Women in the Montana Legislature 1941-1993

Laurie Jerin Zimorino

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Women in the Montana Legislature
1941-1993

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B.A., University of Montana, 1992
presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts
University of Montana
1995

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12 October 1995
A variety of national statistics indicate that women in state legislatures have distinct characteristics, many which have been attributed to their gender, which surface in their jobs as legislators. Because they are women, living in America, they have priorities and concerns which deal with traditional women's issues, such as family, reproduction, welfare, and health care, regardless of their class, ethnicity, or race.

An historical examination suggests that a "women's culture" exists in society which has become a basis for women's collective political activity. A study of Montana women legislators reveals they are representing women's culture by addressing the concerns and priorities which have arisen out of their roles as women. Detailing Montana women legislators committee memberships, committee requests, priority concerns, and types of bills authors indicates this.

This work is, additionally, an historical accounting of women who have served in the state legislature. A series of quotes from interviews with a number of former and current women legislators explains, in part, who these women are and why they chose to run for state legislator.
Acknowledgments

My esteemed thanks to Dr. Michael Jerin, Dr. Thomas Payne, Dee Garceau, and Pat Regan. Your assistance and contributions to this work has been invaluable to me.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my brother Mike, whose personal dedication to this project goes far beyond the requirements of "Big Brother".

My family, Bob and Hannah, I am grateful for your patience.
Thanks to Jill, Toby, and G.G., teachers, mentors, friends.
And lastly, thank you to the women legislators who offered me information, opinions, and encouragement.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

My thesis relates to women legislators in the Montana legislature. My intent was to determine if and how their participation has changed over the last 50 years. To determine change in participation I looked at the women legislators' committee memberships, leadership roles, and their perceptions of their duties as a representative of the public.

Secondly, I have been concerned with whether or not these women have been representatives of "women's culture". "Women's culture" is an important, albeit, much debated concept that has its roots in the historical study of 19th century American society. Historians point to evidence of close ties and relationships among middle class women of this century. They refer to this partially invisible, partially relative construction as "women's culture" because they have found there was a set of habits, values, practices, institutions, and way of seeing the world that was common to middle class women. The networks these women formed were the beginning point at which women in collective groups began to consciously react to their dissatisfaction with their social boundaries and they began to demand consideration of their own creativity and ideas in the shaping of society.

A more contemporary interpretation of the concept of women's culture and the one which I feel reflects my own work, is the concept of women's culture developed from the assumption, by society, of gender differences. Women, because of the limited range of behaviors society has assigned to them, have shared experiences that are distinctly unique from those of men. Women's collectivity is often based on this "shared experience".

Both of these interpretations of women's culture, however, tend to overlook the diversity among women. Neither view addresses the variations in women's experiences that arise out of class, race, and ethnic differences, for example. While differences certainly exist among women, there is also a commonality among them based on the fact that women, as a socially constructed group have certain shared interests which have
resulted from the socially acceptable norms for behavior.

In the 1992 election, Montana counted 440,000 registered voters on its rolls. Of this number, 407,000 voted in the state general election. Women claimed 214,000 of these votes while males voters numbered 193,000. This means that 53% of the population of Montana's voters in the 1992 election were women. Surprisingly, out of the 50 available state senate seats only eight were filled by women in 1992 (16% of the Montana Senate). Twenty-one women were elected to a representative seat out of one hundred available seats for a total of twenty-one percent of the House (Jennings 1993).

Historically, the reason given for this disproportionate number of men in elected positions was that women have more often chosen their roles as Mothers over a political career. However this trend changing (Chafe 1972; Lamson 1968; Whitney & Raynor 1976). Increased numbers of women are running for elected offices in Montana. In 1974 women candidates comprised 25% of all political races in Montana. That year Montanans sent a total of fourteen women to the state House and Senate for a total of nine percent of the membership. At that time this was a record number of females in the state legislature for any one session. Comparatively, in 1992 women candidates for office comprised 38% of the political races in Montana. Montanans voted to send twenty-nine women to the legislature that year for a total of 19% of the membership. This comparison indicates that not only are more women running for office, more women are getting elected.

Studies indicate that increased involvement of women in government means a change in the focus of policy-making (Thomas 1991, Carroll 1991, Cohen 1991). As the proportion of women at all levels of government participation increases, the focus of policy concerns will shift (Abzug 1984, Kirkpatrick 1974, Thomas 1994). This shift has been attributed to the fundamental differences in how women and men perceive society and their roles in society (Kirkpatrick 1974; Lindsey 1994). The difference between men and women in perspectives on political issues, for one, is measurable and has been maintained through centuries of differential socialization of the sexes (Epstein 1988).
Researchers who have measured male and female perception of
different issues refer to the differences between them, as "the gender
gap", (Abzug 1984). The emergence of this gap, although recently named,
can be traced through U.S. history and many argue that this marks the
impact of the differential socialization and concerns of the sexes. For
example, in polling a random selection of men and women on important
issues, Abzug (1984) found the following difference:

(1) Women approve of more "family issues".
75% of the women polled and 65% of the men polled
approved of a mandatory family leave policy.

(2) Women approve of more health care issues.
69% of the women polled and 50% of the men polled
approved of a National health care policy.

(3) Women are more concerned with the environment.
61% of the women polled and 53% of men polled
consider themselves concerned with the environment.

(4) Women are less militaristic.
54% of the women polled and 78% of the men polled
approved of military action in desert storm.

These differences suggest that as more women fill elected positions
the focus of policy-making will shift toward more 'human service' or 'human
welfare' related issues (United Nations Study 1992). Most importantly, more
women participating in all levels of the government implies that women will
have the opportunity to have equal representation in government. No
longer will women be constrained by laws which were made solely by men.
No longer will the concerns and issues that are important to women be
ignored or given low priority. As more women get involved in politics and
policy-making, change in policy focus is inevitable. Lindsey (1994) finds the
attitudes of women and men show that this 'gender gap' exists in a number
of areas including, but not limited to, women's rights issues such as the ERA
and abortion, defense spending, welfare policy, childcare issues, and
morality issues.
The results from the Allport/Vernon test, which tests for gender differences in values and interests, suggest that women get high scores more frequently in aesthetics, social and religions values; while men generally receive high score in politics, economics, and technology. Berit, a Norwegian psychologist, has compiled the results of similar studies in value orientation, achievement motivation, self-evaluation, and positions reached in society by the two sexes. Berit argues that this difference indicates women's culture exists and that as a culture, it has a set of "norms, values, perceptions of the world, and standards of female behavior which are passed from one generation to the next" (1975: p.144). However, there is no consensus among scholars as to why this culture developed and was accepted by females. Some of those who would disagree with the idea of 'separate spheres' would be Smith-Rosenberg (1975), Alcoff (1988), and Kelly (1979), among others. The explanation I base my thesis on argues that because of the extent of the acceptance of these "gender-role stereotypes", a distinct culture has been created that can be referred to as 'women's culture'. The emergence of this phenomenon was due to the acceptance of an ideology that developed in the 19th and 20th centuries in America among the broad middle-class. However, the hegemony of woman's accepted role as home-bound, moral caretakers suggests gender role stereotypes that developed out of this ideology cross class, race, and ethnic lines (Eisenstein 1983; Cott 1977; Berit 1975). The attitudes and practices which grew out of this ideology on acceptable gender roles have played a role in the socialization of almost everyone born in America over that last two centuries.

In the United States, a distinct women's culture developed among women based on their shared interests. Women, because they are female in a society which creates gender-role stereotypes for them, have shared interests which give them a common ground and can be a foundation for their collective action. Shared interests are created through women's common experience but, this is not to say that all women have the same experiences. Women's shared interests arise as a result of "their position in the sexual division of labor", even though the nature of women's
experience, which stems from the sexual division of labor, might differ across race, ethnicity, or class (Carroll, 1992: 26). The sexual division of labor in America, in part, developed out of the practice of differential socialization, which assigns and reinforces the appropriate behavior for gender roles.

**Women in Politics**

In studies more specific to my thesis, a group of male and female state legislators were asked to list their priority concerns as legislators. Male legislators listed the economy, the deficit, and dissatisfaction with the government as their priority concerns. On the other hand, women legislators listed unemployment, poverty, and education as their priority concerns (Abzug 1984; Center for the American Woman and Politics 1991). If this information is compared to Abzug's poll conducted with a random selection of men and women, it appears that male state legislators are failing to address the interests of half the population. This cannot be true of all male legislators. Even though women are voting these men into office, the men, by not addressing the health and welfare concerns of women, discount over half of the population. Because gender role stereotypes differ, men do not share the same sense of awareness women do concerning the importance of these issues.

Women legislators have brought women's priorities to the forefront of legislative policy. Because women's priority concerns have been those issues that come out of their experiences of being a woman in the United States, women legislators have been representatives of 'women's culture' by their consideration of issues which affect women. Therefore, to determine if Montana women legislators are representatives of women's culture, I looked at the priority these women legislators give to issues and concerns traditionally assigned to and shared by women.

Studies on women legislators, predominantly from the eastern United States, suggest that women legislators who are representatives of women's culture have shared interests which are reflected by their: (1) committee
membership, (2) the kinds of bills they author and, (3) the types of issues they list as their priority concerns (C.A.W.P. 1991, Thomas 1994, Carroll 1992).

The exact extent of the impact of gender in elected offices has yet to be thoroughly studied. The reason most frequently given for this is that there are too small numbers of women in offices. This lack of large numbers of women in elected positions should not be attributed solely to women and their particular characteristics of running for office at a later age, or of waiting until their children are well into adolescence to run for office, for example. Women lack 'networks' which offer support to candidates and donate money for campaigning. Enough data has been gathered on women who have been elected to offices to indicate that there is a distinct pattern to women's participation in government. Research suggests that there are particular issues where women representative's influence is felt more than others', for example, where social issues are concerned (Jennings and Thomas 1968)

Past research has generated statistics on female state legislators. Information has been analyzed that details where these women come from, who they are, as well as the way they do their jobs. My research shows that women in the Montana legislature have similar backgrounds to women legislators in the Eastern United States however, Montana women legislators have different perceptions of their duties in office and different perceptions of what issues they consider "women's issues". A review of Montana history will show that in order to settle the new western territory, women in the West, interpreted the ideology of domesticity (the dominant ideology in the East during this era) differently then their colleagues in the East, even though women in the West accepted the underlying values this ideology mandated. Women in the East were constrained by the ideas the ideology professed, thus they felt obstructed by the barriers to education, work opportunities and public life. Women in the West used the geographic conditions of the West to overcome these barriers and used the ideology as justification for domesticating the West. Having examined
Montana women's activities in the state house, my study indicates that the interpretation of the ideology is the fundamental difference between women legislators in the East and women legislators in Montana today.

I will first explain the methodology I employed for this study. In the next chapter I discuss the history of women's participation in politics and the history of gender role stereotyping. Chapter four presents the results of my research including the comparisons that were made between Montana women legislators and women legislators in Eastern United States. Additionally, the following chapter discusses the differences and similarities between women legislators from Eastern Montana and Western Montana. The concluding chapter represents my interpretation of the data results.
CHAPTER II
METHODOLOGY

In my research, I used a combination of methods to substantiate my theses. One method for determining legislators' priorities is to analyze the types of bills they introduce, the committees they are members of and those committees which they chair (Thomas 1991, Thomas and Welch 1991, Zink 1993, C.A.W.P. 1991). The issues that are of particular importance to the women legislators can be established by looking at the content analysis and types of bills introduced. Another way to discern what issues are of importance to women legislators would be to ask them what their priority concerns were for the session they served in, and/or what bill(s) they undertook as their priority concern. Zink (1993) examined women legislators in Oregon and discovered that their priorities were exposed by asking the women what they considered to be their accomplishments and failures during their legislative service.

My study includes all women who were elected to the Montana State Legislature from 1941-1993 (see Appendix I). Women in Montana have been serving in the State House for 77 years. Emma Ingalls and Maggie Smith Hathaway were the first two women to serve in the state legislature. They were elected in 1916, four years before the nation passed suffrage. Examination of a fifty year period of time will show that the representation of women's culture by women legislators in Montana is also an historic phenomenon. Additionally, a fifty year time span should indicate any changes in the quality and quantity of women's legislative service.

I collected information that asked women legislators in Montana to outline their prior political experience and other personal information such as marital status and children's ages when the legislator was first elected. I compared the data from my questionnaire to similar information from women legislators nationally collected by others (C.A.W.P. 1973, 1976, 1991). This comparison shows Montana women legislators have similar backgrounds to Eastern women legislators.
The central question of my thesis addresses is whether or not women in the Montana state legislature are representatives of women's culture. To determine this I asked questions about Montana women legislators' and former legislators' priority issues to see if they are issues which have traditionally been the concern of women. I considered their committee membership, and determined what bills were priorities to the women.

I asked Montana women legislators to rank a set of issues in order of their importance to them in the last legislative session in which they served. The results indicate the issues women legislators in Montana might have considered their priority concerns. The results from this, together with the data on the woman legislators' committee membership and kinds of bills they authored, confirms my hypothesis that Montana women legislators are representatives of women's culture by their attention and priority to issues traditionally considered "women's issues".

