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## ***The Role of Social Groups in Political Thinking***

PAMELA JOHNSTON CONOVER

This article outlines a cognitive–affective model of the role of social groups in political thinking. The model is based on the assumptions that people have stored information and emotional reactions to social groups, and that people are purposive in their thinking about social groups in the sense that they are interested in understanding what various groups have obtained and whether it is deserved. The process through which social groups influence political thinking varies significantly depending upon whether an individual identifies with the group in question. Generally, people are more inclined to feel sympathetic towards the groups to which they belong. These ideas are illustrated with an empirical analysis that focuses on women’s issues and makes use of data collected in the 1984 National Election Study Pilot Study.

Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in the political influence of social groups. This interest has been rekindled by research on a variety of questions: the impact of group identification on political perception and thinking; the role of group consciousness in triggering political participation; the importance of social groups as political symbols; and group deprivation and intergroup conflict as sources of social unrest.<sup>1</sup> Taken together, this research has forcefully

Department of Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. An earlier version of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, at Chicago, April 1986. The data analysed in this article were collected by the Center for Political Studies and made available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. I appreciate the helpful comments and suggestions of several anonymous reviewers and especially Lee Sigelman. Of course, I alone bear the responsibility for any errors of analysis or interpretation.

<sup>1</sup> Studies on group identification include Pamela Johnston Conover, ‘The Influence of Group Identifications on Political Perceptions and Evaluations’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 46 (1984), 760–85; Donald R. Kinder, Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, ‘Group Economic Well-Being and Political Choice’, a pilot study report to the 1984 NES Planning Committee and Board of Overseers, 1983; Ethel Klein, *Gender Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); and Laurie A. Rhodebeck, ‘Group Identifications and Policy Preferences: A Reformulation of Group Influence Models’, a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, 1985. Studies on the role of group consciousness include Arthur Miller, Patricia Gurin and Gerald Gurin, ‘Electoral Implications of Group Identification and Consciousness: The Reintroduction of a Concept’, a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, New York, 1978; Arthur Miller, Patricia Gurin, Gerald Gurin and Oksana Malanchuk, ‘Group Consciousness and Political Participation’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 25 (1981), 494–511; Patricia Gurin, Arthur Miller and Gerald Gurin, ‘Stratum Identification and Consciousness’, *Social Psychological Quarterly*, 43 (1980), 30–47; Patricia Gurin, ‘Women’s Gender Consciousness’, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 49 (1985), 143–63; and Richard D. Shingles, ‘Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link’, *American Political Science Review*, 75 (1981), 76–91. Studies of social groups as political symbols include David O. Sears, Carl P. Hensler and L. K. Speer, ‘Whites’ Opposition to “Busing”: Self-Interest or Symbolic Politics?’, *American Political Science Review*, 73 (1979), 369–84; and David O. Sears, Richard R. Lau, Tom R. Tyler and Harris M. Allen, Jr., ‘Self-Interest versus Symbolic Politics in Policy Attitudes and Presidential Voting’, *American Political Science Review*, 74 (1980), 670–84. Studies on group

reasserted the political significance of social groups. Yet, at the same time, it has made painfully clear how many questions remain unanswered.

One unanswered question concerns *when* social groups have a political influence. Under what circumstances are social groups likely to enter into political thinking? A second question concerns *how* social groups influence political attitudes. In essence, what is the process through which social groups help mould political preferences? To the extent that these questions have been addressed by previous research, it has been primarily in a piecemeal, case-by-case fashion rather than from a general perspective.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the goal in this paper is to present a general framework for analysing when and how social groups influence political thinking, particularly the formation of issue preferences. We begin with a review of previous research and then turn to a presentation of a cognitive-affective model of group influence. Finally, we conclude with an empirical illustration that focuses on women's issues.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

### *The Concepts*

Many different approaches have been taken to the political study of social groups. Nevertheless, despite some disagreement over precise definitions, it is still possible to identify a set of commonly used concepts. Because these concepts play an indispensable role in the development of a general theoretical framework, it is essential that they each be clearly defined.

First, *group membership* is defined as 'objectively' belonging to a particular social group. Psychological closeness to the group or even an awareness of one's membership is not necessary to be classified as a member.<sup>3</sup> In our discussion, the term *ingroup* will denote a group of which a person is a member; conversely, the term *outgroup* will represent any group of which a person is not a member. This

deprivation and intergroup conflict include Faye J. Crosby, *Relative Deprivation and Working Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Laurie A. Rhodebeck, 'Group Deprivation: An Alternative Model for Explaining Collective Political Action', *Micropolitics*, 1 (1981), 239-67; David O. Sears and John S. McConahay, *The Politics of Violence: The New Urban Blacks and the Watts Riot* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin, 1973); and R. D. Vanneman and Thomas F. Pettigrew, 'Race and Relative Deprivation in the Urban United States', *Race*, 13 (1972), 461-86.

<sup>2</sup> Exceptions to this include Miller *et al.*, 'Electoral Implications of Group Identification', and Richard R. Lau, 'Reference Group Influence on Political Attitudes and Behavior: A Preliminary Report on the Importance of Social, Political and Psychological Contexts', a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> Where 'groups' are voluntary (e.g., political organizations) or defined in terms of face-to-face interaction, this definition of group membership may be inappropriate. The definition is most appropriate when the meaning of the term 'group' is essentially that of a category; and therefore, it applies most readily to social groupings based on age, race and sex, etc. (see Richard R. Lau, 'Individual and Contextual Influences on Group Identification', unpublished manuscript, Department of Social and Decision Sciences, Carnegie Mellon University). Finally, even when the term 'group' refers to social categories, group membership may be defined subjectively, rather than objectively as done here (see, for example, John C. Turner, 'Towards a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group', in Henri Tajfel, ed., *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

use of the terms 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' is a neutral one in the sense that it is not meant to imply either intergroup conflict or dominant/subordinate relationships between groups.

Next, *group identification* is defined as having two related components: a self-awareness of one's membership in the group and a psychological sense of attachment to the group.<sup>4</sup> Thus defined, group membership is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for group identification. Some may question this definition, however, because it excludes the possibility that group identification exists when people feel psychologically close to social groups to which they do not belong.<sup>5</sup> Reference group theory suggests that people might be influenced by groups to which they are psychologically close even though they are not actually members. Yet, intuitively we should recognize that feeling close to a group to which one does not belong is simply not the same as identifying with a group of which one is a member: aspiring to be a 'yuppie' is not the same as being a yuppie; nor is caring for the poor the same as being poor; nor sympathizing with the blacks in South Africa the same as being a black in South Africa.<sup>6</sup> While acknowledging that people feel close to groups to which they do not belong, it is none the less critical to maintain a conceptual distinction between the psychological attachment of group members and non-members. From a theoretical perspective, such attachments differ significantly in their origins and influence. Moreover, as we shall see, the empirical consequences of the distinction are also significant.

Another key concept in research on the political influence of social groups is *group consciousness*, which may be described as a 'politicized awareness, or ideology, regarding the group's relative positions in society, and a commitment to collective action aimed at realizing the group's interests'.<sup>7</sup> Thus defined, group identification is usually viewed as a precondition for group consciousness.

Finally, *group affect* refers simply to the positive or negative valence that an individual attaches to a group. Thus, neither group membership, identification nor consciousness is necessary in order for a person to experience affect towards a group. Instead, a person may attach positive or negative feelings to any group.

### *The Research*

Several major strands of research on the political influence of social groups may be identified.<sup>8</sup> A substantial amount of research has focused on the impact of group identification on political thinking and behaviour. The central idea is that

<sup>4</sup> See Gurin *et al.*, 'Stratum Identification and Consciousness'; Miller *et al.*, 'Group Consciousness and Political Participation'; and Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> For example, Rhodebeck, 'Group Identification and Policy Preferences'; and Lau, 'Reference Group Influence on Political Attitudes'.

<sup>6</sup> For a similar discussion see Klein, *Gender Politics*.

