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FINDING OUR WAY: WOMEN'S LIVED EXPERIENCES LEADING TO
THE LEGISLATURES OF PENNSYLVANIA AND MARYLAND

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the *meanings* that individual elected women in Maryland and Pennsylvania's legislatures give to lived experiences on their pathway through life that lead them to overcome recognized and documented barriers, as well as maximize opportunities, in order to decide to run for the state legislature.

To execute this study, I used a qualitative research paradigm and conducted in-depth interviews with eight elected, currently seated women legislators from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Maryland.

For the participants in my study, the lived experiences that led these women to decide to run reflected the following meanings:

- Personal needs and ambitions are part of the decision making process
- Gendered messages are present, but less influential than other factors.
- Political party influences are present, but of less import, than other factors.
- Meanings demonstrate very contextual and generational influences.
- There is no one single pathway to the state legislature for women.

In 2005, women hold less than 24% of the nation's legislative seats, and generally, their numbers are increasing overall. This is not true, however, within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As of 2005, the Commonwealth now ranks a dismal 46th in the nation for the percentage of women legislators.

This study found that addressing this trend requires a two-pronged approach of educational and socialization efforts if a more representative and democratic society are to be achieved. Educational efforts need to include, but not be limited to recognizing and encouraging women's participation and contributions to non-traditional career fields, including that of politics, to eliminate the sense of being an "outsider."

Socialization, as the second component, requires recognizing the existence of female centered social capital. Encouraging women to enter the potential pool of political aspirants requires society to acknowledge and value the unique roles and relationships that many women hold as participants in both the public and private domain. As a result, in its' gendered state, this gendered social capital is often undervalued and ignored as viable currency as women decide whether or not to venture onto the varied pathways leading to the legislature.

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PREFACE

I do not believe I am unusual, nor do I believe my life story is that different than anyone else's. However, like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*, I have found that, sometimes, things within your life that you see may not be what they seem. There have been events within my life that have caused me to question the accuracy of what I am observing. This questioning nature, ultimately, sets the context for this research.

Today, as I work my way through this research, I am in my late 40's, well educated, middle class, feminist, white woman; a mother of three boys, with a husband who is an encouraging, younger, professional man. My immediate and extended family supports all of my endeavors and this enables me to continue pursuing my own educational goals. But, my life story was not always so positive, and understanding that story is critical to understanding why this study is important to me.

Early Life

My family boasted little financial wealth. My parents had lived through the Depression, the two World Wars, and the Dust Bowl days of Oklahoma and it was the stories of their life experiences that enriched my life. It was these stories that helped me learn that many challenges in life, regardless of whether you were a man or woman, could be overcome with patience, humor and staying focused on doing the right thing. This legacy, in addition to sharing and helping whenever they could, were the values they instilled in me. I have internalized

these messages, carrying them with me as I face my own life's challenges and continue to pursue my dreams.

Raised in the Kansas, my mother volunteered me for many neighborhood fundraising activities –exhorting me to always try to help others, and particularly those who could not help themselves. My father's death, when I was 15, was hard and money was very tight. Waiting for someone to help us was not *our way* of coping with this situation. I decided to get a job as a waitress to help out, while going to high school. It was exhausting but the early lessons had been learned well - I could do something; I could help my family.

Defining Insiders and Outsiders

As I worked, I watched and listened to the stories my co-workers told and I quickly learned there were “Insiders” and “Outsiders.” The people who knew what was happening, as well as how things were run, had power and could readily affect my life. I called these folks “Insiders” because they knew the stories, and understood the connections— both social and political—within the organization. Because of their knowledge, they could affect change within the organization. I also realized this knowledge was frequently gendered—men usually had more opportunity and ability to access this knowledge, and subsequently, had more power and control over their lives than women. However, there were women within the organization who were very powerful, but they had been there a long time and accumulated much of the organizational history, so I recognized the power of knowledge in being an “insider.”

This was a very important distinction because I recognized that those who did not have this knowledge, or connections, were “Outsiders.” Being an “Outsider” meant, very simply, that we could either follow orders or quit. I believed that, given time and opportunity, I could acquire an “Insider” status. I did not see myself limited as a woman, but rather, recognized that it would take time, effort, and most importantly, opportunity to build those necessary connections but I knew it would also give me greater control of my own life.

Being a young woman in the 1970’s meant that many perceptions of women’s roles were changing. I knew I did not have to be what my mother and her sisters had accepted as their lot in life; I could be whatever I set my sights for. Women were becoming more active and visible politically; they were joining and performing non-traditional jobs, and entering the workforce—maybe not as equals, but as participants. I had heard about “feminism” and, while it was not very visible in Kansas, I recognized this word as meaning equal opportunity; that as a woman, I would be able to achieve my own goals. However, I also heard the derogatory way some people spat the word out, and I felt uncomfortable with claiming the word as part of my identity. I was very torn, for I wanted the freedom to follow my own dreams and really wondered what could be so bad about feminism? After all, how could there be anything wrong with equality between the sexes?

Outside, Looking In: The Military

I knew an education was important for my future success, but money from my family was nonexistent. Applying to a local university made sense to me but despite grant money, the educational loans mounted quickly. Looking ahead, I felt sick - the ticket to graduation was overwhelmingly expensive! I was afraid I would never finish; I could not afford the cost.

Looking for additional resources, I recognized an option that had long been available for expanding poor men's life prospects, and it now beckoned me – the military. The best choice appeared via the Air National Guard, which would allow me to keep one foot in the civilian world while still earning money within the military. In 1978, the GI Bill was not available for educational support (that has changed), but it was a steady income. I found I could possibly get reduced tuition so I signed up for four years.

New recruits have some input regarding preferences for career fields, but initial military career assignments are generated as a result of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test (ASVAB) for the enlisted people and the Air Force Officer Qualifying Test (AFOQT) for potential officers. The initial placement briefing was clear –despite the results of any tests or my interests, Congress prohibited women from all flying and all combat-support career fields.

This was primarily due to existing gendered societal perceptions of women's abilities, their role within the military, and skills.¹

Accepting these restrictions, I took both tests. Understanding that some career opportunities were simply off limits due to my sex, regardless of how well I scored on requisite tests, I was still shocked and dismayed when I learned the results. I could have been a pilot, according to the officer who scored my AFOQT, except for one small problem. He observed, somewhat amazedly, "It is a shame you are a woman as you have scored better than the last two pilot candidates that we selected."

I had never heard such a statement – a "shame" I was a woman? It did not make sense and seemed very strange to me that someone with a lower score would be tapped for an elite, highly challenging and visible job. That the military would also train that person to be an officer, put him in charge of a multi-million dollar aircraft, give him command experience, and pay more money (as well as enable the male candidate to gain tremendous civilian opportunities and make valuable social and political connections after military training), simply because that person was the highest scoring **male** was shocking!

Stung and angered, there was no recourse or appeal process. Through the use of various cultural and political structures, the federal government

¹ These career options would remain closed, by the federal government, until 1991 (Barrelli, 1992).

decreed that, because I was a woman, I was fated to be an “Outsider.” Legally, I was excluded from many present and future opportunities, despite my skills, knowledge and identified abilities while societal sex roles of gender, reaffirmed by military doctrine, enabled males a much greater chance of becoming an “Insider.”

While laws changed and the practice of sexually discriminated career assignments ended, little changed. Despite the removal of these politically based barriers, the culturally and socially accepted practice of a gendered organizational military culture of men as warriors and leaders, and women in support positions, remained stubbornly in place. The leadership positions remained predominantly populated by men, as sufficient time had not passed to change the upper echelons.

Many of the military’s gendered attitudes toward women also remained. During my 13-year military career as an enlisted Air National Guard person, I weathered many challenging and rocky issues that tended to reflect the gendered nature of the military. While usually one of very few women, I could handle most situations with intelligence and humor. However, the most serious challenge came early in my career --- the continuous sexual harassment from my commanding officer that threatened to destroy my career, as well as the only income and opportunity I had at the time.

Quitting would have been much easier, but to do so would have allowed him to continue to harass other women who may not have had as many options

as I. He stepped up the pressure, but I vowed to not give up. By transferring and staying in, I reasoned, I could learn the system, the regulations that were in place (though ignored), and prevent this from happening to other women. I did not see myself as completely powerless, but recognized that environment would keep me an “outsider”; I would have to leave the area, in order to access the system.

With every opportunity to meet new people, I continued to ask questions; and often times my tenacity challenged many notions of women’s gendered role in the military of being docile, naïve and unable to lead. Working through many layers of command, I learned more about the system that was in place to address the issue of sexual harassment. Finally, though the process took three years, I had finally built enough connections and credibility to gain access to the resources that would bring the harasser to justice.

It was a very empowering feeling because I had, literally, changed the future for many other military women. I did not just walk away, leaving him free to subject other women to the humiliation and abuse he had heaped upon me. During this time, I had overcome many stereotypes of young military women – that we are weak, not career minded, and enjoyed being sexually objectified and disrespected by the men who were our co-workers. Instead, I became someone who recast some of the power dynamics afforded to “Insiders” through the knowledge I acquired through time, connections, and opportunities. It was more than realizing that his behavior was improper, I had become an “Insider” to the military judicial system and I had affected change.

Women in Local Politics

Leaving the military, I looked for other opportunities to become involved with my community. With children entering school, I explored that venue and was surprised, despite the historical and traditional involvement of women in educating children, there were few women present at my school's meetings to offer suggestions or make decisions and the men dominated the conversations. While it was apparent that this community held very strong, traditional ideas regarding appropriate roles for women, participation in the decision making process for our community's children was evidentially not included in the list. In many ways, it bore a strong resemblance to the military culture that I had known.

Trying to understand what was happening, I attempted to explain it and dismiss this phenomenon as a "small town" situation, but it quickly became apparent that was not the case. It was with some shock that I noted the same male dominated distribution was present among all the elected positions throughout the county, as well as at the state capital of Pennsylvania! I could not help but wonder how this was so prevalent and still happening in this new millennium.

This situation did not make sense to me, even in this very conservative area. Historically, one of the most common and accepted gendered roles assigned to women has been the transmission of education. Yet, at this very

local level of educational decision-making and involvement, which requires minimal absence from the home, women are conspicuously missing.

Putting the Stories Together

Then, slowly, it began to coalesce for me. The political environment, in many ways, is much like the military – it is, essentially, a man’s world. The leadership is predominantly male, and while the composition of the rank and file membership of the legislatures varies state by state, Pennsylvania’s continues to be male dominated.

My feminist perspective, of believing that females, in order to follow their own dreams, must acquire the knowledge and power in order to realize those dreams, had begun to coalesce. I was not militant, but I recognized the difference between the knowledge, abilities and experiences of men and women as just that—different! Not better or worse, just different. I also recognized that there were socio-economic differences within our society, as well, that affect how women learn about life and create meaning about their experiences, and these lead to differences between and amongst women. But, ultimately, it remains that the way that women learn about their life experiences, I believe, is fundamentally different from men!

I wondered if it was these differences between and amongst women, the life influences within Pennsylvania that impacted or influenced women differently, allowing for this continued male domination within the legislature. Was this why so few women were deciding to run for this state office? The

absence of women from Pennsylvania's decision-making process, at virtually all levels, is puzzling. This situation results in very few women contributing to the discussions that lead to critical and far-reaching decision-making and agenda setting processes within the state. Is it lack of knowledge, and as a result a lack of power, regarding the system or inability to access the knowledge in order to challenge the in-place system? Is it a continuation of the traditional gendered definition of politicians within the Commonwealth? I want to understand why so few women are elected officials in this state, and it is from this lack of understanding that this study begins.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My mother always believed in me and told me I could achieve whatever I aspired to do. While I miss her physical presence, and I know that her faith in me lives on.

Thank you, Kevin, for being there and encouraging this seemingly farfetched dream. You are my friend, husband and biggest supporter.

My sons. Josh, Sean, and Ryan, you kept me grounded during all of this “stuff”, reminding me, frequently, of what is truly important in life – living a life. I hope you will always remember to follow your dreams and believe, too.

Without role models, as well as cheerleaders, Sharon, Susan, Paula, Mike and Gary, I know this would have been a lonely process.

Thank you for your patience and expertise, Carol and Ian. Without your support, I think it would have taken much me longer to grasp the bigger picture.

Finally, my most sincere appreciation to all the legislators who took time from their hectic schedules to talk with me about their experiences as women, mothers, wives and community members. Only their willingness to share their stories made this research possible.

I am so fortunate to have so many people who believe in me, as well as angels in Heaven, watching over me and encouraging me, and this work is dedicated to all of you.



“Legislature”

“Legislature” is one of Van Ingen’s 10 stained-glass windows found in the Senate. Made of brilliant opalescent glass, each weighs 200 pounds and is 10 feet in diameter.

I would like to offer this stained glass representation of the legislature, that of a woman holding the tools of the legislator, as a beacon for other women to find their way onto the many pathways to political office. The window may be found in the Senate offices of the Pennsylvania legislature.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Toto, I have a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.” Dorothy Gale, Wizard of Oz, 1939.

When Dorothy dramatically crashed into Munchkinland, much of the scenery was confusing and contradictory because she was, quite literally, an outsider to the land. Trying to find her way home, the pathways she traveled were often puzzling and confounding, with things looking and acting like nothing she had ever experienced. Women that run for the state legislature, seeking a pathway to the state House, often face a similarly disorienting experience. Women comprise a majority of the eligible population, yet their presence is a distinct minority within the career field of politics. Women also have a significant presence in the professional educational opportunities that lead to elite career fields, such as law and business, but, unlike their male counterparts, they are less likely to go from that pool of eligible elites into political office. There is significant interest and examination as to why this continues to happen, with inquiry happening across many disciplines.

Politics: A “Man’s Job”

Politics in the United States is defined as a non-traditional career field for women because the workforce of state legislators is less than 25% female (<http://www.afscme.org/wrkplace/wrfaq08.htm>, August 21, 2003). Despite cultural changes, politics, both by definition and by tradition, is still considered a

“man’s job.” Boxer (1984) identifies American women as “outsiders” to politics by virtue of our gendered society. Women have been “outsiders” to the political system for much of this country’s history, and women continue to lack much input. This perspective is affirmed through much of the literature, as various authors describe women who decide to enter into the political arena as challenging the preconceived public notions of not only what a politician “looks like”, but the gendered construction of what constitutes appropriate roles for women in the public domain (Witt, 1994; Boxer, 1994, McGlen and O’Connor, 1998; Whitaker, 1999).

Defining gendered constructions of identity is valuable and important at this point, since this concept plays a significant role in the ability of the general public to see women as candidates and legislators. For the purpose of this paper, I will use Fagot’s (1997) definition of gender: a socially defined system based upon biological differences. Within these socially constructed categorizations of gendered identity are the cultural identifiers of women (and men) that proscribe their social and family roles, professions, education, interests, etc.

Historical Overview: National

Since our country’s founding and through 2000, there have been 11,637 individuals who have served in Congress. The first woman, Jeannette Rankin, was elected to Congress in 1916, and only 207 women have served at the Federal level since that time. Prior to the passage of the 19th Amendment, individual states defined voter eligibility and not all states granted women the right to vote. It

could be argued that since not all women enjoyed suffrage, it would logically follow that not many women had been elected. However, this does not explain the continuation of the low numbers after August 1920 when the United States legislature ratified the 19th Amendment. Schenken (1999) notes that, even after the passage of the 19th Amendment, it usually took her husband's death for a woman to be allowed to take his seat in the Federal legislature! It took until 1949, with the election of Margaret Chase Smith, for a woman who was not preceded by her late husband to be elected to the Senate.

Pennsylvania Perspective.

Pennsylvania is no exception to this glacial pace. In 1922, according to *GenderGap.com*, the first eight women were elected to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, a stellar and notable beginning. Schmedlen (2001) notes, since that election and through 2000, only a total of 105 women have served in the House of Representatives, from more than 10,000 elected Representatives², and the Senate has seen significantly fewer women seated.

Currently, of the 50 Senators seated in the Pennsylvania General Assembly, there are seven women. Within the House of Representatives, which number 203 members, there are 27 women. With a state population of more than 12 million, I wonder what has led only these few women to become politicians and elected leaders in our government?

² There have been 39 elections since 1922 for House of Representatives in the Commonwealth, with two- year terms for this legislative seat. However in 1967, the House of Representatives was increased to the current size of 203. This estimate is considered conservative, as it does not account for successful re-elections or for the fluctuation in the size of the House.

Perspective Verification.

On March 24, 2002, Gordon Freireich, a local, older, white male writer for the York (PA) Sunday News, wrote an article on a curious event that had occurred as a result of redistricting. This newspaper serves South Central Pennsylvania, a very culturally traditional, conservative Republican area, with deep German roots. The York Sunday newspaper is much like the population it serves.

Redistricting is a political action that is done, usually, after every census and accomplishes two political goals. First, as populations shift within the state, redrawing district legislative lines, theoretically, allows for more accurate representation of the population. Second, as majority party in the state capital of Harrisburg determines the placement of the actual district lines, the placement of district lines may effectively minimize or eliminate political competition.

The 2000 census resulted in the move of a political district from Western Pennsylvania to the York area. A new district has no incumbents to control the seat and, while this is a predominately Republican area, the party did not tightly control it. In essence, it was an open seat, with few political structures to impede anyone who desired to run for election. The curious effect that Mr. Freireich observed was that, within this new district that represents 61,000 people, not one woman filed for the seat.

This columnist, noting the conspicuous lack of women interested in representing the population, posed the question, “Where are all of the women candidates?” (March 24, 2002, p. B3). While his query confirmed my own

observation, this unsettling reality provoked even more thought. I wondered if there were some “things” that happen along life’s road that encouraged or discouraged women from considering a political career. If so, why were so few able or willing to overcome them? Conversely, what meanings did the women who did decide to become politicians give to their lived experiences? Are they different? This study began to take shape as I realized that the question of “why men and not women” was not the focus. The important question was, for me and for others, why only some women and why not more or others?

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

- How do state-level elected women describe their experiences of deciding to run for office and what meanings do they attach to their descriptions?
- With regard to their experiences of deciding to run for state-level elections, what knowledge, skills and dispositions have these women developed?
- What activities and processes, as well as skills and dispositions that the women associate with deciding to become state-level elected officials, fostered the development of that knowledge?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“We know much about the problems women face running for office and the factors that facilitate their entry...Less is known about why so many in the eligible pool do not run...” (Carroll, 1993, p. 1).

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- What activities and processes, as well as skills and dispositions that the women associate with deciding to become state-level elected officials, fostered the development of that knowledge?

Introduction

My research questions reflect the phenomenon that Carroll (1993) suggests in the opening quote and lead me to the following lines of inquiry:

- 1) What do we know from the literature about why women decide to become a state elected officials?
- 2) Does the literature address what it *means* to be a woman seeking a state legislative office?

As noted in chapter 1, American history clearly documents that legal barriers were in place up until 1920 that kept women from participating as either voters or candidates in the United States. While *legal* barriers fell, other factors

continued to hinder women's ability to access political office because from 1920 until 1969, according to the Center for American Women in Politics³ (CAWP), women's presence as elected state legislators averaged a miniscule 4%, nationwide. According to McGlen and O'Connor (1998), the literature most commonly describes various barriers and factors as impediments to women's political progress. Cultural barriers and factors include the perceptions and public opinions regarding women's appropriate roles in American society, while political barriers and factors address those issues and institutions created by the political parties within our society.

Despite the Civil Rights Movement and women's growing unrest with the status quo, these barriers and factors lingered, relatively unchanged, until 1968. This is when the most recent Women's Rights Movement⁴ became visible and vocal within our country, with demands for economic, political, legal and sexual equality between women and men (Firestone, 1968).

With the publicity surrounding these activities, and women's greater entrance into the workforce, the cultural and political perceptions regarding women and women's roles began to change (McGlen and O'Connor, 1998). The composition of the legislatures reflected these changes, as well. Women's presence, as elected state legislators, began to increase steadily and, in 2000,

³ Center for American Women in Politics, housed at Rutgers University, is one of the primary research centers for American women's political information.

⁴ All references within this document are to the women's rights movement that began in the 1960's, as American history contains several women's political movements.

reached an all time high of 22.5%

(<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cawp/Research/Reports/BookofStates.pdf>, July 14, 2004). Women have steadily held 22.4% of the state legislative seats in the United States since that time⁵.

It is important to note that this record breaking 22.5% was not distributed evenly among the states, and tremendous disparities were, and continue to be, evident. For example, in 1979, women legislators within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania held 4.3% of the legislative seats; by 2004, Harrisburg saw this percentage grow to 13.8. While this may be perceived as a dramatic increase, the 13.8% is less than stellar when compared to the remainder of the United States. In fact, in 2004, Pennsylvania was ranked near the bottom, at 45th in the nation by the CAWP for women in the state legislature.

The disparity becomes more radical when examined against the state of Maryland. A mere 120 miles south of Pennsylvania's capital of Harrisburg, in the capital of Annapolis, women's presence in the legislature is very different. In 1979, Maryland women legislators held 14.9% of the legislative seats, and like Pennsylvania women, they too increased their presence in the legislature but to a much greater magnitude. In 2004, the elected body of the General Assembly of Maryland is 33.5% female, and is ranked third in the nation by the CAWP for women elected to the legislature.⁶ It is this vast and significant difference

⁵ See Appendix G: Pennsylvania and Maryland Historical Participation Rates for Women Legislators.

⁶ See Appendix H: Ten Highest and Lowest States for Women's Participation in the 2004 Legislatures.

between neighboring states that piques my curiosity. Why are so many Maryland women within the legislature and so few women in Pennsylvania?

As Carroll notes in this chapter's opening quote, much of the literature is devoted to describing the cultural and political factors that women encounter as they attempt to secure elected legislative (or other) political seats and very little of the literature addresses why only some of the women who are part of the eligible pool of candidates run for office, while others are not. Before trying to address the deficiency contained within the second half, I will first focus on the literature that describes the three major, interdependent influences that are most frequently cited as having the greatest impact on women's efforts to secure state legislative seats. They are *Media Factors*, *Cultural Factors* and *Political Factors*.

The Media Factors

Within this paper, "the media" will refer to all forms of print and electronic transmissions that educate, inform or entertain. The impact of media factors on women within the political arena is well documented by many media experts, political scientists, sociologists and others. Within this vast literature, several themes emerge which impact women's experiences as they seek public office. These themes include the role of the media and framing (Terkildsen and Schnell, 1997; Rowlison, 1998; and Whitaker, 1999), the impact of media through bias and coverage (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998 and Wilson and Neufield, 2001), and, intertwined within these two themes, media stereotyping (Braden, 1996; Boxer, 2000; Woods, 2001, et al).