I examined the committee memberships and the content of bills authored by Montana women legislators over a fifty year time span. I found by comparing women's participation from 1940 through 1993 a pattern of change emerged. Additionally, by looking at the number and contents of bills which were introduced during 1940-1993 it is apparent that as more women have been elected to the Montana legislature more bills have been introduced which relate to women and the kinds of issues women are traditionally concerned with.

I compared the backgrounds and views of the women who served in the state legislature from eastern Montana and the women who have represented western Montana. Since the two halves of the State are very different from each other, I expected that the women who have been elected from these areas would have discernible differences. There were some slight differences in age when elected, occupation, previous political experiences, for example. Particular differences emerged when the women legislators described their perceptions of their duties in the legislature, their relationships with other women legislators, and their views on women's priorities.
I began my project by compiling data from archival research at the University of Montana Mansfield Library and the Montana State Historical Archives in Great Falls, and Helena. Thirteen of the 95 women who served from 1941 to 1993 were deceased.

I then conducted extensive research into current studies on women and politics in general, and women in the State House specifically. Based on this information I developed a twenty-four question questionnaire to be mailed (see Appendix II). The questions I asked provided information on the women legislators' background, their priorities and their views on women in the legislature based on their own personal experience. I mailed the questionnaire to 82 women legislators. I included a cover letter to each women legislator introducing myself and explaining the scope of my project. I also included a postcard which the women could return if they chose not to participate. After two months time had passed, I had received answers back from about twenty-five percent of the women. I mailed a postcard reminder out to all those who had not replied. I received several more replies, bringing my percentage of replies received to 50%.

Six legislators chose not to participate. Four of these six gave me no reason why they would not be involved. One woman said that she had health problems which constrained her from replying. The sister of one of the women wrote to tell me that her sister was experiencing failing health and could not reply. Several legislators told me that one reason why I may not have received replies was because the legislators routinely receive a large number of surveys and questionnaires and can not respond to all of the requests.

After receiving the questionnaires back, I arranged interviews with a random selection of 25 women legislators who had returned my questionnaire. They were from legislative districts all over the state. They appeared to have varying backgrounds, interests, and opinions. I was interested in observing what similarities or differences they among them.

In interviewing each woman, I asked the same ten questions (see Appendix III). The interviews lasted from thirty minutes to three and a half hours. In all of the interviews more than the original ten questions were
discussed. Most of the women felt comfortable sharing and spoke at great length about their experience in the State House.

After completing the interviews I sent out another questionnaire to elicit a response from those who had yet to answered. I modified the original questionnaire by adding seven more questions (see Appendix IV) in an attempt to recover some more of the data that I had collected through interviews. In the end, I received 45 completed questionnaires, nineteen women state legislators did not reply at all, fifteen were unreachable despite all my efforts to locate them. (N.B. Since completing my research, I have been involved with a State Senate Subcommittee putting together an historical compilation of Montana women legislators. The 15 women that I could not reach have since been located.)

The data gathered by other researchers provided a model to compare Montana women state legislators (C.A.W.P. 1973, 1976, 1991; Thomas 1991, Thomas and Welch 1991, Carroll 1991, 1992; Githens and Prestage 1977, Mueller 1983, Whitney and Raynor 1986, Kirkpatrick 1974, Bonepart 1984, Abzug 1984). Many of the questions in my questionnaire were designed to collect information similar to the previously mentioned studies. I used this information to quantify and place Montana women legislators within the national model. It was necessary to my study to determine the women legislators' priority concerns in the legislature. In the mail questionnaire, the legislators were asked what their priority bills were during their terms in office. They were asked about their perceptions of women in the legislature, if they had good relationships with other women legislators, and if they ever had worked with the other women legislators to pass or defeat legislation. If they answered yes to the last question, they were asked what the legislation was that they had worked on with other women. Answers from these legislators indicated overall, women in the Montana State Legislature have felt a commonality of their interests which has served as a basis for their political action.

The interview portion of my study was beneficial to me in numerous ways. First, it gave me a taste of what it is like to be in the "field". My travels took me to the far southeast corner of Montana to the far northwest corner and many points in between, for a total of 3000 miles. The face to
face conversations with the legislators were highly informative and enlightening. I had already built up a set of expectations about the women after reading their questionnaire answers. Some of my preconceived ideas were invalidated while others remained questionable after meeting and talking with these women. Talking with the women, usually in a quiet, comfortable setting of their choosing, provided opportunity to ask for and receive detailed information about their treatment, perceptions, opinions, problems, and achievements in the legislature.
CHAPTER III
AN HISTORICAL APPROACH TO "WOMEN'S CULTURE"

In order to determine if women legislators in Montana are representatives of women's culture, it is necessary to first establish how and why women's culture exists. A general claim is that the development of 'women's culture' can be traced through history by examining the ideology of domesticity. This ideology developed out of a two-sphere society in the late 18th century and propagated a set of values and rules of behavior for women that was different than the one prescribed to men (Farganis 1986, Kerber 1988, Freedman 1979, Schlissel et al 1988).

Through a process of gender role stereotyping males and females are taught distinctly different roles. From birth children are trained to display and diffuse prescribed expectations, attributes, and behaviors. Society in the 18th century America helped to create an 'ideology of gender roles' which promoted a set of rigid criteria to define each gender's role and justified the idea of 'separate spheres'. These separate spheres, public and private, relegated women to the home and gave men power and authority through their occupation of the "public" sphere. This separation established the norm for an acceptable range of women's behavior. In the 18th century, fear of being considered as abnormal, undesirable, and in the worst case, insane kept most women from straying from their roles and the behavior expected of them (Cott 1977, 1987).

Ideology of Domesticity

When European settlers first came to America, production of goods was performed solely in the home by all family members. Both genders engaged in the production of goods with a certain amount of equality and interdependence. In the late 1700s the established colonies experienced a period of rapid, intense economic growth. During this period of time and up until the early 1800s, improved agricultural technology led to increased production which led to surplus goods. Consequently, urban centers appeared reducing transportation costs on goods through the formation of central distribution sites. Specialized production became the standard
and home production declined. The advent of capitalism in America led to continued growth in commerce and industry. Social stratification by wealth developed and the split between men and women's labor became more perceptible (Freedman 1979, Cott 1977). As production in the home declined, women's labor was associated more and more with childcare and the home, while men continued to work outside of the home. The association of women's labor with the home (private sphere) and men's labor with the outside world (public sphere) consummated the idea of separate spheres based on gender. The idea of separate spheres formed the basis for the ideology that developed and regulated the behavior of the genders (Kelly 1979).

The advent of the Industrial Revolution broadened the distinction between the two spheres. Pre-industrial production moved out of the home and into the public sphere, reducing women's participation. As industrialism increased individual wealth increased, men became the sole support of their families and women became limited to homemakers. Since women were not paid for housework they performed in their own homes, they were incorrectly viewed as having a leisurely lifestyle. This led to the association of women with the concepts accompanying the European ideal of the upper-class "lady".

One of the foundations of European 19th century society was the ideal of "true womanhood". The belief was that upper-class European women in their leisure time, could learn the niceties that would enable them to beautify and improve their homes. Four fundamental values were established based on this ideal by which women were judged and expected to base their behavior. These values assigned to women were piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter 1966). These values were reinforced through sermons and popular literature which explained and justified women's role. Women endured profound social conditioning into this role of "true woman". True womanhood of 19th century America was accepted and widely practiced by a broad middle-class. The primary duty of women's roles as wives and mothers was to nurture her family through her example of religiosity and morality. It was perceived that
women had an 'innate' ability to dispense goodness therefore, women were assigned the roles of 'moral caretakers' (Blair 1980, Deutchman 1991, Clark 1984). The ideology of domesticity proclaimed that home was the place where women's natural moral qualities could be used to educate her children and raise the quality of her family's life (Schlissel, Ruiz, and Monk 1988, Welter 1966, Griswold 1988, Delamont and Duffin 1978). The expectation was that the values that one learned in the home, values taught by women, would diminish the immorality in the rest of society.

Additionally, 19th century American society absorbed and modified the ideas Charles Darwin proposed in his 1859 Origin of the Species, particularly Herbert Spencer. Americans embraced Spencer's interpretation of these principles of natural science that in the struggle for existence, "the fittest would survive" also known as "Social Darwinism". American society labored to achieve the qualities that Spencer felt important, particularly success. The concepts that influenced and affected American society can be seen in Sinclair Lewis' Main Street (1920) and Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie (1900). In these novels the fittest in social terms were those with the most money and therefore considered the most successful in the struggle for survival. Family and society were considered natural opposites and as inhabitants of public (society) and private (home) so it was believed that men and women also had natural temperaments which best suited each gender for its role in the new 'industrial capitalism' (Sacks 1979). The accepted view was that women's natural temperament (of nurturance and mothering) reinforced her limited role as mother, wife, and homemaker. The roles assigned to females, in effect, determined who a woman was (Eisenstein 1983). Men, on the other hand, were given roles extending beyond the home. Males roles associated them with what was public, the work place.

The social and economic changes accompanying industrialization influenced changes in the family structure, function, and values and particularly, influenced the changes in women's roles and the behavior expected of them (Cott 1977, Cott and Pleck 1979, Sacks 1979, Kerber
1988, Chafetz 1978, Degler 1964, Baron 1987). As women became increasingly associated with home, it became easier to justify women's exclusion from the public sphere.

Women's identities of daughter, wife, caregiver, childbearer, and moral guardian, however, traveled far beyond the middle-class (Freedman 1979). The immigrant and poor women for whom work outside of the home was a necessity also accepted these roles. Because industrialism replaced their labor in the home, it was necessary for these women to replace their diminished labor with a cash income. By working outside the home for the betterment her family this class of women grasped one of the main tenets of the ideology of domesticity. The ideology of domesticity reinforced and was reinforced by the dominance of separate spheres. Because this ideology was so enthusiastically grasped by American society, women were relegated to the private sphere of home while men's claim on the public sphere, and therefore, on economic and political power, increased.

The ideology of domesticity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shaped the process of differential gender socialization by setting and reinforcing one set of criteria for male behavior and different one for female behavior setting up a process of gender role stereotyping. This accepted and far-reaching ideology justified women's exclusion from the public domain because it was considered immoral and evil while home was pure, clean, safe. The ideology limited women's opportunities. Women were discouraged from participating in activities outside the home unless the activities were somehow linked to the accepted behaviors expected of women at the time, such as attending church or prayer meetings.

Historically, this ideology suppressed women's access to education and politics because it assumed that women's temperament didn't allow for it. Additionally, a woman had to venture into the "evil" public domain to participate in politics or education. That was simply not done by 'respectable, moral creatures'. The ideology suppressed women's access to economic participation because women's work was done in the home and failed to produce cash wages (Oakley, 1974). Other feminist theorists
(Smith-Rosenberg 1975, Alcoff 1988, Kelly 1979, Rosaldo 1980, Anderson 1981, Epstein 1988) believe that public and private spheres were more integrated and interdependent than previously considered, and they point out that the economic role of the family has been ignored. This may be true but, their explanations do not deny that long-term gender role stereotyping has led women in their selection of their role. The idea of separate spheres has been central to understanding the sociology of the Victorian Age. It was assumed that women's place was in the home and a whole society accepted it (Rosaldo 1980).

Gender role stereotypes affect the way each sex is socialized and prescribes different roles, values, and behaviors to women. This socially conditioned distinction between the genders accounts for women having experiences that are different and unique from men's (Cott 1977; Cott and Pleck 1979; Epstein 1981; Brown 1958; Schlissel et al 1988; Wandersee 1981). The ideology of domesticity delegated the roles of mother, nurturer, caregiver, housekeeper, and wife to women and these are the roles in which women have based their experience and continue to have a major importance in how women perceive their worlds. The opportunity for shared experiences among women creates a commonality among women which developed into a distinct women's culture.

A distinctive women's culture based on shared experiences of women, existed during the 19th century. Because of her ties to the home women were victims of shrinking opportunities in the land of milk and honey. The democratic ideology pervading America failed to include one half of the country's population (Lerner 1977). Essays, sermons, novels, poems, plays, and manuals dispensed advice to women on marriage, family life, child-rearing, and the appropriate ways to spend leisure time. Confinement to the home made for a lonely existence. Often because there was no doctors available, women assisted one another in sickness and in childbirth. They comforted one another in death and cheered each other's accomplishments. They looked after one another's children. The informal support networks they built together helped them deal with the
oppression of domestic life. Women eventually moved these networks into the public view where they would affect changes in their communities (Smith-Rosenberg 1975, Freedman 1978).

Some of the first organizations women created were volunteer societies for Christian Reform. Women's involvement with the church was already accepted and vigorously encouraged. Churchwomen first justified their move out into the public by providing charity, morality, and assistance based on social welfare; they wanted to help the poor, clothe the naked, feed the hungry and cure the ill. Eventually women defended their movement into the public eye as necessary to the maintenance of the home. One of the first public movements women joined was the Abolition Movement. Although in the beginning Abolition did not advocate equal rights for all, because so many women supported the movement, it later added a plank to its platform which expressed a need for women's suffrage. By 1857, the Abolitionists dropped this proposal from their agenda because it bogged down the proposals concerning slavery.

