June 1979.
7. Data provided courtesy of *The New York Times*.
8. The 17 female aware, nonworking nonhousewives do not fit into either of the three categories. A total of 35 unaware, nonworking nonhousewives are not included as well.
9. For example, a person who became monotonically less feminist would have a pattern such as 2-2-3 or 5-6-6 or 5-6-7, and so on.
10. Variable 282 in 1972 was variable 3,740 in 1976.
11. Some 259 respondents answered the satisfaction with life question while 246 answered the satisfaction with life question as well as the thermometer questions.

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