A number of sources (Braden, 1996; Terkildsen and Schnell, 1997; and The White House Project, 2001) note there is no denying the power and influence of mass media on our society, and that it is particularly daunting in the context of women's socialization to politics (which will be more fully explored in the section *Political Factors* within this chapter). Media editors wield significant power as they define what is newsworthy, what is covered, what will be seen or heard and how information is ultimately packaged or "framed".

Media and Framing

In this discussion, "framing", is the bundling of "key concepts, stock phrases" to produce conventional images in order "to reinforce communal ways of presenting developments" (Rowlison, 1998, p. 20). Framing is a very important concept because the frames that are utilized by the media "guide the selection, presentation, and evaluation of information for journalists and readers by organizing the reading into familiar categories" (p. 20). Thus, framing may not reflect anything more than the editor's perspective, lens, culture, experiences and translation for what is news and, more importantly, what is not news or newsworthy.

Whitaker (1999) notes that, through framing, the news media shape, rather than mirror, the political landscape by creating, as Walter Lippmann (1922) called them, "pictures in the heads of the public" (cited by Whitaker, 1999, p. 87). Lippmann (1922) believed these pictures then constitute what is "real" for viewers and readers. These pictures often replicate the "myths driven by cultural

norms and standards of what are deemed ‘appropriate’ roles for women in society as determined by institutionalized discrimination and common socialization within the news organization itself” which can have several effects (Whitaker, 1999, p. 88).

Framing may be beneficial and serve to turn the tide for women seeking to challenge entrenched incumbents. Depending upon the political landscape or climate of the area, women legislators seeking to challenge an incumbent officeholders or political structures that are perceived to be corrupt, apathetic or arrogant regarding their constituents’ needs may benefit from framing. In this political landscape, the media may then frame the potential women legislators as fresh and new to the political scene, as well as more honest, more empathetic and less controversial (Braden, 1996).

However, within a political climate that is less supportive of women entering into politics, framing may have a negative effect. The media may create frames in a way that diminish women politicians. According to Thomas and Wilcox (1998), the two dominant methods, among many, that are utilized by the media include lack of media coverage and bias.

Media Coverage and Bias

Media coverage, in any format, refers to the amount of exposure that is given to a topic; while media bias refers to the editorial decisions that determine what “constitutes news, what issues are important, and how policy debates are packaged” (Terkildsen and Schnell, 1997, p. 879). In tandem, media coverage and

bias shape and/or reinforce the societal images and perceptions that represent “cultural and political norms” of a politician through the process, in this case, of including or excluding women from news coverage (Wilson and Neufield, 2001, p. 2).

The literature notes many examples of media coverage and bias, with the most common example being the placement of interviews or pictures of women politicians on society, rather than news, pages (Braden, 1996; Boxer, 2000; Woods, 2001). This example of media bias is particularly insidious due to its double whammy effect. First, this particular placement reinforces traditional gender roles by focusing on hair, clothing or the woman’s family obligations, which is not done to male candidates. Second, this placement also removes the female voice and perspective from the front page or “news” frame, thus diminishing the woman’s visibility as a credible, capable elected authority (Schmedlen, 2001).

The diversionary effects of media bias also may be observed within the agenda setting function of the media. Terkildsen and Schnell (1997) note that the media holds a very strong role in establishing the political agendas of our society, as well as influencing the priorities within the agenda. This is done, primarily, by providing coverage and exposure for certain individuals and their agendas, while simultaneously denying exposure for others. An example of this would be when an editor deems the female politician’s appearance or her message is not newsworthy and gives the event or appearance little to no exposure. According to

Terkildsen and Schnell (1997), this sends citizens a tacit message that the woman is an unimportant player, an outsider, and/or that her message or agenda is less important or unimportant.

The White House Project: Media Bias.

While women are *less* of an oddity today within the legislature, the media still frequently portrays them as “outsiders.” This is particularly true when news directors are acknowledging or identifying subject experts or authorities within the political domain. In a recent study done by The White House Project⁷, the phenomenon of media coverage and bias within Sunday morning talk shows was studied. In particular, this study focused on the composition of guests who appeared on network Sunday morning talk shows, which are identified within the study as a “critical source of national political discussion”

(http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org/research/who_talking_overview.html, November 10, 2002, p. 5).

The study examined all the Sunday morning talk shows for an 18-month period, beginning in January 2000 and found the guest list tends to be “predominantly white and male” (p. 5). By excluding women from the discussions, and thereby reducing their visibility, these shows perpetuate the societal gendered frame that women are not leaders or part of the political

⁷ The White House Project is a national nonpartisan organization dedicated to enhancing public perception of women’s capacity to lead and fostering the entry of women into positions of leadership including the U.S. Presidency. The White House Project (www.thewhitehouseproject.org) is a program of the Women’s Leadership Fund, a 501 (c) 3 organization.

landscape, as well as reinforce the bias “that women lack the credibility, expertise and authority to address our nation’s most significant problems” (p. 7). According to the authors of this study, inclusion or coverage of a person or topic within this particular segment of the media has the potential to “confer power and authority upon those chosen as speakers on national issues” (p. 7). While this study focused on national networks, Whitaker (1999) notes that the local or regional media can also influence how women are perceived within the political climate of a region or state through this same process.

This study is useful to me as it clearly demonstrates the issue of media bias, as well as reiterates the lack of women in national leadership positions within the United States. However, it is of limited usefulness. My study explores the state, rather than the federal level, of elected women; the study quantifies the number of participants, and their sex, and, most importantly, the White House Project study does not address any of the questions within my study.

Media Framing and Stereotyping

In addition to the concepts already discussed, framing can also be used to create and reinforce gendered (as well as other) stereotyping. Gendered stereotyping, according to Paul (1998), is the process of consciously and unconsciously ascribing a set of learned and reinforced descriptors as a characterization of all of the members of a group within our culture.

Gender stereotyping within the media continues to be present, despite a two-decade-old directive within the Associate Press and United Press

International stylebook that prohibit stories “belittling the ambitions of woman and forbidding gratuitous descriptions of women when a journalist offered no similar descriptions of men” (Braden, 1996, p. 68). In mid-1990 campaigns, Braden (1996) notes that the media continued to use gendered societal stereotypes of women politicians and political hopefuls including those of “girls, gals, or ladies...homemaker and housewife” (p. 67).

Political cartoons also serve to provide political perspectives within the United States. Gilmartin’s (2001) study of political cartoons associated with Elizabeth Dole’s 1999 bid for the Republican nomination for president highlights the continuation of this replication of gender roles. Of more than 750 cartoons examined, only 30 even exhibited Elizabeth Dole, and the majority of them portrayed her as the “sexualized and domesticated” wife of Robert Dole, rather than potential presidential candidate (p. 51).

This literature clearly demonstrates that, despite societal changes and policy directives, the media continues to use gendered stereotypes to frame and represent women politicians. This framing, ultimately, is integrated as reality and reinforced within our culture, creating factors that continue to affect, both positively and negatively, women politicians. Yet, despite the overwhelming implications of these practices, women still decide to run for the state legislature.

Cultural Factors

Cultural factors, according to McGlen and O’Connor (1998) are those barriers that affect women’s ability to enter political career fields and include

internal and public attitudes about women in politics, women's political socialization and family obligations. These public attitudes typically reflect the dominant media images that were discussed earlier, and are also rooted in history.

Gendered history lessons

Gendered stereotypes exist within our culture as a result of the continued replication of early societal and political philosophies that were established within Socratic and Aristotelian philosophies. These philosophies created a schism that was gender based, and resulted in two spheres of influence in society.

The *polis* was the public sphere and women's presence was excluded from this sphere through the creation of the *oiko* or the private sphere of reproduction and the household (Jones, 1988). It was the *oiko* that defined woman's role in society and life and reflected the intimate relationship with childbearing and nurturance. Though a woman's role was seen as *contributory* to society, it was not a part of the *polis*, which was the public or production sphere, and open solely to men.

In addition to exclusion, stereotypes evolved as a result of these early philosophies, particularly with regards to women's ability to participate capably in the public sphere. According to Jones (1988), early political activities were characterized as logical discourse within the public sphere. Thus, women's physical absence and verbal silence from the *polis* was attributed to an inability for women to be logical, rather than recognition of the inability to be included in the public sphere. According to Bloch (2001), this example of an early cultural

factor continued to be replicated, and lead to the construction of a gendered stereotype of women being illogical or incapable of logical discourse. This stereotype survives even today and continues to impact women candidates' ability to be considered serious contenders in the political arena.

The literature also notes this cultural concept of women belonging to a separate sphere of society as wives, mothers, nurturers and homemakers continued to be accepted, internalized and replicated, relatively unhampered, into the early 1960's (Woods, 2001; Taymor, 2001; and McGlen, O'Connor, van Assendelft, and Gunther-Canada, 2002). However, as noted earlier, the mid-1960's heralded cultural changes within the United States that directly confronted this historical, gendered stereotyping of women.

Cultural Changes: The 1960's

McGlen, O'Connor, van Assendelft, and Gunther-Canada, (2002) identify Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), the Civil Rights Movement, and President Kennedy's 1963 Commission on the Status of Women as key factors that challenged many of these gendered societal concepts. It was during this time, as well, that public awareness was raised regarding the many forms of oppression experienced by all women. This awareness launched what has since been given the moniker "The Women's Rights Movement" - a movement that challenged the cultural attitudes and perceptions of women as less than equal to men, particularly with regards to political power and access, as well as women's gendered roles in society (McGlen et al, 2002).

Barriers and Opportunities

Political Attitudes

Political attitudes are included in this section because they refer to those beliefs related to politics, politicians and political office that are held by the public. Frequently based on traditions, they are influenced by factors such as sex, age, race, culture, class, education, and as previously noted, the media (McGlen, O'Connor, van Assendelft, and Gunther-Canada, 2002). How these attitudes are internalized and acted upon is particularly important, because these attitudes reflect women's ability to see themselves as not only a voter, but also as candidates – full participants within the political sphere.

Internalizing these public attitudes regarding women's abilities and the appropriateness of being a politician may lead a woman to experience a lowered sense of self-efficacy, despite her accomplishments. This phenomenon that may affect women's ability to visualize themselves as candidates (as well as high level executives) is the "Imposter Syndrome" (Cowman and Ferrari, 2002; Vance, 2002; Clarence and Imes, 1978). According to Cowman and Ferrari (2002), "imposters do not accept their high abilities and outstanding achievements as reflecting their skill but believe that the recognition they receive is fraudulent, undesirable, and a fluke" (p. 119). Women who are quite successful at local levels of government, for example, begin to doubt their abilities and strengths—hence the phrase "Imposter"—when discussions or consideration are being given for the women to move up to a state level elected position.

While a woman may overcome the internal conflict created by this cultural phenomenon, attempting to visualize herself as a candidate may still lead to frustration if local or regional political attitudes towards women participating as elected officials are not the same ilk. Despite the Women's Rights Movement and women's increased visibility in the workplace, gender bias, with regards to the public sense of appropriateness of women as political candidates, may serve to dissuade a woman from running for office.

Political Socialization

Political socialization, according to McGlen, O'Connor, van Assendelft, and Gunther-Canada (2002), is the exposure and orientation towards political involvement by an individual, with the family being the most frequent source of that socialization. These authors believe the lack of women in politics may be explained as a "byproduct of negative cultural attitudes" (p. 70).

Various studies (Farah, 1972, The White House Project, 2000, McGlen et al, 2002) address women's political socialization, particularly their identified ambitions for political office, and consistently, women state a preference for lower levels of government. Carroll (1994) defines lower levels of government as those that are located close to home, so that traditional roles could be fulfilled. Farah identifies factors that account for this preference as follows

Public officeholding at higher levels has been identified with men and male attributes to a greater extent than officeholding at lower levels, to aspire to a higher office requires a greater deviation from traditional sex-role expectations. Second, women have a greater interest in local issues and may simply prefer to serve in offices that deal directly with these

issues. Third, women may be more likely to aspire to those offices where they have the greatest number of role models... (p. 127).

Another component of political socialization is the ability or willingness for women to self-identify as a candidate. According to Carroll (1994), because political office is seen as a male domain, a woman running for political office is seen as exhibiting “deviant” behavior, but a woman who takes the initiative and seeks a major party endorsement “is even more incongruous with traditional conceptions of appropriate female behavior” (p. 28). This is a significant risk for women living in more conservative and traditional regions or locations, and may preclude them from seeking opportunities that could lead to a political career.

The White House Project: Political Socialization

This 2000 study, executed by the White House Project, was designed to look at political leadership and socialization (http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org/research/pipeline-future_full-report.pdf, February 12, 2003). It was, methodologically, both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative portion of the study consisted of a telephone survey of 600 people between the ages of 18 and 24. The survey questions were designed to identify issues, measure the frequency of the identified issues, and to then elicit attitudinal responses to each individual’s perception of their own ability to affect those issues within their own community.

The qualitative component included eleven focus groups, conducted in four major cities around the United States, early in 2000. The sample included

600 young women and 200 young men who were between the ages of 18 and 24 in 2000. As noted, the focus of the study was political socialization, with particular attention paid to their perception of the barriers to women and youth to entering political leadership positions and what factors affected their decisions to run for office.

This study identified the civic behavior these young women observed and received from their childhood as a strong factor in their political socialization. Civic reinforcements included parents who voted, being encouraged to seek office, and serving as a volunteer within their communities. The study concluded that these activities served to demonstrate to young women that their actions could have a positive effect and create change within their community.

The White House Project study also notes that this participant group of young women was “the first to have parents as likely to be voters as non-voters” (p. 7). These parents, having matured through the Watergate scandals, have conveyed the perception that politics is “complicated” and that politics are the “province of older white men who are driven by money and largely corrupt” (p. 7). McGlen et al. (2002) notes similar cultural and family influences on political socialization as the parents of this generation have led to a “negativity and cynicism” regarding politics and politicians. These parental attitudes and beliefs may overwhelm any positive political socialization these women may have experienced as a result of their own involvement in their community, and preclude them from moving up to state level politics or higher (p. 72).

This very timely study has components that resonate with the focus of my study. It is important because of its currency and, similarity to my research. The focus groups identify various factors, such as lack of role models, bad image of politics, and high amounts of money, are still perceived by young people as barriers to political office for not only women, but young people, as well.

Interestingly, the study notes that the participants were consistent in expressing their lack of interest in running for political office. However, it was only when the question regarding interest in running for office was connected to a cause or concern, and the question phrased in a “non-intimidating way” did participants finally express any interest in running for office. Even with these qualifications, participants still identified only a limited amount of interest (http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org/research/pipeline-future_full-report.pdf, pg. 20).

However, this study is different from mine in some very fundamental ways. First, and foremost, the study is researching a totally different population. This study focuses on men and women, within a certain age bracket, who are not office holders at any level. Secondly, this study is comparative between men and women regarding their perspectives on political leadership, and, in particular, women in political leadership. I am not interested in comparing the experiences of men deciding to run for political office. Finally, this study focuses on measuring the degree of interest in running or becoming involved in political leadership. I am not seeking to know how many or the degree of interest, I am interested in the

individual's reasons for involvement. This study provides limited opportunity for individual input.

Educational limitations

Educational opportunities, and their subsequent career options, were limited for women through the 1960's. For the young, college bound woman, there was the expectation that an "M.R.S." would be acquired upon graduation, rather than employment (Wood, 2000; Taymor, 2000). This cultural bias became unwritten admissions criteria in higher education and served as justification for denying women admissions spots, regardless of the woman's stated intentions. With the passage of Title IX in 1971, this form of institutional discrimination from colleges and universities was legally eliminated (Darcy, Welch and Clark, 1994).

The effect of this cultural factor is important for a number of reasons, including the previously discussed negative political socialization as well as the limited educational opportunities that result in a lack of career autonomy and social capital. Negative political socialization within the educational scope includes women dissuaded from nontraditional career fields due to the political and cultural climate that women experience within the classroom (American Association of University Women, 1995). This intentionally and unintentionally gendered guidance essentially eliminates women from entering the elite career fields such as law, medicine and business that typically comprise the educational background of elected men.

It is also during this advanced educational process that many men develop important personal connections, or social capital, that enhances, facilitates and often funds their future political pursuits. In addition to holding advanced degrees, these elite career fields also tend to offer more autonomy than more traditionally women-oriented career fields (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998). Thus, educational discrimination had the potential to impact significantly upon a women's ability to have the flexibility and opportunity to develop political ambition.

Since Title IX overturned sex discrimination in college admissions, women are now more evident within the aforementioned elite career fields. According to "College Report," (*U.S. News and World Report*, 2002) women's presence in the elite professions has increased tremendously, reflected by their presence in degree programs. As of 2002, women represented 44% of the law classes, 45% of the medical school classes, 30% of the business school classes and 55% of the undergraduate programs. With women's growing presence in academia, the legal and medical fields, it may now be easier for women to add the career field of legislator to her list of goal aspirations.

While this literature highlights some of the now historical factors that once firmly impeded women's ability to secure sufficient resources to enter political office, many barriers still exist. Despite women's growing presence in the workforce and access to higher education, current literature suggests that today's young women still face a complicated mix of messages regarding their ability to

access a political career, particularly with regards to the importance of familial influences.

Family Influences

Within the literature, the influence of the family on a woman who wishes to become a politician is examined in the light of both her birth and conjugal family. Aie-rie, Rinehart, and Tolleson (1994) notes that, as the United States are a varied and multicultural nation, these family influences may affect each woman differently. Dependant upon factors such as cultural and religious beliefs, as well as opinions regarding participation in politics and the public sphere, familial support for a female political aspirant may range from supportive to completely obstructive of a desire to seek a state legislative seat.

Influences of Religion

Familial religious beliefs may impact the support a woman receives from her family when considering a political career. For example, fundamentalist religious groups that endorse a separate sphere for women may frown on women entering politics and provide little encouragement or support. Viewed as part of the public domain, toleration of women endeavoring to enter this domain is reserved for elected seats or positions connected to concerns of the private domain. These would include positions such as school or community boards (Woods, 2001; Taymor, 2001).

While the literature did not address the impact of one religion or culture as being beneficial to women entering politics, it is interesting and perhaps

significant that virtually all the contemporary feminist leaders were Jewish. Also, Taymor's (2000) *Running Against the Wind: The Struggle of Women in Massachusetts's Politics* and Woods' (2000) *Stepping Up to Power*, as autobiographies of these women within their respective state legislatures, reiterate that they also were raised Jewish. (This observation may not reflect the philosophy of the religion as being more or less supportive of women in public office, but may, instead, reflect the value held by this religion for intellectual discourse and education.)

Family and Class

With regard to class and women in politics, the literature focuses, predominantly, on elite families. Brownstein (1998) defines elite families as those families that have historically possessed significant social capital as well as economic capital, enabling them to have greater advantages, access and power within their environment. Social capital refers to the individual's personal ties, memberships, and relationships with the community, groups and other institutions that shape the quality and quantity of social interactions (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2000). Examples of elite families within the United States include the Kennedy's, Forbes, Rockefellers, and DuPonts.

Carroll (1993) notes that while elite families supply many candidates to the eligible pool of political candidates, and that entry into this political pool is often "facilitated by an intimate exposure to politics" (Witt, Paget, Matthews, 1994, p. 105), this case does not frequently include women. Studies of elite

families often do not include women family members, whether by birth or through marriage, as part of that pool (Darcy, Welch and Clark, 1994; Witt, Paget and Matthews, 1994). It is only recently that this trend has begun to undergo a very small change. Brownstein (1998) notes that the pattern of grandfather/father/son succession within the United States political realm is starting to change, and the succession is beginning to include both second and third generations of women. However, Brownstein also notes, this is a very short list and is limited to a group of women within elite and long established political families, such as the Kennedy's, Pelosi, Kennelly of Connecticut, Kassebaum of Kansas, and Long's of Louisiana.

According to Witt, Paget and Matthews, as more women are refraining from changing their name upon marriage, the ability to capitalize on a known family name, always an asset to political sons may be positively affected. However, this continuing lack of inclusion of women as part of the elite pool reflects the previously discussed cultural and gendered stereotypes that women face with regard to accessing elite careers and their political socialization.

Children

Regardless of the culture, religious background or class, the literature consistently highlights the cultural, gendered expectation of women as primary caretakers for children. As a result, women candidates with children are often challenged to explain how they will fulfill all these roles, a challenge not faced by their male counterparts with children (Taymor, 2000; Woods, 2000). These

expectations create significant distress for women politicians, as well as many other professional women, who are challenged to balance their careers and their familial responsibilities, particularly if the children are still at home (Boxer, 1994; Margolies-Mezvinsky, 1994; Mikulski, B., Hutchinson, K., Feinstein, D., Boxer, B., Murray, P., Snowe, O., Collins, S., Landrieu, M., Lincoln, and Whitney, C. 2000; Taymor, 2000; Wood, 2000; and Schmedlen, 2001).

In 1976, when Manning Lee released her study that concluded “The regrettable but straightforward conclusion...is that the percentage of women holding public office is unlikely to increase by a substantial amount in the future unless radical changes occur in current sexual role assignment” (p. 298), the role of women in the United States could be described as being in flux. American women struggled to reconcile conflicting messages regarding the role of women as the media portrayed women in traditional family settings, as television shows such as “The Brady Bunch”, “Happy Days” and “The Walton’s” (<http://www.classic-tv.com/shows/1970s.asp>) reigned on prime time television, against evening news reports that women were entering the workforce in dramatic numbers and enjoying the economic freedom. Women were escaping these gendered constraints, according to media ad campaigns in the late 1960’s and into the 1970’s that celebrated women’s freedom by proclaiming “You’ve come a long way, baby!” (http://users.wclynx.com/theshaws/adsvirginiaslims_ads.html)

Yet, women wondered if they had truly “come a long way” or not because, when the workday ended, the responsibilities of the home and children still

awaited them. It was this continuing role, Manning Lee (1976) asserts, that removes women from any opportunity “to compete against men for elected public office and elite positions of power” so long as there were small children in the house (p. 298). This is an important clause. Once children had grown and gone, the public perceptions of a mother slighting her children and forsaking her maternal duties ceased. Once the gendered dues were paid, these women gained the freedom to consider running for political office.

This delay, which often forces women to wait until the “ages of fifty-one and sixty” to begin to realize their political aspirations without encountering negative public scrutiny, affected the individual’s ability to accumulate the necessary social capital for election (p. 305). Manning Lee notes that it is during an individual’s twenties, thirties and early forties that many of the business and community connections are made that translate into enhanced social capital. It is within these same ages that women experience often prolonged absence from the public sphere due to child rearing, and the impact may be significant. Manning Lee concludes that only when significant changes occur to more evenly distribute home responsibilities will women be able to realize and pursue political opportunities and careers.