The need for reform in the public sphere bound women together to battle a common cause. Women could use their nurturing talents to improve the quality of life within their community and thus improve and preserve family morality. Women started banding together into small organizations or "clubs". At first the clubs were based on needs that would directly benefit women such as education and labor opportunities. As women got comfortable in their new, public roles, the objectives changed; women began forming clubs for "self-improvement". Clubs instructed women in public speaking and gave them opportunities to do so. More and more women's clubs branched out into the cultural domain.

Women associating with one another led to the recognition of the inequities which had long kept them confined to the home and limited their opportunities. As these inequalities became more apparent and the women's overall perception of their oppression increased, they began using clubs to strike small but important victories in the overall fight for women's rights. In Buffalo, New York a women's club opened a gymnasium for women. The first of its kind, club members demanded that women have the same right to a strong and sound body as a man. This club had
other victories, women were placed in police stations as matrons to deal with female law breakers; the club also demanded and received enforcement of alimony payments to divorced women (Blair 1980).

Collectivity among the women created a feeling of sisterhood which inspired women to recognize and address the grievances against their sex. Sisterhood encouraged women's self-esteem and supported her efforts to move into political activity. The creation of a separate, public female sphere helped draw women together to produce the political power they needed in the male dominated society (Smith-Rosenberg 1975, Freedman 1978).

Some who have studied women say that women have traditionally had social issues as their priority concern because these were issues which most affected them and their families (Stock-Morton 1991, Cott 1977, Blair 1980, Kirkpatrick 1974). Since the early 19th century women have had an obscure influence on what happens in the election booth and on the congressional floors. Women have uniformly used their nurturing talents to influence the world outside the home (Rossi 1973, Blair 1980). Women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought changes to education, health, and welfare through collective reform. Women pushed to create labor laws to protect children and women as well as created unions to protect working women. Their reform work was continually based on sustaining traditional family values which the ideology of domesticity entrusted to women to instill into society. Women struggled to bring reforms in their communities because the reforms would ultimately enhance their homes. Under the guise of "municipal housekeeping" women were effecting change in the public institutions that affected their private domains - their homes (Blair 1980, Cott 1977). Women who went out in public gained acceptance because their special moral qualities were used to justify their public work. Women strongly believed that they had to protect the moral sanctity of the home they had made or else the turpitude of the community would destroy it. The saving grace of the American family as it was know then, was tied to women moving out of their homes and into the public eye to protect the community through reform.
Domesticity Settles in the West

Throughout the 19th century, the ideology of domesticity was encompassed and refined by the American society, which was largely settled in the eastern United States (east of the Mississippi). Eastern society embraced this ideology which assigned women the role of home-bound, moral caretakers whose primary responsibility was caring for her family. As populations moved West, this eastern-bred philosophy would accompany them into a country abounding in hardships - hardly a 'gentle, moral place' (Brown 1958). The migration West coincided with the acceptance of the ideology of domesticity. The tenets of the ideology became part of the cultural baggage the women carried with them. Those traveling West grasped the ideal that taking care of their family was a woman's primary job.

In part, men and women traveling west accepted this ideology because it provided them with ties to the past; it offered a way for the women to 'connect' their new environment to their old, established roots. Life in the new land was so unpredictable and the hardships so great, the ideology of domesticity gave women a familiar and established way to explain their attitudes and outlooks (Griswold 1988, Schlissel, Ruiz, and Monk 1988, Campbell 1978, Jensen 1993, Larson 1974, Riley 1980).

By referring to the ideology of domesticity, women could explain their actions, behaviors, and their presence in the West. Since settlement and community-building was a goal of those who moved to the west, the presence and acceptance of women was a necessity. By referring to the values associated with the ideology, the general blurring of gender roles was justified. Although work was divided by gender lines, women could and often did plow, chop wood, and hunt for food for dinner; just as men could and often did cook, sew, and help birth babies. Both men and women in the West understood the labor of each other's work and respected one another for it (Jameson 1984). The diversity of hardships in the West certainly provided opportunities for gender roles to overlap and become hard to distinguish. Therefore, the ideology of domesticity continued to thrive in the West, in a variation, because it legitimizd women's efforts to civilize the West. Women would "civilize the West" in the
respect that they wanted to create schools, churches, and other associations that would help them to secure a familiar social order in which their families could grow (Jameson 1984, Larson 1974, Riley 1980).

Comparing the acceptance of suffrage in the West to the East shows another the differences in how the two regions interpreted the ideology of domesticity. Suffrage in the West was accepted 50 years before it was passed in the East. Wyoming passed suffrage in 1869, Montana in 1914. Montana elected a woman to Congress (Jeanette Rankin) in 1916, four years before the eastern women won suffrage in 1920. By 1914, women could legally vote for elected officials in Wyoming, Montana, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, California, Arizona, Utah and Kansas. Whether early suffrage in the West was a statement about the precepts of democracy or was it merely a reward for the women who came out to the west and persevered so many hardships is arguable (Jensen 1993). Some historians point to a scarcity of women as the reason suffrage was attained on the frontier before it was in the East or that the scarcity of women in the West would attract more women from the East to move west (Larson 1974; Brown 1958).

Why, then, was suffrage not adopted as easily in the East? One explanation proposes that there was a group of women, largely situated in the East, who opposed suffrage, the "Antis". These women were staunch adherents to the cultural norm of the ideal lady, and therefore, they were vehemently opposed to women's suffrage because, they believed, it would make women 'unfeminine' or 'undomestic'. They were active in society and had garnered public support for their beliefs. The East also experienced problems that the west did not have to contend with. For example, in the East, the political structure was already well entrenched in the culture. Concurrently, Easterners were aware of what changes women's voice in public matters would bring to them, having gotten a taste of this with the Women's clubs and the reforms they struggled to enact (Matsuda 1985). The historic achievements women have made in society by extending their nurturing skills and morality beyond the home to improve community life have literally been ignored when viewed against a backdrop of male political participation.
Others contend that despite the hardships, the West offered opportunities to women that were not available to them in the East. Women in the West could own their own land. Western communities compared to Eastern establishments were more welcoming to women professionals (Matsuda 1985, Riley 1980). In fact, in 1890, fourteen percent of the female population were doctors, lawyers, teachers, musicians, and surgeons. The high numbers of professional women in the West and an early appreciation of co-education implies that Western women were less prone to accepting the traditional viewpoints of society (Campbell 1978). Education influenced Western women to be more open to change and less rigid in their grasp of current ideology than their counterparts in the East.

A general concern about the rowdiness of the frontier helped suffrage's acceptance in the West. Many citizens in western towns believed that letting women into politics would soothe the harshness and chaos of the new territory. By allowing women the vote, women would help establish civilized communities. Because women were symbols of the home and civilization, they were expected to make Western communities inhabitable (Hill 1981). Giving women the vote, put some strength behind women's efforts to accomplish this task. In the East, the 'Antis' kept the objectives of "true womanhood" going strong reinforcing the dominance of the ideology. Suffrage did not find as firm support in the East as it had in the West.

**Gender Role Stereotypes in America**

Because of women's experiences as mothers and wives and their socialization since birth toward these roles, analysts suggest that women are interested in the issues related to those experiences (Farganis 1978, C.A.W.P. 1973, 1991, Cott 1987). This view proposes that women are concerned with issues that reflect the social roles assigned to them as women. Given their roles as mothers and housekeepers these issues include childcare, education, reproductive choice, health, care for the elderly, and human welfare. This view does not propose that all women necessarily concern themselves solely to these issues. However gender
gap research has shown that even in other issues such as military defense and foreign policy, the majority of women questioned have a distinctly different view than do men (Abzug 1984). The rationale held is that women's experiences afford them a view on other related issues such as financial management and peace which differs from the men's views. This research is based on the long-term effects of gender role stereotyping.

The sociologist, Ruth Hartley (1966) identified several processes which characterize differential gender socialization. Although, this research is outdated, I think it is advantageous to look at the processes she defines to understand the impact of gender role stereotyping. These "gender stereotypes" create expectations for the different sexes that influence their behavior.

The first process she called "manipulation": in this process adults tend to worry and to fuss more about a girl's appearance than a boy's. Girl's are excluded from many activities because parents fear she might soil or tear her clothes, while boys are usually not given these restrictions. Boys' disheveled appearance is accepted. The next process is "verbal appellation": this is reinforcement such as "you're such a pretty girl, little lady, prissy little thing", as if these comments are goals for the child to achieve. The last two processes Hartley describes are "canalization" and "activity exposure", which compliment one another. Canalization is when a child's attention is directed to particular objects. Girls are encouraged to play with dolls while boys are encouraged to play with trucks and guns. Commercials on television show boys having fun with these kinds of toys, rarely are girls pictured as enjoying these toys. In activity exposure, children are encouraged to participate in the traditional gender related tasks. Helping momma do the dishes, make the beds, or do laundry are tasks which young girls are encouraged to do. Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged make repairs, mow the lawn, and barbecue. However, gender differences and gender role stereo types are not immutable. Because this process of socialization continues over a life time, the sexes can and do adapted to changing gender role expectations (Russo 1987).

The history of the ideology of domesticity has shown that because gender role stereotypes, women do share common experiences. These
shared experiences have led women to common values, perspectives and patterns of interaction. My thesis will demonstrate that this commonality based on shared experiences serves as a basis for collective political action by women elected to the Montana legislature.

**Gender Stereotyping Through the 20th Century**

Traditional issues assigned to women by the ideology of domesticity and the process by which women assert their views in society can be traced through history. Allen (1947) in her study of women's participation in government in the 1940s, provides several examples of instances of women collectively pursuing issues which have traditionally been assigned to the women's sphere. Allen's research demonstrates that women collectively pushed for reforms which would improve their lives and/or their families' lives. For example, in Illinois, women joined together in the League of Women Voters (L.W.V.) and they got legislation passed that limited the number of hours women could be made to work in a factory. The L.W.V. in Colorado and Missouri pushed for legislation which would make milk safer for consumption and standardize milk production codes. Because of these women's efforts a new and modern milk code as passed. In Ohio, women activists were successful in getting a law passed which defined the state school attendance requirements. This was a first of its kind legislation.

Allen (1947) lists several other reforms that women were able to get passed by working as a collective. Nearly all of Allen's examples show that women in the late 1940s were still primarily interested in those issues that they had been socialized to be interested in.

The range of appropriate female behavior in the 1940s can also be seen in examples of the popular culture during this time. Comic strips featuring Blondie and Winnie Winkel instructed women how to cope with home-front dilemmas. Partially because the country's defense was dependent on women's efforts movies encouraged the continuation of their military participation. "Mrs. Miniver" showed homemakers that her efforts (working in factories) would help safeguard the country and contribute to her family's welfare. Periodicals during this time (Redbook,
Family Circle, and Women's Day, for example) ran countless articles that emphasized women's new public roles while still enforcing the traditional importance of being "a lady" (Hartmann 1982).

Although WWII provided a temporary respite from established ideas about women's roles, the traditional beliefs about women's association with the family endured. Women took jobs so men could go to war. Women working outside of the home during this time period were viewed as a reflection of the woman's commitment to family values as well as to her country. Her pay check, in lieu of her husband's absence, paid for the home and fed and clothed the kids. The relationship between the women's job and her home was established by the fact that women were working to sustain the family. Women working outside of the home were following the dogma of the ideology of domesticity because a woman working outside of the home meant survival of the family.

Society accepted women in the work place as long as their new role did not pose a threat to traditional beliefs about gender role division (Anderson 1981; Wandersee 1981). Factory managers rewrote job descriptions to accommodate women's entrance into the work force. What was once airplane manufacturing now became akin to dressmaking; ordering parts was compared to shopping. By likening women's work in factories to the chores she performed in the home, American society could justify the entrance of women into the public workforce.

Women returned to their homes after the war, encouraged to leave their jobs at the factories to the men returning home from war. The 1950s saw a return to the traditional values associated with the home and family life and femininity (Anderson 1981). The government instigated a campaign to put women back into the home. There were television commercials that literally said, "Women, go home. Returning veterans needed the job". The campaign was aimed at women to quit their jobs and factory owners to fire women. Women wondered why they should go home. After experiencing work outside the home, women wondered what was at home that she could identify with (Van de Wettering 1992). Women began to publicly articulate their dissatisfaction with traditional roles that kept women at home, effectively limiting her opportunities outside of the home.
In 1963, the appearance of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, became the pinnacle of the articulation of this dissatisfaction. Women were bored and dissatisfied with their lives at home. Friedan's book publicized this dissatisfaction and the ensuing controversy set the stage for feminism and the struggle for equal rights for women. The book led to the formalization of these dissatisfied women into small groups. The Position of Men and Women in Primitive Societies by E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1965) indicated that women in primitive African societies are happier when they are excluded from major roles in society. His views supported the traditional belief that baby makers could not be decision makers. Popular culture in the early 1960s reinforced this message through television shows like "Ozzie & Harriet", "Leave it to Beaver" and "I Love Lucy". These shows depicted women as homemakers and men as decision makers.

The civil rights movement, the advent of America into the Vietnam war, and the capacity of America's youth to question authority radically changed women's traditional roles. Just as women joined the radical abolition movement in the 1840s, women joined the radical civil rights movement of the 1960s. Women in the abolition movement attempted to turn the movement into a struggle for all people's rights and not just slaves' rights. Similarly, women in the 1960s sought to address the inequalities of women in the movements they joined. However women's voices, in neither movement were heard or they were ignored. Women had to form their own organizations to address equal rights for women. "The men in those movements against oppression still retained sex oppressive structures and behaviors" (Kelly, 1979: 219).