<sup>7</sup> Miller *et al.*, 'Electoral Implications of Group Identification', p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> For a more extensive review of previous research see Lau, 'Reference Group Influence', or David O. Sears, Leonie Huddie and Tom Jessor, 'Groups in Politics: Proposal for Measurement R&D for 1985 Pilot Study', a report to the NES Board of Overseers, 1985.

people are motivated to give political support to the ingroups with which they identify. Within this body of literature, two more specific schools of thought can be distinguished: *social cohesion* and *social identification*.<sup>9</sup> The social cohesion approach posits that ingroup influence is a function of interaction among group identifiers, group cohesiveness and the perception of shared self-interests. In contrast, the social identification model portrays ingroup influence as an outgrowth of cognitive and affective identification with the group. When a person identifies with a group, the group's interests take on a symbolic value that is distinct from the individual's own self-interests; thus, ingroup influence can occur even in the absence of a sense of shared self-interest.

The symbolic politics literature provides another perspective on the political influence of social groups.<sup>10</sup> Its basic idea is that people are influenced by how much they like or dislike various groups. Ingroups and outgroups alike represent symbols that trigger affective responses which in turn may structure political attitudes and behaviour. As regards group members the symbolic politics argument overlaps with the social identification approach since both emphasize the role of group affect.

Finally, a number of studies have concentrated on the influence of group consciousness and intergroup conflict on political behaviour.<sup>11</sup> These studies draw on a variety of the approaches just outlined, although they differ from the others in their simultaneous focus on ingroups and outgroups and the potential conflict between them. Group members may perceive intergroup conflicts in terms of their own self-interest (i.e., ego deprivation) or the ingroup's interest (i.e., fraternal deprivation). In both cases a sense of group consciousness influences the individual's reaction to the outgroup. Alternatively, individual reactions to group conflicts may be a function entirely of group affect regardless of group consciousness; whites, for instance, may oppose busing strictly because of their dislike of blacks.

### *Problems in the Political Study of Social Groups*

One of the major characteristics of research on the political influence of social groups is that much of it is specific to one domain or group.<sup>12</sup> Many of the symbolic politics and intergroup conflict studies have started with a particular issue – race relations being the most popular by far – and then attempted to specify how group concepts enter into an explanation of political attitudes on that issue. Similarly, many of the group identification studies have been group-specific, with blacks and women being the groups receiving the most attention.

<sup>9</sup> Lau, 'Reference Group Influence': Sears *et al.*, 'Groups in Politics'.

<sup>10</sup> Sears *et al.*, 'Whites' Opposition to "Busing"; Sears *et al.*, 'Self-Interest versus Symbolic Politics'; Sears *et al.*, 'Groups in Politics'.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Lawrence Bobo, 'Whites' Opposition to Busing: Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict?', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45 (1983), 1196–210; Klein, *Gender Politics*, pp. 81–94; Gurin, 'Women's Gender Consciousness'; and Rhodebeck, 'Group Deprivation'.

<sup>12</sup> Key exceptions to this include Gurin *et al.*, 'Stratum Identification and Consciousness'; Lau, 'Reference Group Influence'; and Miller *et al.*, 'Group Consciousness and Political Participation'.

The domain or group-specific nature of much of this research is not an inherent problem; but it has had several serious consequences. For one thing, there has been a proliferation of theoretical approaches. For example, Schuman and his colleagues have identified at least four distinct explanations of racial attitudes among whites.<sup>13</sup> The number of theories has not only grown; they have become increasingly specialized. More importantly, this specialization has come without any real effort to detail the conditions under which a particular type of theory will apply to other domains or groups. Because theories have been tailored to explain specific instances of social group influence, little attention has been devoted to the general question of 'when' social groups will enter into political thinking. And finally, the failure to consider the 'when' question has contributed to the neglect of situational variables that play a role in determining both the conditions under which social groups influence political thinking and the extent of that influence.

There are other problems as well. Existing theoretical approaches have differed significantly in their emphasis on cognitive and affective reactions to groups. Sears and his colleagues, for instance, strongly emphasize the role of affective factors in their symbolic politics approach; Kluegel and Smith, in contrast, stress the importance of cognitive factors in their examination of stratification beliefs and racial attitudes.<sup>14</sup> Few studies explore the interaction of cognitive and affective responses to social groups.<sup>15</sup> In addition, research has focused on ingroups that people identify with and/or outgroups that are evaluated negatively or seen to be in conflict with the ingroup. There has been very little attention to outgroups that are positively evaluated. Thus, we have little understanding of how political sympathy for social groups shapes political thinking. Most important of all, perhaps, few researchers have systematically addressed the question of purpose: when it comes to politics 'why' do people think about social groups the way they do? Finally, research in this area has often been insensitive to questions of measurement. National Election Study data have been the mainstay of most research efforts, and in some instances the availability of certain questions, rather than theory, has guided the operationalization of key concepts.

Clearly, all of these problems cannot be solved in a single article. None the less, a start is made here by specifying a general cognitive-affective theory of when and how social groups enter into political thinking. This framework moves beyond previous research because it is applicable across domains and

<sup>13</sup> Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh and Lawrence Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).

<sup>14</sup> Donald R. Kinder and David O. Sears, 'Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism versus Racial Threats to the Good Life', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40 (1981), 414-31; Sears *et al.*, 'Whites' Opposition to "Busing"; James R. Kluegel and Eliot R. Smith, 'Whites' Beliefs about Blacks' Opportunity', *American Sociological Review*, 47 (1982), 518-32.

<sup>15</sup> An exception to this is David O. Sears, Leonie Huddie and Lynitta G. Schaffer, 'A Schematic Variant of Symbolic Politics Theory as Applied to Racial and Gender Equality', in Richard R. Lau and David O. Sears, eds, *Political Cognition: The 19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986).

groups; because it describes the interaction between cognitive and affective factors; and because it addresses the question of purpose. Although this framework is general enough to apply to both liked and disliked groups, the emphasis will be on understanding political sympathy for outgroups, since that has been a neglected area in previous research. With that in mind, we turn to an explanation of the model.

#### A COGNITIVE–AFFECTIVE MODEL OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL GROUPS IN POLITICAL THINKING

##### *Basic Assumptions and Concepts*

In developing a cognitive–affective model of when and how social groups influence political thinking we build on earlier work. Specifically, an information-processing approach is adopted.<sup>16</sup> Several key assumptions follow from that decision.

Firstly, it is assumed that, because people have a limited cognitive capacity, they use previously stored knowledge to help them reach decisions and judgments as accurately and efficiently as possible. In understanding how people store and use information the concept of a *schema* has proved quite useful.<sup>17</sup> A schema may be defined as a cognitive structure of ‘organized prior knowledge, abstracted from experience with specific instances’ that guides the ‘processing of new information and the retrieval of stored information’.<sup>18</sup> Schemata perform a variety of functions: they lend organization to an individual’s experience; they structure the way information is remembered; they guide the inferring of new information; and they provide a basis for evaluations and problem-solving. In understanding how social groups enter into political thinking, four types of schemata are particularly important: the self-schemata associated with a person’s group identifications; ingroup schemata; outgroup schemata (typically described as stereotypes); and causal schemata, which help structure an individual’s explanations of various situations.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Earlier works with similar approaches include John C. Brigham, ‘Ethnic Stereotypes’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 76 (1971), 15–38; and Walter G. Stephan, ‘Intergroup Relations’ in Vol. 2 of Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, eds, *Handbook of Social Psychology*. 3rd edn (New York: Random House, 1985). For an overview of the application of information processing theory to political science, see Reid Hastie, ‘A Primer of Information-Processing Theory for the Political Scientist’ in Lau and Sears, *Political Cognition: The 19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition*.