Schmedlen (2001), while researching the historical and current women of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives⁸, notes that anecdotal and research

⁸ This study was of limited use as it focused narrowly on the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. It provided limited insight about individual women’s decisions to run, but served to enumerate and highlight the types of women who have held this office.

data indicate that some of these same dilemmas still exist for today's political women. According to Schmedlen (2001), 68% of the 105 Pennsylvania women representatives are mothers, and concern for family responsibilities affects many of their decisions regarding running. Consideration is given to a variety of issues, including the potential effect of the immense time commitments of the office, the ages of the children and whether the children were still in the home. Many women, in addition to being a legislator, see themselves still performing the socially assigned roles and responsibilities primarily associated with being a mother and wife, such as transporting children to their many obligations and "maintaining a family life" (Schmedlen, 2001, p. 57). Unlike being a banker or a lawyer, "mothering has traditionally been a full-time job" (Darcy, Welch and Clark, 1994, p. 106).

Time Away From Home

It is this long shadow of family responsibility that affects individual women's perceptions of their ability to enter politics. State (and federal) politics often entail long hours, frequent travel and time away from home, and, therefore negatively impacts women, particularly those with younger children. Schmedlen cites Pennsylvania Representative Mary Ann R. Dailey as believing "the most difficult challenge facing women candidates is trying to balance the roles of wife, mother and politician, even with the wholehearted support of her family".

I would advise women who are thinking of running for public office to realize the time commitment involved in public service. This is not a job I would have considered while raising my children, for I believe that my

responsibility to my family is my first concern. Now that they have grown, I can devote more time to full-time employment outside the home (p. 70).

Travel time has been cited as an influence on a women's ability to participate in political office. Nechemias (1985) notes the distance the woman lives from the state capital might have an impact on women's willingness to seek public office, as the inability to commute on a daily basis may deter women from seeking office. Hogan (2001) suggests that today this factor may now have less of an impact on a woman's willingness to run, though no particular reason is given within his study to account for this shift in attitude.

Today's political woman

The literature speaks of many cultural factors and barriers that have historically affected women's pursuit of a political career, but today's political women are showing indications that these are changing. Ford and Dolan (1999) observe that women elected in the 1990s exhibit fewer of these characteristic hesitations related to being the primary caretaker of family needs, and the question of how much influence a changing society has on women's willingness to participate in political office is apparent.

Potential explanations include a decrease in negative attitudes towards working mothers (particularly of young children) as more women enter the world of work in order to help the family. Cultural barriers may be lower as more women become visible within the career field, allowing women to seek support for their political careers from family, spouse, and children more comfortably and

actively (Margolies-Mezvinsky, 1994; Mikulski, et al, 2000; Taymor, 2000; Schmedlen, 2001; etc). As more women are finding that friends and family are supportive of their desire to become state legislators, and are successful in their efforts, they still face political factors that may be less than welcoming.

Political Factors

Political factors are those structural and environmental factors identified within the literature that tend to prevent or dissuade women from seeking political office (McGlen and O'Connor, 1998). Much of the literature related to the structural factors that affect women's experiences in securing state legislative offices are presented in comparison to men, with men's experiences being assumed to be the "norm" (Manning Lee, 1976; Jennings and Farah, 1981; Darcy, Welch and Clark, 1994; McGlen and O'Connor, 1998; etc.). Jennings and Farah refer to this literature as the "segment characterized by convergence between men and women with respect to most political attitudes and behaviors" (p. 462). The literature tends to look at how many women, what kind of women, what political party and other measurable, quantitative factors that serve as indicators for potential research, but do not address my qualitative concerns.⁹

Specifically, the literature that addresses my earlier stated questions tends to present the political environment as interrelated and interdependent, which I

⁹ It should be noted that there is also a significant body of literature related to structural factors that do not address my question. Examples of this literature includes concepts such as the impact of redistricting on national elections of women (Marlantes, 2002); voting and representational behaviors of elected representatives (Reingold, 1992; Berkman & O'Connor, 1993; Dolan & Ford, 1995); and female legislator's concepts of power after election (Reingold, 1996).

have characterized as a “webbed environment.” That is to say, I recognize that there are factors such as political party, urbanization and political climate, and the level of professionalization of the legislature that have a connected and interrelated, or webbed, nature within the political environment.

These factors, in addition to being webbed, are also contextually bound. Dependent upon the woman’s geographical and personal location, these factors could have varying magnitudes of influence on her ability to seek elected state office.

Political Party

Political party refers to the organized and recognized two-party system that dominates the political activities of the United States in which the members of the parties share similar philosophies and values, and seek to recruit members and candidates who will perpetuate those shared values (Carroll, 1994; Whitaker, 1999). McGlen and O’Connor (1998) note that both parties appear to “now support the notion of electing more women” and that this support includes recruitment, campaign assistance and money (p. 87).

Recruitment

According to Carroll, “the recruitment practices of political parties function as an aspect of the political opportunity structure, not subject to control by individual women candidates, that works against the rapid movement of women into political office” (p.22). Carroll argues that more women running for office does not necessarily guarantee more women holding office if political

parties do not recruit women or are not receptive to and supportive of their candidacy.

Carroll identifies this recruitment for political office as a “broader process of elite circulation” (p. 23). Party leaders, when faced with a newly emerging social group that threatens dissension, may recruit leaders from within that group to run as candidates, in order to contain any political threats to the organization. If dominant party members resist assimilating these new groups, and their perspectives, into the current structure, according to Carroll, “they risk rebellion or even revolution” (p. 23).

Party recruitment usually includes consideration of three factors: whether the seat is winnable, whether a viable candidate can be identified, and if this can be a reward for a loyal party member (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998). Carroll (1993) also adds that women are frequently the recipients of party recruitment in order to fulfill a deceased husband’s term or as a preemptive strike to avoid losing control of the party selection process due to the perceived or actual inappropriate behavior on the part of an incumbent.

Urbanization and Political Climate

Urbanization, as a geographic factor, may play a significant role in how an individual woman describes her ability to access political office. Several authors (Matland and Brown, 1992; Hogan, 2001) note that since cities tend to have more women in the labor force, contain larger pockets of financially resourceful, well-educated women, and have access to political support systems such as NOW and

League of Women Voters, these more urbanized climates may be more “female friendly.” As a result, greater levels of urbanization appear to foster a political climate that is also supportive of women entering into political offices, and women having a greater potential for securing a legislative seat (Matland and Brown, 1992).

Hogan: Urbanization and Political Access.

Hogan’s (2001) study looks at the regional and state effects of political parties on women entering into political office. Utilizing Elazar’s (1984) classification of states, Hogan determines that the degree and type of urbanization impacts and influences a woman’s ability to access state political office. Hogan concludes that, through this classification process, it is theoretically possible to identify the dominant political influences of a state, region or area – that is whether it welcomes women into the political arena or not.

Elazar’s (1984) classification of states’ system seeks to consign geographical entities into one of three categories- moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic – based on the inclination of the resident political party towards allowing “outsiders,” such as women, access to political control (Darcy, Welch & Clark, 1994). Elazar’s three categories established a spectrum from very favorable to women accessing political office (moralistic) through indifferent (individualistic) to “hostile” (traditionalistic) (1994, p. 56). This classification system also recognizes that different regions and areas within a state may have different political climates. Thus, a woman’s place of residence may have a

significant impact on her ability to realize her goal of becoming a state legislator. This factor becomes even more pronounced when the professionalization of the legislature is considered.

Professionalization of the legislature

The final barrier within the political environment that I will discuss is the professionalization of the legislature, which is defined by how closely the state legislature resembles Congress (Kurtz, 1992). According to Kurtz, the urge for state legislative reform in the 1960's was the impetus for the professionalization of state legislatures as states moved towards a more professional Congressional model for their structure – a model dominated by Euro-American males.

Red, white and blue legislatures

Kurtz's modification of Squires (1997) model of professionalization of the legislature uses a spectrum approach and utilizes the categories of "red", "white" and "blue" to categorize state legislatures. Within these categories, according to Kurtz, the "three baseline characteristics of the legislatures – length of session, compensation of legislators and size of staff – can determine the extent of professionalization of the legislature" (p. 2).¹⁰ While session length and pay are

¹⁰ Kurtz (1992) categories related to the professionalization of the legislature: Blue category is characterized by an average of 5.6 months in session per Biennium, a staff average of 127, and compensation that averages \$13,388. White category is characterized by an average of 8 months in session per Biennium, a staff average of 384, and compensation that averages \$28,973. The Red category legislatures average 19.3 months in session per Biennium, 1,487 staff members and average compensation of \$55,135. (Session data – 1988/89, staff data - 1988, compensation data – 1997).

known, according to Kurtz, the size of staff is difficult to ascertain and may fluctuate, based on seniority, needs of the legislator, and ability to pay.

Members of “red” legislatures most closely resemble Congress and consider their jobs to be virtually full time, with large staffs and relatively high compensation. Legislatures in the “blue” category are at the opposite end of the spectrum, as they spend “little time in session, are low-paid, and have relatively small staffs...and demonstrate a strong commitment to the concept of a citizen legislature ” (Kurtz, 1992, p. 3). States in the “white” category “have some characteristics of each of the groups, but do not consistently fall at either end of the spectrum” (p. 3).

Pennsylvania legislature.

According to Kurtz, Pennsylvania is a “red” legislature, which is easy to discern when two of the three components of the theory are applied - the legislative session is year-round and the compensation is very attractive at \$61,889¹¹. Darcy, Welch and Clark (1987), as cited by Hansen (1994), state that it is these two factors, rather than other political culture factors such as gender bias by voters, “that limit the number of women running for or winning public office in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania” (p. 90). The pay of a legislator, exceeding the average annual income for Pennsylvania by almost \$27,000 in 2001, significantly increases the interest and subsequent competition for the job (<http://stats.bls.gov/news.release/annpay.t01.htm>, 5/20/04).

¹¹ Section 3, PA Manual, “Salaries of the General Assemblies” 2002/03.

Maryland legislature.

Kurtz (1992) identified Maryland within the Squires (1997) professionalization of the legislature as hybrid or “white”, because it does not fall at either extreme of the spectrum. This classification is clearly demonstrated as the two prior components are analyzed. According to the Maryland Archives (<http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/>, August 8, 2003), the annual legislative session is 90 days per year or 180 days (6 months) over the biennium for the Maryland General Assembly. With respect to the length of session, Maryland would be classified in the “blue” legislative column, which has an average of 5.6 months in session over the biennium.

The pay for Maryland legislators is very different from that of the Commonwealth. According to Fayette Longwell, Librarian with the Library and Information Services of the Maryland Department of Legislative Services (email of February 2002), the current pay of the Maryland General Assembly is \$31,509, with slated pay increases which will increase this salary to \$43,500 by 2006. This rate of pay, according to Kurtz (1992), would place Maryland in the “White” category, which averaged \$28,973 in 1997. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average pay in the state of Maryland, for 2000-2001, is \$38,237; which is not significantly different from the legislator’s pay. This reduces the attractiveness and competitiveness of the job for women seeking office (<http://stats.bls.gov/news.release/annpay.t01.htm>, 5/20/04).

Hogan's study, the use of Elazar's (1984) classification of states and Kurtz's (1992) spectrum approach are useful to this study. First, this information provides tools for analyzing the professionalization of legislatures in order to understand the impact political climate might have upon a woman's experience of trying to secure an elected state legislative seat. It appears conceivable that, should a woman decide to run, her chance of successfully accessing a state legislative seat may be dependent upon where she lives and the political climate of her residence, within either the state or the area when she decides to run for office. This literature also reaffirms the previously mentioned webbed image presented earlier of the multitude of political factors that act on women's individual experiences, impacting her ability to access office.

However, Hogan's study is only tangentially relevant to my study. For example, Hogan argues that urbanization may positively affect a woman's ability to access political office, but it appears that not all urban areas are created equal. Within Maryland, there are few major cities, based on population, while Pennsylvania has many. According to the 2000 United States census, there are eight cities in Pennsylvania that are larger than the largest city in Maryland, yet, as has already been demonstrated, there are many more women seated in the Maryland legislature.

While the literature speaks volumes about the barriers to women's ability to participate within the public sphere, it is irrefutable that there are women elected to the state legislatures of both Maryland and Pennsylvania, as well as

others. The question raised by Carroll (1993) of understanding how *some* women have overcome these documented, measured and pervasive barriers to achieve this goal still has not been addressed. The answer may lie in the literature regarding how women learn and make meaning of the events of their lives in order to decide to pursue a state legislative office. This is the literature I will review next.

Learning

In order to for women to make meaning of their lived experiences in order to decide to run for state legislative office, women must first learn about politics, governance and other related topics. This necessitates not only the accumulation of knowledge, experience and exposure to this information, but the ability to then process and apply the information.

Public Education

One pathway for accomplishing this task is via formal, public education. Publicly funded education was established around the turn of the 20th century, and, historically, the goal of public education was to prepare the immigrating citizen to be workers and their children to participate effectively as citizens of the United States (McClung, 2002, Arnot, 2000). Through the transmission and replication of a set of a common core of values and beliefs, particularly the value of constitutional democratic governance, it was believed that greater assimilation of immigrants would be possible and the United States would realize a more productive and unified country.

I would argue that it is unlikely that public education is the only satisfactory explanation for several reasons. First, public education is the domain of children; there is significant change and growth that occurs as a result of experiences in adulthood that alters knowledge amassed early in life. Secondly, while women may learn about the structure of government and gain awareness of the role of politicians through this formal education process, the curriculum content is not one that would facilitate movement of women into politics. Curriculum tends to be written with knowledge, values and beliefs that are reflected through the lens of the privileged, white, and Euro-American males, the dominant culture of our country. As a result, this information reflects political success as achieved through acquisition of male values such as individual autonomy, competition as well as attainment of social, gendered positions (Jackson, 1993, Hayes and Flannery, 2000).

Arnot (2000) argues that this dominance of gendered knowledge creation and transmission creates a variety of significant problems for women. While learning about government and politics, women do not recognize themselves within the texts or “connect” the teaching to their own lives, as there are few, if any, visible role models. Additionally, Arnot (2000) argues the educational system is designed to encourage the gendered citizenships defined by the dominant culture. In essence, women are unable, as adults, to overcome these dominant culture’s teachings in order to realize their ability to be a state level politician or a part of the political world, thus necessitating another approach.

Women's learning

The literature on women and learning within the adult education literature and the qualitative research literature on women in politics are remarkably similar. According to various authors, (Flannery and Hayes, 2000; Biere, 1999; Peck, 1998, Puwar, 1997), it is very sparse and reflects a “prevailing lack of information and understanding about adult women’s learning and education” (Flannery and Hayes, 2000, p. xi).

This shortcoming, Flannery and Hayes (2000) note, is particularly evident within the literature and discussions of adult learning theories. “Women, women’s thoughts, women’s writings and research specifically about women’s lives and learning have been absent, subsumed, ignored, and misrepresented” (p. 6). They argue that, philosophically, learning theories within adult education are treated as universals, and women’s learning is “typically a postscript” to a general discussion of adult learning (p. xi). In an effort to address this vacuum, Hayes and Flannery (2000) assembled *Women as Learners*, as a compilation of the theories that they were able to identify that addressed women’s learning.

Harding (1996), as cited by Flannery and Hayes (2000), notes that the effects of gender are present within the culture, as well as the relationships within the cultural setting, and these shape the individual and the construction of knowledge. Reflecting the situational nature of these influences—where the woman lives, her ethnicity, age, etc.—different knowledge may exist between women, as well. Thus, even when individuals are in the same situation, they may

create different knowledge and meaning about an event. Despite the scarcity of research regarding women's learning, Flannery and Hayes (2000) have identified three dominant theories that keep adult women at the focus of the research. Generally, these theories recognize the influence of gender on how women make meaning of their lives, the oppression that is created as a result of much of this gendered influence and how this affects the construction of knowledge. They are Psychological Feminist Theories, Structural Feminist Theories and Post-Structural Feminist Theories.

Psychological Feminist Theories

This theoretical framework tends to reflect an orientation and emphasis on learning that comes as a result of understanding the differences between women and men, with a focus on socially constructed gender roles, power inequities and women's learning that is constructed through the connections established within the relationships. Familiar works include those done by Gilligan (1982, 1988) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986).

Gilligan's (1982) research, for example, began with a focus on moral decision-making, and the assumptions that had been accepted regarding moral development. She questioned why the related theoretical development, which was based on an examination of only half of the population (male), was deemed to also be relevant for girls and women. Seeking to answer that question, her studies included girls, adolescents and women and their social/moral development.

Gilligan notes that, within moral decision-making, females tend to emphasize a

focus on caring. More females within Gilligan's study also spoke of their desire to understand the other person's perspective, to connect with the truth of the other's experiences; rather than superimpose an impersonal explanation or understanding. This focus was "almost exclusively a female phenomenon in three samples of educationally advantaged North Americans" (p. xix).

Gilligan is also credited with coining the phrases "connected knowing" and "separate knowing" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg and Tarule (1986, p. 101). Connected knowing relates to the relationship between the knower and the known, and the subjective nature of knowledge. Separate or procedural knowing, on the other hand, emphasizes an acceptance of conveyed knowledge, previously established guidelines and rules – a recognition of another as the "expert".

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) research is similar, yet slightly different. Clinchy, Goldberg and Tarule's work was with a similar group of subjects, younger women, and their experiences within the context of exploring college student development. Belenky's focus was more on the voiceless poor mothers with young children, and the institutions that impacted their lives. Coming together, they linked their work with a growing interest in women's development, to make sense of the apparent difference that existed between women's knowledge construction and the accepted theoretical models that had been advanced by Perry (Gilligan, 1982, 1988; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg and Tarule, 1986). Ultimately, this theoretical position stresses that, by understanding the gendered nature of our society, these political and social barriers may be

overcome and allow women's knowledge, experiences and contributions to be valued equally to those of men.

Psychological Feminist Theory Development

Peck (1986), in an acknowledgement of the shortage of theories on women's self-knowledge and definition, advances a theory that reflects this psychological framework. Acknowledging the diversity of life experiences, as well as attempting to address the lack of application of women's lived experiences to "existing models of adult development," Peck's theory reflects the influence of the contextual setting on women's lives, and is inclusive of social, emotional and political influences (p. 282).

Presenting her model as a flexing, fluid, vortex-type figure, Peck describes the external wall as representing the influences of social-historical times in which the woman lives, while the internal sphere of influence swirls around the core of self-definition. Acknowledgement of the lack of linear progression that many women experience within their development, Peck argues that the influences of "socio-historical time dimensions" on women's lived experiences are significant (p. 277). As the woman attempts to define herself within her relationships and external forces, the socio-historical walls may be more giving, using the example of the ability of women to see options related to unplanned pregnancies for a woman in the 1940's versus the 1980's (p. 278). The woman in the 1980's experiences a much more fluid and contextual relationship with the decision

making process, including timing of the pregnancy, ability to support herself and a child, as well as her class and race.

Peck's internal "sphere of influence" within her model accommodates the influence that the woman has on her environment, as well as the impact the environment may have upon her (p. 279). Utilizing Gilligan's (1982, 1988) concept of connectedness, this portion of Peck's theory reemphasizes the importance of the woman's connectedness to her environment and the emotional complexities that shape women's various relationships. Again, Peck emphasizes the "flexibility and elasticity" as critical to understanding women's development (p. 279). As relationships flex, one relationship may offer the woman greater support for her development and growth, resulting in a diminishing of the sphere of influence, strength or connectedness to another relationship.

Psychological feminist theories have some application to my study in that theories resonate with the orientation of woman-centeredness, which is critical to this study. This framework is also useful to this study within the application of examining the contextual setting in which the women have grown up that has led them to be the women they are today.

However, many of the examples that were given within this theory development, including the initial assumption of comparisons to men, are incompatible with my research. This study does not include comparisons of men to women in politics, other than to make the numerical argument that women are in a significant minority within the legislature. However, most of the research is

based on women who are marginalized, and virtually powerless, such as women who are poor, or in abusive relationships. It is arguable whether elected women legislators, when examined in comparison with the women within these cited studies, could be considered either marginalized or powerless.

Structural Feminist Theories

These theories examines societal structures such as patriarchy and capitalism that tend to oppress women, as well as how the oppressive behavior is replicated within society in settings such as family, schools and the world of work (Flannery and Hayes, 2000). Hayes and Flannery identify Wendy Luttrell as a researcher that utilizes this theoretical framework. This framework attempts to understand the relationships between these structures and how they affect class, gender, and race, with the intended goal of changing the structural oppression.

Luttrell (1997, 1989) has spent significant efforts on trying to understand the implications of race and class on women's lived experiences, particularly as it relates to their understanding of the value of education on self-worth and identification. Luttrell (2000) notes that her work with primarily working class women has reiterated the unconscious value system our society has given to formal education (whether high school GED or community college), and that attainment of those credentials serves to enhance their personal worth.

The focus on the societal structures of gender and patriarchy within the stories of the women in Luttrell's studies, as well as the women's experiences within education, resonate within my study. There can be little argument

regarding the gendered nature of politics, but I believe this theory may have limited application to my research. Luttrell is seeking to identify generalities, across race and class, while my research focuses on understanding the phenomena of women's lived experiences that lead to deciding to run for office. I am attempting to compare their experiences, not to make any generalizations. Within my study, race and class, are additional, not distinguishing, factors for understanding the phenomena.

Within Luttrell's studies, working class participants reported that the educational structure affected their ability to succeed academically, and, as a result, their perceptions of self-worth. While some of my participants identified their family of birth as working class, this class designation reflects the context of when the woman was young. Several women within my study lived through the 1940's and the related economic influences, and, as a result have self-identified their birth family as "probably poor". The remaining participant's birth families, as well as the current family of the participants, were self-described as nothing less than middle class.

The influence of societal structures on educational attainment is very different for my participants, as well. Several participants within my research reported that gender and race issues within the educational system created conflict, however, educational attainment were not limited due to these conflicts. All of my participants have a high school diploma, the majority has college

degrees, and over half of them have advanced degrees as lawyers. This is an important distinction between Luttrell's studies and my research.

Post-Structural Feminist Theories

The final theoretical framework, Post-Structural Feminist Theories, attempts to recognize the contextual nature of the lived experience, and how women are both privileged and oppressed within our society. Researchers within this framework, according to Hayes and Flannery (2000), include Debold, Tolman and Brown (1996) and Tisdell (1997). Hayes and Flannery note that this theoretical stance recognizes the individual's agency within the oppressing societal structures, and that particular attention is paid to the woman's thoughts and knowledge construction, as demonstrated through the language of the woman. Tisdell's (1997) research, for example, focuses on gender and power dynamics within the college classroom. Examining the power of positionality within the classroom, this research notes the effects of such social and institutional dynamics as status, gender, and sexual identity on previously marginalized students. This theory recognizes that women's lives may be influenced differently based on many socio-economic and cultural factors, and result in different meanings for these events. As a result, there is a recognized legitimacy for the uniqueness of each woman's experience and there are few assumptions of universal applications within this framework.