Despite shifts in economic and political ideologies, women today are still relegated to roles of homemakers and caregivers (Oakley 1974). Even though a woman may hold a job which contributes equally to household income, social ideology still deems that women are primarily responsible for the home and children. Popular culture has been slow to change and still depicts the appropriate range of behavior (Barker 1988, Hartmann 1982, Welter 1966, Cott 1977). Popular culture reflects the public view of appropriate and expected behavior for gender roles.

Magazines, today, still offer advice based on the traditional roles of
women (Barker, 1988). Redbook, Woman's Day, and Family Circle are still among the most popular magazines women read. Articles on home decorating, meal planning, child rearing, and sex only serve to perpetuate the myth that "woman's place is in the home" and that her primary job is to take care of her families' needs. Even though it is now widely accepted that mothers will work outside of the family home, many articles still suggest that women's primary responsibility is to the home and family. Articles entitled "Do Working Mothers Cheat Their Kids" attest to this. A glance at the table of contents of the magazine, Working Mother, lists recipes for working women to fix in "an instant", advises women how to get their spouse to do more around the house, and counsels working woman on how to handle their child's behavior problems which occur because working mothers take business trips and work late at the office (July 1994).

Today's talk shows regularly focus on the changes that occur as more women enter the workforce. On February 7, 1995 on an episode of "Ricki Lake", the topic was "Working Mothers: Are They Ruining Our Lives?". Again, popular culture serves to enforce women to behave within the traditionally acceptable norms.

Even though America has experienced drastic changes in other ideologies (such as the political and economic ideologies), gender role stereotypes have stayed pretty much the same and the channels by which women gain political and economic power are shaped and often limited by their association with the domestic world (Chafetz 1978 and Rosaldo 1974). Women are still expected to devote their lives to their families and homes.
CHAPTER IV
CHARACTERIZING WOMEN LEGISLATORS

Women's relative lack of participation in government has limited studies on their impact on politics and policy. Nevertheless enough data has been collected on women in state legislatures to develop a profile of them. Research has been concentrated on women East of the Mississippi or in states with large urban populations such as California. The following text describes the characteristics of women state legislators in the eastern states. A comparison of Montana women legislators will show that they fit this pattern in most respects.

Education

Research shows that women state legislators are better educated than the general population. For example, the C.A.W.P. (1976) survey found that 64% of the women state legislators polled had a college degree, had earned graduate credit, a Ph.D. or the equivalent. The pursuit of higher education requires a large amount of personal commitment and drive. A woman legislator who has earned a college degree could be perceived as ambitious, professional, and a person who finishes what she starts (Kirkpatrick 1974), admirable qualities in a legislative candidate.

It appears that Montana women legislators, overall, have much the same or greater educational experience than Eastern women legislators (Table 1). Ninety-two percent of Montana women legislators have a college degree or have attended college from one to three years, compared to 88% of the Eastern women legislators. Montana women legislators also have a higher percentage of college graduates with thirty percent of the women polled having a college degree compared to twenty-four percent of Eastern women legislators. Higher education indicates that Montana women legislators demonstrate a strong sense of commitment to education and personal enrichment.

In my interviews, I asked the women legislators if they thought their educational background was important for them to get elected. The majority seem to feel it did help them in some way. Montana women
legislators who were asked how helpful they thought their educational experience was during their service replied that being well educated was probably helpful during their service, but that in the Montana legislature, there are numerous avenues to seek information on any subject a legislator might be unfamiliar with. Even if a woman legislator does not have a college degree, other avenues are available to seek answers to their questions. Lobbyists, Legislative Council and library, members of your party, committee, or one's seatmate can supply enough background information to any of the legislators. Someone is available who can give them enough information to give the legislator the same opportunity to make an educated decision as any one else.

Lobbyists are absolutely invaluable. Whether you believe in their position or not, its your greatest source of information (H014)

I think that's one thing you find. You find people that tell you the necessary things that you need to know (S009)

One of the women legislators mentioned how helpful everyone in the State house was, from staff members to the lobbyists. She compared her relationships to others as "one big family" (S009). Ten women legislators also felt a familial relationship with their colleagues and fondly remember the lifelong friendships they made in the legislature.
Table 1.
A Comparison of Education Levels of Women State Legislators: Eastern U.S. vs. Montana Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>highest level attained</th>
<th>N=503</th>
<th>N=95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. less than H.S. diploma</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Some college</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. College Graduate</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Some grad work-M.A. or equivalent</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ph.D. or equivalent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Unknown</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources: C.A.W.P. (1976)

Age

The mean age of the eastern women state legislators on election is 48 years old. Historically, women start their careers in politics at a later age than most male legislators. Analysts suggest that women tend to wait so long to enter into the legislature, their advanced age often will limit the amount of power that they will gain through seniority (Gehlen 1977).

The mean age of women in the Montana legislature in 47 years old. The youngest woman elected to serve was Allison Conn, of Kalispell. She was elected at the age of nineteen. She interrupted her college education to fulfill her legislative term. The oldest woman to serve was elected in 1967 at the age of 81. Eleanor Dougherty was a teacher and she was also the first woman to serve in the legislature from Cascade County. Montana, over time, has had a larger percentage of women under thirty than Eastern women legislators. A total of nine (eleven percent) women under thirty have served in the state house. The women who were under thirty when elected all said that although their age was a detriment during their service, they felt their lack of credibility was doubly encumbered by the fact that they were women, too.
When asked if being a woman affected her service in the legislature, one woman replied,

To some degree I think I was a little different in two respects. One was my age and the other was being a woman. I can't say which one was the bigger barrier (H069)

Forty-two percent of the women who have served in the Montana legislature have been 50 years old or older. The majority of Montana women legislators, with very few exceptions, have waited until they were 40 years old or older to run for a seat in the legislature.

**Marital Status and Number/Age of Children**

The average eastern woman state legislator is married (73%) with children. Eighty-two percent said they had children when they were first elected. However, of this number who had children, almost half of them said they purposely waited until their children were older (46% have children eighteen or older) before embarking on a political campaign. For most women polled, it was very important for them to be at home while their children were young. Typically, women wait until their children are, at least, in high school before formally entering politics.

As well as being older, more Montana women legislators are married (79%) than Eastern women legislators (73%). Several of the women credit their husbands for convincing them to run for office in the first place. Some women said they decide to run after their husbands were asked to run and decided not to. Their husbands, in these cases, felt their wives were better qualified. When asked during the interview about spousal support, twenty-three of the twenty-five women legislators interviewed said their husbands were very supportive. Several of their husbands had actually suggested they run for the legislature. Several others said their spouses were active in their campaigns. One or two of the spouses even attended the legislative session(s) with their wives. Of the two women who said their husbands were not supportive, one said that once she was actually elected, her husband did give her plenty of support. Of the 45 Montana women asked if they had children when they were elected, thirty-
two (71%) had children. Of the thirty-two women who had children when elected, twenty-one (66%) had children eighteen years of age or older, eight (twenty-five percent) had children between the ages of twelve and seventeen and three (nine percent) had children under twelve years old. More Montana women legislators than Eastern women legislators had children eighteen years old or older when first elected to the legislature. These women said they would not have run had their children been younger. All the women who answered this question stressed to me, the need they felt to be home with their children.

No way, said one Eastern Montana Democrat woman, Not at all. We're too far from Helena. When the seat opened, my youngest was a senior in high school. So it worked out perfectly. Otherwise, I'd really have suffered with 'empty nest syndrome', (HO54)

Another woman (Eastern Montana Republican) said,

No, I'm sure I wouldn't have considered it. That's pretty hard to leave your kids because you've got to go up there (Helena) for four months..... But I think it's hard. Why do it? You only have your kids for a certain amount of time, you might as be with them when you can, (H008)

The three women who had children under twelve years old when they were first elected to the legislature said that they felt there were times when they really missed out on family events and their kids' childhood triumphs and tragedies. None, however, said they would have rather waited to run. The majority of Montana women legislators interviewed, felt a strong attachment to their families and felt their role as Mother was important to her as any other role she had.

Party Affiliation

Of all the Women state legislators polled, 56% claimed ties to the Democratic party and 34% to the Republican party. This is a national trend for women running for office at the federal level, also. Studies imply that women tend to be open-minded in their thinking and therefore, women tend to chose the run on the Democratic ticket (C.A.W.P. 1976).
In Montana, from the legislative session in 1941 until the one in 1993, a total of thirty-three (35%) Republican women have been elected to the legislature compared to sixty-two (65%) Democratic women.

Twelve of the women that I interviewed implied they had no real party loyalty. Women who said they were very active in their party's politics said that, even so, they did not always follow their party's platform. Seven of the women I spoke with said that when they were deciding if they were going to run for office, they were courted by both parties. One woman who was elected as a Democrat said once she got to Helena, the members of her party wanted to give her to the Republicans because they viewed her opinions as conservative for a Democrat. At least four Republican women I interviewed said members of their party viewed the legislation the women were interested in as being issues that were too liberal for the Republican party. Suggestions were made by party leaders that these women move over to the Democrat side of the aisle. When pressed for details one woman legislator (Eastern Montana Democrat) said,

"I know that (the previous incident occurred) for example, with the 'gifted and talented children's program. It had gotten off the ground and that's one area where Andrea Hemstad (Republican) worked with us (Democratic women). Andy really got into a big hassle with the leadership of the Republican party. They just wanted to ostracize her. It really cost her later on when she wanted to run for (State) Auditor" (H069)

Greater numbers of Democratic women candidates have been elected to the legislature than Republican women candidates; almost twice as many (62 Democrats to 33 Republicans). Most of the women I talked to said that they either had some amount of party loyalty or else they said they had absolutely no loyalties to either party. The women who professed no party loyalties said the choice to run as a Democrat or a Republican was a convenience. Often, the women were not registered in either party but, someone from those parties had asked them to run,
A former Democratic woman legislator from Western Montana said

"If the Republicans would have asked me to run, I probably would have thought, why not... The Democratic committee wanted a woman to run who could be more outgoing and friendly (than the woman who ran before her)" (H012)

Most women I talked with agreed with me, that party platforms come secondary to the concerns of their constituents. What matters to the women is that they are running and not whether they run as a Republican or a Democrat.

**Number of Terms in Office**

When questioned about their length of service in the legislature, the group of eastern women state legislators surveyed had 56% in their first term and only eighteen percent were serving their third term or more. The poll was conducted in 1976, the large number of women serving their first term was accounted for by the large numbers of women entering politics during this period. The 1970s appear to be the point when the entry of women into politics across the nation became acceptable.

In Montana, 39 (41%) women have served a single term while 41 (43%) served between two and four terms. Fifteen (16%) have served five terms or more, with four women having served nine terms. In the 1975 election in Montana, fourteen women were elected to the legislature. This is five more women then were ever elected previously.

Montana women legislators have served longer terms of service than Eastern women legislators. More than half of the women who have served in the legislature have served more than two or more terms. It seems like Montana women legislators less often have special agendas for getting elected. Studies indicate that women who serve one term are more likely to have a particular objective they want to accomplish; once it is accomplished, they don't run again. I don't think Montana women legislators have these kinds of special agendas. I don't think they would be elected if they did. Legislative districts in Montana are composed of 8000 people. There is too much diversity in the interests of any one district for special agendas. The twenty-five women interviewed all agreed, they
never would have been elected had they run on a specialized platform.

Limitations of terms was set in the 1993 legislative session. Correspondingly, a large number of male legislators have also had a long tenure with the legislature. It will be interesting to see how a limit on terms will affect the composition of the legislature.

**Prior Political Experience**

Women legislators have had different kinds of political experiences than men. They have less elective experience and more experience in appointed board of commission positions (Carroll 1991). The majority of women in state legislatures have served in their communities on some kind of board (frequently school board) or in an appointed office prior to their legislative service. Working at this level gives women the opportunity to affect change in their community. Women state legislators have had a lot of low level political involvement having served on their party's central committee and worked in the precinct polling place (Fisher 1947). Women state legislators have been city council members, civic club members and officers, school and park board members, and held other local appointed or elected offices. Some Women state legislators have also held positions on National Advisory boards.

Several Montana women legislators who answered the question about their prior experience had plenty of prior experience in similar "help" related positions. At least four women mentioned that being a mother had been a good experience prior to the legislature. Other women felt their jobs as teachers and nurses, school board members, legislative liaison and aide had been very helpful in giving them an idea of what was important. One woman had been the first mayor of Whitefish, while several others had served on city and county commissions. Four women were delegates to the 1972 Montana Constitutional Convention, which were elected positions (at large).
Political Role Models

Many women in state legislators have worked on a campaign for others, often for other women. Women running for office and those who are in elected offices often times become role models and advocates for other women. During one interview, Geraldine Ferraro was told how often women had used her as a role model in their own political activity. Ferraro responded that she was happy to hear that, because she also admired a woman who had always encouraged other women to strive for their share of the power. She said that if there had been no Bella (Abzug) there would be no Gerry (Whitney & Raynor 1986).

When asked if they had a role model, 36% of the twenty-five women legislators I interviewed said they admired another female politician. Geraldine Ferraro was one of the women mentioned.