<sup>17</sup> For an explanation of the schema concept see Pamela Johnston Conover and Stanley Feldman, ‘How People Organize the Political World: A Schematic Model’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 25 (1984), 617–45; Richard R. Lau and David O. Sears, ‘Social Cognition and Political Cognition: The Past, the Present, and the Future’, in Lau and Sears, *Political Cognition: The 19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition*; Shelley E. Taylor and Jennifer Crocker, ‘Schematic Bases of Social Information Processing in E. Tory Higgins, C. P. Herman, and Mark P. Zanna, eds, *Social Cognition: The Ontario Symposium* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981).

<sup>18</sup> Susan T. Fiske and Patricia W. Linville, ‘What Does the Schema Concept Buy Us?’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 6 (1980), 543–57, p. 543.

<sup>19</sup> Conover, ‘The Influence of Group Identifications’; and Stephan, ‘Intergroup Relations’.

Secondly, it is assumed that people are purposeful in their thinking about social groups. When people use their political schemata they are trying to do much more than simply organize a vast array of information. They are trying to understand politics.<sup>20</sup> In effect, bits and pieces of information are organized in a purposive fashion so that the perceiver can make sense of the political world. But, what purpose guides the way people think about social groups and politics? In addressing this question, it must be recognized that most political issues involving social groups concern either conflict between groups or the distribution (or redistribution) of goods, privileges or obligations. In such settings, the concept of fairness is quite important.<sup>21</sup> Thus, although a variety of purposes may influence political thinking in general, when it comes to social groups we argue that one dominates: the desire to know who is getting what and whether they deserve it.<sup>22</sup> In effect, political issues involving social groups are judged not only in terms of the nature of their outcomes – who gets what – but also very much in terms of their fairness – whether the outcome is deserved.

Thirdly, in line with the symbolic politics approach, it is assumed that affect matters in determining when and how social groups influence political thinking. Until recently, one of the problems with schema theory was its neglect of the role of affect in structuring information processing.<sup>23</sup> Yet recent research has suggested that affect may interact with cognitive factors in a variety of ways.<sup>24</sup>

Affect will be considered in several ways. Firstly, people store affective 'tags' with group schemata.<sup>25</sup> Thus, a particular group label evokes both a group

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the importance of 'purpose' in political thinking see Donald R. Kinder, 'Understanding Political Understanding', a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 1985; Robert E. Lane, 'What are People Trying to do With Their Schemata?' in Lau and Sears, *Political Cognition: The 19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition*; and Milton Lodge, 'Notes on a Cognitive-Science Approach to Political Information Processing', a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 1985.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth A. Rasinski, 'What's Fair is Fair – Or Is It? A Psychological Analysis of Conflicting Public Views About Social Justice', a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 1986; Tom R. Tyler, 'Justice and Leadership Endorsement' in Lau and Sears, *Political Cognition: The 19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition*; and Tom R. Tyler, Kenneth A. Rasinski and K. M. McGraw, 'The Influence of Perceived Injustice Upon Support for the President, Political Authorities, and Government Institutions', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 15 (1985), 700–25.

<sup>22</sup> Lane, 'What are People Trying to do With Their Schemata?'; and Lodge, 'Notes on a Cognitive-Science Approach to Political Information Processing'.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of this point see Susan T. Fiske, 'Schema-Triggered Affect: Application to Social Perception' in Margaret S. Clark and Susan T. Fiske, eds, *Affect and Cognition: the 17th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982); and Lau and Sears, 'Social Cognition and Political Cognition'.

<sup>24</sup> Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition* (New York: Random House, 1984).

<sup>25</sup> Susan T. Fiske, 'Schema-Based Versus Piecemeal Politics: A Patchwork Quilt, But Not a Blanket of Evidence' in Lau and Sears, *Political Cognition: the 19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition*; and Susan T. Fiske and Mark A. Pavelchak, 'Category-Based Versus Piecemeal-Based Affective Responses: Developments in Schema-Triggered Affect' in R. M. Sorrentino and E. T. Higgins, eds, *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition: Foundations of Social Behavior* (New York: Guilford, 1985).



schema and a stored affective reaction. To illustrate, for most people the label 'feminist' evokes not only a schema about what feminists are like but also a positive or negative reaction. Secondly, people also have 'emotional' reactions to social groups, where 'emotions' are defined as affective reactions differentiated beyond liking and disliking (e.g. sympathy, anger, pity, frustration). In many cases, emotional reactions to others are triggered by causal attributions about their behaviour.<sup>26</sup> For example, we sympathize with a person who falls down because he/she has slipped on the ice, but if we attribute the same fall to drunkenness we are more likely to react with disgust. Central to our framework are the causal attributions that people make about the status of social groups, and whether they subsequently react with sympathy or hostility towards the groups.

In summary, three key assumptions underlie our cognitive–affective model of the role of social groups in political thinking: the assumption that people organize their information about social groups in terms of group schemata; the assumption that people's *political* thinking about social groups is purposive, being guided by their desire to know what various groups are getting and whether it is deserved; and the assumption that people react affectively to social groups based on stored affective tags and causal attributions, and that these affective reactions influence how and what people think about social groups. With these assumptions in mind, the model itself may be outlined.

### *The Model*

As illustrated in Figure 1, four types of variables determine the role of social groups in thinking on political issues: (1) biological, socio-biological and cultural factors; (2) the individual perceiver's characteristics; (3) cognitive and affective factors evoked by the situation or issue; and (4) the characteristics of the evaluative process.

Research in psychology, anthropology and biology suggests that people have a natural tendency to react to others in group terms.<sup>27</sup> As perceivers, we organize information by placing it into categories. In the realm of social relations, this tendency is reflected in our common use of group labels (i.e. racial, gender and age labels) as a basis for categorizing information about others.<sup>28</sup> The tendency to view others and oneself in terms of readily apparent group categories helps individuals to establish a sense of both personal and social identity by providing a

<sup>26</sup> Bernard Weiner, 'The Emotional Consequences of Causal Ascriptions' in Clark and Fiske, *Affect and Cognition: the 17th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition*.

<sup>27</sup> Dennis L. Krebs and Dale T. Miller, 'Altruism and Aggression' in Lindzey and Aronson, eds, *Handbook of Social Psychology*, pp. 1–71, especially p. 15; and Stephan, 'Intergroup Conflict'.

<sup>28</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, 'A Categorization Approach to Stereotyping' in David L. Hamilton, ed., *Cognitive Processes in Stereotyping and Intergroup Behavior* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981); and David A. Wilder, 'Perceiving Persons as a Group: Categorization and Intergroup Relations', in Hamilton, *Cognitive Processes in Stereotyping and Intergroup Behavior*.

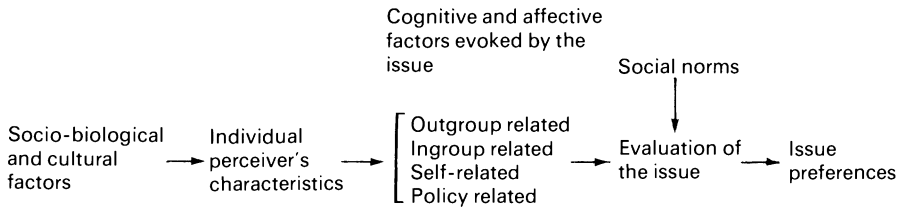


Fig. 1. A cognitive-affective model of the role of social groups in political thinking

basis for comparing themselves to the rest of society.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, this categoric basis of social cognition complements certain socio-biological characteristics. As Krebs and Miller argue, a variety of research indicates that humans are characterized by: (1) the tendency for pro-social attitudes and behaviour to be evoked primarily by kin or those who resemble them (i.e., ingroups): (2) a strong inclination to co-operate with members of ingroups; and (3) a tendency to be aggressive or hostile towards outgroup members particularly when there is competition for scarce resources.<sup>30</sup> Applied to the political arena, this suggests that people will react to political issues in group terms and will favour their ingroup especially when there is competition from an outgroup. The influence of these shared tendencies is filtered through the individual and will be taken as given for the remainder of this discussion.