This theoretical framework provokes a great deal of thought, with regard to this research. There is clearly an attempt to recognize and embrace the

uniqueness of each woman's story within this theoretical framework, yet in its' attempt to emphasize the uniqueness, could it also frustrate future attempts to address or correct the imbalances? If each woman's experience is truly unique, is it possible to influence or modify those social or political structures which have been discussed within this research that have historically impeded women's progress into the legislature?

Moving from the individualized concerns, I am concerned about assuming the experiences of some women are the experience of all women. Flannery and Hayes (2000) note that the literature on women's learning, while putting the focus on the particularity of women's lives, has suffered from generalization amongst and between women, as well. The experience of the white and middle-class woman has become the standard for all women, and only recently have "race and-class-based differences been recognized" (pg 11). I have endeavored to recognize some of those differences, such as age, race and class, within this study in order to bring more diversity into this body of literature regarding women's lived experiences.

My theoretical stance

Exploring this literature has given me the opportunity to reflect on the various strengths and weaknesses of these philosophical positions within my own research, ultimately developing my own perspective. As a result of this research, I have determined that my own philosophical position regarding how women learn

is more in synch with the psychological feminist theory development, blended with pieces of the post structural feminist learning theory.

The psychological learning theory resonates with women's relational and connected orientation to learning that resonates within my research. The relationships that women forge with their community, learning about the needs and wants, while also accumulating the connections that lead to critical social capital, is evidenced within my research. However, I am not seeking to compare men's learning or lived experiences to women's. As a result of blending this women's learning theory with the contextual and reciprocal nature of learning that is within the post-structural feminist theory, I have a learning framework that is very compatible with my orientation.

Summary

This research has highlighted the fact that the literature related to, and focusing on, women in politics, as well as that of women as learners, is scarce. The quantitative literature speaks dispassionately about the systematic, measured and general sense of those factors that affect women's ability to access the state legislature. While providing summarized and general information on political women, however, it does not help with understanding how an *individual* woman has successfully navigated that terrain in order to decide to become a state legislator. This is the major weakness of the quantitative literature.

The literature that tends toward anecdotal and biographical information, such as that provided by Boxer (1994), Taymor (2000), Woods (2000) and

Schmedlen (2001), breathe life and meaning into the sterile and impersonal facts of the quantitative literature. Their words provide contextual meaning, depth and color to the quantifiable literature in order to identify emerging and recurring topics.

However, these anecdotal and biographical stories, while deep and rich in meaning are also lacking. The stories are not comparative between women, to see if there are similarities or generalities that could be identified. The stories are not systematic; they evolve as the storyteller recounts them, and are very individualistic. While of interest, biographical and anecdotal stories, alone, also cannot answer my research questions.

In addition to adding to the body of literature, my study will be different from the earlier literature in that all of these concerns and features will be addressed within one study. First, my study will be a systematic examination of each woman's story. Second, it will be comparative between the women's stories within the study, and finally the study will be rich in contextual detail. By addressing all three aspects, within one study, I believe there can be a greater understanding of how state level elected women describe their experiences of deciding to become elected officials, what meanings they attach to their descriptions and what processes they may have used to know that this was what they wanted to do.

My study will address the issue of being shared research space as I let the voices of the legislative women of Maryland and Pennsylvania provides the

factors which may have affected how they chose their pathways to the legislature. Additionally, this study will be comparative between and among the participating legislators of the two states, in order to understand more fully why there are differences between the women's participation within the states' legislatures. Finally, my study will also provide the rich, contextual meaning so that the voices and stories of the women of these two state legislatures can speak to all women who may wish to find their way into the state legislature. By addressing all three components in one study, I believe there can be a greater understanding of how certain women make the decision to run for state legislative office.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter begins by identifying the purpose of the study, restating the research questions and then proceeding into an overview of the design. The overview describes the various research methods utilized within the study, and then I describe the site selection process, sampling procedure, data collection, data analyses processes and ethical considerations. I conclude with a discussion of issues related to credibility and trustworthiness, and my background and bias as the researcher.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the *meanings* that individual elected women in Maryland's and Pennsylvania's legislatures give to lived experiences on their pathway through life that lead them to overcome recognized and documented barriers, as well as maximize opportunities, in order to decide to run for the state legislature.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

- How do state-level elected women describe their experiences of deciding to run for election and what meanings do they attach to their descriptions?

- Regarding their experiences of deciding to become state-level elected officials, what knowledge, skills and dispositions have these women developed?
- What activities and processes, as well as skills and dispositions that the women associate with deciding to become state-level elected officials, fostered the development of that knowledge?

Design Overview

In order to address the above research questions, this design overview begins by defining an extensively used phrase within this research and is the focal point of the research –the “lived experience.” Within this study, the lived experience refers to the pre-reflective stories that are given by each of the women during the interview process.

As these are their recounting of their lives, I accept this information –my primary data—to be accurate and true and the focus is kept on understanding the meaning of the lived experiences of these women. With this focus in mind, the decision to do a qualitative study, and in particular phenomenology, is straightforward because I am interested in understanding the meaning within the lived experience, rather than reducing the data to generalities, measuring or quantifying it (Van Manen, 1990).

There is an additional lens that I believe is needed to complete this research. There is no dispute that the field of politics reflects a male domination. As a feminist, I believe that women, who comprise over half the population, have a tremendous potential to offer through their participation within the public

domain due to their different perspectives and life experiences. As the legislative career field is part of that public domain, I believe this is a viable and appropriate career goal for women. As a result, I have incorporated a feminist lens within this study to examine the gendered nature of this career field, as well as provide a forum for these women's voices to be heard. Greater detail will now be presented regarding the two components of my research design: phenomenology and feminist research.

Overview of Phenomenological Research

Phenomenological research focuses on quality rather than quantity. Marshall and Rossman (1995) define phenomenology as “the study of experiences and the ways in which we put them together to develop a world view” (p. 82). Van Manen (1990) illustrates this when he points out that phenomenology asks, “What is the nature of this lived experience?”(p. 42). He notes that the “lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research” (p. 36). Thus, understanding the meaning of the lived experience provides the insight into this research “by the questioning of the essential nature of a lived experience: a certain way of being in the world” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 39).

The decision to use phenomenological research allows me to accomplish several things. First, it allows me to establish a relationship with the legislator, resulting in making her feel less of an object of study, and more of a participant. This is a very important factor in feminist research that will be discussed in greater depth in that section of this chapter.

Secondly, this method of gathering data also permits me, as the primary tool for the data gathering, to gather data by studying the legislator as she responds. My sensory-based observations, a form of intuitive data, provide me with a myriad of unspoken data clues about the legislator, such as the emotions elicited through the telling of the experience, as well as the congruence between what the legislator is saying and what her body language is revealing. These nuances are also imperative to my understanding the depth and breadth of the meaning of the lived experience for the participants (Van Manen, 1990).

Thirdly, phenomenological research allows me to pay attention to the contextualities of the women's lives. Contextualities refer not simply to the concrete elements of their social and physical environment, but also to the way in which those elements color and are colored by the women's lives. Marshall and Rossman (1995) observes that "human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, thus one must study that behavior in situations...and the internalized notions of norms, traditions, roles, and values are crucial contextual variables" (p. 44).

While this quote recognizes the importance of contextuality, I believe this quote does not completely embrace the full implications of this factor within this study. Marshall and Rossman fail to mention the reciprocal relationship. These women's lives also influence their environment, as well as being influenced by the settings of their culture, families, and traditions in existence. Recognition of

this reciprocity elicits a richer sense of these women's stories, providing color and depth that would have otherwise been missing,

Ultimately, my intent is to provide a plausible understanding of the women's lives, rather than to develop a theory or a set of hypotheses that would explain their lived experiences. In developing this understanding, I am "... less concerned with the factual accuracy of an account than with the plausibility of [the] account – whether it is true to our living sense of it" (Van Manen, p. 65).

Overview of Feminist Research

As noted earlier, I employ feminist research to explore gender inequalities that exists within the political structures of the state legislature. This research orientation means, according to Puwar (1997),

- It actively seeks to remove the power imbalance between the researcher and the subject
- There is a conscious effort to share the research space with the researched
- It begins with the standpoints and experiences of women.

The first criterion, removing the power imbalance, was generated as a result of research done by relatively powerful researchers observing relatively disenfranchised women (Puwar, 1997). Within much of that research, Puwar notes, there is a significant imbalance of power, but that is not the case in this research. As elected state legislators, the women in my study occupy relatively powerful positions; however, I do as well. As I disclosed my own my credentials to the legislator, power is also conferred upon me, as a result of my educational

affiliation and background. I am a doctoral student from a highly regarded institute of higher learning, as well as an elected official. Consequently, the notion of the powerless subject under the spell of the powerful researcher does not hold in this case.

Nevertheless, it is still important for me to pay attention to the ways in which our differential sources of power shape the research process. Another aspect of power that I need to pay attention to are the ways in which the male dominated field in which these women work and the patriarchal society in which they live, shape the women's stories.

The second criterion, that of sharing the research space, refers to the desire to create a research situation in which the interviewee is encouraged to participate as much as possible, in order to create "an empowering experience for the researched"(Puwar, 1997, p. 3). Puwar argues that that this encourages a more comfortable and open environment for the researched woman to tell her story, in her words, for a fuller and more complete understanding of the experience.

While the third criterion would appear to be self-evident, that it begins and ends with the standpoint of women, I believe a bit of specificity is required. I am expanding the third criterion to recognize a factor that is not usually addressed within feminist research and that is the dearth of studies of elite women. Jennings and Farah (1981) notes that the majority of research related to the elite structure of society—those who have power, position, and ability to affect change—continues to define and reflect a predominantly male domain. This research will

augment the minimal research that has been done on women elites, as well as challenge the paradigm that only men are members of the elite structure of society.

Highlighting and recognizing women as valid members of the elite structure of society also addresses two issues mentioned earlier in this research – women as “outsiders” and the Imposter Syndrome. Presenting their stories, in their voices, removes the oddity that surrounds women as a minority group within politics, and addresses both issues (Wilson, 2001). This sense of women as “outsiders” to politics is reduced when we hear these women’s stories, demonstrating they are competent and functional members of society. By virtue of their election, they become a part of the public arena and elite class formerly only the domain of men.

Additionally, by increasing the number of elected women, there is a greater visibility of these women, which creates the potential for mentors and role models. In this manner, women who are considering a political career may experience greater efficacy through vicarious observation of elected women (Zelden and Pajares, 2000). If women, particularly those new to the political arena, can see themselves as competent and as capable as their role models, the sense of being an “Imposters” or recipients of fortuitous serendipity can be eradicated and replaced by authentic validation of their knowledge, skills and abilities.

Research Procedures

This section discusses the procedures within my study including site selection, participant selection, ethical considerations, data collection, and analyses. Fundamental to the premise of this study, as I have stated, are the beliefs that

- Women have a tremendous potential to offer within the public domain due to their different perspectives and life experiences.
- Women should participate as fully as they may wish, within that domain, and,
- These two beliefs are worthy goals of a democracy.

I believe that by understanding how various women have comprehended and successfully negotiated the socio-economic, political culture and structures that have been identified within the literature, as well as maximized the available opportunities, then the future level of women's participation in the legislature may be improved.

Site Selection

I determined that the state legislature, rather than the federal legislature, was the most appropriate level for conducting this research for several reasons. As noted in Chapter Two, selecting the state level recognizes that this office is often a training ground for future political offices – women who experience success at the state level feel more capable of pursuing a federally elected legislative office.

The primary reason for selecting the state level, however, was accessibility. Security concerns since September 11, 2001, resulted in the creation

of additional obstacles that precluded access to many politicians. There were significant concerns that this factor could delay or even prohibit the study from being done.

As a consequence of these two factors, my research focused on women at the state legislative level, and in particular, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the state of Maryland. Pennsylvania was, by default, one of the research sites, as that is where I live. Also, as noted in earlier chapters, it was within this political environment that my curiosity about women's presence in elected political offices was prompted in the first place. The state of Maryland was selected for the following reasons:

- The states of Maryland and Pennsylvania are contiguous,
- The state capitals are closely situated.
- Women participate within both state legislatures.
- I have personal familiarity with the state capitals
- There are striking difference in level and type of political representation of women in the two states.

While six states are contiguous to Pennsylvania, I chose Maryland instead of the other five states for a variety of reasons. Harrisburg and Annapolis, as the respective capitals, are both accessible by car and familiar to me as the interviewer; with the physical separation of the two capitals is approximately 120 miles. This means the research sites are very commutable, rather than requiring

hotel rooms, rental cars, or the purchase of airline tickets to visit, observe and interview the participants.

The selection of these two sites also increased the likelihood of completing the research in a timely manner. Puwar (1997) notes that the very unpredictable nature of the legislature and the high demands for the legislator's time and attention create the potential for last minute cancellations and/or changes due to committee and constituent meetings, as well as lengthy legislative sessions. Recognition of these factors was part of the terrain of the study, but the close proximity of the capitals reduced the amount of hardship and guilt that could have been experienced due to the need to reschedule.

Logistics has some impact on the site selection for any study, but there was a greater reason for the selection of these two states that is much more profound than any consideration of physical distances. Each of these two state legislatures has women seated, they have women in both houses of the legislature and each of these legislatures has women of color seated. And the similarity ends there. As noted early in this study, Maryland and Pennsylvania are at opposite ends of the spectrum with regards to women's presence within the legislature and it is this observation that creates the greatest intrigue for me and drives the site selection within this study.

Sampling Procedure

Going to the state government web sites for both states, I obtained a list of all women legislators who were in office in 2003. According to the respective

state websites, 35 women were in the legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – eight Senators and 27 Representatives, while the General Assembly of Maryland has 47 women within the House of Delegates and 15 women serving within the Senate, for a total of 62 women. Thus, the potential pool for the entire study included a total of 97 female legislators (Appendix A).

With that finite reality in mind, my first invitation was sent to 23 randomly selected women legislators. The initial letter of invitation, along with a response card, was sent early in 2003 (Appendix B and C), and generated only two responses – both negative. A follow-up was made to this group, via email, to the legislative electronic addresses listed on the biography to try and generate interest in participating. Again, there were no positive responses.

An additional group of 27 randomly selected women legislators were sent invitational letters, telephone calls, and emails, bringing the total to 50 women legislators. Only fifteen women legislators responded in any manner. My experience is not uncommon, as Puwar (1997) notes that the whole process of attempting to interview women elites is a “potential struggle for the interviewer” primarily due to the inability to gain access to the women (p. 2).

Of the fifteen, five administrative schedulers stated the legislator had no time in her schedule to give any interviews. One additional legislator’s aide notified me that she would like to participate, but she could give me only 15 minutes on the telephone, which I declined. One legislator that agreed to participate was forced to drop out prior to the interviews because of other

conflicts within her legislative requirements Thirty-three did not respond in any manner, despite numerous and varied attempts.

Characteristics of the Participants

Eight legislators agree to be participants in this study – three from Pennsylvania and five from Maryland. I believe the small number of women willing to participate from Pennsylvania reflects Kurtz's (1992) observation regarding the limited time available to legislators in the more professional legislature.

Regarding their legislative positions, there are three senators and five are either representatives or delegates. The ages of the women are varied and range from mid 30's to mid 60's. Of the eight women, two represent mixed small town/rural areas, two represent a single major city, and four represent various suburban areas. Two are women of color.

Data Collection

As I began to design this study, I recognized that there were several forms of data that I would need to consider collecting for this research. These included data obtained through observation, interviews, as well as archival data.

Deciding to obtain data through observation proved to be problematic. As no elections were in process and no one that I knew was thinking of running for office, there were no candidates to observe. As a result, observing women legislators at the state legislature seemed the best option.

The Maryland Assembly was not in session as this was late spring, so I went to observe the Pennsylvania legislature. I was able to observe women legislators in several committee meetings, as well as a few interactions between women legislators and others, such as staff, fellow legislators and constituents. However, I recognize these observations, as data, are of interactions that have occurred “after the fact” of the woman having decided to run for state legislative office, and while interesting, this data does not reflect the focus of this research.

Moving on in the data collection process, I realized the best way for me to understand the meaning of these women’s lived experiences was through one on one interviewing. Crafting semi-structured questions, consistent with phenomenological research, would allow me to elicit the rich, contextual data I was seeking. Bogdan and Biklen, (1992) note that rich, thick data may be acquired through in-depth interviewing achieved within a naturalistic setting of the participant’s choice, that it is contextually bounded, and descriptive. The interview questions I crafted had to create the opportunity for pre-reflective stories, rather than analytical or presumptive responses. I wanted the information that often disappears when attempts are made to generalize measure or quantify human experiences.

The format of the semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews was selected because, as Van Manen (1990) notes, people “talk with much more ease and eloquence and with less reserve than they will write their thoughts on paper”

(pg 64). The interview protocol (Appendix D) was designed to elicit the woman's "lived-experience descriptions" (p. 55). I wanted them to tell me their stories.

While my decision to use a semi-structured interview format was affirmed through the literature (Van Manen, 1990; Riessman, 1993), it was also the most expedient. Most politicians view time as an extremely precious commodity and their very time-consuming schedules eliminate the more unstructured interview format (Puwar, 1997).

Getting on the legislator's agenda required negotiating first with the gatekeepers – the schedulers, secretaries, and administrative assistants. Each of these individuals, very professional and skilled at handling the multitude of requests, was determined either not to over commit the legislator or to obligate her to be in two places at the same time. With their expertise and invaluable assistance, the interviews were scheduled and accomplished during the months of July through September 2003. At the request of the interviewees, all follow-up questions were addressed via telephone and email. This occurred during the fourth quarter of 2003.

The process for my interview with each woman was very uniform - the interviews were done at the interviewee's convenience, at the location of her choice, which included Harrisburg, Annapolis, and within their home districts. I explained the purpose of my study, obtained a signed Informed Consent Form (Appendix E) in accordance with University requirements, and proceeded with the interview. The initial data collection was done utilizing electronic audio

recording, with subsequent note taking. The pencil and paper field notes taken during and subsequent to the interviews were to record my thoughts, impressions and reactions to the interview sessions.

I interviewed each woman, once, in person. Each legislator was asked to tell her story of growing up. I asked her to describe her family, childhood neighborhood, educational experiences, and to share how she decided to become a state legislator. The final question asked what counsel she would offer other women who were thinking of seeking a political career path.

During the interview, I consciously avoided imposing a rigid structure upon the interviewee. My semi-structured questions provided me an effective way to “open the door” to renew the contact with past experiences, thus allowing the women the freedom to go as far as they wished. Attentive to some of the possible follow-up and related questions, I probed gently, minimizing my input while encouraging the maximum contribution from the legislator, which parallels Puwar’s (1997) observation that the goal of feminist research is to do research “with women, rather than on women” (p. 2).

Regarding conducting the interviews, I am confident of my skills as an interviewer because of my directly related background. I have spent approximately seven years of my life as a military journalist, interviewing people across the spectrum of rank and grade regarding their lives and jobs in the military. My sensitivity to words and how they are used is, as Van Manen (1990) states, a tremendous asset for my attentiveness to the phrases that are associated

with this phenomenon. In addition to this expertise, as I noted earlier, I am also a locally elected school board director. This additional familiarity and sensitivity enables me to realize that “to the extent that *my* experiences could be *our* experiences” (Van Manen, 1990, p.57), I am better and more easily able to tease the rich, contextual data from these stories.

An additional facet of the data that I believe to be imperative is the unspoken component of the story – the intuitive data mentioned earlier. This is very similar to Van Manen’s “close observation” as a means of gathering data. As I was listening to their stories, there were moments of silence that were not due to a lack of words, but of the woman reliving the experience. Her silence expresses as many feelings as her words. Sometimes, within audio-recorded stories there are tonal qualities that will also yield this data, but often it is the sensitivity to the nuances of the delivery that provide the rich depth and meaning. The detailed observations gained by the storyteller—the physically exhibited excitement, lowered voice, pitch and tone, hesitations, and other observable physical manifestations—create both an opportunity for additional probing as the stories unfold during the interview, as well as create the emotional reality of the story.

Archival data was also gathered from the legislators and began with the on-line, state website, biographical information on the legislator. The majority of the interviewed women also provided documents related to their careers and lives. This documentation included newspaper clippings and articles about their elections, fact sheets regarding their voting records, campaign literature, as well

as informational guides related to constituent assistance. Three of the women had only recently been elected, so archival information is limited, primarily, to campaign brochures. Additional on-line searches of legislative activities, chronicled within each state's electronic archives, generated data regarding their support of various initiatives and committee memberships.

Data Analyses Procedures

I began my analyses with the taped interviews. Once all the interviews were completed, I began to transcribe the data. I consciously worked to keep my own opinions, biases and assumptions about women legislators, and what may have led them to decide to run for office, to a whisper within my mind as I listened, wanting to hear their stories without my interpretations overshadowing them. I believe this is a similar process to Patton's (1990) *Epoche*, which he describes as the suspension, minimizing or eliminating "personal involvement with the subject material" (p. 407). This is a critical step that, at the least, minimizes the contamination of my own prejudices and biases from the investigation, and allows me to continue to focus on hearing her story and her voice.

As each of the electronically recorded interview tapes was transcribed, verbatim, into written format, I was determined to be as true to the experience as I could. I included long pauses, laughter, as well as voice changes and my own spoken encouragement and affirmations. After completing the transcription, I

played through the tapes, reading and listening to ensure the accuracy of each of my transcriptions.

All interview tapes were transcribed prior to beginning any analyses so as to accomplish several goals. First, I wanted to be very familiar with the stories, actively listening and hearing the stories without having to worry about anything else. Secondly, this process allows me to move logically through steps, avoiding jumping back and forth, mentally, between active listening and listening to analyze.

With the original audiotape playing again, I had a very good sense of each woman's story as I began to focus on the passages that spoke of the activities that fostered her development and knowledge that led to her decision to run for legislative office. Using N-Vivo software, a tool designed to assist with qualitative data analyses; each transcription was analyzed –line-by-line- for patterns and themes within the woman's life story. This process assists me, as the researcher, to bring to light those phrases within the transcripts that speak of the experiences of the women that lead to their decision to run for state legislative office.