"When I met her, I think that was probably one of the most exciting days of my life. I learned a lot about commitment. I mean commitment to those issues you care so deeply about." (H044)

Another woman named Eleanor Roosevelt as her role model,

"I always respected Eleanor Roosevelt greatly. I think she showed what women could do if they were willing to come forward and do it. And I think she showed that we need to get ourselves heard and become part of what was going on." (SO17)

Several other women said they had admired Montana women in politics. Jeanette Rankin was mentioned most often. Many see Rankin as a role model for women in politics because she was a representative guided by her moral convictions rather than by practical or career considerations. "In the midst of reform, Progressive Teddy Roosevelt invented the term 'muckrakers', and as journalistic social critics expounded sordid tales of a nation gone mad with wealth while thousands of Americans starved in ramshackle tenement buildings, Jeanette began carrying a banner for women and children", (Giles 1980: p.14). One Western Montana Democratic woman legislator said,

"I think of her in terms of someone who really had some high ideals and really stayed with them for a long time," (HO11)
Others said they thought Dorothy Bradley had been a good role model for them. Almost all twenty-five of the women I spoke with said they admired Bradley's forthrightness and her ability to be effective. Many had worked on her gubernatorial campaign. When I mentioned to Ms. Bradley how highly other women legislators thought of her, she was genuinely surprised. Interestingly, research shows that not all women state legislators perceive themselves as role model for future generations (Githens 1984). However, when one Eastern Montana Republican woman was asked how she made a difference in Montana government, she replied,

"Well, maybe because I started out being one of the few women running. Me and my colleagues probably made a difference in how other women were able to run," (S014)

Eight percent of the Montana women state legislators interviewed thought that certain male political figures had been more of a role model. Pat Williams, the congressman from Montana was mentioned by some of this group as a role model for themselves. One Western Montana Democratic woman told me that,

"if I could be one 36,000th as good as Pat Williams, I would consider myself really fortunate. If I could be as articulate and down to earth and homsey and folksy as I think he is..." (H067)

Twenty percent of the women state legislators interviewed named a female relative (primarily, Mother) while sixteen percent named a male relative (primarily, Father) as role models.

The remaining twenty percent of the women state legislators interviewed said they did not have a role model. One Eastern Montana Republican said,

"no, I've just walked in my own little shoes all my life. I've been pretty happy with the lifestyle I picked, (H032)

While a Western Montana Democratic woman replied,

"well, I never put anybody on a pedestal because they usually fall off," (H009)
**Occupational Background**

Women in state legislatures frequently come from occupations that are not considered high status and are occupations traditionally assigned to women. These occupations include teachers, healthcare providers, and housewives (C.A.W.P. 1976, Cohen 1991, Carroll 1991). In the C.A.W.P. (1976) study, 42% of women in office listed their occupations as health worker, social worker, teacher, secretary or librarian. Less than 3% said they were farmers and none listed housewife or homemaker as an occupation.

Out of the 45 Montana women legislators who listed their occupation on the questionnaire, 44% listed teacher, homemaker, or a healthcare related job as their primary occupation. Six percent said they were retired, eleven percent said they were farmers/ranchers, and eight percent said they were involved in business. Twenty-seven percent listed a professional career such as journalist, geologist, stockbroker, or public utilities executive. These numbers indicate that the majority of Montana women legislators worked in women's traditional careers prior to their election to office. It is likely that the proportion of women professionals in the legislature will increase as more women join and gain acceptance as professionals in the workplace (Kanter 1977).

**Some Reasons Why Women Run For Political Office**

Hill (1981) found that most women legislators invariantly have distinct agendas for getting involved in politics. He accounts for this by a continued receptiveness by women to grasp and advance the values that have been traditionally associated with women, that is, a concern with the public welfare rather than with personal enrichment. The main point here is that women do not run for offices on a personal agenda, nor do they get enough support from PACS to be dedicated solely to the PACS issues. Costantini and Craik (1972), C.A.W.P. (1973) have found that most women in political office are not looking to make a political career out of their service in office. They have found that for males, political involvement is often a "vehicle for personal enhancement and career advancement" (Costantini and Craik 1972, p. 234), while women politicians serve out of a
sense of duty to her community, state, or country and a desire to implement social change (Lamson 1968). Women legislators show a genuine concern for people.

Out of the twenty-five women interviewed only two said they had a specific agenda in running for office. The first, a Western Montana Democrat said

"I never intended to get involved in politics until there was a crisis at the Boulder River school and hospital. My whole background was working with folks with disabilities. And that's why I decided to run. I had some pretty clear notions how folks with disabilities should be allowed to live and that's in communities. So I ran and in that first session sponsored the legislation to finalize the community-based structure for folks with disabilities. That has changed the way we've dealt with people with developmental disabilities in this state, (H023).

The other woman, also a Western Montana Democrat, said,

"I sought out this office, probably to point out to the administration that no one was an advocate for public education. And it was so obvious to me that there wasn't anybody here as a leader in education. Nobody advocated for kids; (they were) bringing in unbelievable legislation, almost punitive legislation against teachers...." (H044).

Two women said they were tired of the representation they were getting from their current representative. One woman from Eastern Montana who had always considered herself a liberal, registered with the Republican party just so she could run against the representative from her district.

"But I was just so horrified at this man. He was really a vicious personal attack-oriented kind of guy" (H028).

Another Eastern Montana Republican legislator said of the representative from her area,

"he had the distinction of having the most absenteeism in all of the legislature," (H034).
One woman, Western Montana Republican, had been encouraged by the association, where she was a lobbyist for eight years, to run for the legislature,

"I wasn't sure anybody else knew any more than I did. Obviously there were some people who didn't. So I decided to jump in..." (S019)

The remaining twenty-one women all expressed a desire to make a difference. Several of these women had a life long fascination with politics and the process. Serving in the legislature was something they really wanted to do.

Ultimately, Montana women legislators want to do a good job and do what they can to represent their constituents. As mentioned previously, legislators have to serve too many different interests in their districts to have special agendas.
CHAPTER V
WOMEN LEGISLATORS’ PERCEPTIONS AND PRIORITIES

One fact that researchers have consistently supported is that women have a distinct perception of their duties and responsibilities in office and to their constituency. (Lansing 1979, Dubec 1976, Freeman and Lyons 1990, Havens and Healy 1991, Githens and Prestage 1977, Thomas 1991, Carroll 1991, Cohen 1991). It has been illustrated earlier in this paper that because they are females, women legislators bring to office a different kind of experience which has been influenced directly by differential socialization women receive throughout their lives. This experience colors women legislators’ views on issues (Githens and Prestage 1977).

**Perceptions of Duties in Office**

A look at what Montana women legislators perceive as their most important duty validates the assumption that typically, Montana women legislators do not campaign with special issue platforms. The overwhelming response of Montana women legislators was that they were in the legislature to represent their constituents. All the women I talked to campaigned door to door. They met and talked to, some would say, every voter in their district.

Montana women legislators feel a great responsibility to the people they represent. Over 51% of the women responding felt that representing the people in their district was their most important duty in the legislature. Comments from the women indicate how strongly they feel this. One woman (Democrat from Western Montana) said,

"(My most important duty) is contact with the people. Very definitely, and helping. I saw it as helping. I saw government truly in that light. That government is here to do things that we can not do individually for the greater good," (HO44).

Another Western Montana Democrat said,

"Staying in touch with my people. That was critical," (HO09)
Still another Western Montana Democrat said,

"To represent the people and I think I do a very good job of it," (H067).

A Republican woman from Eastern Montana said,

"To represent the people the best I can..... I feel like the representative before (me) really favored special interests. And I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to be representing any one particular group," (H008)

Other women said they felt they owed more to their constituency than just representation. One Western Montana Democrat said,

"(My most important duty is) to understand the big picture issues to the state and not look at simple solutions. And explain to people what the big picture issues are. And I think that's a real important role and I think its a role legislators don't do well in. They listen to the people and go vote. They don't then go back and explain to them what the issues are and why they voted the way they did. And I think education of the populace is very important because people by and large listen to thirty second sound bytes and they've got simple solutions for complex problems. And I see one of my major roles is learning what the real problems are and then educating people," (SO19).

**Perceptions of Their Effectiveness in Office**

Other studies have indicated that women do make a difference in the legislature, I asked the Montana women legislators if they felt that they had made a difference in Montana government. Twenty-one (79%) of the twenty-seven asked this question responded "yes". Twenty gave me an example of the legislation they presented which they thought made a difference.

"A regional rail authority bill which allowed counties to go together to go out and seek a short line operator to keep their railroads running (to haul grain). (H054).

"One of my greatest rewards right now is if I have a constituent that will call me with a personal problem, whatever it is and I can help them individually," (H014).
There have been services that have changed. We have developed some community based services for the elderly and disabled in the state. We've made some changes in Medicaid that would not have occurred if I hadn't been here." (SO19).

"With the daycare legislation (that I introduced) I believe that I did. It opened up more slots for women," (HO67).

One legislator said she knows she made a difference by working to pass a bill pertaining to the presumption of arrest in domestic abuse cases,

"A woman came up to me several years after that bill had passed and she told me that it had literally saved her life. I now know I made a difference" (H044).

Two women (seven percent) said they weren't sure if they had made a difference,

"I'd like to (think I made a difference). I wouldn't be trying to do it so hard if I didn't," (H046).

Another, a Republican from Eastern Montana, said,

"I'm not sure. I'm still working on it," (HO32).

Two women (seven percent) said that they felt they did not make a difference. Despite pointing out several pieces of legislation that she was instrumental in getting passed, one Eastern Montana Democratic woman still insisted,

"no, I really didn't. Not as much had I had more experience and had done more of it," (HO69).

An Eastern Republican legislator said,

"Me personally? Well, just because I'm a vote. No, I don't think I did anything," (HO08).

While one Western Republican legislator felt,

"I think everyone who goes personally makes a difference," (SO09).

And finally, Democratic legislator from Eastern Montana said,

"I would hope that my approach to things would make an impact but I don't go around trying to measure it...," (HO10).
Views on Gender and Women in Politics

The perceptions of themselves in the statehouse is another distinguishing characteristic of women legislators. Women legislators feel they have to prove their capabilities to the public and they feel they have to prove it to themselves. Women legislators, having been told they can't do whatever for so long, often feel like they have to work harder, longer, and be better than male colleagues (C.A.W.P. 1973).

I asked the Montana women legislators if they felt there were any advantages or disadvantages to being a woman in the statehouse. Their comments seemed to reflect an overall view that women in the legislature have of themselves nationally.

Most women believe they are there for a good purpose, (H009, Western Democrat).

I think it has been to my advantage to be a woman in politics partly because for a long time it was unique. It was rare, at least, so I got a lot more attention than people who were working just as hard, (H010, Eastern Democrat).

I think after awhile they listened to us more because the other thing we learned was not to talk on everything. Pick your fights. And men tended to think they knew everything about everything..., (H044, Western Democrat).

People feel we're accessible. Whether its staff or constituents, people feel they can talk to us, (S019, Western Democrat).

Women look at issues, we look at any issue differently than a man does... Women look at issues on how its going to affect the family, on how its going to affect the community and how its going to affect them personally. Men look at most issues, for the most part, on how its going to affect the budget (H046, Western Democrat).

Asked about the specific problems in being a woman in the state house, Eastern Montana Democrat said,
sure, they (the leadership) tend to overlook women quite a bit. The Democrats are pretty darn good, though, about including women. But, still, you know that you're a woman. A lot of times they would rather have men for committees and things like that and sometimes you get put on these things as token women. It's still a problem, its better than it was, but its still a problem, (H054)

I don't think we're perceived as threatening. Not that we're perceived as powerless, but we aren't as threatening, (H011, Western Democrat).

I think I'd lie if I told you there weren't (problems). You incur problems with housing, getting an apartment - you've got to be very careful where you're going to stay. You watch who you're going to dinner with. You watch lots of little things that I'm sure guys don't think anything of. You just basically are double sure of everything. You're very, very careful. You're far more cautious because you're a woman and you want to be sure nothing happens to (affect) another woman that's going to be elected, (H046, Western Democrat).

I didn't want to be treated like a perfect lady. I just wanted to be treated like a person, (S013, Eastern Democrat).

Some women commented on the 'good ole boy' network still firmly entrenched in the legislature. Committee...assignments and a lack of women in leadership positions indicate this.

There really is a 'good old boy' network and I had to learn to work around it and with it. Overall, the women legislators worked very hard, (H012, Western Democrat).

The real 'Old Boys' did not know how to deal with us - nor did some of the lobbyists and state employees. Often (the 'Old Boys') 'underestimated' (the women legislators') political savvy or preparation, (S013, Eastern Democrat)

I worked harder. The 'good old boy' system is still alive and well in both parties. Therefore, it is important (for women legislators) to expend greater energy in positive ways to get around 'their' system, (H074, Eastern Republican).

A few women said they had not experienced any difficulties due to their gender, in the state house. Among those who said they didn't, I was told,
We still struggle with some of the stereotypes. There are still committees that are all men. Women tend to be steered away from Taxation and into Human Services, Education, or Public Health committees, (S019, Western Democrat).