The individual perceiver's characteristics also influence how a person reacts to a particular political issue. Background characteristics and personality traits may shape perceptions of social groups and issues involving them. In particular, whether a person has an 'altruistic' personality may be especially important. Fundamental political values such as individualism and equality may influence perceptions of political issues and social groups, especially causal attributions about the group's status and the fairness of that status. And basic political predispositions such as partisan and liberal-conservative identifications also may affect perceptions.<sup>31</sup>

The cognitive and affective factors evoked by the issue itself mediate much of the impact of an individual perceiver's characteristics on political thinking. How an issue is framed for the public by the media and political leaders determines

<sup>29</sup> Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*; and Richard M. Merelman, 'Domination, Self-Justification and Self-Doubt: Some Social-Psychological Considerations', *Journal of Politics*, 48 (1986), 276-300.

<sup>30</sup> Krebs and Miller, 'Altruism and Aggression', p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Evidence on the actual existence of the 'altruistic' personality is mixed: see Krebs and Miller, 'Altruism and Aggression'. For evidence on the influence of political values see Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Stanley Feldman, 'Economic Self-Interest and Political Behavior', *American Journal of Political Science*, 26 (1982), 446-66; Stanley Feldman, 'Economic Individualism and American Public Opinion', *American Politics Quarterly*, 11 (1983), 3-30; Herbert McClosky and John Zaller, *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Towards Capitalism and Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); and Rasinski, 'What's Fair is Fair - or Is It?'.

whether it contains various group cues. These cues evoke ingroup and outgroup schemata that contain information about prototypical group characteristics, the status of the group and possible causes for that status. Such group cues also evoke 'affective tags' that are attached to the group schemata in memory.<sup>32</sup> Based on such affective tags, their related group schemata, and various causal schemata the perceiver is able to assess whether, previously, the group has been treated fairly in the broad domain (i.e., social, economic, political) associated with the issue at stake. This judgement, along with other factors (i.e., inferences about need, perceptions of responsibility), triggers an affective reaction to the group: sympathy for groups that have obtained less than they deserve and hostility for groups that have obtained more than they deserve.

Finally, these group-related emotions combine with other factors to determine the individual's assessment of an issue. Here two types of factor are especially important: self-interest and social norms. Self-interest may override or reinforce feelings of sympathy for ingroups and outgroups. Similarly, it may temper or intensify feelings of hostility for outgroups. Also, social norms may either reinforce or conflict with emotional reactions to social groups as well as self-interest. In particular, norms of reciprocity, social responsibility and justice may all play a role in ultimately determining whether people adopt sympathetic attitudes towards their own and especially other groups.<sup>33</sup>

Having outlined the basic model, let us turn now to a more detailed examination of two related questions. First, *when* will social groups enter into political thinking? And secondly, *how* do social groups influence political thinking?

### *When Social Groups Influence Political Thinking*

When do social groups influence political thinking? The answer lies in how issues are framed for the public. Both the clarity and the saliency of group cues are important, so each is considered in some detail. First, how clearly does an issue evoke particular group cues? In this regard, issues may be thought of as varying along a continuum. At one end are 'strong group issues' – issues framed very explicitly in group terms so that most members of the public will pick up the group cues. Issues which clearly mention a particular group, such as equal pay for *women* or preferential treatment for *blacks*, are examples of strong group issues. In the middle of the continuum are 'weak group issues' – issues framed so that group cues are latent rather than manifest. On such issues, particular groups are not explicitly mentioned in the public discussion; instead, the per-

<sup>32</sup> Fiske and Pavelchak, 'Category-Based versus Piecemeal-Based Affective Responses'.

<sup>33</sup> A. W. Gouldner, 'The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement', *American Sociological Review*, 25 (1960), 161–79; Leonard Berkowitz, 'Social Norms, Feelings and Other Factors Affecting Helping Behavior and Altruism' in Leonard Berkowitz, ed., *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 6 (New York: Academic Press, 1972); Robert E. Goodin, *Protecting the Vulnerable: A Reanalysis of Our Social Responsibilities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985); Jennifer L. Hochschild, *What's Fair: American Beliefs about Distributive Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); and Tyler, 'Justice and Leadership Endorsement'.

ceivers themselves must establish the link between some group and the issue on hand. Typically, the groups that become important in the assessment of 'weak group issues' will be ingroups that the perceiver identifies with or outgroups that evoke strong affective reactions. For example, abortion is an issue of morality or individual rights for much of the public, but for feminists on one extreme and New Right activists on the other extreme the abortion issue evokes powerful group symbols.<sup>34</sup> Finally, at the other end of the continuum are 'non-group issues' – issues framed so that group cues are neither manifest nor latent for most members of the public.

Secondly, how politically salient are the group cues that are evoked by an issue? The saliency of group cues also may be described in terms of a continuum. On one end are issues containing 'very salient' group cues – groups for which most members of the public will have a group schema and related affective tag. For instance, racial issues such as busing readily evoke a 'blacks' schema for most members of the public. On the other end of the continuum are issues that contain group cues that are 'not salient' to most members of the public; although people may perceive the cues they do not associate them with group schemata, or, if they do, the schemata are impoverished and the affective tags weak. For instance, in most urban parts of the United States the issue of price supports for tobacco farmers does not contain salient group cues, since most people are unlikely to have a schema for tobacco farmers. Politically, the most salient social group cues are likely to be associated with categorical groups such as race, gender and age.

When the clarity and saliency of group cues are considered simultaneously, the implications are fairly straightforward. Social groups will enter into political thinking most strongly on issues where the group cues are explicit and salient. Many racial issues would fall into this category. On issues where the group cues are latent and/or salient to only a portion of the public social groups will shape the political thinking of only a portion of the public. 'Women's issues' such as abortion or equal pay may well fall into this category. Finally, on issues where group cues are missing or non-salient, social groups will not enter into the political thinking of most members of the public.

In a broader sense, this suggests that both the environment and the perceiver play an important role in determining the extent to which social groups influence political thinking. The environment structures some issues in such a fashion that it is difficult not to think about them in group terms. Other issues leave the individual more leeway; on such issues social groups affect political thinking because the individual identifies with the groups or feels strongly about them. Thus, opinions on a wide variety of political issues may be influenced by people's beliefs and feelings towards social groups. Finally, from a practical perspective this discussion suggests that the phrasing of survey questions may prompt people to think in group terms. It should come as no surprise, for

<sup>34</sup> Pamela Johnston Conover and Virginia Gray, *Feminism and the New Right: Conflict Over the American Family* (New York: Praeger, 1983).

example, that there are different patterns of response to a general question on affirmative action and one asking about affirmative action *for blacks*. In the first question the group cues are only implicit while in the second they are explicit.

### *How Social Groups Influence Political Thinking*

Having discussed when social groups are likely to enter into political thinking, the next question is *how* they influence political thinking. In answering this question, it is useful to consider separately the impact of ingroups and outgroups. We begin with ingroups.

As suggested by the 'social identification' model, the key to understanding how ingroups influence political thinking is group identification. Belonging to, but not identifying with, a group is likely to have some impact on political perceptions and attitudes, but, it is identification with the group that leads to the most dramatic effects.<sup>35</sup> Both group identification and group consciousness may be conceptualized usefully in schematic terms.<sup>36</sup> Specifically, identification with a group leads to the development of a 'self-schema' that merges two bodies of information: knowledge of one's self and a group schema.<sup>37</sup> For instance, a woman may have a schema about 'feminists'; if she begins to apply that schema to herself, a self-schema may be said to exist.