I facilitated this process by posting the research questions prominently within my work area. This simple technique helped me to maintain my focus on the critical incidents and explanations that spoke of the phenomenon I was investigating, as I was analyzing the transcripts.

After this process, the N-Vivo software assisted me to move into the clustering aspect as I identified key phrases that seemed to speak of the phenomenon of deciding to run. For example, all of the women's narratives included descriptions of their childhood homes and the connection they experienced to that community. Ali speaks offhandedly of living in "typical suburbia – houses on one-acre lots, gracious lawns, that kind of thing" while Leslie emotes a descriptive love for her neighborhood that ties her, still, to it. Within qualitative research, what is imperative is that the data not be taken out of context and removed from the thick, rich description that is the hallmark of this research. Once again, the initial strong familiarity I had developed with each woman's story, supported by the analytic function of the software, enabled me to identify the critical deep, rich phrases from all of the interviews that were key to, as well as related to, my research interests.

Van Manen (1990) speaks of this analyses as a "process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure – grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning" (pg 79). Patton (1990) notes that Douglass (1984) equates this step with "moving around the statue" to see the various perspectives of the theme (p. 408). Patton states that this portrayal is an "abstraction of the experience that provides content and illustration but not yet essence" (p. 409). Within this process, I focused on seeing the common threads within their stories. The descriptions among the women with regards to their stories included parental influences on their

educations and careers, vested connections to community and community service, as well as other important factors. My goal was to gain insight into what life events moved them to decide to run for office, to know and make sense of their stories by reflecting on the commonalities, differences, notions or themes within them that speaks of the *meaning* within these stories.

Patton identifies one final step in the analyses, that of constructing a synthesis of the themes for understanding the meaning within the individual stories. By looking beyond the superficial, initial understanding of the experiences of the women, reflection provides greater depth of understanding. Within this reflection of the women's stories, I am able to grasp and understand the essence of their personal stories and experiences that are laid bare and unfold with greater clarity.

Ethical Considerations

As briefly noted, each interview began with a full disclosure of the focus of the study, in compliance with The Pennsylvania State University Office of Regulatory Compliance. I presented the information verbally, and supplied a copy of the University Certified Informed Consent Form (Appendix E) to each participant. This form provides study participants with full disclosure of the study, proposed use of the data for a doctoral dissertation, awareness of their rights to participate, assurance of the confidentiality of the data, as well as assurances that no harm or damage would result to the participants as a result of the interview. Appropriate university contacts were also supplied. I obtained the legislators'

signatures on this document prior to engaging in the interview process. A copy of this completed document was mailed to each participant, with the original maintained as part of the documentation process, in accordance with University procedures.

Trustworthiness

In this study, trustworthiness was established through the following indicators:

credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

- Credibility refers to the believability of the results of the data from the perspective of the participants of the research.
- Transferability is the degree to which the results may be applicable in other contexts or with other respondents.
- Dependability addresses the ability of the outcomes to be realized if the research is done again with “the same (or similar) respondents in the same (or similar) context”.
- Confirmability addresses the degree to which the findings reflect the “characteristics of the respondents, and the context and not from the biases, motivations, interests, and perspectives of the inquirer” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 218).

Lincoln and Guba discuss a variety of methods that contribute to trustworthiness, and I have elected to use team interactions, triangulating, and peer debriefing within this research. I will now briefly discuss each of these methods of insuring the trustworthiness of my research.

Team interactions, according to Lincoln and Guba, are critical to trustworthiness because this keeps communications open and ensures that the inquiry remain orderly. The team for my research was primarily my Chair and I,

with one additional committee member providing guidance in the political science inquiries. These interactions were all scheduled; some were formal sessions, while others decidedly informal. Communications with my committee chair occurred on a regular basis while developing my procedures, executing the research and discussing my findings.

Regarding triangulation, Lincoln and Guba note, within their writing, “No single item of information (unless coming from an elite and unimpeachable source) should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated” (p. 283). Despite the fact that my research is on elite women, my discussion related to my triangulation efforts will be addressed shortly.

Lincoln and Guba present peer debriefing as the interaction between the researcher and an uninvolved professional in order to accomplish not only a give and take to challenge the researcher, but also as a “sympathetic listening point for personal catharsis” (pg. 283). This step in my process was accomplished with four individuals serving as “Devil’s Advocate.” There was one male and three females who provided this support and challenge for me. Two are friends and two are professional acquaintances, but each holds a doctorate in either Adult Education or School Administration. These individuals have significant familiarity with the need to stay focused within the process, and, in addition, provided multiple perspectives for the data analyses and thematic identification.

Credibility

As discussed earlier, credibility is established early within this study through a variety of methods including recognition of the self as the primary data collection instrument, close observation, source triangulation and peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To establish the credibility that is critical to my research is to, first and foremost, realize that the instrument of my qualitative research is myself, as the researcher. This necessitates that I am credible as a researcher, competent to interview elite women, and understanding of the process being undertaken. As I am also an elected woman, I believe I am accepted as credible. I am familiar with the challenges, language and setting that I was encountering, enabling me to enter into their world comfortably. This also enables me, particularly when taken in conjunction with my educational credentials, to be viewed as a very credible individual.

This ability to enter the political woman's world is very similar to the stance of the researcher during "close observation." Van Manen (1990) notes that this process requires the ability to be in a relationship with the researched, but still have the ability to step back in order to reflect on the situation. I listened closely, I was aware of the content and contextual material being given, but I always knew that I was the researcher. Even as I developed a relationship, I kept an objective stance because I was in the company of very skilled and articulate women, fully capable of constructing a public persona that may or may not be accurate.

This issue of accuracy was what prompted me to consider using Patton's (1990) triangulation of sources for verification and validation. Many of these women, within their stories, referenced specific incidents, times, and people, and some of the anecdotes resonated within the focus of this research. By examining past newspaper clippings, press releases, campaign brochures, speaking with associates and peers, as well as accessing the Internet, I was able to check the consistency of these facts within their stories. More importantly, within these clippings and various resources, I was able to gain greater contextual nuances regarding their lived experiences and further enrich my understanding of their stories.

The final method I used to establish credibility was peer debriefing, which followed the same basic format as I have already discussed earlier in this section. This method was particularly beneficial, providing me with an opportunity to respond to challenges regarding assumptions that I had made regarding my data, as well as bolstering my confidence level regarding my familiarity with the data.

Transferability

Transferability, in this research, is accomplished through the use of rich, thick description. Findings that are supported by descriptive passages draw the reader to the findings, allowing a sense of agreement with the findings. Working through the data with N-Vivo ensured that I had secured passages that were rich and detailed enough, should other researchers seek to transfer these results to other settings. Important to note here is that transferability is not guaranteed, since

the data is rich and detailed enough to negate the transferability. That is to say, women who have similar experiences still may not run for public office and other women who are in state legislative offices may have totally different life experiences.

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose several arguments that are “useful for shoring up dependability claims” and include (p. 316):

- Recognizing the mutual relationship between credibility and dependability,
- Triangulation through an overlap method,
- Stepwise replication, and
- Inquiry audit.

I have elected to use, primarily, their first and fourth arguments to support my claims of dependability, but will also explain why the other two are not used.

Within the first argument, they opine that dependability cannot exist without credibility, so “a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (p. 316). Within the credibility discussion, I believe I have demonstrated the basis for not only the credibility of this research, but my credentials as a researcher, as well.

Guba suggests that a technique of “inquiry audit” may be used to insure the dependability of the research. This two-step process requires an auditor to first examine the process of the research to insure the fairness of the representation of

the data and to then examine the product. Within this research, the chair, as well as the committee, has examined the process within the proposal defense and affirmed that the process was dependable. The product, which are the “data, findings, interpretations and recommendations” is examined and deemed “coherent” and acceptable via the acceptance of the dissertation. It is this audit process that, according to Guba, also “establishes the confirmability of the inquiry, simultaneously” (p. 318).

I have elected not to utilize the other two methods for proving dependability. Guba notes that the overlap method is designed to accomplish the first argument, rather than a separate approach to proving dependability. The stepwise replication is also not selected because Guba argues that it is not a tool that is conducive to qualitative naturalistic research and the emergent nature of inquiry due to the need to have two parallel examinations of the data occurring. Guba argues, “it is precisely because the two teams could, for reasons independent of the instability problem, diverge onto two quite different lines of inquiry that stepwise replication is a dubious procedure” (p. 317).

Confirmability

In this research, confirmability is accomplished in a variety of ways. They include the use of triangulation, thick, rich data, which I have discussed previously, as well as the dependability audit, mentioned above. I will now elaborate on the audit.

The dependability audit, as noted above, “establishes the confirmability of the inquiry” and, done correctly, also supports the confirmability of the inquiry (Guba, 1985, p. 318). To meet this need, I have developed an audit trail that has evolved as the research has progressed, and is primarily electronically based. This audit trail contains the raw data in the form of transcribed interviews, with contextual data inserted from my field notes, my N-Vivo data reduction, and my analyses to include the emergent themes that came from the thick, rich data nodes.

I have also taken notes during team and peer debriefings, showing the evolution of some of the conceptual issues that were dealt with during the research. These notes primarily reflect the need for me to keep the focus clear, and on target, despite other interesting—but distracting—pieces of information within the data. While the literature speaks of going back to the sources for their input regarding the findings, this option was not viable. The legislators made it very clear during their initial interviews that, while they would be available for brief follow-up questions, they would not have additional time to commit to reviewing transcripts. Unanimously, they expressed their trust in me to faithfully and honestly represent them and their words.

Researcher Background and Bias

Today, I am a white, middle-aged, wife, mother and feminist. For me to use the phrase “feminist” is to mean that I recognize, in particular, that opportunity and power in the United States tends to be gendered and repressive towards females, both women and girls, and I believe these constructs are capable

of being challenged, thus enabling females to achieve as they aspire. As a feminist, I believe that knowledge is power and females, regardless of race, class, religion, nationality, ableness, or sexual orientation, should be able to access knowledge and power, as they so desire. As part of my philosophy, in concluding this definition, includes the caveat that I believe it also an individual's prerogative to choose whether or not to challenge these constructs, as not all women may feel compelled to challenge these constructs, nor should any women be made to feel uncomfortable for her decision regarding her own life decisions.

Concurrent with this philosophy, I do not seek nor attempt to claim within this research or my writing to speak, literally or figuratively, for all females or all women, or all middle-aged white women, or all feminists. I have constructed this philosophy based on my lived experiences, observations, and reading, and assume I will continue to evolve this philosophy as my life progresses. However, it is within this philosophical framework that I engage this research. While I discuss my theoretical stance more thoroughly in chapter two, I will also admit to recognizing that I do not feel compelled to embrace or integrate, wholly, many of the recognized and categorized theories. I see myself as evolving and growing being, rather than either defined, confined or circumscribed by other's theories.

This evolving nature of my life is also reflected in the many other roles that I fulfill, including those of wife and mother of three boys, two of whom are still at home. Professionally, I have a background in human resources, journalism and the military. I am a teacher, and am an elected school board member. Like

pieces of a puzzle, they affect who I am, provide a variety of lenses for not only seeing the world, but also for executing this research.

Researcher Biases

I will admit I came into this study troubled by the lack of women in the Pennsylvania legislature, and frustrated by the apparent lack of women's voices on the agenda as well as lack of prioritizing by the state with relation to programs and funding. Were women missing from the state legislative level because they did not **want** to be in office, no one had **asked** them to run or because they could not **see** themselves in Harrisburg as politicians? Was it lack of role models? Was it socialization regarding what constituted an appropriate role for women? These questions were and still are quite troubling in the 21st century.

This research began with introspection and additional reflection reveals the assumptions that I have made and I willingly acknowledge with regards to this research. Central to this research are the beliefs that a democratic society is a desirable good; citizenship, at its lowest component, requires a voting populace; and representative representation within our country is critical to a robust and healthy society. While I realize these are huge areas for discussion, I will keep my assumptions as brief as possible, while still providing insight.

Democracy

I believe a democratic society is one that respects the individual within the community, as well as part of the principles of social equality, and that this is a goal to aspire to within our country. A democracy allows for multiple voices to be

heard and multiple seats to be at the table, rather than allowing only the rich, the powerful, and the connected to be heard or accommodated.

Democracy demands citizen participation. While there are many identified freedoms within our country, I believe the greatest freedom we have is that of citizen expression – we can critique the government, criticize and actively seek to change the political agenda of the country, even if we are not members of the elite in society. Democracy works only when people are involved, and I believe that this is a role that everyone should engage in order to keep our democracy.

Voting

I believe that one of the most minimal levels of involvement in democracy is exemplified by the acts of registering to vote and then voting. Voting, as a right of citizenship, is an acknowledgement of the ability to have a voice within the governing of our country. Through the process of voting and becoming involved in the political process, citizens realize their most basic role as the stewards of democracy.

It is saddening to realize that many people do not share these same values and assumptions. In 2002, the most recent elections in the state of Pennsylvania, for example, only 38.8% of the eligible voters actually went to the polls (http://elections.gmu.edu/VAP_VEP.htm). According to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, the 2000 Presidential elections, hotly contested and a close race, saw only a 51% turnout in the nation (<http://www.fairvote.org/turnout/preturn.htm>). It would appear that many have

forsaken this particular aspect of our stewardship of democracy. While I believe there may be a variety of reasons to explain this phenomenon, I believe disenfranchisement has resulted from unresponsive incumbents, inappropriate behavior by legislators, media portrayal of politics and politicians as dishonest, disreputable and willing to do anything to be elected.

Under Representation of and by Women

It is indisputable that women, by their proportion within our society, are underrepresented within the legislature. As a result, this limited representation of women within the agenda setting and financing functions of government has resulted in decisions and policies that reflect a lack of women's ideology and expertise, as well as continued to call into question the legitimacy of the political system (Darcy, Welch and Clark, 1994). By advancing the concept of a more equitable and representative representation, I believe more of these issues could be addressed.

Representative or equitable representation refers to the concept that the "representative bodies should include the various elements of a diverse society," rather than just the privileged or the majority (p. 17). This ideal that has been around since John Quincy Adams, and while this condition has improved within our country, as demonstrated in earlier chapters, it has not been realized.

Running for a public office involves a much greater level of commitment to the stewardship of our country and, as a result, it may not be for everyone. While chapter two demonstrates the many documented barriers that preclude or

inhibit women from running for public offices. Yet, it is difficult to accept that the barriers are *so different* between the women of Pennsylvania and the women of Maryland that they affect women's presence within the state legislature so significantly.

I believe that women's voices do make a difference within the legislatures of our country, and the goal of equitable representation is critical to achieving a more democratic society. This representation has to start at the local or state level for women to become less of an oddity, and an outsider. With increased visibility, women will cease to be the exception and will be accepted as simply a politician, rather than as a woman politician. This local representation is also critical because the literature highlights that the most common pathway to the state legislature is from the local level, and the federal government legislators are often former state legislators.

I believe one of the reasons women are particularly resistant or apathetic to running for public office has to do with the media image of politicians as being nasty, disgusting, dishonest folks. Ugly, vicious attack ads by candidates and their support groups are the meat and potatoes of the media advertising during any election year, rather than informative discussion. The fear of being subjected to such vitriol is a significant deterrent. The media image of the tawdry, rough and tumble, political environment causes citizens to wash their hands of the political debacle, as well as the civic responsibility to try and change it. Disillusionment

and mistrust of the government, trumpeted daily via the media, has become part and parcel of our society, and there appears to be little any one person can do.

Conclusion

This is a lengthy discussion of my biases, but they are fundamental to how I approach this research, and the expectations that I have of others in our society. Intellectually, I understand why women would be hesitant or resistant to running, but the fact remains that this behavior is not consistent, even between these two contiguous states! Recognizing and suspending my biases to the best of my ability, I recognize that each woman's story reflects her own unique pathway to the state legislature and it is their voices that I am trying to hear, and their meanings that I am seeking to understand, which may, perhaps, allow me better insight into my own.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH RESULTS

I've yet to be on a campus where most women weren't worrying about some aspect of combining marriage, children, and a career. I've yet to find one where many men were worrying about the same thing." Gloria Steinem (1934-)

The focus of this research is to understand more fully the meaning that state level elected women give to their lived experiences that lead them to run for state legislative office. This study has two parts: first was identifying the various social, political, and historical barriers or influences women encountered during their lives, and then understanding the meaning these experiences had upon these women and their decisions to become state legislators.

Presenting the Data

As I wish to help the reader understand these women, I have decided to tell their stories in a narrative manner. I have created the opportunity for them to dialog amongst themselves as a means of analyses. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) note that utilizing narrative analyses moves the researcher, through the “writing up” of the data, to another level of analyses, as presentation of the data represents the view that has been taken of the words, voices and images within the data (p. 109). These authors also note that “all forms of textual representation involves some form of fictional work” and the use of “reconstructed dialogues or debates”, in order to create a relationship between the participants, can be a very effective literary tool for analyses (p. 123).

Within this created dialog, I have used the participant's actual words, tones, inflections, as well as body language. The participant's interactions with me are used within the reconstruction of the data, along with some creative license, to bridge the discussions. This is done in order to accomplish the continuity of conversation that is expected, as well as create a "plausible version of social reality" that anyone could recognize (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 123).

The created setting for this narrative is a luncheon for the participants. I will begin by introducing each of the participants in the same order as I originally met them and present a brief biography. This biographical information is obtained from each woman's on-line state biography, as well as information that is stated and observed. I have remained true to each woman's description of herself, with a particular awareness of the phrases each woman uses that highlight their race, ages, class, as well as other "shaping forces" in their lives (Luttrell, 2000, p. 504). The interactive dialog within these analyses, as I have previously noted, reflects some creative license on my part, as well as my own responses to the women's interview comments.

Understanding that this is a creative tool for conveying the data, and that this event did not actually happen, I will now introduce each of my participants. After the introductions, the narrative will provide guidance and direction to understand the meanings of their lives that have led them to decide to become state legislators.

Participants of this Study

As each of these women is a public figure, their identities are relatively easy to discern. However, in accordance with university guidance, each participant has been given a pseudonym to disguise her identity¹², though each legislator resolutely stated that “this was not necessary” as her story was true, there was nothing she was worried about and, most importantly to her, each stressed that what she was offering to me was the truth.

The Guests Arrive

“Leslie” is the first to arrive, and she dashes in, apologizing, for she believes she is late. Her day has already been hectic, as she has just come from another engagement. Leslie is young for a state senator – about 38 years old. A die-hard city dweller by her own admission, she is single, slender, tall, a woman of color with an engaging laugh and a very easy manner. Dressed in a business suit, she easily begins chatting with me about the two roles that she holds: city public defender and state senator.

Next to arrive is “Barbara,” a second term state representative from a small town. She is petite, dressed in a tailored pantsuit, a white woman in her late 40s. I know she is married and has intense interest in family issues. Friendly, she has agreed to participate, but with one caveat. She must leave at the designated

¹² While all legislators gave permission to use actual names, only Jill Carter does not have a pseudonym due to the power of her story.

time in order to be home for dinner and homework with her school-aged children.

I assure her, upon her arrival, that I will remember her request.

“Katy” is also a representative and arrives shortly after Barbara. Katy is single, a white woman in her late 30s and from a very urban area. She is new to the legislature, having completed only one session, and laughingly admits that she is still trying to figure out how to be an elected legislator and keep her law practice going. Working in a prestigious downtown firm, she is with clients all day, so she is dressed in a corporate manner - dark suit, white blouse. She too begins to circulate, appearing to be very comfortable with herself.

“Lisa” arrives next. She is an experienced representative, having served almost ten years in two different regions. She is from a mixed rural/urban area. This petite white woman’s biography is impressive and includes working at the state and national level on very high profile programs, but it sheds little light on her personal life. She is very self-assured, introducing herself to me and then moving into the room to begin meeting others.

An elected representative since 1987, “Joy” arrives closely behind Lisa. She is a conservative appearing, older white woman, and she enters the room a bit more nervously than my prior guests. As I watch, she enters, pauses, scans the room, advances a bit further, and stops again. She is a seasoned veteran of the legislature, so her behavior causes me some concern. Inquiring if there are problems, she quickly assures me that she is this way before any meeting. She is highly sensitive to perfume and aftershave and this sensitivity dictates whether

she can remain or not. Not detecting any overt scents, she begins to relax. Representing the same large, very metropolitan area for her entire career, her extensive biographical information includes membership and even leadership positions on many committees. I know that she is married with three adult children.

Jill, who arrives next, is also a newly elected legislator. This petite, slender, young black woman – who admits to only “being in her 30s” – enters the room with an energy level that is impossible to miss. She is single, with her own legal practice, and she has squeezed this meeting in between two court appearances. Representing a poorer section of the city, her name has been mentioned by several elected officials as an individual to watch, as her recent election was like “nothing that had ever been seen before”. I will admit I am very interested in hearing her story.

My final two guests, “Mary” and “Ali” arrive almost simultaneously. Mary is an experienced senator, elected to that office in 1995. She is an older, white woman who represents a large, rapidly growing, urban area. Her demeanor reminds me of southern gentility, as she is very solicitous regarding whether she has inconvenienced me or my other guests due to her late arrival time. Her biographical information is by far the most extensive within the room, with a strong focus on the area in which she lives. She is also married with two adult children.

“Ali” is a relatively new representative as she has just started her second term. Like Mary, she too represents a large, rapidly growing and evolving urban area. Her biography sheds little light on her personal life, but I know she is a white woman in her mid 40s. Before her election, she was an attorney who focused on land preservation issues. She enters the room with a great deal of confidence, laughing frequently and loudly as she engages in discussions with others.

As the servers quietly begin to move among them with coffee and tea, I welcome them all and thank them for their willingness to share their life stories with me. I explain that the focus of my research is to understand how they decided to become elected state legislators, and that I hope they will tell me their stories about growing up, their birth family, their conjugal family, as well as others that may have impacted their decision-making process. I secure the necessary paperwork from each of the participants and ask if there are any questions prior to beginning the discussions.

Early Life

Birth Family

This appears to be a very agreeable and conversant group and I joke with them that it is easiest to begin at the beginning. I ask them to share their stories about their parents and childhood, and the dialog between them quiets. Each looks at the other, waiting for someone to begin.

Leslie

Leslie opts to be first and begins with some quick background information. She grew up in a major city, in an upper middle class African-American neighborhood that boasted many prominent politicians and educators. “It was one of the first planned communities in our city. It started out with a predominantly white, Protestant population and then, after the stock market crashed, it began to transition,” she explains, “We moved in 1966 and by the time I can remember anything it was all African-American, and mostly just strong traditional mom and dad kind of houses.”

“I was born in 1964, so I have no recollection of, for instance, Civil Rights, Martin Luther King – when he was killed, I was three years old.” Almost apologetically, she adds, “I don’t know much about political activism from the direct African-American experience.” She quickly adds that she has one older brother, whom she calls the “kindest, most patient person you could ever meet.”

