

Lee Ann Banaszak. *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. xv + 291 pp. \$65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-02640-4.



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Published on H-Pol (August, 1998)

In this volume, Lee Ann Banaszak, an associate professor of political science at Penn State, compares the suffrage movements of the United States and of Switzerland to figure out why American women won full enfranchisement seventy years before Swiss women. Banaszak asserts that scholars have neglected internal movement decisions as a focus of research on social movements in favor of theories of resource mobilization and political opportunity structure. Based upon her examination of archival sources and interviews with 62 Swiss suffragists, Banaszak contends that the disparate results require "theories focusing on collective beliefs and values" (p. 215) which explain suffragists' perceptions and tactics.

Banaszak succinctly recounts the history of the two movements which evolved in both countries over decades. The movement to improve women's status in Switzerland began in 1868, but Swiss women focused on the needs of women workers and on moral reform. The first organization to address women's rights exclusively appeared in 1893 and the first national woman suffrage organization in 1909. Even then, however,

Swiss women tended to emphasize issues other than the ballot for women, presuming that speaking more generally about women's situation would eventually lead to suffrage support. After several of Switzerland's neighbors acted to enfranchise women in the wake of World War I, one house of the Swiss Parliament briefly considered the question but no further action took place at the national level for forty years. Between 1910 and 1920, however, four cantons passed partial suffrage laws, permitting women to vote in church or school councils. During the Depression and World War II, Banaszak tells us, the suffrage issue virtually disappeared in Switzerland, even though more of its European neighbors took action to enfranchise women. In 1959, a national constitutional amendment was rejected by an "overwhelming majority" in all but three cantons (p. 17). After these three jurisdictions granted suffrage on the cantonal level, the Swiss suffrage movement expanded, but success came only with the appearance of a new feminist movement in the 1970s. In February 1971, 66 percent of the electorate approved a constitutional amendment granting national (but not cantonal) suffrage to

women. Women didn't receive full suffrage in all cantons until 1990. The experience of Swiss women thus differs substantially from that of American women, who won a federal guarantee in 1920 after more than half a century of activism. Each of Banaszak's summaries demonstrates an enviable conversancy with the available literature, and scholars looking for succinct precis will welcome these essays.

Banaszak uses statistical tools to test successive hypotheses to explain the difference in timing between Swiss and American suffrage. Possibilities she discounts include membership of suffrage organizations and money. More potent indicators of success are the extent of national organizing, efforts devoted to lobbying, the role of political parties, and the use of confrontational tactics. Her examination of the influence of each of these factors is carefully and intelligently conducted and contributes to the debate about the relative utility of demonstrations compared with insider politicking. As Banaszak explains, Swiss women declined to organize nationally, to recruit members, to target anti-suffrage legislators or parties, or to employ lobbying or confrontation, all tactics American women had employed to good effect.

Banaszak attributes this reticence to a variety of factors specific to Swiss culture. Among the most important were religious, political, and language differences, which divided activists and impeded the transmission of ideas and strategies among suffragists; Swiss commitment to localism, which both inhibited national action and prevented organizers moving from one canton to another; the remarkable stability of the Swiss political system, which easily rebuffed challenges from new outsider parties; and a strong preference for consensus-building rather than achieving goals by exercising political leverage. Such an environment created a social order unusually resistant to change. Banaszak observes that these factors also created a weak anti-suffrage movement. She

brings to all of these discussions extensive familiarity with local differences, and she offers ample documentation to support her contentions.

But Banaszak leaves some tantalizing international comparisons unexamined. For example, in her discussion of cultural variations, she emphasizes Swiss linguistic divisions (65 percent German; 20 percent French; 10 percent Italian). But she ignores an intriguing comparative pattern in religion: Protestant countries in general gave women the vote before 1920 (Finland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States); Catholic and Orthodox countries came around in the 1930s and 1940s (Spain, France, Italy, Belgium and Greece). We see this phenomenon most closely in Canada, which enfranchises women in 1917, except for French Catholic Quebec where women get the vote in 1940. By waiting until the 1970s to enfranchise most women and until 1990 to enfranchise all, Switzerland is an outlier by a significant margin.

Banaszak does discuss the impact of religion on the suffrage struggle but only within the pro-suffrage contingent, i.e., that Catholic suffragists were more traditional than Protestant suffragists. Banaszak cites the 1945 declaration by Pope Pius XII favoring women's political activity as a turning point for the Swiss Catholic Church, but she does not elucidate the influence of religious affiliation on the construction of pro-suffrage and anti-suffrage support outside the activist community. Given that she characterizes ten cantons as Catholic, religious influence within Switzerland bears scrutiny. When she explains that the French Protestant cantons grant suffrage first, she attributes that result to either "French culture" or socialist influence even after noting that in the one canton in which there was a strong French language component (60 percent) and a strong Catholic influence the suffrage movement was "tiny" (pp. 209-10). The one place where she refers specifically to religion as a possible deter-

mining factor is to deny it: the rural mountain half cantons of Appenzell Innerrhoden and Appenzell Ausserrhoden rejected suffrage until 1989-90, though one was predominantly Catholic and the other Protestant.

Banaszak might also have considered the role of suffrage and its meaning to Swiss women as compared with its meaning to American women. One of the points she does make is that local organizations have a great deal of influence over local life in Switzerland and women do play significant roles in those settings. Perhaps Swiss women failed to win the vote until 1971 (when a new generation of feminists mobilizes support) because the vote occupies a place in Swiss democracy different from its place in American political culture. It's tempting to conclude that Swiss women didn't mobilize early and employ successful strategies because they didn't very much care about the vote.

At bottom, Banaszak has a problem in comparing tactical successes and failures of movements when they function in historical milieus 50 years apart. How much emphasis can we place on specific strategies when we observe a worldwide Protestant consensus on woman suffrage after World War I and among Catholic countries by the end of World War II, with Switzerland part of neither? If Banaszak is correct in citing perception and tactics, her explanation would have more power if she had cast her comparison more broadly.

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Citation: Cynthia Harrison. Review of Banaszak, Lee Ann. *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage*. H-Pol, H-Net Reviews. August, 1998.

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