In schematic terms, group consciousness may be conceptualized as a specific configuration of various cognitive and affective elements: a strong group identification; a well-developed ingroup schema containing information about the group's status; a causal attribution of responsibility for that status that attributes good outcomes to the efforts of group members and bad outcomes to external forces; and an emotional reaction based on that attribution. For example, group consciousness among subordinate groups, such as racial minorities in the United States, would entail the development of a schema containing information about the group's relatively deprived status, a causal attribution for that status that places the blame outside of the group, and a sense of sympathy for the ingroup and anger towards those outsiders seen as responsible for the group's status. Group consciousness, therefore, naturally leads people to feel sympathetic towards their ingroup, and thus it strongly contributes to the development of pro-group issue preferences.

From a schematic perspective, it is clear that group identification plays a major role in facilitating the development of group consciousness. The development of a self-schema linking the individual to the group – that is, a group identification – has several important consequences. Information processing about both the ingroup and outgroups is affected, with greater attention devoted to

<sup>35</sup> Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*, pp. 254–67.

<sup>36</sup> Conover, 'The Influence of Group Identifications on Political Perceptions and Evaluations'; and Stephan, 'Intergroup Conflict'.

<sup>37</sup> Hazel Markus, Marie Crane, Stan Bernstein and Michael Saladi, 'Self-Schemas and Gender', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42 (1982), 38–50.

stimuli relevant to the ingroup.<sup>38</sup> And, group identification helps to trigger an ingroup/outgroup bias that favours the ingroup in perceptions and evaluations. This bias seems to be the result of an enhancement of the ingroup's image rather than a denigration of the outgroup's.<sup>39</sup>

More importantly, this bias facilitates the development of group consciousness and pro-group issue preferences in several ways. It helps enhance the ingroup's image.<sup>40</sup> It contributes to what has been labelled the 'ultimate attribution bias': a pattern of attributions in which 'positive behaviors performed by ingroup members and negative behaviors performed by outgroup members are attributed to internal factors, whereas negative in-group behaviors and positive out-group behaviors are attributed to external factors.'<sup>41</sup> The ultimate attribution error directly aids the development of group consciousness by leading group members either to blame others for their group's misfortunes or to accept credit for their group's successes. Finally, the ingroup/outgroup bias enhances the personal relevance of group outcomes for the individual. As Marilyn Brewer explains, 'outcomes to the group as a whole come to be perceived as one's own'.<sup>42</sup> In essence, group identification fosters a sense of interdependence between the individual and the group that is not based purely on self-interest. Thus, group identification stimulates the development of group consciousness in a variety of ways.

What are the implications of group identification and consciousness for information-processing on political issues? Generally, group identification biases an individual to make those causal attributions about the ingroup that will prompt positive emotional reactions to it; more strongly, an inevitable by-product of the development of group consciousness is sympathy for the ingroup. Thus, when people identify with a group and especially when they experience a sense of group consciousness, they should adopt pro-group issue preferences. In specific terms, when issues contain clear cues for a group that a person identifies with, the assessment of the issue will probably be biased in the pro-group direction. Where group cues are weak, people with strong group identifications may, none the less, evaluate an issue in group terms relevant to them; consequently, various individuals may be influenced by different group identifications on the same issue. Finally, group identification may bias the perception of an issue

<sup>38</sup> Conover, 'The Influence of Group Identifications on Political Perceptions and Evaluations'; and N. A. Kuiper and T. B. Rogers, 'The Encoding of Personal Information: Self-Other Differences', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37 (1979), 449-514.

<sup>39</sup> Marilyn B. Brewer, 'In-Group Bias in the Minimal Intergroup Situation: A Cognitive-Motivational Analysis', *Psychological Bulletin*, 86 (1979), 307-24.

<sup>40</sup> Stephan, 'Intergroup Conflict'.

<sup>41</sup> Stephan, 'Intergroup Conflict', p. 607; and Thomas F. Pettigrew, 'The Ultimate Attribution Error: Extending Allport's Cognitive Analysis of Prejudice', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 5 (1979), 461-76.

<sup>42</sup> Brewer, 'In-Group Bias in the Minimal Intergroup Situation', p. 322. See also Conover, 'The Influence of Group Identifications on Political Perceptions and Evaluations'; and Roderick M. Kramer and Marilyn B. Brewer, 'Effects of Group Identity on Resource Use in a Simulated Commons Dilemma', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46 (1984), 1044-57.

pertaining to an outgroup by influencing attributions of responsibility for the outgroup's status. Or, evaluations of an issue may be biased if the ingroup is perceived as being interdependent with the outgroup.

The impact of outgroups on political thinking is not expected to be as pervasive as that of ingroups. For the most part, an outgroup should enter into political thinking only on an issue that is framed so that it contains a clear cue to the outgroup.<sup>43</sup> Generally, the impact of the outgroup on political thinking will depend upon several factors: the affective tag associated with the group, the group schema, a causal attribution for the group's status, and the perceiver's emotional reaction to the group. The affective tag will be especially important under two conditions: when it is extremely negative or positive, or when the related schema is very undeveloped. Under those conditions, how much people like or dislike a group should strongly affect how sympathetic or hostile they are to the group's cause. In such cases, the process resembles that posited by symbolic politics theory.

Under other conditions, a person's emotional reaction to an outgroup will be shaped not only by the affect associated with the group, but also by the outgroup's perceived status and the causal explanation associated with it. To return to one of our basic assumptions, when people think about social groups they are motivated by a desire to know what the group is getting and whether it has been treated fairly. Assessments of the fairness of a group's status are expected to have a strong influence on a person's emotional reaction to the group; and the emotional reaction itself should influence whether the person adopts issue preferences favourable to the group. Generally, people are expected to feel basically neutral towards outgroups whose status is perceived to be fair, regardless of whether the status is high or low; sympathetic towards outgroups whose status is perceived to be unfairly low; and hostile towards outgroups whose status is perceived to be unfairly high. For instance, one man may perceive that working women have a deservedly low status because women are not as ambitious as men; consequently, he experiences little sympathy or hostility for working women. A second man also perceives that working women have a low status but attributes it to discrimination; therefore, he feels sympathy for working women. And, a third man might perceive that working women have an undeservedly high status; consequently, he is hostile towards them.

It is important to recognize that a person's assessment of a group's status and its responsibility for that status may be biased by a number of factors. Political values and orientations like 'individualism' and conservatism lead perceivers to assign greater responsibility to individual group members for their fate, and thus

<sup>43</sup> An exception to this general pattern may occur for outgroups where people's affect is very strong and their schemata are very well-developed. In the United States, racial groups are a key example of this. We might therefore expect to find that racial groups have a greater role than other groups in the political thinking of whites. See Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, 'Racial Issues and the Structure of Mass Belief Systems', *Journal of Politics*, 44 (1982), 2-20.

mitigate against sympathetic feelings.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, cognitive biases such as the 'ultimate attribution error' may lead perceivers to judge that an outgroup's low status is deserved or its high status undeserved, causing the perceiver to be unsympathetic or even hostile. Finally, in many instances perceivers will have stored in their outgroup schema ready-made explanations for the group's status.<sup>45</sup> So their assessment of whether the group's status is fair may be accomplished with very little new information processing.

Moreover, the assessment of whether a group has been treated fairly does not always translate directly into feelings of sympathy or hostility. Strong affective feelings for the group or social norms may shape the emotional reaction that a person has for an outgroup. For example, an individual may perceive that the poor have a deservedly low status, but none the less feel sympathy for them because of a sense of social responsibility. Also, as suggested by group conflict theories, perceived interdependence of the outgroup with either an ingroup or the self may colour one's emotional reaction to the outgroup. For instance, a man might perceive that working women have a deservedly low status, but still feel sympathetic towards them because he perceives that his own status will improve if the status of working women does.