Both of her parents were public school educators, beginning as teachers and finishing their careers in administration. Pausing, she quietly states, “If my dad had not died, I would never have run for office,” and elicits a collective gasp from the group. While Leslie is one of the youngest legislators, and already a senator, the reaction to her statement is one of stunned and puzzled silence. It surprises everyone as it has come out so quickly! It is a most unexpected statement from a young woman who has grown up in a major city since the Civil Rights and women’s liberation movement, and it catches the assemblage off guard.

“I would not have run because he had that kind of influence on me... he would have said, ‘I don’t like politicians and I think young women ought to do something else, like teach,’ she explains, with a quiet laugh. “But he never, would never, have approved of it and I would have just said, “I won’t do it.”

She sighs; her shoulders drop and she looks at her hands, then whispers, “Oh yea.” Then, sitting straighter and recovering her voice, she continues, “Cause he is traditional, I mean, he’s...a woman politician?” I know; this is 1998!”

Struggling through the sudden emotions, she continues, “My dad was my favorite person in the world. I have never...no man has walked this earth like my dad. We were best friends! Despite the fact that my mother was his sweetheart, it was clear that I was the child of his heart.” Silence grips the room as the women realize the depth of the father-daughter bond that, had it transcended the grave, would remove this bright, promising young woman from our midst. Lisa’s eyes drop to her lap, and no further words emerge. The small group remains very quiet, until, finally, Ali speaks up.

Ali

Beginning brightly, Ali offers her story of growing up in an affluent upper class neighborhood as one of six children in an Irish family. As the third of the six children, she describes her neighborhood as very homogeneous in its make-up in that it was Irish and Catholic. “In fact, the people who were not Catholic stood out,” she explains, with a laugh. “It is typical suburbia – houses on one-acre lots,

gracious lawns, that kind of thing. There was a country club not too far away that we rode our bikes to; my dad played golf there. That was basically the neighborhood.”

Ali notes that her mother’s life was circumscribed by the special needs of the youngest child who had significant disabilities. Her father was a lawyer. “He really enjoyed the practice of law,” she enthusiastically offers, “My grandfather on my mother’s side was a lawyer. I am a lawyer, I had an aunt, surprisingly, who went back to law school after her children were in grade school and became a lawyer. So, it was a pretty usual career for our family.”

Eyes twinkling, she laughs as she explains, “My parents always told us we could be whatever we wanted. Because my brother Tom came along late in the pecking order, my father thought he was raising girls and he wanted us to know that we could be whatever we wanted.”

This pronouncement is met with significant laughter and prompts Mary to join in. Mary is one of the more senior legislators participating in this study, having first been elected as a Representative in 1976, becoming a Senator in 1995.

Mary

“I am an only child and my parents were just wonderful!” she begins, effusively. “When my parents met, my mother was a college professor and my father was an engineer, but they married during the Depression and it was

considered inappropriate for two people in the same family to hold a job, so she quit working.”

Mary was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, and her mother never returned to work. Sounding pensive, she reflects on her mother’s decision, “I just felt that if she had been able to continue – had been able to go back to work and so forth, she would have had a much richer life. Of course, I was the beneficiary of that decision and I was lucky.”

She notes that her father was her mentor and even when she was a young girl, “he really wanted me to be an engineer. But back then, girls weren’t even accepted at those schools. But I did take some courses in high school in mechanical drawing, stuff like that.” Mary explains, “And I was really already, back then, into this mode that I could do most anything I wanted to do.”

Mary’s “can-do” attitude was cultivated early, and by both parents. “We rented a duplex across from the church, and I was the only girl with 18 boys in the neighborhood,” she explains, “My mother was the scoutmaster for all of us, planning out activities for us in the summers because there were two summers when we had polio epidemics and all the pools were quarantined.” She laughs and notes that she played football, learned some judo moves and proudly states that she had “flipped one of the guys into the mud!”

This proclamation is cheered roundly, and provides an opening for Barbara to offer her story to the group.

Barbara

“Well, I grew up with a mom, dad, three sisters; my mother was a stay-at-home mom and my dad worked a lot, too much. He was a corporate attorney, down in Washington,” she begins, speaking rather quickly.

As the second oldest of the four girls, she describes her childhood, her voice sounding somewhat lonely. “We had a nice little house in a nice, quiet little neighborhood with mostly older neighbors – not a whole lot of kids, unfortunately,” she notes, and glances wistfully at Mary.

My dad worked a lot. When he was home, I was the one who would take the time to sit down and talk to him. He wouldn’t get home until 8 at night or later, but I always went to talk to him while the others really didn’t.

The room is quiet, listening to her somewhat pained conversation. She pauses, and as if satisfied with her offering, she leans away from the table. Silence envelopes the room and some women visibly squirm in their chairs, until Joy quietly cleared her throat.

Joy

“I was born in St. Louis, Missouri and moved to St. Charles when I was three, during the Second World War,” as she begins her introduction. “We had a single family house that was home to my father, my mother, my grandmother and, eventually, my little sister, Carol.”

One of the major local employers, McDonnell-Douglass, was providing aircraft for the war effort and was recruiting heavily. With no empty houses or hotel rooms, it was considered patriotic to open one’s homes to the men who had traveled to support the war efforts. So, Mother went and

bought five cots and put them upstairs. The men didn't eat with us; they were only roomers and it probably only lasted a year.

Transitory living was not restricted to the roomers in Joy's home. As her story unfolded, the economy forced her father to leave the family to seek work in Memphis. "There was no place for us to live," she explained very straightforwardly, "So for ten months, he lived in a room and we waited for him to tell us that he had found us a place to live."

The new home was a small beach cottage and probably "not meant to be lived in year round," but according to Joy, "it beat all of those miles between us." Pausing in her story, she looks around the room and quietly notes, "It was a very rural community of Southerners; we were totally outside of our element. And at that point, when I look back and I think—we were probably a poor family and didn't ...I didn't know it."

The neighborhood of Woodstock was very poor and playmates were rare. "I remember playing for several winter months with the Christmas tree and finding treasures I could decorate it with" she explains "I played by myself with whatever I could find and made doll clothes from scraps for my dolls."

Eventually a slightly larger house became available, another move, and another job for Dad. "Dad was a traveling salesman for J. Atkins Farm Implements in Northern Mississippi, so he was gone Monday through Friday; sometimes he would come home on Wednesday." His long absences continued as

she grew up and she noted that he missed all of her special occasions including graduations and weddings.

The larger home meant that her Grandmother could rejoin the family, compensating for her father's absence, but creating a new challenge. There were only two bedrooms. "Grandmother, my sister and I shared a bedroom," she explains to the group, laughing, "there was a double bed and a single bed and I couldn't tell you who slept where, but the concept of a private bedroom was totally foreign!"

Joy notes with a matter of fact air that "there was a cotton field behind the house, and you were required to move all the furniture to the center of the room in the summer so that the community could spray DDT because of the mosquitoes, and there was probably asbestos, but those were all good things back then."

Jill

Jill was listening intently to Joy's talk about the housing and the unhealthy issues that were simply part of the times that existed when she was growing up. "Some things never really change for the poor," she expressed, under her breath, somewhat startling the closer women. Taking the silence as a cue, she drew a deep breath and began to rapidly talk about growing up as the daughter of one of the premiere civil rights activists on the East Coast.

"I was raised in the same neighborhood as Leslie, with one older sister, named Judy," she hurriedly explains, "It was a Jewish neighborhood right before it became an all Black neighborhood. It was very large and very well-educated."

She notes, as Leslie had, that many prominent African-American politicians from the city lived in the neighborhood, including the former mayor.

The reason for her comment regarding the poor emerges as the story unfolds and we sat, transfixed. “I think my family is very unique and we have a strong tie to our city. My mother was a housewife; she kept everything together for my sister and me because of the activities that my father was in.”

[Pausing, taking another deep breath, she plunges on.]

My father was Walter P. Carter, a very well-known civil rights leader, a consultant to the Jesuits, a leader in CORE, which was the Congress for Racial Equality, a social worker, an activist, and there are many people around here who believe he was one of the greatest of the greatest community organizers that I think ever lived. He was simply amazing.

Since she was a small child, Jill was aware of the political activities of her parents, and shares her memories of being thrilled to hear that her daddy had been arrested “again.”

Protesting the racial segregation laws of the state for public accommodations and entertainment, Jill’s father was arrested frequently for trespassing and other specious charges. “My mother is also a great person – a politically active person. She’s a background sort of person; she doesn’t like being in the forefront. She’s been very active in the background with different politicians forever and I always grew up like that.”

Her pause is longer, as if savoring the memory, and then she resumes, “My father died in 1971 when I was really young.” Speaking at a rally against a

prominent slumlord that had consistently employed predatory practices against African-Americans, “my father suffered a heart attack and died at the podium.”

There is silence in the room. We can only continue to watch this proud, young woman as she speaks of growing up as the daughter of someone who “could have replaced Martin Luther King.”

“Black History month was hard,” she states. As a child, she was asked, many times, to stand and share the stories of the legacy her father had left, of how he spent his last life moments. Sharing her childhood memories, the Civil Rights history of her city, is part of who she is today.

Grasping the mental images she offers in her rapid-fire recitation, we are somewhat overwhelmed. She is intense in her demeanor, and it appears this youngest daughter, now a compelling young representative, has caught up her father’s philosophies.

“My mother went to work after that (his death) to support my sister and I by becoming an early childhood educator which has really helped me a lot with some of the questions I have, and she only recently retired,” Jill concludes, then looks around the room, her glance settling on Lisa and Katy, the only two who have not yet spoken. To encourage them, and end her time, she smiles and calls, “Next?”

Lisa

There is an air of hesitancy about following such an impassioned presentation. Lisa, finally, clears her throat, smiles and introduces herself. “I wish

that for every time I did one of these ‘why did you run for the office’ things I would have a dollar. I would have a nice healthy bank account because it’s of interest to a lot of people in our state.” she observes, with a quiet laugh.

Originally from the same city as Leslie and Jill, Lisa was also an only child, who openly admits to loving her city of birth. “My mother, who worked part-time for the doctor who delivered me, was born in Belgium, and my grandparents were from France,” she explains, “so everything and anything for nationalities lived in my neighborhood; it was a melting pot of nationalities which I feel gave me a really good background, probably better than my children have had,” she observes.

Growing up in a neighborhood that had “no young ladies”, Lisa notes that her most frequent playmates were the five Italian boys who lived in the next row house over. Giggling, she observes, “I was very much a tom boy!”

The other neighbors in the area were middle to low income, and she surmised, “...I think I had an advantage by getting to know a lot of people from...people that were...at that time, there were no rich people, but there were ‘doing ok’ to very poor people.”

At age 12, her father, a CPA, relocated the family to a much less urban area. Lisa’s voice softens as she fondly recalls the city of her childhood as being friendly, whether you were walking along or waiting for public transportation, and that people would talk to each other. “I cried bitterly to leave my grandparents and my neighborhood,” she explained.

Moving to the new town, in the mid-50s, she did not find that same hospitality for outsiders. “If you weren’t born there, it was hard to make friends,” she declares, concluding her introduction, “Even today, one of my mother’s closest friends is one of the other out-of-towners who welcomed her as part of the town’s Welcome Wagon!”

Katy

Katy smiles easily at this closing comment and then begins her own initial remarks. Looking around the table, she speaks in a clear, confident voice and announces that she is single, no children, in her early 40’s, a family lawyer, and very recently elected. “I am the oldest of eight – half are boys and half are girls.” Pausing, she laughs quietly, and then continues, “I grew up in a middle class neighborhood of 26 houses that was built by my uncle, with many of my relatives living close by.”

Citing an almost “idyllic childhood,” her father was an educator who earned his doctorate and went on to become a school administrator. “Mom stayed home until my youngest sibling started school, then she worked for the parochial school that we attended – so our hours were her hours!”

Summers were spent playing with the neighborhood kids. “We didn’t have camps and stuff like that, except for football camps when the boys were older. We would all just get outside and play, and even now my siblings joke about how our mother had no idea where we were until everyone showed up for lunch,” she pauses, soberly. “Times change, we would never dream of doing that with our

children today!” Living in a suburban, predominantly white neighborhood, with two African-American families and one Hispanic family, and with relatives nearby, she notes there was little reason to leave the neighborhood of her youth.

With the thumbnail biographical sketches completed, I suggest that we move onto discussions about their educational experiences.

Education

The women appeared to be relaxing in their chairs, losing their initial stiffness, as the tension of being strangers dissipates from the room. Wishing to keep the process moving, I wonder aloud if there was a school role, activity, or function that might be a common thread within their lives. I know that education, at least through high school, was a common experience for all these women.

Looking towards Jill and Leslie, Ali muses. “Since you both grew up in the same neighborhood, are close to the same age, and both ended up deciding to run for office, maybe you could start?” Looking at the two women, she waits for their responses.

Public Education

Looking at Jill, Leslie speaks first, and begins by emphasizing her public school background. “I went to public schools because both my parents were school administrators and my dad was adamant that, if we get our money from the public school, that is where you are going to school!”

“When I went to high school, there were two all girl, public high schools in the United States, one is in our city and the other is in Philadelphia, and we,” Leslie, at this point glances over at Jill, “both attended it.”

Jill nods, and takes that as her cue to speak, her voice clear and fast. “I didn’t know Leslie in school, but I also went to public elementary school and I was in school when they started a gifted program.” Looking at her hands folded in front of her, she shakes her head, frowning and remembering the program, “They decided I should be in it so, kicking and screaming, I was forced out of my regular elementary school and put into the Gate Program, almost like a guinea pig! It was just starting; it was a horrible experience for me and luckily I got out of it and switched to regular junior high and then on to Western High School, same as Leslie.”

Seeing our quizzical expression, Leslie offers a brief history of Western High School as being the oldest all-girls public high school in the United States, as it was established in 1844. Now an all-girl’s magnet high school, its student body reflects the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the city and admissions is by examination only. With a reputation of being a liberal arts college preparatory school, its graduating classes have averaged 85% college placement for more than 20 years.

Wondering if the opportunities to be found within a single sex high school education were a possible key to these young women’s willingness to enter this challenging arena, I asked them if their high school activities had foretold of this

pursuit. Interestingly, neither had been elected to school offices, though Leslie offered, off the cuff and with a chuckle, that she had inherited the presidency of the band when the elected leader quit school. Looking about the table, the other women began to talk about their educational experiences and the excitement was palpable.

Nonpublic Education

Ali and Katy both volunteered that they had gone to parochial schools, though only Ali's had been an all-girls' school. Barbara had gone to a private school until 6th grade, then public school from that point on.

“My dad was also a public school teacher, and later an administrator, but my mother insisted that we all go to the Catholic schools,” explains Katy. “I know this was a point of frequent discussions, particularly since there were eight of us, but Mom won the debate, I wouldn't call it an argument, but religion and our education was so important to her.”

Ali's parents also sent all their children through single-sex parochial schools. She notes that “all of the athletic roles and the leadership roles within the school were filled by girls, there were no avenues closed.” She concludes, with a laugh “we even had to import boys for the plays!”

Educational Achievement

While it appeared there were various educational delivery opportunities experienced, I wondered aloud about the family emphasis on grades and achievement. Almost as one, the women lean in closer to the table, and begin to

talk to one another. Agreement is instantaneous regarding the familial message that education was important within their birth home. Several, still laughing, shared the clearly stated family expectations regarding high grades.

“You could bring home a B,” Barbara laughs, “but there had better only be one!”

My father would just be disappointed, he is extremely bright and that’s all he cared about – education, academics, education, academics! My mom, on the other hand, how can I say it...she wanted us to do well, she never really helped and pretty much she ...I wouldn’t say she pushed us but it was expected, it was always expected.

This declaration generates nods of understanding from several women.

Ali, still nodding, notes that her siblings are “a bunch of over achievers” because the emphasis on grades within the home was evident, and clearly stated.

My mother wanted us all to do whatever we had to do, she pushed us, and you know we got fabulous grades. But if we...if in the entire family, if you came home from high school or college and your report card showed a “B” in French and an “A” in everything else, my parents would say, “What happened in French?” I mean that was the **first** remark, you know!

Lisa smiles at the comment and shares that she didn’t experience as much home pressure for high achievement.

I skipped fifth grade when we moved because I was further ahead, but I was a very average, in the middle kind of kid. I got along, graduated from high school, nothing outstanding grade wise. Wasn’t failing, could have done better, but I really did enjoy myself in high school.

She smiles broadly, thinking of her high school days and Barbara offers that she, too, skipped a grade.

“Because I was in this private school since I was three, I had a really good educational foundation.” Barbara explains, “So middle and high school were easy! In fact, I skipped 11th grade and went to 12th, then graduated at 17.”

Extra-curricular Activities

“Barbara, were you involved in extra-curricular activities since academics weren’t an issue for you?” Katy asks.

“Oh, yes, I was in everything” she responds, brightly “I was president of my class, I was cheerleader, I was on student council every year, I was involved in all kinds of things all through school.”

Mary volunteers that she, too, was an officer in most of the clubs, and her chosen office was usually treasurer, because “I did not want to be president.” When pressed for an explanation, she smiles, “I had already earned a reputation for being very, very frugal and it was partly because of necessity as we never had much money, but I think that trait has helped me with my life and political career.”

I was involved with everything there. I was in every club; I was in everything. I took every advance course. I just really loved high school. I dated a lot of different people, never anybody for a long time, which was good. But I really loved high school. And then when I went to college, I went to a state school where I already knew all the people because they were from Charlotte.

Lisa, slightly raising her hand, laughs and shares that she, too, was a cheerleader and offers, with only a moment’s hesitation, her memories:

I was active in the drama department, and to this day I like my school better than my kids like their high school. I donate to the alumni thing and

I still have friends that go there and I still will go to a football now and then and I have a great attachment to my high school. I couldn't tell you why.

The excited chatter related to high school days fills the room, and I find I have to lean closer in order to listen, as I am intent on hearing their offerings.

Though her parochial high school was small, Katy notes that journalism and the school newspaper were her passion in both high school and college, one that is shared by several other women. "I wasn't very athletic like my brothers and sisters," Katy admittedly laughs, "but I could do this!"

Joy joins in the laughter, and acknowledges that she was happy her mother owned a manual typewriter. While growing up, Joy played with it and taught herself to type. "I wasn't a good writer, but I was one of the few who could type!" she exclaims. This skill landed her a slot on the newspaper, a satisfying involvement that lasted from junior high through high school.

Ali spoke up and noted to the group that, like Joy and Katy, she, too, had been involved in journalism. Her journalistic involvement, however, did not start until college, and resulted from gender discrimination.

Higher Education Gender Discrimination

There was a sudden silence at her statement and all eyes were on Ali.

"It wasn't until I got to college that I first discrimination against me because of my gender! And it was a shock!" Ali makes it clear to everyone that her single sex education had not prepared her for this development. Attending a formerly all male Catholic institution that had gone coed about four years earlier,

she noted some things were slow to change. Recalling the memory, her voice takes on tones of barely restrained outrage, and she leans in much closer to the table.

I was running for student government in college and I couldn't believe that they thought that being a woman, being a girl at the time, was noteworthy! See, I couldn't believe that was *an issue*! That my classmates would have to think about it to vote for a girl to be president of our class? I mean, I was like "WHAT?" That one blindsided me! I never expected it; it just never occurred to me that that would be an issue! I thought an issue would be what I wanted to do for the school, or the class or whatever, but it never occurred to me that my gender would even matter! So, it was a big shock.

Leaning back from the table, eyes flashing, she folds her hands, holding us in suspense. "Well, what happened?" Barbara impatiently asks, "Did you win?"

"No," Ali's response was brusque, "I lost the election." It was clear from her pause; there was more to the story.

But it was like Watergate, and I decided to be in the newspaper, which was a merit-based system because they needed people who could write on time and get stuff done. So, I was one of the younger editors of the newspaper – I was not the first woman, I think I was the second. I was definitely the youngest, ever. I think I became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, which was a weekly, at the end of my sophomore year, which was extremely early.

Smiling smugly, it was clear that her gender was not a limiting factor in her mind.

A collective chorus of "all right" breaks loose amongst the women, as Joy asks what she had majored in during those exciting years, causing Ali to laugh again.

Jill looks surprised and proclaims that she, too, had experienced similar problems at a Jesuit campus that also had been co-ed only a few years.

“There were very few black women there and most of the black men were athletes who were treated specially,” she clarifies, “So I felt very excluded from the whole process there and it was very isolating.” Laughing depreciatively, Jill observes that she graduated with less self esteem at 22 than she had begun with at 18. “I mean, only with the grace of God and going to law school was I able to regain any of it.” Shaking her head, she states emphatically, “Law school was a cake walk after this undergraduate program!”

No one else spoke after this unsettling observation and, sensing the time passing, and knowing the tight schedule, I probed further. “So, in light of all of your various experiences, what made you decide to choose the career that you did?” I asked the group.

Careers

Gendered Messages

Needing little encouragement, Ali volunteered that, as her brother Tom was so late in the birth order, “my dad figured he was raising girls so he wanted us to be anything we wanted.” Leaning forward, eyes sparkling, she proclaimed that in 5th grade she knew she was going to be a lawyer!

I remember we were taking standardized tests. Before you start the test, I guess they do a demographic thing. You are filling in the little things with your #2 pencil and it asked you what grade you expected to get up to. I think it went as far as post high school. I remember taking my test paper up to the nun and saying “I want to be a lawyer and I know that is after

college and if there is no little place for me to fill in, what do I do?" She looked at me and laughed! I mean, I can understand that now but at the time I was deeply offended! What was I? 11?

My father was a lawyer and he enjoyed it. My grandfather on my mother's side was a lawyer. I had an aunt, surprisingly, who went back to law school after her children were in grade school and became a lawyer. So, it was a pretty usual career for our family.

Preparing for this career, her father also offered her some guidance.

"My father told me if I wanted to be a lawyer to major in something that would require a great deal of writing and reading, which turned out to be good advice, so I majored in political science." Rolling her eyes, she sighs dramatically, "THAT was a mistake because I discovered, as I look back now, in politics, politics is not a science, it is an art! And I learned nothing about politics in political science!" Her laughter is instantaneous and the others in the room easily join in, as if this observation is common knowledge.

This laughter prompted Barbara to share that her father was also an anti-trust lawyer, but she had received little career guidance from either parents.

"I don't remember any guidance or discussions regarding potential careers for me or my sisters," Barbara explained, "It was assumed that I would go to college, but I am not sure for what purpose, and then my mother's advice was to marry someone rich!"