I think that being a woman in the legislature is just something that we have to prove that we are capable of doing the job. We can't go in there with the idea that we're going to change everything overnight, or that our ideas are all the best. We have to be willing to listen to the other side also, and to work with the rest of the legislators. I didn't find any real problem that I could feel was instrumental just because I was a woman, (S017, Western Democrat).

No, I've been extremely lucky. The little funny things that have happened have been mostly funny. I was very fortunate because I had instant equality, I had a vote, (H010, Eastern Democrat)

Priority Concerns

Additionally, research (C.A.W.P. 1973, 1991; Stoper 1984; Mezey 1978; and Kirkpatrick 1974) reveals that among the women state legislators in their studies, these legislators were oriented to women's issues involving health, childcare and women. C.A.W.P. (1991) determined that a majority of the women legislators it surveyed have as priority concerns issues dealing with women, children, and families. Women state legislators in the East have run on platforms concerned solely with women's issues and won. Many women are in office today because of their views on choice, healthcare, and education. Women introduce more bills dealing with women, children and the family and are more successful at getting them passed then men (Thomas, 1991).

I asked women legislators in Montana to list five bills they considered their priority during their service. Of the 45 women responding to this question, twenty-six (58%) women had listed a bill concerning women, children, education, healthcare, or welfare. Ten women (22%) listed a bill concerning taxes, the budget, business and industry, or local government issues. Five women (11%) did not answer this question. Some of the bills that the women legislators listed as priority were an "anti-stalking law"
"healthcare reform", "ERA", "unannounced nursing home inspections", "education funding", "drunk driving restrictions", and "welfare reform".

The ten women mentioned bills dealing with "reducing the state budget", "tax reform", "industry & business", and "budget". Eight of the ten said categorically, that "all issues are women's issues". As one Western Republican woman put it,

I don't see any difference between women's issues and people issues. Women have to have good jobs. Women need to make a livable wage. Women need help but so do men need good jobs, (H058).

I asked the women how they prioritized the interests that they represented. One felt that,

You put them all together and you don't prioritize them. They're all equal. Because nobody's on top. I didn't ever pick and chose what was important. I just went through and if I felt it was a fair issue, I presented it, (H046, Western Democrat)

Others had issues they were more sensitive to than other issues,

I also went with what was important, children's education, children's issues, (H009, Western Democrat).

While another said,

anything the community came forward with as far as what the community needed as far as legislation, (H020, Western Democrat).

I'm not good at prioritizing things. I try to meet their needs, (S019, Western Democrat).

I think the things that affect these people (in her district) most are jobs, of course, they need to make money. Education so they can get out of here... to better themselves and to get things better for their kids, just like what I try to do, (H067, Western Democrat).

Thomas' (1991) research suggests that the majority of the women she surveyed in twelve states had legislative priorities which focused on issues traditionally assigned to women. She points out that these women legislators had listed as their priorities legislation which concerns women,
children, and family issues. Githens (1984), Mezey (1978), Carroll 1991, 1992, Kirkpatrick (1974), and most particularly the C.A.W.P. "Impact Series" (1991) explicitly state that women in political offices are changing the legislative agenda by focusing their attention on policies that are affecting women's rights, healthcare, children and families. Again, these are issues which are related to women's traditional roles as mothers and nurturers in American society. Although women state legislators do not limit their interests to these areas. Cohen (1991) concludes that women legislators' sensitivity to these kinds of human services issues has developed out of the woman's family life experience. Stoper (1984), Mezey (1984), Randall (1982) among others, point out that women's experience in their traditional roles has helped to shape their perspectives and priorities as legislators. It is conditioning of women into socially accepted roles that leads them, as legislators, to give a higher priority to those issues that reflect those roles.

Female Experiences Women Legislators Bring to Office

I asked Montana women legislators if they could think of any experiences or attributes that are specifically female that they brought into office with them. The responses imply most of these women had experiences from their traditionally assigned roles that helped them in their roles as legislators.

Oh, I think, being a mother of two kids, being a caretaker of my father when he was ill, and when I was younger, helping be a caretaker for my grandfather who lived with us in his old age, (SO19, Western Democrat).

I do (think her role as mother was an important experience that she brought to her office), I think that as a person who has kind of kept things running in the home, it takes a lot of organization. You see how schools work, you're involved with other women who are out of the home and working and dealing with childcare, (H011, Western Democrat).

I think as the daughter of a woman who was very strong-minded. She was a widow herself and had to make her own way. I had to make my own way with five children, (H060, Eastern Democrat).
Three Montana women legislators said they felt there was a distinct difference in the way women legislate.

I think women are more compassionate, (H020, Western Democrat).

I think the ability to communicate. I think women can communicate better than men. I think they can be more open and communicate their feelings and thoughts better than men, (H008, Eastern Republican).

I think much more cognizance of those issues that affected women and children. They were not brought into the arena. I think men were not as sensitive to battered women legislation. Its not in their life's experience to be in a battered situation, (H044, Western Democrat).

A few others mentioned that it was their previous experience in community activities.

Community activities are very important. I participated in volunteer money raisers through the years, (H034, Eastern Republican).

**Do Women Legislators Think They Have Different Priorities Than Men Legislators?**

Examining the priorities of Women state legislators in Montana, of the twenty-eight Montana women legislators who answered this question, a resounding 86% felt that women legislators in Montana had different priorities than men.

I think we're much more hands on, realistic. We're concerned about things with families and children. (S019, Western Democrat).

Women have to be motivated to go (to the legislature)..... because they have to know they are different, they face a screen (i.e. screening process). Women have to be more motivated, aggressive to get through this screen to prove themselves. With that kind of personality type, you've (women) got to campaign on something that you'll get done. And women just want to do what they say (they'll do), (H069, Eastern Democrat).
Of the women who did not believe women have different priorities than men one said,

I think that women have a different opinion on something that they have expertise on. I do no think that their gender determines their interests... (S009, Western Republican).

Another said,

Oh I suppose when it came to working on women's issues as far as choice, pro-choice, pro-life, some of those issues. I think perhaps the woman's point of view is more strongly felt and that we had a greater influence on being able to present and get some of those bills passed. I think sometimes in education, too, we look at the handling of youngsters in some ways different than the men do. I think the women's views on some of that is instrumental in helping to get things in education that are necessary." (S017, Western Democrat).
CHAPTER VI
WOMEN IN LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

Committee Membership

Historically, women in legislative service have been assigned
discriminantly to those committees that men have decided they are best
suited to be on, namely, health, education, and welfare. In the 1940s and
1950s and a great extent in the 1960s, most women state legislators
accepted whatever committee membership were assigned to them by
the male leadership. Nonetheless, the nature of these committees justified
women's assignment to them by claiming the committees clearly defined a
traditional sexual division of labor. Rarely, did Women state legislators sit on
committees where it is said the 'real power' lies.

Time and the number of women now involved in the State legislature
has changed the make-up of committee membership. More women
state legislators are requesting and getting assigned to committees such as
Banks and Banking or Taxation. Nevertheless, committee memberships
continue to reflect the traditional sexual division of labor. In the C.A.W.P.
(1976) survey, 70% of the women questioned said they were on a
committee that dealt with education, health, environmental, or welfare/issues. Comparatively, 34% said they were on Taxation committee,
fourteen percent said they were on Judiciary committee or on committees
dealing with commerce, labor, or banking. Are committee assignments
made on the basis of discrimination or preference? Kirkpatrick (1974)
found that in her research group there was little evidence of 'gender
stereotyping' in committee assignments. If women were assigned to
education, health, and welfare committees it was because they requested
the assignment. This indicates that another way to discern women
legislators' interest and priorities would be through their committee
requests. Cohen (1991) feels that it is women's heightened sensitivity to
those issues which develop from family life experiences that manifest into
the woman's advocacy of human service issues consequently, women
legislators frequently request human service related committees.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the women in the Montana legislature were
routinely assigned to committees with names such as Courtesies and Good
Fellowship, Sanitary Affairs, or Public Health, Welfare, and Safety. In fact, every woman who was a legislator from 1941 to 1965 had at least one assignment to these committees.

In the Montana legislature, a woman first served on the Appropriations committee in 1959. Further research revealed that her husband had been a legislator prior to her service and he sat on Appropriations during his terms in office. Another woman would not serve on the Appropriations committee in Montana until 1973. Over the years, a total of nine women have sat on the Appropriations committee. Twelve percent of the total of women state legislators in Montana, from 1941 to 1993, have served on this committee, considered by many authorities to be one of the most powerful committees in the Statehouse (Whitney and Raynor, 1986). However, not all the women legislators I talked to believed that those who sat on Appropriations hold that much power.

Its (Appropriations) very time consuming. You have to sit there for hours and hours and hours. I know you can have an impact on everything, but I am a lot more interested in carrying legislation and being involved in the decision-making process. Overall, they (members of the Appropriations committee) don't have the ultimate say. Fifty-one percent of the votes make the decision, (H014, Western Democrat).

Some evidence supports the contention that women in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s were assigned committee memberships based on their traditional social roles. The information I got back from one woman who served in the 1950's, said she had requested assignment to the Education, Business and Industry and Constitutions and Elections committees. She was assigned to the Education, Public Health, Morals and Safety, and Social Security committees. She said her assignments were pretty typical of the committees women served on during her service in the legislature.

My data indicates that women in the Montana legislature serve on committees that reflect the traditional roles and interests created from gender role stereotyping for women (see Tables 2 and 3).
One woman (Democrat from Western Montana) currently in the legislature said,

I think women care more about the people to people kinds of things and I guess that's typical of how we get assigned to committees. We get assigned to committees like Healthcare and other human services committees (H011)

While another woman (Democrat from Western Montana) said that she requested to be on Human Services.

Yes, I did. I did that every time just because I really like that and I have had an interest in those areas all the time (H012).

Table 2.
Montana Women Legislators' Committee Assignments 1941-1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legislators served on multiple committees.

Committee membership of Montana women legislators differs from that of Eastern women legislators on Agricultural committees. Twenty-three percent of the women who had served in the Montana legislature have served on an Agriculture committee. Viewed historically this seems appropriate, after all, Montana is an agricultural state. Women in Montana have always participated in agricultural activities, and they have participated as equals. Montana women legislators have represented the interests of their districts by their membership on Agricultural committees. Of the Montana women who have sat on an Agriculture committee, 96% have been members of W.I.F.E. (Women Involved in Farm Economics), a national organization.
### Table 3.
**Montana Women Legislators' Committee Requests.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leadership Positions**

Whether or not committee assignment was due to preference or discrimination, the fact is that the males legislators hold the leadership positions and thus the power to make those decisions. The facts are clear, women in the legislature chair numerous committees, but rarely are they in other leadership positions such as speaker, (C.A.W.P., 1973).

In Montana, of the women legislators, none have ever been chair of the Education committee (see Table 4) and six women have been vice chair. No women have been chair of any of these committees Appropriations, Judiciary, or Banks & Banking. Two women served as the chair of Taxation committees and three women were chairs of Commerce and Labor committees. Six women have been chair of Welfare committees, five of Health committees and seven of Legislative committees.

In other legislative leadership positions, Montana women legislators have been consistently disregarded. No woman has ever served as Speaker of the House. This is the second most important office in state government. The Speaker has a very influential position and has a lot to say about the kinds of legislation that will get brought up. The person in this position controls, to a considerable extent, the political careers of every member of the House (MacDonald, 1940; Snider, 1950). In 1993, Marian Hanson served as Speaker Pro Tempore of the House. The first woman

Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Montana Women Legislator's Committee Leadership</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Appropriations</td>
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<td>Banking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationships With Other Women Legislators

Research shows these shared interests based on shared experiences exists among women legislators. But, it has also shown that having just one or a small number of women legislators is not enough to enact change. Since the entrance of large numbers of women into public politics, women's issues, interests, values, and perspectives have become incorporated into the legislative agenda (Bystydzienski 1992). Furthermore, studies (Thomas 1991, Thomas and Welch 1991, Carroll 1992, U.N. 1992) illustrate that the higher proportion of women in office the more likely that the policies which are the priorities of women will be introduced and passed. Increased numbers of women in the legislature mean larger support networks for women who push issues of importance to them.

I asked the Montana women legislators in my sample, first, if their relationships with the other women in the legislature were important to them. Of the 45 women who responded, thirty-three (73%) said yes they were important to them. Second, I asked them how they were important. The largest response (39%) said their relationship with other women was
important because of the support women give to each other. Eighteen percent of the women felt that other women were mentors for them and fifteen percent felt they collaborated on ideas. Of the ten women who said their relationships with other women were not important, one said she had nothing in common with the women from either party. Another said she had more in common with the younger male representatives. Still another commented that because she as a Republican had moderate views she was isolated by both parties of women. She emphatically state that "there is no sisterhood in the legislature" (H074).

Carol Mueller (1983) in her research on women legislators concluded that most women in the state legislature seem to draw strength from collective identification. She points to the caucuses as the symbol of women's collective influence.

Montana has a Democratic Woman's Caucus but has never had a large enough number of Republican women in the House and Senate at one time to assemble a Republican Women's Caucus. When the women were asked if they had ever worked together with the other women to pass legislation, 63% said that they had. When asked what the bill(s) they worked on together related to, 51% said that the bill related to women, children, or family issues.
CHAPTER VII
WOMEN LEGISLATORS IN MONTANA

Are Montana Women Legislators Different?