To summarize, outgroups are expected to influence political thinking primarily on those issues where the outgroup cues are clear. When outgroups do enter into political thinking, perceivers are expected to focus on what the group's status is and whether the group has been treated fairly. A variety of factors may affect such judgements, including the perceiver's own characteristics and political values. Ultimately, the perceiver's assessment of the fairness of the group's status should play a large role in determining his/her emotional reaction to the group. Political sympathy should be highest for outgroups that are liked, perceived to have been treated badly and unfairly, and whose fate is positively interdependent with that of the perceiver or his/her ingroup. Conversely, political hostility should be high for outgroups that are disliked, perceived to have been treated unfairly well, and whose fate is negatively interdependent with that of the perceiver or his/her ingroup. Finally, while emotional reactions to an outgroup should be related to issue preferences, they are not the sole determinant; the effects of either political sympathy or hostility may be weakened by the impact of self-interest, social norms or other political symbols. Conversely, pro-group attitudes may not always reflect political sympathy for an outgroup; strong social norms could lead a person to adopt a pro-group attitude in the absence of substantial sympathy for the outgroup.

Finally, let us briefly contrast political sympathy for ingroups and outgroups. Political sympathy is considerably more likely for ingroups than outgroups. For outgroups, political sympathy is primarily a function of affect and assessments of the fairness of the group's status. For ingroups, political sympathy is a natural outgrowth of group identification and the feelings of group consciousness that it

<sup>44</sup> Feldman, 'Economic Self-Interest and Political Behavior'; and Rasinski, 'What's Fair is Fair – or Is It?'

<sup>45</sup> Stephan, 'Intergroup Conflict'.



fosters. When an issue contains both ingroup and outgroup cues, favourable attitudes towards a positively evaluated outgroup are likely if: (1) the group identification is weak; and/or (2) there exists a positive interdependence between the self and the outgroup, or the ingroup and the outgroup; and/or (3) social norms are very strong. Finally, for both ingroups and outgroups the impact of political sympathy on issue preferences may be dampened by other factors although that is more likely in the case of outgroups.

#### AN ILLUSTRATION: THE CASE OF 'WOMEN'S ISSUES'

Given its complexity, the full model of the role of social groups in political thinking is difficult to test in a single analysis. From a practical standpoint, moreover, it is probably impossible to devise a reasonable test of the complete model using currently available data sets. Ideally, then, what is needed is the development of new measures specifically designed to operationalize the key concepts contained in the model and the collection of new data pertaining to a variety of groups and issues. In the absence of that, this empirical analysis is best thought of as an illustration of parts of our theoretical argument, rather than a definitive test of the complete model. In particular, this analysis focuses on how the process of issue evaluation varies between group members and non-members for a set of issues in which group cues are similar; the question of when groups enter into political thinking (that is, the variation in group inferences across different types of issues) is not taken up.

With such caveats in mind, let us turn to an empirical analysis of several women's issues.<sup>46</sup> Such issues provide an opportunity to explore both the development of group identification and consciousness (i.e., feminism among women) and positive emotional reactions to an outgroup (i.e., men's feelings of sympathy for women). Women's issues are particularly suited for such an analysis because political sympathy, rather than hostility, should be the more common reaction of men to the plight of women. This is true for several reasons. Men and women interact in all facets of life, and their fates are often interdependent. Also, there has been no significant 'men's movement' and thus the group consciousness of men is likely to be low; from the perspective of men, therefore, there should not be a great deal of ingroup-outgroup conflict.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> For the purposes of this paper, 'women's issues' are defined as those issues 'where policy consequences are likely to have a more immediate and direct impact on significantly larger numbers of women than men' (see Susan J. Carroll, *Women as Candidates in American Politics* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 15). Of course, from the perspective of the individual, what constitutes a 'woman's issue' will vary from person to person depending on their perception of group cues and their existing schemata.

<sup>47</sup> Male groups associated with sports teams, men's clubs and the military may promote bonding and a sense of solidarity among their members; but they do not necessarily create a heightened sense of group identity (i.e., 'I am a man') or, more important, group consciousness. Similarly, in the 1970s one backlash of the women's movement was the creation of a 'men's' movement. However, this movement never really 'took-off', either in the popular culture or as a topic of academic research. For a discussion on the men's movement see, Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon, *The Forty-nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1976).

At the same time, it is important to recognize that some of the same factors that make it likely that men will feel sympathetic, or at worst neutral, towards women are also factors that work against the development of widespread group consciousness among women.<sup>48</sup> In particular, the structure of relations between men and women profoundly inhibits the development of group consciousness among women. Specifically, the frequent and intimate interaction that typically occurs between men and women interferes with women's development of a sense of solidarity and their recognition of group deprivation.<sup>49</sup> Thus the extent and intensity of group consciousness among women is less than for some other groups (such as racial minorities), and this should be reflected in less distinctive issue preferences between men and women.

### *Data and Methods*

The data for our analysis were collected in the 1984 Pilot Study for the National Election Study. The variable numbers for all the questions employed in our analysis are provided in the Appendix. With the exception of age (coded as number of years), all the measures were recoded to range from zero to one for the regression analyses.<sup>50</sup>

Four general classes of variables are used in the analysis: background variables, political value and orientation measures, group-related measures and issue preferences. There are seven background variables: education, income, social class, marital status, work status, race and age. Scores of 1 indicate, respectively, high education, high income, upper class, married, working and non-white.

There are four variables tapping basic political values and orientations. The traditional seven-point party identification and liberal-conservative identification scales were recoded to the 0–1 format, with high scores indicating, respectively, 'strong Democrat' and 'extremely liberal'. Next, an 'individualism' measure was devised. It is an additive scale (coefficient  $\alpha = 0.63$ ) based on responses to five questions concerning the 'Protestant ethic' and the success of individual efforts in our society. A score of 1 on the scale indicates a strong sense of individualism. Finally, an 'equality' measure was created. It, too, is an additive scale (coefficient  $\alpha = 0.55$ ) based on three questions about the need for equal opportunity in the United States. A score of 1 on the equality scale represents a strong sense of the need for equal opportunity.

Measuring the group-related concepts presented a challenge. Questions in existing surveys, and this one in particular, have not been designed to measure

<sup>48</sup> Gurin, 'Women's Gender Consciousness'; Debra Kalmuss, Patricia Gurin and Aloan L. Townsend, 'Feminist and Sympathetic Feminist Consciousness', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 11 (1981), 131–47; and Klein, *Gender Politics*, pp. 105–39.

<sup>49</sup> Gurin, 'Women's Gender Consciousness'.

<sup>50</sup> When variables are rescaled to a zero-to-one format they are not being dichotomized. The lowest value is set to 0, the highest value to 1 and all intermediate categories to corresponding fractional values.

the various group concepts as they are defined here. There is therefore some slippage between our conceptualizations and our measures. In particular, while our interest is in the women's movement and sympathy for it, our questions focus more specifically on working women. With that in mind, the six group measures may be considered.

First, affective reactions (i.e., liking and disliking) were measured in terms of responses to feeling thermometers for four groups: women, working women, feminists and women's liberation groups supporters. Responses on these questions were combined to form a scale (coefficient  $\alpha = 0.65$ ) on which a score of 1 indicates a very strong positive reaction. Secondly, identification with working women (among women) and identification with men (among men) were measured by identically worded questions asking how close the respondent felt to the group. In both instances, a score of 1 indicates that the respondent feels very close to the group. Thirdly, a sense of interdependence with working women was measured by a question asking whether it would make any difference to the respondent and his/her family if working women were to do better. Responses indicate that less than 3 per cent of the men and the women feel negatively interdependent with working women; and 55 per cent feel no sense of interdependence; and the remaining 42 per cent feel positively interdependent (scored 1).

Fourthly, it was not possible directly to measure attributions of responsibility for the status of working women; consequently, we focused on perceptions of discrimination. Presumably, people who perceive that women are discriminated against would also argue that women are not entirely to blame for their status. Our measure of perceived discrimination was based on three questions asking directly about discrimination against working women; on the scale (coefficient  $\alpha = 0.58$ ) a score of 1 indicates a strong perception of discrimination. Lastly, in measuring political sympathy we relied on two questions: the first asked about whether working women got more or less than they deserved, and the second question asked whether the respondent felt bitter or resentful over this. Responses to these two questions were combined so that high scores indicate political sympathy (i.e. bitterness over working women getting less than they deserve); low scores represent political hostility (bitterness over working women getting more than they deserve); and middle-range scores stand for a more or less neutral emotional reaction.