Her light laugh, following her contribution, prompts a very stilted laughter to patter throughout the room, perhaps uncomfortably identifying with Barbara's mother's proffered guidance. An almost palpable silence filled the room, until

Mary leans towards Barbara, smiles and asks, “What did you ultimately decide to do about college?”

Barbara paused only a moment before responding to the query.

I wanted to get away from home, my parents were very strict, and my mom and I weren't getting along, so I went to a college that my counselor told me about that was three hours away. I majored in psychology and sociology, with a minor in social work. I graduated and even though I would have liked to have gone onto a Master's degree, I didn't want their money; I needed to get a job and make my own way.

These early experiences provide the impetus for her to counsel and speak with young women today regarding college and career decisions, “I talk to young women whenever I can about their thoughts for their future, it is really exciting to have these discussions!”

Mary nodded in agreement, “I think it is so important that young women realize what opportunities are out there and how to explore them because I also was put in the position of having no idea how to deal with identifying what I wanted to do.” Seeing the puzzled expressions, she explained her situation to the assemblage.

I was a finalist for a big scholarship to Duke, one of four people. My mother let me drive to the campus, thirty miles away, and I wore my best dress. The woman who met with me admired it and asked if I had made it, which I had and I guess it showed. Well, she asked me what I wanted to major in, and I said I didn't know. She asked if I was interested in Home Ec and I said I haven't decided for sure. She said, “We don't have that at Duke.” And that was the end of that conversation!

Looking around the room, she proclaimed indignantly, “I wish I had known to say astrophysics or just anything, but no one had told me anything!”

“Oh my gosh, that’s awful” Lisa exclaimed, “What did you do?”

Well, I went to the women’s college of UNC because women couldn’t go to Chapel Hill until their junior year. Had I graduated from the women’s college I would have a Bachelor of Science in secretarial administration.

[Mary pauses, dramatically]

But I changed after two years and went to Carolina where I just came out of my shell, if I ever had one, and I have a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Relations, which is psychology, business, and economics. See, I still couldn’t decide what I wanted, but it worked out!

Leslie’s expression was one of agreement, “It is funny how things work out, isn’t it?” Glancing over at Mary, she announces that Duke is her alma mater, where she majored in history, much to her father’s chagrin. “My dad was a Math teacher who said, ‘you know what History Majors do? They become secretaries!’”

Despite his dire warnings regarding the utility of her major, she explains that she stood firm, explaining her rationale to the assembled women, “I wanted to major in history because I believe that if I understand history, I can understand the dynamics of power. I think the people that best capture the power structure in America are people who understand from where we come. And I think about and still search for that concept of what is real power and who has it.”

While doing research for an Honor’s History Program at Duke, Leslie discovered that “my great, great, great, great grandfather was in the House of Delegates of North Carolina – one of the first Blacks.” With a giggle, she proclaims that, regardless of whether or not she had intended to go into politics

after finishing her law degree at the University of Maryland, this discovery was accepted as a sign that “It was in my genes!”

Katy laughs at this thought, sharing that she has held intentions of going into politics since 11th grade, and her college selection process had also been rather fortuitous. While in the guidance counselor’s office in high school, she had seen a brochure for a small, private women’s college near Washington, DC. On the cover was a neighbor’s daughter, who looked very happy. “I wanted to be near Washington, DC because I had fallen in love with the idea of going into politics since serving as a page in the Maryland legislature when I was a senior in high school!” After securing a great financial aid package, this deal was sealed.

Lisa asked Katy if any of her seven siblings had similar aspirations due to her opportunities, prompting a recital of the litany of the sibling’s careers. Pausing, she looks at Leslie and Lisa and thoughtfully notes, “You know, there might be something to that thought about genetic orientation! If you look at my siblings, we all embraced higher education and are all basically involved in careers that are public service oriented!”

As Ali came from the next largest family, all eyes turned to her, curious to see if this theory held up. Thinking for a moment about her sibling’s career choices, Ali rattled them off, rapidly. Laughing, she notes, with some wonderment, that while her family consisted of acknowledged “overachievers,” this had not precluded some of them from also entering altruistic and nontraditional career fields.

Nature Versus Nurture

There was a long silence as Ali's observation struck the women.

"Is it genetic or is it," queried Leslie, "a predisposition created by what our parents may have done while we were living with them?"

"What do you mean by predisposition?" asked Jill.

"Well, Jill, take your father, for example," she replied, "He provided a very strong orientation towards being involved in your community, of standing up for people and being a visible leader without being an elected leader!"

Growing excitement fills her voice as she continues, "My parents were always involved in something; we marched on picket lines for teachers, we were active in our church, in fact, I still teach Sunday school! My brother also grew up to be a social worker!"

Jill quickly picks up the thread of conversation, adding that her mother was also always active, and served as a good example for her, as well.

I've always been encouraged to campaign for some politician or some candidate and I've always voted, even when I was at college. I was in the library one day and my mother, whom I hadn't even spoken to, located me and said, 'I'm pretty sure you haven't voted today because I know you're studying for a test but I'm going to take you to vote.' She wanted to be sure I didn't miss voting.

Mary's eyes light up as she noted that her parents, too, were involved with their church and community. "When I was a little tiny thing, my parents were air raid wardens during World War II, and they were also involved with the Methodist Church. They were leaders in the church and part of the couples class

which had about 200-300 members and they were friends with all of them!” She smiles, remembering how her father “never met a stranger on the sidewalk; he would speak to anyone and welcome them!”

Lisa’s look was thoughtful as she leaned into the conversation, “I was an only child, but my grandfather, whom I adored, became a citizen after they emigrated from France during the war. He sent a clear message about civic involvement and responsibility,” she explains to the group. “He even volunteered when they moved to California! When he was 89, and had just been diagnosed with liver cancer, he was taking a bus into LA to do grand jury duty because he felt that was his duty because he was an American!”

A murmur of approval runs through the room as Mary offers an important insight. “It is important to remember that when I and several other women in the room were young, community involvement was very limited. The focus was work, family, and church, and very few other things were available to offer involvement for parents.” She concludes, noting the nods of agreement from several of the older participants.

The Adult Journey

Searching to Find Their Own Way

“But wait a minute!” Barbara’s tone is one of frustration, and catches everyone’s attention. “My parents were never active in anything in the community, the schools never talked about community involvement; volunteerism

was not part of the culture where I lived!” Somewhat indignant, her tone reflected a plaintive but unspoken, “What about me?”

Before there was a career or college, was there something else that these women had done with their lives and what impact had that had on their career selections or their pathway to the legislature? Looking at Barbara, Joy posed the question, “Well, if not your family and church, then what influenced who you are today?”

Workforce Preparation

As Barbara ponders the question, she begins to slowly reply, “Well, I told you about the private school I was in when I was younger, that the academic program was so outstanding that I was advanced a grade, but I think it was more than a school for me.” Her relationship with this school had started early, as she recounted attending summer day camp at this school, beginning when she was three years old, and continuing through age 12. “Socially, it was just wonderful; it felt like a big family! They all knew me, I knew everybody and even today, about two months ago, I talked to one of my old teachers!”

This long and positive relationship also provided an entrance for Barbara into her chosen field. “I began working at age 13 for a hamburger stand, and by age 16, I was working as a camp counselor for this school!” Progressing through lower camp counselor, for children under third grade, through head counselor to being in charge of the lower camp, Barbara noted that she had a real affinity for working with children.

Newly wed, graduated, and living in a new town, Barbara shares that her first, post-college job, at a local center for the blind and visually handicapped, was revealing in many ways.

I stayed there ten months and it was great because, I don't mean to sound conceited with this, it was almost like...everyone always thought I was so cute, so for all those years, people would say to me, "Oh, isn't she...she's just so cute!" My first job being at the Blind Center – it really built my confidence because people couldn't see me, and they still liked me. They still appreciated me being there and I was able to do a lot of good things, so that was probably a really important 10 months because nobody could see what I looked like. Even if you read stuff that my teachers in 7th grade wrote in my yearbook, it said stuff about appearance! Everything was about appearance!!

Seeking further affirmation of her skills and abilities, Barbara moved onto the Children and Youth Services, spending seven years working with children and teenagers. "Kids were easy, I had always worked with that age group, but teens were tougher," she explains, "but it worked because I was not that much older than they, and I was good at listening." Still searching for greater challenges, Barbara heard about another job opening.

I applied to the intake, the investigation unit and began investigating physical and sexual abuse – didn't even know what sexual abuse WAS! Didn't even know it existed! But I found that I was a great interviewer, I did really well with the kids, I was very good at not asking leading questions, people like to talk to me, kids liked to talk to me.

Her smile and voice gradually diminish as she continues, "I was almost their age, I was almost their height! So, it was a good fit! So, I really developed a knack for doing that but then..." Barbara's voice dropped so low that several women leaned forward to hear her continue, "I also had a child [client], a little

girl who had just turned five, who died, who was murdered.” A collective gasp went through the room.

Pregnant with her own first child, Barbara ultimately ended up testifying at her trial and still another murder trial. “It was very life altering ...I was very good at my job, but I saw problems with the laws, and so I decided to start working on the laws.”

Lisa, looking pale, quietly asks, “How long did you work with the child and family?”

Taking a deep breath, Barbara shakes her head slightly, “It was only 10 days, but I knew her and her family and she was murdered. As a supervisor, if you do it right, it is just as difficult as being a caseworker because you do feel the responsibility for the others...in fact it’s harder because I like control. I had to rely on somebody else to be telling me what they saw and their perceptions of what they saw, but it didn’t matter...” she finished, her voice trailing off.

Forged in Crisis

After what seemed like a long silence, Lisa slowly began to talk about her life with a traditional father and her first job that, while very traditional, was actually very liberating. It let her see that women could do it all in the world of business, and that remained a very powerful image.

I sort of attended a two-year college, got a job as a Bell telephone operator, and knew I would have a job forever, if I wanted one because there were phone companies everywhere in the 1970s. More importantly, there were women doing many of the jobs that I could see, including management.

Her early life was distinguished by moves, a variety of jobs, and skill accumulation. “Then, I married a man who had three children and we struggled to support them, and I waited so long –I was almost 29—to have our first son that I wanted to stay home with them!” Lisa’s animation grew as she was speaking, “We had three sons, also, and I just dearly loved taking care of those kids!”

Using her many skills she found herself getting involved in a hospital fundraiser, doing volunteer work to improve the community, and staying home with her children, which made life perfect. Lisa explains, “I really enjoyed all that, I love to put things together and make them work.”

Lisa’s voice slows, her lips tightening, “Sometimes, however, even when it is right in front of us, we don’t see what is going on.”

When they moved to an urban area, one of her stepsons, a middle school student, asked to move out with them.

Well, he started high school, got into the whole drug issue and that’s how I got educated and became the anti-drug crusader which is what I did for pretty much my whole married, having children life and still do.

[Laughing depreciatively, she looks around the room]

He had teachers hiding him. He had teachers helping perpetuate it and we were very indignant –they did not like us exposing this in Yuppieville! Of course we were very ignorant, we didn’t know about all this stuff!

[She leaned forward, nodding sagely]

Particularly since I was a stay-at-home mom, remember, you always blame working moms because you’re not home. Well, I was home...making the cookies...and it still happened!

Citing threats from drug dealers, school officials who did not want to look ineffective, Lisa knew there was no turning back, once she started fighting for her stepson. “I did not know if he would be alive if I did nothing.”

I ended up working nationally on the National Federation of Parents for Drug Free Youth, and through all these years, Peter, our oldest son, ended up a national spokesperson when he was 15, but it was a family affair because it was his stepbrother. We didn’t think our oldest would live. But he did and he’s wonderful and he has a wonderful family.

She pauses, her eyes glistening, “I tell this story so much, I often forget to say that he came out all right, which is important to give parents hope.”

“Well, you didn’t this time, and you are right, parents do need something hopeful in this situation,” Katy quietly offered.

Experience, the Teacher

Leslie had been quiet for some time, and looked around the room. “Well,” she offers, solemnly, “I didn’t have anything that dramatic, but I did like being the Easter Bunny.”

The collective gasps and laughter immediately brings a bit of lightness back to the room.

“You went to Duke and became the Easter Bunny?” Joy asks, incredulously.

“No!” Leslie shouts, trying to keep from laughing, looking at the stunned looks on the women’s faces, “I decided to do temp jobs while I was going to law school at night and I was the only one tall enough to fit the costume, but I had a lot of fun doing it!”

Their bewildered expression prompts Leslie to offer further explanations.

Temp experience, I think, is one of the most transforming experience of my life, because I was working as a temp for about 14 months in which I went to all these different jobs. I had different bosses every day, I had to learn how to deal with different kinds of people, and I had to learn how to ask for help, which is a critical skill even today.

After successfully completing law school, Leslie entered her new career field enthusiastically. Three years after graduation, she was the president of the Alliance for Black Women Attorneys and made a significant impression.

When I got elected President of the bar, the older members wanted to die! Because they said, “She is out of law school three years; she has no idea what she is doing!” And I said, “Oh, but you are going to have a great time!” So I did a lot of community service stuff with them, I mean I wore them out! They were so glad when I left!

You know, we won like two or three national awards during my tenure and they said, “You know, she raised a lot of money for us, and she has a lot of energy”, they wouldn’t take me again like that...now you have to be in like ten years before you can get that office.

But it was a fun experience and it gave me sort of the notion that there is so much stuff to be done in the community. No one wants to do it, but, if you give them the structure and the format...you will get people to come to you. You can say, I want to do this, and everyone will say “okay, fine” and then you start doing it. You start doing it and then two people will say “I will help you do that part” and two more will say, “I will help with that part” and that is how you get them involved and then you praise them, effusively. Then you say we now have 20 people who are willing to help do thisthen the group starts to transform itself....

I Can Do That!

This remark ignites a new energetic exchange as Joy exclaimed, “That is it! That is how women are different, because we find positive experiences in so many different opportunities and jobs!”

I was involved in AAUW; the Kensington Branch was going to start a daycare center. When you consider the list of things I am proud of; starting that daycare center is one of them. No one heard of adult daycare in 1969 and we opened in September 1970 with about 27 children and 29 slots. Our purpose was to serve a low-income community and that center now serves about 150 children. But we were looking for a high quality center so that these kids, whose parents were working, would not be so stigmatized by not having a parent around.

“I knew how to type, I am reasonably organized and meticulous for details, but I never intended to get into politics,” she explains, “but I went to a Central Committee meeting in 1974 and they needed someone to keep the calendar and I thought, “I can do that!”

When the legislator won, he asked Joy to help him with constituent work in Annapolis. Joy thought about it and realized the benefits, “Once again, I could do it on my terms and be home when my children got home from school, so I did that, too!”

Moving from one legislator’s office to another, Joy gained knowledge of the process and connections associated with the legislature. “I was approached by the Board of Education to be a lobbyist; that lasted two years and then when the job became too political, my contract was not extended.”

Enjoying the community contacts, she took a job working with scheduling space within the school system for outside groups. The ability to meet so many new people, to be able to provide assistance, there left but one facet untouched for Joy – the ability to effect change.

“I wanted to be in the decision making position. I had been danced all around the decision-making – I had been in the senator’s office and the delegate’s office and then been a lobbyist and the job I really wanted was the decision making one.” All those jobs gave her the opportunity to build the skills and abilities to finally decide to run.

Having It All

Ali sat by, nodding her head in agreement. “It is so fascinating how outside interests end up changing our lives, isn’t it?”

Educated as a lawyer, there was no doubt in her mind that she would go into practice, but little did she know that her personal interests would soon overwhelm that intent.

I spent five years in the city, doing personal injury, but I was spending ten hours a week just commuting and that was just not the way to build a practice, so I moved to a rather high-pressure firm in the county where I lived.

[Ali paused, leaning forward, shook her head and crossed her arms in front of herself.]

I was there for five years when I had a baby, and while I was not the first associate to have a baby, I was the first one on the partner track to have one and I announced that I intended to stay on the partner track!

Working nights to keep her weekends for her family, she made partner. However, she also discovered, after having her second child, a junior male with fewer clients and less experience was being paid more money. Confronting the senior partners, “I told them, I don’t want to be partners with guys who would do this.”

They quickly remedied the situation, but she decided to move on and start her own firm. In the meantime, she became active in her community and neighboring communities for land preservation, particularly equestrian and hiking trails.

“We moved to the neighboring community, and I am not there a year and they put me on the planning commission!” She announces with a boisterous laugh. “They knew who I was and within a year after that I was elected to the Board of Supervisors. So, there we are, five of us on the Board of Supervisors, and I am either chair or vice chair! I am running this local government!”

A New Voice for the Voiceless

Jill laughs along with the others and observes, “When you do something that people really want done, it is amazing what can happen to your own life!”

After graduating from law school, Jill began working for minority small businesses and contractors. “There was a law proposed that would basically broaden the definition of minority to include just about everyone, which is, of course, not the point of minority protection,” she explains, rapidly, “and while there is some argument that there are disadvantaged White males in parts of the state, the language of the law was so broad that it was virtually a free for all as this was not clearly understood.”

Marshalling a variety of minority groups under one coalition; Jill represented them during hearings and was successful in defeating the legislation. “It was my first time ever going down to Annapolis and testifying before a

committee and,” she pauses, and admits, with a smile, “I really liked it; I liked it a lot better than going to court. I thought it was like argument rather than trial and questioning and I like that much better. And so it grew from there.”

Life's Classroom

Mary leans forward, eyes sparkling, as she speaks of gaining her experience.

When people ask what my background for being in the legislature was, I say having taught third grade because I have eyes in the back of my head! I had to have a plan for every child like I have to have a plan for every member of my committee here.

Laughing, she explains that being a teacher was one of her first jobs, and she was trained by some of her sorority sisters on how to do it.

My friends who were majoring in education put together a “how to” box! They gave me a box with files and they all taught me how to do it. And I was a good teacher. I had a lot of energy. But it was difficult. It was the most difficult job I’ve ever had, physically and mentally.

There weren’t special education programs when Mary was teaching and she described her classroom as “mixed”. “And I wanted to be their friend until they ran over me” she explains, so she had to learn some new tactics. “I was pretty clever in dealing with them.” Leaning back from the table, she crosses her arms over her chest, smiles, and announces “and that is how I learned how to be a legislator!”

The Decision

Power Play

This comment is contagious and soon the women are swapping stories about how they began to decide to run and who was involved in the process.

Mary's voice came through, strong and determined, "I decided I had seen enough!"

I had gone to this Democratic convention that they had and they chose, at this convention, the people who would run on the Democratic ticket for various jobs. In this small group for our district, the only people who could vote were the precinct chairs. I couldn't vote but I went to listen.

[Leaning into the table, her voice grew stronger, with anger]

There were two incumbents and an open seat. There were several really good candidates and I saw them choose a real political hack who was really a buffoon for a position. His speech was 'Well folks, you all know me. My law practice is shaky and I need the job.' That made me so angry that I tried to find somebody else to run. I tried to get some of the other people who had been there, to run.

Unable to find anyone who would run, a neighbor suggested that Mary run, and "So I did, but not as a serious candidate!"

With a conspiratorial twinkle, Joy asks what a "non-serious candidate" looks like, prompting laughter as Mary responds, "I didn't really expect to win but I got to know everybody who was anybody, lost by 280 votes and had a ball!"

I just never thought of myself as a politician. Then I became part of this important health planning commission for the county. I never thought about running again.

But I was really angry that our county was getting short shrift from the state. And that's kind of the history of what's been happening there. These

three delegates that we had were all attorneys and it's nice to have attorneys, but you don't need all attorneys.

So I went to them, the fact we were being ignored, these people wouldn't even return my phone calls and here I was chairman of the rehab committee and they wouldn't do anything! Just brushed me off like they didn't know why it was important what I was dealing with.

Mary speaks passionately about the positive, community impact this mental health hospital has, primarily by keeping their children in state for services, rather than sending them to other states. "It would be less expensive, the parents could be involved with the treatment and it just made sense" Mary explains to the women, "but the state announced it would keep the facility closed 2-3 years because it was too expensive."

It is soon apparent to the other women in the room that this pronouncement, when coupled with ignoring Mary, was to prove to be a career-changing event for the incumbents!

These guys, these lawyers, they didn't care anyway. So about a week before the final deadline, I was in the grocery store and one of my friends said, 'Well, you're going to run, aren't you?' I said, 'No, I really don't think so.' She said, 'Oh come on, I'll help you. You've got to do it. You've got to try. I'll knock on doors for you after work.' I said I would look into it. And I looked into it and there were seven men running for three seats. And the top ones were attorneys and that was 1978. That was perfect timing.

"Did you have any endorsements from anyone?" Barbara asked.

"No, the teachers were happy, the party endorsed the three guys," Mary replies, with a flippant tone.

I didn't have the endorsement of anybody except the newspaper because they knew who I was and how committed I had been to the community! I

was everywhere. Plus there were very few women – there were only nine women in the legislature at the time.

The guys hated me. I wound up getting out there and knocking on doors and I did everything that I could possibly do, not spending much money. On Election Day, I had friends, neighbors; even my clients came out and helped me on Election Day at every polling place, all day long! I came in first in the Primary and knocked off one – and this Republican guy won, too – and knocked off another one of the attorneys. They hated me because I knocked off one of their drinking buddies!

Leaning back, Mary laughs heartily, remembering the anger of the incumbents who had been so sure they would win.

Anointment

Leslie laughed along, and noted that her campaign had been very strange, with all kinds of highly visible political influences.

With a quick glance around the table, she explains the political club system, as there are several women who are not from her state. “As a young woman, I was involved with a political club that had lost its ability to attract younger members”, she explains, quickly. “These political clubs are part of a system that is in place within the city to field candidates – usually three delegates and one senator on one ticket.” Her club consistently had a candidate on a ticket since 1963, and it was time to select a candidate to run.

Clay, who was as young, actually is younger than I am, decided he was not going to run at all for office. They said, ‘Clay is not running’ and I said, ‘No, he’s not going to run.’ They said ‘We have to find somebody!’

[She laughed boisterously]

So they looked around – you know, lady in the wheelchair, guy in the walker.... [More laughter].... they can’t campaign! One foot in the grave

already and the other foot on a banana peel, and so there were two young people...it was between the two of us and the guy became my treasurer and my campaign manager! They said to me, 'You can do this!' I did, and that's how I got in!

Endorsed by the incumbent senator, "a well respected icon of the city who had held office for 32 years, it was clear that "I was the delegate of choice." Leslie won a delegate's seat. When the Senator announced he was retiring, Leslie was once again selected. "However," she candidly admitted, "I know I never would have gotten there until he chose not to run." Unlike the delegate seat, the senate seat was highly prized, but his selection of Leslie went unchallenged.

