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Hellenic (Greek) Gender Attitudes

Using data from 1,120 residents of Athens, Greece, we used structural equation modeling to confirm the existence of three types of gender attitudes: (1) egalitarian housework attitudes, (2) acceptance of females in traditionally male occupations, and (3) acceptance of males in traditionally female occupations. There was more acceptance of females in traditionally male occupations than of males in traditionally female occupations. Consistent with previous research, there was a relatively strong relationship between gender and egalitarian attitudes. Compared to men, women were more accepting of females being employed in traditionally male occupations, of males being employed in traditionally female occupations, and of equality between husband and wife in performing household chores. Education and marital status had significant impacts on egalitarian housework attitudes but not on occupational gender attitudes.

During the past fifty years, attitudes about gender have become more egalitarian and there has been an increase in occupational opportunities for women (Caycedo, Wang, and Bahr, 1991; Kamerman and Kahn, 1978; Karakatsanis, 1999; Kyriazis, 1995; Marshall, Chadwick and Marshall, 1992; Thornton, 1989). Increasing numbers of women are earning college degrees and attaining prestigious positions in fields such as business, education, law, and the mass media (Blau and Ferber, 1995; Chowdhury and Trovato, 1994; Eurostat, 1999; Karakatsanis, 1999; Marcos, 1995; Mooney, Knox and Schacht, 2000; Moore, 1995; Patsalidis, 1996; Psacharopoulos, 1995; Roman, 1991).
As the egalitarian ethic has spread, there have been decreases in the gender imbalance that exists in some occupations. It has become acceptable for women to be employed in traditionally male occupations such as manager or judge, and for men to enter traditionally female occupations such as nurse and secretary. However, many of the traditionally female and male occupations remain largely the domain of only one gender. For example, in the United States in 1998, 71 percent of judges and 97 percent of pilots were males, while 93 percent of nurses and 98 percent of secretaries were females (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999: 424).

The movement toward gender equality is a complex process that is affected by a variety of social forces. Since much of the research on this topic has been conducted in the United States, systematic comparative work is essential to refine concepts and confirm findings (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, and Crouter, 2001; Ray and Korteweg, 1999). With these concerns in mind, the purpose of this article is to examine gender attitudes among a sample of Greek respondents. We have three objectives: First, we review some of the social changes that have occurred in gender attitudes and behaviors in Greece. This enables the reader to place the study within the broader social context. Second, based on existing theory and research, we identify three different types of gender attitudes and use structural equation modeling to confirm the existence of these dimensions. Third, we estimate the extent to which gender, education, age, and marital status predict these three gender attitudes among Greek respondents.

We chose to study Greece because of its unique social context and the fact that relatively little research has been done on Greek gender attitudes. Compared with other European countries, Greek residents exhibit higher attitudinal support for feminist goals but have lower levels of female education and labor force participation (Banaszak and Plutzer, 1993a). This finding is not consistent with other research showing that education and women’s labor force participation are positively associated with feminist attitudes (Banaszak and Plutzer, 1993a; Wilcox, 1991). The need to study Greece is highlighted by the fact that previous European research in this area has not included Greece (Banaszak and Plutzer, 1993b; Wilcox, 1991).

Global changes in gender attitudes are conditioned by the unique cultural patterns of each individual society (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). Therefore, it is important to study gender attitudes within specific social contexts (Banaszak and Plutzer, 1993a; Banaszak and Plutzer, 1993b; Crompton and Harris, 1997; Fox and Murray, 2001; Stroope, 2001). In order to place the current study within the appropriate social context, we begin by reviewing trends in Greek gender attitudes.