Finally, one general and three economic issue questions are employed as dependent variables. The general question, 'social roles', asks whether women should have an equal role in society with men. The three economic questions are all phrased similarly in that they ask 'how much effort and resources should the government in Washington put into' (1) 'improving the social and economic position of women'; (2) 'promoting affirmative action programs that help women get ahead'; and (3) 'insuring equal pay for equal work for women'. All four questions are coded so that 1 represents the extreme feminist response.

Findings

Men and women are considered separately throughout the analysis since the processes underlying their responses should be different. Unfortunately, the subsamples are small so many of our estimates have large standard errors. Consequently, we focus on the patterns in the estimates rather than their absolute size. And, remembering that they are comparable between variables (with the exception of age), the unstandardized coefficients should also be examined, because in some instances the large standard errors contribute to statistically insignificant beta weights.

The distribution of political sympathy among men and women is shown in Table 1. As anticipated, there is very little hostility towards working women either among men or women; at the same time, a substantial proportion of both the men and women, although not hostile, are not sympathetic either. Among those who display some sympathy, there is a tendency for women to be more sympathetic.

TABLE 1 *Frequency Distribution of Political Sympathy for Women\**

	Men (%)	Women (%)	All (%)
Hostility (0-0.49)	5	1	3
Neutral (0.5)	33	39	37
Mild sympathy (0.51-0.74)	51	39	43
Strong sympathy (0.75-1.00)	12	21	17
Total	100	100	100
(N)	(130)	(184)	(314)

\* Due to rounding the percentages do not all add to exactly 100.

For men, political sympathy should be a function primarily of affect and attributions of responsibility for women's status (i.e., perceptions of discrimination). For women, affect and perceptions of discrimination should be joined by group identification and other indicators of group consciousness, like interdependence, in promoting group sympathy. As shown in Table 2, these expectations are borne out.

Men's positive feelings towards women combine with the recognition that women are discriminated against to produce sympathy for working women. Among men sympathy is not a manifestation of self-interest: a sense of personal interdependence with women has virtually no effect on political sympathy. Nor, as expected, does the identification of men with other men influence their political sympathy for women.

Women's sympathy for working women is more broadly based. As in the case of men, positive affect and perceptions of discrimination contribute to women's political sympathy for working women. In addition, although closeness to women has little direct effect, interdependence with women (which identification

TABLE 2 *Regression of Background, Political and Group Variables on Political Sympathy*

Independent variables	Political sympathy	
	Men	Women
<i>I. Background</i>		
Education	0.11 (0.05)	0.27 (0.15)**
Income	0.08 (0.04)	-0.01 (-0.006)
Social class	-0.15 (-0.08)	-0.05 (-0.03)
Work status	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Marital status	-0.03 (-0.01)	0.09 (0.03)
Race	0.03 (0.02)	-0.21 (-0.10)**
Age	-0.07 (-0.006)	-0.02 (-0.002)
	(-0.009)	(0.007)
<i>II. Political</i>		
Party ID	-0.18 (-0.08)**	-0.04 (-0.02)
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Liberal-Conservative ID	0.09 (0.06)	-0.06 (-0.06)
	(0.06)	(0.07)
Individualism	-0.06 (-0.04)	-0.002 (-0.001)
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Equality	0.06 (0.03)	0.13 (0.08)
	(0.04)	(0.05)
<i>III. Group</i>		
Group identity-men (men only)	0.08 (0.04)	—
	(0.04)	—
Group identity-women (women only)	—	0.06 (0.03)
	—	(0.04)
Affect	0.16 (0.16)*	0.11 (0.12)
	(0.08)	(0.09)
Discrimination	0.46 (0.23)**	0.24 (0.13)**
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Interdependence	0.04 (0.03)	0.23 (0.19)**
	(0.06)	(0.07)
$R^2$	0.37	0.31
(N)	(117)	(157)

Notes: \* = ( $p \leq 0.1$ )      \*\* = ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

Unparenthesized entries are beta weights.

Parenthesized entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.

Second line of parenthesized entries are standard errors.

helps to foster) has a substantial impact. Moreover, as argued earlier, in the case of women it would be misleading to interpret the impact of feelings of interdependence strictly in terms of self-interest. Group identification and the development of group consciousness nourish a sense of interdependence that represents more than pure self-interest; it indicates the personal relevance of group outcomes. Also unlike the case of men, education and race have substantial effects on political sympathy among women. This is not surprising, however, because the same type of women – better educated whites – have been drawn most strongly to the women's movement.<sup>51</sup> As expected, then, men and women differ noticeably in the sources of their political sympathy for women.

The impact of political sympathy also should differ significantly between men and women. Because political sympathy is interwoven with women's self-identities, it should have a relatively consistent and substantial influence on their preferences on women's issues. In contrast, among men political sympathy is rooted in their analysis of women's situation rather than in their own identities. Therefore, men's sympathy may be more easily dampened by other factors, and thus the effect of sympathy may be weaker and more inconsistent. In particular, there may be more variation between issues among men because they may respond more than women to the different cues in the issues. Finally, for both sexes, policy preferences may also be influenced by other factors such as political values and norms, self-interdependence with women, and, in the case of men, their identification with other men.

We first examine the relationship of issue preference with sex. On the three economic issues, there is a positive relationship: women are more likely to adopt the pro-women position (average Pearson correlation, 0.17). However, on the general issue there is no relationship; men and women do not differ in their preferences for modern vs. traditional sex roles (Pearson correlation, minus 0.04, n.s.).

Table 3 presents the results of the regression analyses. For both men and women the background variables have a sporadic effect. As for the political variables, individualism and party identification have little effect on issue preferences among both sexes while equality and liberal-conservative identification have substantial effects, with those favouring equality and liberalism tending to adopt pro-women positions. There are, however, some sex differences.

Turning to the impact of the group variables, the patterns vary among men, depending on the issue. On the three economic issues – government help, affirmative action and equal pay – sympathy for working women has a positive effect which is strongest on 'government help', the most general of the three issues. On the two other economic issues the effects of political sympathy are considerably weaker, perhaps because those issues evoke other symbols such as 'equality', which take precedence over political sympathy in determining men's issue preferences. In effect, among men equal pay and affirmative action for women seem to be issues decided more on the basis of equality and general

<sup>51</sup> Klein, *Gender Politics*, p. 107.

TABLE 3 *Regressions of background, political and group variables on issue preferences*

Independent variables	Issues			
	Government help		Affirmative action	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>I. Background</i>				
Education	-0.11 (-0.11) (0.10)	-0.07 (-0.06) (0.08)	-0.07 (-0.07) (0.10)	-0.03 (-0.03) (0.08)
Income	0.08 (0.08) (0.10)	0.07 (0.06) (0.08)	-0.04 (-0.05) (0.11)	0.06 (0.06) (0.09)
Social class	-0.20 (-0.21)** (0.09)	-0.18 (-0.19)** (0.08)	-0.13 (-0.15) (0.10)	-0.14 (-0.15)* (0.09)
Work status	-0.06 (-0.09) (0.15)	0.00 (0.00) (0.04)	0.04 (0.06) (0.17)	-0.04 (-0.03) (0.05)
Marital status	0.03 (0.02) (0.05)	-0.01 (-0.004) (0.04)	0.10 (0.07) (0.06)	-0.07 (-0.04) (0.05)
Race	0.13 (0.14)* (0.08)	0.07 (0.05) (0.06)	0.08 (0.09) (0.06)	-0.02 (-0.02) (0.06)
Age	0.10 (0.002) (0.02)	0.25 (0.004)** (0.001)	0.15 (0.003) (0.002)	0.26 (0.004) (0.001)
<i>II. Political</i>				
Party ID	0.03 (0.03) (0.07)	0.05 (0.04) (0.06)	0.18 (0.17)** (0.08)	-0.05 (-0.04) (0.06)
Liberal-Conservative ID	0.25 (0.36)** (0.12)	0.29 (0.42)** (0.10)	0.17 (0.26)* (0.13)	0.24 (0.36)* (0.11)
Individualism	0.11 (0.15) (0.10)	0.03 (0.03) (0.07)	0.13 (0.18) (0.12)	0.005 (0.006) (0.08)
Equality	0.34 (0.34)** (0.08)	0.15 (0.16)** (0.08)	0.38 (0.40)** (0.10)	0.32 (0.36)* (0.08)
<i>III. Group</i>				
Group identity (men only)	0.17 (0.16)** (0.07)	— —	0.13 (0.13) (0.09)	— —
Interdependence	-0.14 (-0.22)* (0.12)	0.30 (0.40)** (0.10)	0.02 (0.03) (0.14)	0.24 (0.34)* (0.11)
Sympathy	0.27 (0.57)** (0.17)	0.15 (0.24)** (0.12)	0.07 (0.15) (0.19)	0.14 (0.23)* (0.13)
$R^2$	0.50	0.40	0.37	0.37