Montana women legislators measure up to Eastern women legislators in many respects: similar ages, education, occupations, party affiliations, and perceptions of their legislative duties. Montana women legislators differ from Eastern women legislators in few respects. Montana women legislators seem to serve more terms than Eastern women legislators. The average number of terms served for Montana women legislators is three. Well, over 50% of Montana women legislators have served three terms. Sixteen percent have served five terms or more. I think this displays that the voters have a high level of acceptance and contentment with Montana women legislators. If the women are being re-elected, their constituents must be satisfied with what the women legislators are doing.

The low numbers of women serving more than one term in the East could mean that the women have pursued higher offices after gaining experience at the state level. Or it could mean their constituents weren't pleased with their representation and voted the Eastern women legislators out of office. It could also mean that Eastern women legislators are going into their offices with a specific purpose in mind and once the goal is accomplished they don't run for re-election. A limitation of terms was set for Montana representatives during the 1993 Legislative Assembly. How this will change the complexion of the legislature remains to be seen.

Montana women legislators differ from Eastern women legislators in committee membership on two points. The first is that Montana women legislators have served on Agriculture committees with the same frequency as they have served on Health, Education, and Welfare committees. The C.A.W.P. (1976) statistics on Eastern women legislators committee memberships did not even list Agriculture as a committee. Since part of Montana's economy is agriculturally based, this committee deals with a lot of very important issues. Montana women legislators, especially those who are ranchers and farmers, are concerned with
agricultural issues because they concern their livelihoods, which ultimately will affect their homes. For example, any bills that could impinge on their ability to produce or sell their goods will directly affect the family. That is one reason several of the Montana women legislators told me that all issues were women's issues.

Historically, women in Montana have had to pitch in and do "men's" work because it was necessary in order to establish her home. I think many Montana women, especially those that grew up in an agricultural environment, have experienced this 'necessity for the blurring of gender roles'. I came to this conclusion because of the women legislators who said that being a woman did not affect their role as a legislators. These women were raised on ranches and married ranchers, and are still ranching today. This leads me to believe that it is in these women's experiences that gender lines are blurred and this colors their views. Several other women seem to express the same feelings as these women but, they did not give the same answers to those questions.

Despite the previously mentioned differences, Montana women legislators display many of the same characteristics as Eastern women legislators. For whatever reason, these women legislators all share a concern for those issues which have developed out of their experiences as women.

**Why Montana Women Legislators are Different**

Montana women legislators have had opportunities the women legislators in eastern states were not so fortunate to have. For instance, women have served in the legislature since 1917. These women broke a lot of new ground for the other women that followed them into politics. Women in other states were politically active during this time, too. But they did not have the advantage of suffrage in their states until four years after Montana passed it.

Montana women legislators have a large pool of political role models. Most noteworthy, Jeanette Rankin is still widely admired for her tenacity and her integrity to stand behind what she believed in.
When Rankin visited the Constitutional Convention during its 1972 meeting and spoke to the delegates one of the women delegates/legislator said,

It was the most beautiful and well received.... She was just so distraught about what was happening in Vietnam. And she said if they were to ask me what we were to do about that situation, I would have said right at the outset, and I say it today, we should just go right in there (Vietnam) and we take all those young people that we took there and we just bring them back home. That would be the end of it.' And that's ultimately what happened (H069).

**Constitutional Convention of 1972**

Montana Women have their equality spelled out in Montana's Bill of Rights. The Constitutional Convention of 1972 gave women a foot into the door of politics. The fact that a group of women actively participated in the drafting of the new constitution was a new idea across the nation.

Major changes in the legislative process and policy occurred with the implementation of Constitutional Convention reform in 1972, (S006).

The Montana Constitutional Convention of 1972 was the fourth one to be held in this state. The first was held in 1866, but it wasn't authorized by the U.S. Congress. The document they produced got lost when it was sent to printing in St. Louis and never found. The second Constitutional Convention was held in 1884. It, too, was unrecognized by Congress even though the people of the territory voted to accept the constitution it produced. The third Constitutional Convention was held in July of 1889. This constitution was not only adopted by the people of the territory, it was accepted by Congress and Montana was admitted to the Union in November 1889.

During the 41st Legislative Assembly (1969), a Constitutional Review Commission was formed. Following through with the Commission's recommendations, the 42nd Legislative Assembly (1971) authorized the election of one hundred delegates to a Constitutional Convention. On November 2, 1971, Montana’s twenty-three districts elected 19 women and 81 men as delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1972. The
1971 Legislative Assembly had decided that you could not be in the legislature and serve as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, so those currently serving in the legislature were not allowed to run. The hope was the absence of seasoned legislators would prevent the Constitutional Convention from becoming filled with the adversity and malice that can be detected between two politicians with opposing views. Ten of the delegates were past legislators, the other ninety delegates were without legislative experience. But, they were ambitious, hard-working, and willing to learn. All were feeling terribly proud to have this honor and dedicated to their task at-hand. All party lines between the delegates ended after the election of officers. No vote was ever decided along party lines.

I truly believe that the women who made up 19% of the Constitutional Convention delegation made a big difference (S014).

The Constitutional Convention was important to Montana women legislators for three reasons. The first, is that the delegates wrote an Equal Rights provision (equal rights for all, regardless of race, religion, or sex) into their bill of rights. Montana is one of the few states that has this clause. The eleven member Bill of Rights Committee was comprised of three women and eight men. Chair of that committee, Wade Dahood, remarked on his committee's

....concern for citizen rights and for their intense desire to draft a declaration of rights that would be meaningful for all citizens and bring about a more just Montana society for all those who are most in need of assistance from the law and the process of the judicial system (Montana Constitutional Society of 1972, 1989, p. 25).

The next most remarkable phenomenon about the convention is that nineteen women were elected to serve as delegates. Up until the 1972 Con Con (as the Constitutional Convention is commonly known) there were low numbers of women in all government offices, elected and appointed. The Constitutional Convention proved that women could be effective in government. That there were women delegates at the Constitutional Convention, I believe, encouraged other Montana women to activate politically. In the 1970 State election, two women were elected to the legislature. In the 1972 election, after Constitutional Convention
ended, nine women were elected to the legislature (including two senators); a record number of women to serve at once in the legislature (Table 5). After the Con Con (Table 5) the number of women legislators elected rose by almost 350%. Additionally, four of the Con Con delegates, Margaret Warden, Betty Babcock, Arlyne Reichert, and Dorothy Eck went on to serve in the legislative.

*It (Constitutional Convention) was the greatest political experience I think anyone could have, because it was really grass roots democracy in action* said one delegate/legislator (H069).

**Table 5.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of women elected to State</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The third reason why the Con Con was important to women legislators was there were a lot of cutting edge provisions to the constitution that were created and voted in by the delegates at the 1972 Constitutional Convention. I can't substantiate that this was the influence of the women delegates who made up 19% of the membership. Studies have shown that when a minority of 15% or less exists within an organization, that minority feel their behavior is restricted (Kanter 1977). Maybe, the right combination and number of women finally coalesced.

Somehow in the Constitutional Convention I never felt that being a woman affected the power or ability to communicate that I felt often happened at the legislature. Why is that? Because a different breed of men were there, or just because we (women) asserted ourselves? (H069, Eastern Democrat).

Of the ten substantive committees which made up the Constitutional Convention, women had leadership positions in three committees. Catherine Pemberton (Broadus) was vice-chair of the Judiciary committee and Virginia Blend (Great Falls) was vice-chair of the Local Government committee. Louise Cross was the chair of the Natural Resources and Agriculture committee. This committee wrote Article IX (Environment and Natural Resources) to include some ground-breaking provisions. One such provision was the declaration that Montanans had a 'right' to clean air. Because of this women's deep concern for environmental issues,

we now have a right to a cleaner, healthier environment.
Louise Cross, she's really the Mother of the environmental movement in this state, (H069, Eastern Democrat).

Montana Women Legislators Still on the Cutting Edge

An example of innovative and original legislation sponsored by Montana women legislators is HB 358 from the 1983 Legislative session. It was introduced to the floor of the House on January 19th by Jan Brown, a freshman Democrat from Helena. HB 358, "the non-gender or unisex insurance bill", said that in the state of Montana it would be unlawful to discriminate solely on the basis of sex or marital status in the issuance or
operation of any type of insurance or retirement policy, plan, or coverage. The bill passed both the House and the Senate. Of nineteen women legislators, only one voted against it. The bill was signed into law by the Governor on April 15. This piece of legislation received the attention of many other states. The legislators who participated in authoring the bill were called on to travel to a host of different states to instruct them in writing a similar bill. In 1987, an attempt to revise this law was introduced, HB 519. It passed both the Senate and the House with all six women senators and eleven of the twenty-one women representatives voted against it. The Governor (Ted Schwinden) vetoed the bill on the following grounds,

"The legislature and the governor are bound, not by our perception of what is 'good' or 'bad' economically for women, but by the unequivocal language of Article II, Section 4 of the Montana Constitution:

> No person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws. Neither the state nor any person, firm, corporation, or institution shall discriminate against any person in the exercise of his civil or political rights on account of race; color; sex; culture; social origin or condition; or political or religious ideas."

A motion to override the veto failed with 61 (five women) for the bill and 37 (twelve women) against it. A two-thirds majority is needed to override the Governor's veto. Not only was this bill introduced by a woman and supported by women but it deals directly with a woman's issue. These Montana women legislators were representing women's culture on this bill.

Another bill which was a prototype for other state legislatures is HB 585. The purpose of this bill is to provide a radon control act. Only four other states ranked higher than Montana in the percentage of homes exceeding U.S.E.P.A. guidelines. Vicki Cocchiarella introduced this bill which would establish a certification program for persons providing radon measurement and mitigation services.

Because of all negative publicity on the effects of radon, several companies appeared in the state to do testing and mitigation. However,
none of these companies had qualified people to do the testing. Needless to say, by accident or intention, many Montanans paid for unnecessary mitigation or had high levels of radon go unnoticed during a testing. This legislation put a stop to those amateurs. The bill laid out licensing requirements and acceptable radon levels, for testing, based on the criteria established by the U.S. Department of Health and Environmental Sciences. The bill passed in the House and Senate by large margins and then it was signed by the Governor.

**Measuring the Differences**

Montana is the fourth largest state in the country. If you were to drive from the far north east corner of the state to the far south west corner, you would see every sort of landscape imaginable. From lush, golden wheat fields to forest so green and dense they appear to be colored black to mountain ranges so towering high you can get a nose bleed from just looking at Eastern Montana. The Rocky mountains divide Montana naturally into two distinctly different areas. It is along this line that I chose divide up the group of women legislators (see Appendix IV). Although Western Montana covers only about half the area in square miles Eastern Montana does, density of the population in the western portion acts as an equalizer.

Women legislators have come from many locations in the state, representing a wide range of interests. Ninety-five women have served in the legislature since 1941. Fifty-four women have been elected from the eastern part of the state and forty-one from the western part. Of the 54 women from Eastern Montana, nineteen (35%) were Republican and 35 (65%) were Democrat. In Western Montana, fourteen (34%) women have been Republican and twenty-seven (66%) Democrats.

Women legislators from Eastern Montana when elected have been slightly older than women from Western Montana. Of the 45 women legislators who answered the questionnaire, 57% (12) Eastern Montana women have been between the ages of forty-one to fifty when elected. While women in Western Montana have had 61% (14) women legislators in this age group. Women from both sides of the state take their traditional
roles very seriously and family remains a top priority.

Four women from Eastern Montana and one from Western Montana have been involved in farming and ranching. Running a ranch involves every family member. All of the women related stories to me about their involvement on the farms/ranches and particularly stressed their participation during branding and harvest activities. They are right out there with the men roping, driving equipment, digging fence post holes, and baling hay as well as getting all the meals on the table and performing the routine of their daily chores in the home. It appears that Montana women legislators who spent their adolescent as members of the family farm ran for the legislature at a point in their lives when they were 45 years or older, their families were grown, and while they were still a part of the family farming business, modern technology and less household members had lightened their work loads considerably. Weist (1992) suggests that as their children get older, women's lives change; they move into more off-farm activities.

Committee membership of these women legislators does not indicate that there are major discrepancies between the East and the West women legislators (Table 6). One obvious contrast, twenty-one (thirty-four percent) of the women legislators from Eastern Montana who answered the questionnaire have served on an Agriculture committee compared to three (seven percent) of the Western Montana women legislators who answered the questionnaire. Since Eastern Montana is the more agricultural part of Montana, I would expect to see this difference. Eastern Montana women have requested the Agricultural committee more often than Western Montana women. Twenty percent of Eastern Montana women requested assignment to Agriculture compared to five percent of Western Montana women. Through their membership on the Agriculture committee, women in Eastern Montana are representing the issues and concerns of their districts.
Table 6.

Montana Women Legislators'
Committee Membership vs. Geographic Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>N=95 Committee Assignment</th>
<th>N=42 Committee Requested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%Eastern MT</td>
<td>%Western MT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences between the two sides of the state weren't clear until I started to analyze how the women felt about their role in the legislature and how they felt about working with other women in the legislature. Forty-five women replied to the questionnaire. When asked if they had worked with other women in the legislature to get legislation passed twenty-eight (62%) said they had. Fifteen of these women were from Eastern Montana and thirteen from Western Montana (Table 7).