Notes: \* = ( $p < 0.1$ )      \*\* = ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Unparenthesized entries are beta weights. Parenthesized entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Second line of parenthesized entries are standard errors.

Issues	Equal pay		Women's role	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
	-0.006 (-0.005)	0.003 (0.002)	0.20 (0.22)**	0.19 (0.22)**
	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.10)
	-0.09 (-0.09)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.04)	0.25 (0.29)**
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.12)
	0.02 (0.02)	-0.14 (-0.14)	-0.03 (-0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.11)
	-0.003 (-0.004)	-0.06 (-0.03)	-0.02 (-0.03)	0.19 (0.15)**
	(0.16)	(0.05)	(0.20)	(0.06)
	-0.007 (-0.004)	0.04 (0.02)	0.14 (0.09)	-0.23 (-0.15)**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.06)
	-0.03 (-0.03)	0.08 (0.05)	-0.02 (-0.02)	0.13 (0.12)
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.08)
	0.23 (0.004)*	0.13 (0.002)	-0.17 (-0.003)	-0.05 (-0.008)
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)
	0.02 (0.01)	-0.07 (-0.05)	0.07 (0.07)	0.10 (0.10)
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.08)
	0.28 (0.36)**	0.20 (0.29)**	0.12 (0.19)	-0.05 (-0.10)
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.14)
	0.12 (0.14)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.05 (-0.06)	0.01 (0.01)
	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.14)	(0.10)
	0.30* (0.27)**	0.11 (0.11)	0.15 (0.16)	-0.04 (-0.05)
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.10)
	0.09 (0.08)	—	-0.09 (-0.09)	—
	(0.08)	—	(0.10)	—
	-0.005 (-0.007)	0.24 (0.32)**	0.14 (0.25)	0.11 (0.19)
	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.16)	(0.13)
	0.14 (0.27)	0.13 (0.21)	0.04 (0.10)	0.21 (0.44)**
	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.22)	(0.16)
	0.26	0.19	0.18	0.34



liberalism than on political sympathy for working women. Nor, for that matter, does their own self-interest influence men's positions on the economic issues. On the general issues, sympathy for working women has little effect. At least for men, then, sympathy in the economic domain does not have an impact on more general issues. This makes sense given the process that underlies the development of sympathy for an outgroup. Remember that people are expected to make a quick assessment about the status of the group in the domain of the issue at hand. Thus, sympathy for outgroups should be domain-specific. In contrast, because the process differs for ingroups, we would expect sympathy to be more diffuse for groups with which respondents identify.

Among women the group variables have a more consistent effect across issues. Notably, political sympathy has a consistent, positive impact on issue positions. The effect tends to be stronger on the more general issues (government help and social roles), which contain few other competing cues. Similarly, a sense of self-interdependence with women has a consistently moderate, positive effect that is stronger on the economic issues than on the general one. While a strict interpretation of these results would suggest the influence of self-interest, one must remember that group consciousness stimulates a sense of interdependence between the individual and the group. Thus, for women the interpretation of the performance of the interdependence measure is necessarily ambiguous. Overall, then, women tend to perceive 'women's issues' in terms of their impact on women, particularly when the cues are clear-cut and not competing with other symbols. This is not to deny that women are influenced by other factors; nor that political sympathy dominates all other variables. But it does suggest that women, unlike men, maintain their focus on women even when other values such as equality are at stake. Clearly this is only to be expected: women who identify and sympathize with women have their own self-image on the line when considering 'women's issues'; men do not.

#### CONCLUSION

This article has outlined a cognitive-affective model of the role of social groups in political thinking. The model is based on the assumption that people have stored affective reactions and organized information about social groups which enters into political thinking in a purposive fashion. In particular, in thinking about social groups people consider what a group has obtained and whether it has been deserved. *When* social groups enter into political thinking depends upon the clarity and the salience of the group cues contained in the discussion of political issues. Because people react to both explicit and implicit group cues, social groups may influence political thinking quite frequently. The *process* that underlies the role of social groups in political thinking varies, depending upon whether the group is an ingroup or an outgroup. For ingroups, group identification and consciousness can help structure political thinking so that individuals are more likely to react to their own groups with political sympathy. This polit-

ical sympathy should have a consistent pro-group effect on political issues containing ingroup cues. In contrast, for outgroups, a number of factors interact to influence thinking in such a fashion that political sympathy is a less likely outcome. Even when people do feel sympathetic for an outgroup it is no guarantee that they will adopt pro-group issue positions. All this suggests that thinking about ingroups and outgroups differs considerably.

In general, our empirical examination of women's issues supports some of these ideas. Political sympathy for working women is somewhat greater among women, and has different roots among men and women. For women it is an outgrowth of group consciousness; for men it is triggered by an assessment of women's position in society. More importantly, political sympathy for women has a different impact on how men and women evaluate women's issues. For men, political sympathy is only occasionally a key determinant in their final assessment of an issue; generally, political values prove to be more important than sympathy in determining whether a man adopts a pro-woman position on an issue. In contrast, for women political sympathy and a sense of interdependence with other women play a consistent and significant, albeit not always dominant, role in how they evaluate women's issues. This, then, generally supports one of our key hypotheses: the way we think about social groups depends enormously on whether we are part of that group. Try as we might, the political sympathy that we feel for other groups is never quite the same as that which these groups feel for themselves or that which we feel for ourselves.

Finally, we turn briefly towards the future. The analysis presented here is suggestive, not definitive. Much work needs to be done before we fully understand the role of social groups in political thinking and behaviour. We must begin by developing measures that more closely correspond to the key concepts under study. And, we must compare how people think about a variety of groups on a wide array of issues. Ultimately, by exploring the role of social groups in political thinking, we may better understand how to stimulate pro-social attitudes and minimize intergroup hostility.

## APPENDIX

The data used in the analysis were collected as part of the 1984 Pilot Study for the National Election Study. The variable numbers for the various measures are listed below.

### *I. Background variables*

Education (V542), Income (V2354), Social Class (V732), Marital Status (V2332), Work Status (V2321), Race (V763), Age (V535) and Sex (V762).

### *II. Political variables*

Party Identification (V2203), Liberal–Conservative Identification (V393), Individualism (V2170, V2173, V2176, V2254 and V2258) and Equality (V2169, V2175, V2257).

*III. Group variables*

Affect (V2186, V2195, V2197, V2199). Discrimination (V3166, V3167, V3168), Identification – Women (V3111), Identification–Men (V3112), Interdependence – Women (V3113, V3114), Political Sympathy (V3176, V3177, V3178).

*IV. Issue variables*

Social Roles (V435), Government Help (V3185), Affirmative Action (V3187) and Equal Pay (V3189).