All of the bills that the women said they worked on together to pass or defeat were related to traditional women's issues. But when asked if their relationships with other women were important to them, equal numbers of Eastern and western Montana women legislators said "no", they weren't. While eleven Democrat women said that their relationships with other women were very important were very important to them. Those that said their relationships with other women were not important were the ones who said that gender did not play a role in the legislature. However, when I started looking at the types of bills they had listed as priorities, I found that the bills this women listed as priority were all related to women, children, and family.
Table 7.
Montana Women Legislators' Perceptions of Themselves in Office

**Question 1:** Did you work together with other women legislators to pass or defeat legislation?

n=42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/Party</th>
<th>%yes</th>
<th>%no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Republicans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Democrats</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Republicans</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Democrats</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 2:** Were your relationships with other women legislators important to you?

n=42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/Party</th>
<th>%yes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Republicans</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Democrats</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Republicans</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Democrats</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 3:** Did being a woman affect your experience in the legislature?

n=42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/Party</th>
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<th>%no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Eastern Republicans</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Democrats</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Republicans</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Democrats</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eastern Montana women were the most vocal in expressing their feelings that "all issues are women's issues" (H028 & H008). Their feeling is that everything that happens in government will affect women in some way, just as it will affect men in some way.

When the women were asked if they thought women had different priorities than men, eleven (79%) of Eastern Montana women legislators and thirteen (87%) of Western Montana women legislators said yes, women did generally have different priorities than men. Women in the East didn't necessarily see themselves as having priorities that were different from men. Looking at what these Eastern women listed as their priority legislation, those issues related to those issues traditionally associated with women. I think that Eastern women, because they have been raised in
farming and ranching communities where the gender role divisions are blurred due to the nature of the work, consequently they see all issues as relating and important to women. The issues most important to Eastern women are those that affect the family farm, for example tax bills or agriculture bills that ultimately affect the family and therefore are women's issues.

Briefly, the differences between Eastern Montana and Western Montana women legislators appears to be in their interpretation of their roles. Women in Eastern Montana seem to consider themselves equals in their home and therefore, equals in the legislature. These Eastern Montana women tend to address those issues which affect the economy which affects the farm which ultimately affects the family. Western women, however, do not share the agricultural background of Eastern Montana women. These women tend to address the needs of those Montanans who have little or no voice in the process,

To me the biggest group of people who don't have a voice are kids. Everything that I think of is for the next generation. I read somewhere on a bumper sticker that said, 'while you're living on this earth take care of it. Your kids are loaning it to you'. I think that's a good way to look at it (H014, Western Democrat).

Examining the changes that have occurred over 50 years of women's participation in the legislature, what is most apparent is that the numbers of women entering the legislature have increased over 1400%. The scant amount of information I was able to gather about women in the 1940's and 1950' s indicates that they were routinely assigned to Health, Education, and Welfare issue-related committees. The legislation that they carried and supported covered a broad area of interests including those bills concerned with women, children, health, and welfare. But, since there were so few of them, the opportunities for networking with other women to pass legislation was severely limited. As more women have become involved in the legislature, there is no doubt that more legislation has been proposed and passed which is of primary concern to women, children, and families. More women participating at the state level makes for larger support networks for the women's priority legislation. The Democratic
Women's Caucus is one example of the type of support organization, for women, that has developed in the legislature.

Geographic location does not make a difference when considering whether or not Montana women legislators are representing women's culture. Priority issues, legislation and committee membership all indicate that women legislators from both sides of the state have been representatives of "women's culture".
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that Montana women legislators are representatives of a phenomena called "women's culture", this is because their legislative activity addresses those issues considered to be traditional concerns of women. Interviews with twenty-five of the Montana women legislators suggest that they are representatives of "women's culture" regardless of party affiliation or geographic location even though eastern Montana women legislators said their priority issues were other than those typically assigned as "women's issues".

One of the indicators that women legislators are representatives of women's culture is to look at the kinds of bills they list as priority legislation to see if these bills refer to women, children, family, welfare, healthcare, or education. Sixty-five percent of Montana women legislators who were questioned said they had/have priority legislation in those areas. One woman legislator commented that during her tenure in the legislature, she and her female colleagues introduced

    legislation that brought women's issues to the forefront of the Montana legislature. (H044).

Which in itself suggests that some of the women legislators view themselves as representatives of women.

The primary reason why Montana women legislators chose their priorities represents how other factors work to constrict or influence the construction of gender. For instance, those Eastern Montana women legislators who listed a budget bill as a primary concern are considered representing women even though a budget bill is not considered to be a "traditional woman's issue", a single mother on welfare could be seriously affected by it, especially if programs she is enrolled in are cut. Also, those who listed Agricultural bills saw them as affecting the farm and therefore, the family. Those who listed Appropriation bills said that these bills can cause cuts in programs which may ultimately affect women or families. This is diversity of perspectives is what Montana women legislators contribute to government. Most women legislators have been mothers, many are single parents, and some have even been on welfare. I am making the
assumption, based on my research, that male legislators, in the past anyway, have never been in these roles. Therefore, they are not going to view issues the same way as women might nor are they going to give issues the same priorities as women legislators might. However, I did not obtain any information about or from Montana's male legislators so I can not substantiate this claim as true.

The majority of Montana women legislators have served on a Health, Education, Environment or Welfare committee, while smaller numbers have served on Commerce, Banking, Taxation and Appropriations committees. Corresponding percentages of women have said that they requested to be on an Education and Environment committees. However, small numbers of Montana women legislators said they actually requested assignment to Health and Welfare committees. Its possible that these women who were discriminatingly assigned to those committees which have historically been said to deal with 'women's issues' are representing "women's culture" by just being a member of the committees, regardless if they requested the committee or not. Requesting these committees could indicate further that Montana women legislators are addressing the issues important to women through their committee membership.

In sum, this information suggests, that Montana women legislators are representatives of women's culture because their priority legislation focuses on women, children, family, and welfare issues. This, despite the somewhat different perceptions Montana women legislators have of women and women's issues. The differences of perceptions are based loosely on party affiliation and more solidly on geographic location and occupation.

**Problems I Found With this Study**

The biggest obstacle that I had in this endeavor is that my population group and my time frame were too large. Since there were only one or two women legislators during the first few decades of my study there wasn't enough information available to accurately compare those women legislators who served the later part of the century. Although change could be seen in the increased numbers of women being elected as the century ran on. What other changes occurred is hard to pinpoint because so many
of the earlier women legislators are deceased and could not be interviewed to find out more data which would illustrate their particular priorities.

Also, because I did not use male legislators, it is hard to determine exactly what the impact of women legislators have had on Montana government. It is easy to count the bills that women have sponsored to see how many deal with "women's issues", but it is not easy to predict which of these bills would not have been authored had there not been any women's participation. Since men have been involved in State government since Montana was first declared a territory, they have pretty much set up the procedure and tone of the legislature. I did not find a measure to show how that has changed since women have been elected. I think it may be possible that the longer women serve in the legislature the more the differences between men and women legislators will blur.

Another problem with my study is that I did not measure differences in the women legislators class, race, or ethnicity. Montana women legislators have been so diverse, I don't know if the numbers gained from these aspects would be informative because of the sheer lack of numbers. Montana has had one woman who was African American and four women who were Native American and I did not ask any questions to discern class, therefore, the influences these backgrounds have on the women was not discerned.

Future Research:
The Future of Women in Politics

Because of their attention to issues like non-gender insurance, radon, domestic violence, infant mortality, and drunk driving restrictions Montana women legislators have enlarged the scope of politics in Montana. If this is an example of the changes women can bring to the forefront of legislation, imagine the possibilities when there are equal numbers of men and women at all levels of politics. As I was told by a dozen of the women I interviewed, "we don't want to take over, we just want an equal voice".

I asked the twenty-five women I interviewed if they thought that more women's involvement would change things in Montana government.
The results show a split between Republican women and Democrat women. The Republican women said they don't feel that more women in the legislature would make a difference. Or at least they hoped it wouldn't.

I hope not. I hope that women will be statespeople and not just have an agenda (S009, Western Democrat).

I don't think so. As far as I'm concerned there has never been any discrimination towards me. No one has ever said 'you're a woman, you wouldn't understand'. No one ever said that. We work together very well, I think, or at least I feel I work well with the men. But there's always going to be that male domination. I just feel that that's life, you know, we have it in the home, we have it everywhere and I think that's always going to be there (H034, Eastern Republican).

The Democrat women said they felt very encouraged by the growing numbers of women entering the legislature.

Just how they (women) insist on working with people and getting things done and trying to stem controversy. In trying to decrease the adversarial nature of things. And their sensitivity and their priorities (H010, Eastern Democrat).

I think were concerned about putting money where it really matters. I think it will make a difference (H012, Western Democrat).

Future research should look more closely at women's ties to political parties. Women legislators have expressed a need for representation beyond the black and white of the two party system. A look at how a third party, a women's party, would affect government would surely be beneficial to women's participation in politics.

An examination of the last legislative session in Montana using a male-female legislator comparison would also fully illuminate the impact women legislators. The information produced from this study could encourage more women to run for legislative offices, particularly if women's impact could be measured quantifiable. This information could also provide some background to women legislators performance overall in the legislature and possibly add a great amount of substance to a re-election bid. Additionally, the data produced from such a specific study
would allow Montana women legislators to compare their impact to women legislators nationally.

Additionally any information that could be collected on the men and women delegates of the 1972 Constitutional Convention might be enlightening. It appears that this convention affected all Montanans because of its scope and particularly affected women because of the ERA written into it. A study of this event might point to a definitive example of women's impact on Montana government.
# Appendix I.
All Women Elected to the Montana Legislature, 1941-1993

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**APPENDIX I. (cont'd)**

*All Women Elected to the Montana Legislature, 1941-1993*

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1. Party Affiliation
2. Member of the State Senate, X=Yes
3. Member of the State House, X=Yes
4. Member of both the State Senate and House, X=Yes
5. Year first elected to the legislature
6. Number of terms served in the Montana Legislature
APPENDIX II.
Mail Questionnaire

(All information is strictly confidential)

1. Current Age? Age when first elected?


3. Children? no/yes/number

4. Age of youngest child when first elected?

5. Highest level of education when elected?

6. Briefly describe the environment in which you were raised.

7. Occupation when first elected? Current occupation?

8. Please list any offices, employment, or other positions you held prior to your legislative tenure that you feel were important to you in the legislature.

9. Please list any political offices that you sought and were elected to after your legislative tenure (list year elected).

10. Are there any other political offices that you sought and were not elected to (list office and year ran)?

11. Year first elected to MT legislature? Number of terms served?

12. If terms were not served continuously, please explain why?

13. Did you request specific committee assignments during your tenure in the legislature?

14. If so, what committee assignments did you specifically request?

15. Did you hold either the chair or the vice-chair on any committees of which you were a member?

16. If yes, please state which position you held for which committee and the year in which you held it.

17. Did you hold any other leadership positions during your legislative tenure (Speaker, Ship, Caucus, etc.) Please state what this position was and the year in which you held it.

(Continued on next page.)
18. Please rank the following interests as their importance to you during your legislative tenure: least important 1, somewhat important 2, and most important 3): Agriculture, Budget, Business, Childcare, Education, Elderly, Environment, Healthcare, Housing, Job Training, Party Interests, Reproductive Choice, Welfare, Other.

19. Please list five bills that you considered to be your top priority concern during the legislative sessions in which you served.

20. Please list what you consider to have been your accomplishments during your tenure as a legislator?

21. Do you feel that your being a woman affected your role and/or experience as a Montana Legislator? How?

22. Did you have the opportunity to work with other women legislators during your term(s)? How did you relate to them?

23. Did the women in office with you ever work all together to get a bill passed or defeated? What bills?

24. Were your relationship(s) with other women in the legislature important to you during your time in office? In what ways, if any, did you find these relationships helpful?
APPENDIX III.

Interview Questions

1. How did you become involved in politics?

2. Can you briefly characterize your constituency? How do/did you prioritize those interests?

3. Do you think that, overall, women legislators have different legislative priorities than male legislators?

4. What experiences or attributes that you have, as a woman, have you found helpful to you in the legislature?

5. Was your educational background and previous political experience helpful to you in getting elected? While you were in office?

6. Do you have a role model? Was there one person in the legislature who helped you in some way when you first arrived?

7. Do you feel like you make a difference in Montana government? What is that difference? How do you make it?

8. What do you consider to be your most important duty in your role as Montana legislator?

9. Do you think that more women's involvement in the legislature will change Montana government? Why not or in what ways?

10. Are there any specific problems to being a woman in the legislature? Any advantages?
APPENDIX IV.
Modified Mail Questionnaire

22. Can you characterize your constituency? Who are the people you represent?

23. How do you or can you prioritize those interests you represent?

24. Do you think that, overall, women legislators have different legislative priorities than male legislators?

25. Do you feel like you have made a difference in Montana government? If yes, can you describe that difference?

26. Do you have a role model? If yes, who is it and why?

27. Are there any advantages to being a woman in the Montana legislature? Please explain.

28. Are there any disadvantages to being a woman in the Montana legislature? Please explain.
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