On the day the senator announced his retirement, it was decided he would announce my endorsement! So, we orchestrated it so that we would do it at Annapolis. He would shake my hand, and as he reached over to touch my hand, every camera went off! He said, 'I am passing the mantle to this young woman.'

Pausing dramatically, Leslie continues her story, "Then, before the elections, the state held a redistricting as a result of the 2000 census. As a result of this political manipulation, a very powerful woman is thrown out of her district, and placed squarely into my region!"

Leaning back from the table, she shakes her head, still amazed, "And suddenly we have TWO strong candidates, me and the state Chairwoman of Budget and Taxes!" Laughing, she looks around the table and announces, "and boy, could this race sell papers!"

Extreme dichotomies erupted, which Leslie tries to explain, "She was White, wealthy, 62, 5'2", Jewish and held a position of power within the state,

while I was a public defender, Black, 36, 5'9" and a city girl!" Looking sad, she pronounces that the Senate race was the most covered race in the state, and neither the papers nor the polls favored her.

It was not kind press because they had endorsed her. For me, going through it, in retrospect, it hurt my feelings, I was sad all the time. I mean we were in the paper every day; either she was picking on me or I was picking on her. Anything we did made the paper! Sometimes it made the headlines! You know, it would make the local section headlines...I mean all sorts of stuff, every small thing made the paper and every day!

"Well, if you think about it" Lisa observed, "The redistricting made it an open seat up for grabs!"

Leslie laughs, "Grabs, yea! Actually it should be "grubs" because it was the grubbiest race! It was a hard race, but it was worth it."

Career Plans

Katy, who had already stated that she wanted to go into the legislature, speaks up, sharing how she made her dream come true.

I have always intended to do this from the time I was a page in the Maryland House of Delegates! It was just a question of, from a career perspective, when I could swing it. I knew I needed to concentrate on establishing a practice, having a career and I have done that and I still love practicing law. One of the reasons why I like being a state delegate is because it is part time, which every now and then I'm not convinced that it's just part time!

[She laughs at the thought]

...I guess about two years before I ran I started to try to get a little more involved in the Democratic Party and more community based activities. I had been very involved in the bar and held multiple and different positions. But decided if I really wanted to try running for office that I was going to need to be seen in other areas than just in the practice of law.

Getting involved with a women's political club, going to community meetings, and becoming more involved in her church, suddenly, the opportunity to run arose. "One incumbent went to challenge the Senator," Katy explained, "while the other moved out of the legislative district."

A lot of people tease me and talk about having a lucky star over my head, that I sort of just arrived on the scene and pulled it off. I did not expect – when I started this, I really figured I would have to run this time, get my name out, and then run again in four years. I don't know why but somehow it just all came together and it worked out.

Looking at Katy, Joy is puzzled, "Did you campaign or did you do anything other than just become more known through the earlier meetings you mentioned?"

There were about 5 or 6 female attorney friends that were very involved. My campaign manager is also a family law lawyer; we are very dear friends. While I always thought I wanted to run for office, she apparently took public affairs and marketing in college and wanted to run campaigns!

[A bit of embarrassed laughter]

We went to a few – the Democratic Party actually had a seminar on how to run a campaign. We did that and we read different articles and books and just kind of did it. I raised – I didn't spend probably as much time fund raising as some people did. I raised about \$15,000.

I actually spent a lot of time, based on what my billable hours, campaigning. I primarily knocked on doors, every Saturday and Sunday starting about mid-June last year until through the primary and then again through the general, we knocked on doors.

Joy looks around the room, smiling, and announces, "Good old fashioned political glad-handing works!"

Career Coincidence

Ali, already a locally elected and experienced campaigner, shares that she had already let it be known that she was looking for “greener pastures.”

I talked to my local municipal chairman, told her I was ready to move up. I thought maybe county commissioner; serve another part time job – better paying part time job!

I wanted to be county commissioner but the former United States Secretary of Transportation under Reagan, was already in. He is a big name and he is also and is to this day a HUGE supporter of open space. He was Chairman of the first county open space task force and he has personally given land and money for open space preservation. So, when he got in the race, I didn’t want to challenge him and I joined his team. I was working FOR him; then in the midst of it, they discovered he had a problem with alcohol.

[Frowning, she shook her head]

Over a weekend, they pulled him out of the race and slipped another Republican candidate in. So, I didn’t want to rock the boat, I am backing this other guy, who is a very nice fellow. He isn’t my first choice, but he is a very nice fellow. So, he won. The following year they came to me and said, “Would you be interested in running for state rep?” I said, ‘My state rep is fine and I am not going to run against him.’

Ali, shaking her head again, observes that there were concerns that, should issues became public, the seat could be lost in the House, which was “evenly split R’s & D’s”.

The representative has a fight with his girlfriend. She was in a fit of pique and files a police report, but it was an incident report. That report went into a file in the Chief’s office and somehow got to the Inquirer.

All this jazz is breaking over the bow, the people in the capital and Washington are starting to worry that they are going to lose the House because Joe had a fight with his girlfriend! So, they persuade him to get out of the race!

[Leaning forward, she looks around in amazement, then at Katy.]

That is the weird thing – people who study government don't understand! Much of it *is* serendipity! You know what I mean?

So, now they need a woman. They decided they needed a **woman** to run against a **woman** and they look around the county, they look around the district, okay they have to find someone in the district who is ready to run... They looked around and they picked me because I lived in the district, I was a woman, I had a good reputation, I polled well and I had expressed an interest in moving up. But this was NOT the job I wanted! You know what I mean!

The campaign got ugly, fast! We had the county Republicans, and then the House Republican campaign committee got involved, which was nuts! Because it made a difference between whether or not we were in the majority or not. And then, at some point, the nationals got involved! We were on National Public Radio, for a state Rep race! It was bizarre! My sister, the one in the GAO, said she heard me on the radio and almost drove off the road!

[She laughs, remembering the incident, then sighs, leaning on the table, as if for support]

We had laid out a nice campaign but when we became a targeted race, and my opponent, who was a local news celebrity, bought time on the Channel 6 newscast, to make the connection for viewers saying this broadcaster/candidate's name – we had to match it! It cost us \$100,000! We didn't have \$100,000! We had tapped out the county!

They [House Republican Campaign Committee] were willing to find it and put it up because they didn't want to lose my seat because it might mean that we would lose the majority. The pressure **was intense** and it **was awful!** I have told people since that if I hadn't won the race, I would have crawled under a rock and never come out again! It was the most awful thing! It was terrible!

Political Connections

Barbara notes, as Ali finishes, that, sometimes, political connections are made long before there are any plans. Explaining that she had a job in the capital under a prior governor, she briskly explains the distress it caused in her life.

... [The job] required long hours and running back and forth...and I should not have done that. I loved the job, but then I was offered \$10,000 more to come back and work as Executive Director for a local health coalition, which I did for two years. After that, all these people called and asked me to run for this job and I did. [Laughter] I mean, I took a year, for a year I said, 'No, no, no, don't want it, don't want it!'

Leslie looking puzzled, asks, "Who were 'all these people' that called you?"

Barbara laughs, and answers, apparently still somewhat amazed by the attention,

These people were our state senator, the other representatives, the sheriff, the DA, the Congressman who is now the Congressman, but it's his seat that I took ...everybody! Because I knew all these people from all my other jobs! Then, they had Harrisburg call me! They had me go to the capital! I kept saying, 'No, no, no...' 'Why don't you come up and just talk?' Well, I don't want to do that. Yea, everybody, just on and on!

Barbara admitted she took a great deal of time deciding, "Should I do this or shouldn't I? For a year, I didn't even take it seriously! Then, at one point, I said, 'All right, let me see.' Looking around the room, she smiles, "You know, there is a part of you that thinks, 'Oh this is cool!'"

Lisa nods in agreement, and begins to share her experience of being asked to run. "In 1992 ... it was a brand new seat, through reapportionment...and I was asked, 'Why don't you think about it?' I had never, ever thought about running

for politics.” But, her leadership in the drug awareness program was known, and the pressure began.

She [the spouse of a prominent state politician] said, ‘you know, you ought to go into politics. We don’t have any women talking about it.’ And I said, ‘oh, don’t be silly.’ And then a couple of guys who worked at Republican headquarters said, ‘You ought to...’ And, of course, everybody jumps into an open seat. So, I thought, well, ok, I’ll seek the endorsement. If I don’t get it, I don’t want one of these battles, you know, running in a primary unendorsed.

[She sighed, looking around, as if for support]

So about eight or nine of us, I guess, tried...and I got the endorsement.

[She laughs, mockingly]

I always have a primary but I think what they think is that if she can do it, it can’t be *that* hard. I’m morally convinced some of the folks that come out, it’s not like they’re Republican loyalists, but it’s somebody from somewhere, saying, ‘Gee, it can’t be that hard and it would be great pay!’ When I first ran, the salary was \$47,000 and now it’s almost \$65,000!

But nobody gave me a chance, really, of winning, because I was a female, in a very rural, very agricultural area and I had to go out and say ‘Hey, I’m a Baltimore girl. I really don’t know anything.’

I really don’t. But what I’m good at, what my strength is finding people who are. So that if you have a bad problem, I’m very good at finding the right person to talk to, to connect you.’

Jill laughs quietly; easily able to identify with what she had been hearing from the other women. Then, reminding everyone of her successful fights to block the legislature’s expansion of the minority contracting laws, she noted that action had been prescient, “It literally forced me to file for House of Delegates, the minority position!”

We had meetings on Monday night on July 8, 2002...I mean they found out that the filing deadline had been extended for one week to July 8. And so on Monday morning, two of the board members began calling me saying, "You've got to file for House of Delegates in your district." And I said, 'you're kidding me. I'm not interested in being in the House of Delegates. I'm absolutely not interested in that.' And they were like, 'Just file and see what happens.' So, I really didn't plan to.

[She laughed and shook her head]

I went to our regular meeting at 6:30 that evening in Baltimore. They were there. Everyone at the meeting was urging me to sign these papers. And they drove me to Annapolis to file them by 9 o'clock, which was the deadline. I'm thinking to myself, 'I'm going to withdraw.' The next morning, when I woke up, I already had three or four phone calls from friends who were saying, 'It's so great that you filed. We're so happy. We really need you in the legislature. I want to help you.' So, people were excited about it and I was like, 'You're kidding. You're kidding, right?'

Mixed in with the astonishment, the excitement and the struggles, it was evident that other people were participants in the decision making process. I was curious to hear how their families accepted these decisions.

Family and Friends

Clearly, as each of these women stood at the crossroads, trying to decide between whether to choose public service life versus private industry, support was critical. If not immediate family; then extended family and friends were part of the process. I was interested in hearing how conjugal family and birth families reacted to this new career and Leslie spoke up first.

When I initially filed for the House of Delegates, I didn't tell anyone because the truth was, I just didn't want my mother to discourage me. I wanted to do it and people often said that you shouldn't throw your dreams out to the wind, because they are your dreams and you should protect them and make sure they ripen and strengthen before you put them out there for other people to question.

Unfortunately, in her excitement over registering, she left some papers in another woman's car and this woman returned them to the house, handing them to her mother. "She looked at my mother and says, "Your daughter just filed for the House of Delegates, are you excited?" My mother looks at her and says, "She did what?"

Realizing the predicament, Leslie tried to pacify her mother by telling her she didn't want to "bother her," an excuse that quickly fell apart. But the parental disbelief and dismay did not last long. "My mother became a huge supporter for me, including going with me on campaigns, signing up voters and distributing campaign literature!" she finished, proudly.

"You know, my mother is conflicted about this. My mother wanted us all to do whatever we had to do, she pushed us, you know we got fabulous grades." Ali smiles, and continues, "But she quit when she got pregnant, that was what you did! And she never went back!"

Eyes widening, Ali's voice rises appreciably as she speaks of her conjugal family reactions to running for a state office.

Politics is a dirty business and my father-in-law falls into this realm. 'All politicians are crooks,' he tells me. I said, 'Dad, I am running for state rep, at what point do I become a crook?' 'The instant you announce', he says to me. No KIDDING!

[Eyes wide, her astonishment is still evident]

This is my FATHER-IN-LAW! 'I'm kidding, I'm kidding,' he says, 'you're okay, but the rest of you are all crooks!'

As everyone laughs, Jill notes that mothers seem to be the most protective, despite everyone else's excitement, and then she shares her own experience.

Everybody [was excited] except my mother, of course. As mothers, they are just worried, you know. 'They're going to destroy you. What horrible things are going to come out about you?' I'm like, 'Mom, I've never killed anybody or anything. What could be that bad that I've ever done?'

[Rolling her eyes dramatically, she laughs aloud.]

Mary laughs and shares that her parents, while also very supportive of nontraditional careers, were not considering politics as one of the options for her.

... The community thing – they [my parents] never ran for office, and they kind of had disdain for elected officials. We never talked politics at home- ever. They liked Roosevelt. I remember standing for hours by the railroad track when his funeral train came through.

My mother and dad didn't even want me to run for office. What were they going to tell their friends? My, gosh, that's not lady like!

[She smiled, mischievously.]

I think they were afraid for me that I wouldn't win and that I might be disappointed. The second time when I won in 1978, I didn't tell them I was running.

Leslie, with a gleam, innocently asks, "So, how did you tell them, or did they find out like my mom did?"

Mary laughs at the thought, and then nods. "Yeah, they were still in North Carolina and they didn't find out until a week before the election that I was running. A friend up here from Charlotte told her parents and they told mother."

The assemblage laughs, and Mary notes that her family, and in particular her husband, was very helpful during her run.

Joy smiles, and agrees, noting that her husband's help has been important for her run, but then sadly notes:

My mother was gone before I ran, but she knew that my husband was running for the Central Committee and she really thought that politics was dirty business and she was not at all excited about that!

I don't know how my mother would feel about my being involved, I mean, obviously after 17 years I have been in there, she would have come around, but I don't know how she would have felt about my first running. Dad knew that I ran and lost before he died, but my sister is very proud of me!

"Our son, who is the younger of our two children, was in high school when I ran for office and won," Joy continues. Recruiting friends, family, neighbors and others to help out, Joy found that the door to door work was a great way to make herself known and find out about the community.

"As I explained, I was known in the community because of many of the jobs I had held, but I went home to my family and asked them!" Barbara looks around the room, the adds, emphatically, "I asked them 'should I do this or shouldn't I?'"

Her concerns were clear. "It might be very difficult, it might be too time consuming. But, on the other hand, I wasn't sure where I was going from there, where I was."

She met with people from the local political area, as well as the state capital. "I had some concerns, they cleared them up and so I ran. I hate politics! I still hate politics. Everyone says, 'Don't say that!' But it is true; I don't like the politics part of it."

Katy nodded, “Going to community activities, getting involved with the local democratic groups so that my name could become a bit more known was important before I decided to run, and then when the campaign started all my siblings, as well as my nieces and nephews were all involved.”

Both of my parents believed in public service and being involved and not sort of just letting life pass you by and sort of let things happen to you but trying to make a difference. And that’s really something dad said early on, ‘you should try and make a difference even if it’s only in your little corner. You should try and make a difference.’ So based on that, I’ve kind of always intended to do it.

Children, Career and Life: The Balancing Act

Conversations were beginning to slow, and time was running out. Before they dispersed, I asked them to share their wisdom or advice to young women who were thinking about running for public office. As I finished posing the question, there was silence.

Puzzled, I thought the insights they could provide about balancing their life against a career, a likely step prior to taking public office, would be valuable, and forthcoming but little was said. Replaying the introductions, I startled to realize that, framed into a traditional context of career, marriage, and children, not every woman had that experience! Of the eight women who had volunteered to participate, three were single with no children! Only two had school age children at the present time, and the remaining three had older or adult children!

Sharing this observation, there was a moment of silence. Was it because of the gendered message that women with young children don’t belong in politics

and the implications of the hearth and home responsibilities? There were some murmurs of assent.

Hesitation

Of the women who had children, deciding to run for office was not made lightly, and these five mothers appeared to have very divergent approaches to making that decision. With a 16-year-old daughter and a 14-year-old son, Mary admitted she was hesitant to run for office.

I said to my next door neighbor, ‘Maybe I should wait a few years because the kids are still home’ and this savvy friend, said, ‘If you haven’t taught them what they need to know by now, you haven’t done your job. They’ll learn more from you if you get this job.’ With that thought, I proceeded into a serious campaign and was elected!

[For a young woman interested in getting into politics] I would say to weigh what she has to lose, that I would see nothing. If you don’t try you’ll never know. I encourage people to think through their lives and think is there anything embarrassing that would upset you if it came out? And the other thing is you have to brace yourself to be able to fail.

The drawbacks are that your time is never your own frequently... So you’ve got to have a spouse who is willing to tolerate all the time constraints, if you have a spouse, and your idiosyncrasies.... I think it would be hard to be in the legislature with small children, I think so. It would have been terrible for me. I’m so glad I lost the first time, so glad. It just would have made all the difference in the world. But people do. There are a few of them here that do. And I think it works ok if you have family nearby or something.

Joy and Lisa both noted that their children were also older teenagers when they ran and won. Joy’s son, as a 17-year-old driver, was more than happy to provide courier services for his mother’s election aspirations, and only Lisa’s 15-year-old son was left at home when she decided to run for office. With the prior

political involvement of the drug council, Lisa noted, he was already an experienced political pundit!

Working Mothers

It was then that the last two women looked at each other. Ali began to speak, slowly, of being a working mom.

So, my parents pushed us and pushed us and pushed us to get through everything. Get into college, get through law school, first honors –I mean every single one of us came through with first honors, every single time, with the possible exception of French!

[She laughed quickly.]

We did very well, but then, when we started having babies...my mother started having a problem with it. I don't know what she was thinking, but she was thinking we would stay home like she did. My mother, in a time when women did not get college degrees, had a college degree, went to work for Smith-Kline-French, at the time, the Pharmaceutical company that is now Smith-Kline-Beecham, as a chemist! But she quit when she got pregnant, that was what you did! And she never went back!

[Her pause was long]

My mother just was not prepared for this working mother stuff. She gamely bit her lip and soldiered on! She just didn't think it was right. But you know, the reality is if you drop out, you can sequence...thank you, Sandra Day O'Connor for that piece of advice...but you don't make partner at the law firm. You do get behind the 8-ball.

With this experience, she contemplated moving from lawyer and member of the local Board of Supervisors, for almost ten years, to the role of state legislator.

I knew that would be an issue when I ran in 2000; Tommy was 12 and Paul was 14. So, originally, I had this fantasy about taking them with me to campaign. In fact, colleagues told me you could do that! But I want to tell you something, a 12 year old does not want to come and, while they

may be willing to go with you, you've got to work that crowd for 2-3 hours and they are done in a half hour! It was awful for them but my husband was very, very, very supportive.

As for advice, well, I think it is very difficult to do this with babies in tow. I didn't. If you establish your base early, I mean get those two election cycles behind you, the job provides you more flexibility than most other jobs... you could probably ease up on that to have babies, but it is very, very difficult. Some women and some men will "diss" you for trying to do it all.

Ali paused a moment, then continued to explain what she saw as women's biggest problem to accessing elected state offices.

Guys want jobs that pay well and politics in my county, the jobs that paid, were almost always something that men were always angling for and angling to give out...Sure, go ahead and run for Supervisor –Supervisor pays nothing, it is a part-time job. So, I think the fact that the job pays real money means that there is real competition for it.

The guys are more knowledgeable about the pathways to getting there and they are in the pathways! ...The women are not at the bar when the decision is made that ...we need someone else [to run]! Women are not in the room! They are not there, and they are not playing golf the day that someone met the next guy they are going to slip into that slot!

Nearby, Barbara nodded, understanding the new tone in Ali's usually confident and jovial voice –it was one of concern over what sacrifices might have to be made, and consequences to be faced.

Calling the Shots

"Before I was elected in 2000, I had a job in the state capital working for the Deputy Director of the Governor's Community Partnership for Safe Children, that I absolutely loved and I kept it for two years," Barbara explained, "but the

time spent running back and forth between home and the capital created an untenable situation at home that I will not repeat as an elected official.”

With children that were 15, 14, 10 and 5, the 14 year old seemed to suffer the most from her absence as her grades dropped due to lack of attention to homework and studying. “My husband was there,” she explains “but he was not as attentive as I am to this stuff, so she made some bad choices, which we were able to correct, but she did not get into her first choice for college.”

Sighing, she notes, “As much as I loved that job, I should not have taken it, probably. The girls were 15 & 14 – bad, bad ages!”

Barbara realized a great deal from that experience, and it lead to a firm decision that she had already shared with me.

I decided I was going to do it [be a politician] my way – which meant I was not going to be away every night of the week. I am just not doing it! If people don’t like it, then vote me out! I don’t care! I will put my all into it, I will be available all the time, but I am just not going to go to things just because people want me to go to everything when I have a family....

I have to do it my way because if I don’t, my kids will be the ones that suffer. And then, what good will I have done for anything? So, I am not going to do that, I have got to be there for them. They are first.

Her pause was very long, “You know, I grew up in a family that my mother was there, but not there, really, and my father was **not** there. I am not doing that, I still have an 11 year old and I have a teenager!”

I make it work. A part of me...I probably am more crazy than most... than anybody else up there because everybody else up there, you know...people that come from a distance, even the women...most of the women don’t have kids. I think only one other does – that are smaller.

But when they come up there, they stay. Because they live too far away to run back and forth so they stay. Their responsibility, then, is that job....See, me, I am trying to juggle the two. But if I am not there, there is **nobody** that understands that kind of lifestyle! And those issues!

So, a part of me says, “Gosh, this really doesn’t work well for moms, with children that are young.” And another part of me says that is why I need to be there.

[She paused for a moment to collect her thoughts, and then continued.]

For someone thinking about it, I would just lay it all out. I would not want to be...to sway them in any way because, like I said, I wanted to be a teacher and everybody talked me out of that! I don’t think they should have now! So, I would just lay it all out. Usually what I do, and I have students who come to me about that all the time. What I do is I ask them if they want to spend time with me. I take them to meetings and do all kinds of things with them. Then they can do an internship in here, we have student interns all the time rotating in and out!

Joy listens to Barbara’s observations, nodding soberly, apparently

agreeing with much of what had been said.

I would tell [a young woman thinking of running] to evaluate her energy level. Politics takes an amazing amount of energy, both in campaigning and in keeping up with the schedule. Your time is not your own.

Frankly, I would not encourage a young mother to do this, the fact that I was defeated the first time meant that I could go to my son’s track meets, that I could watch him win the state championship. I was there. All my kids were in college or beyond by the time I ran. I think it would be very difficult for me to not be there for 3 months out of the year with young children. But that is my philosophy. Now, if you could take them with you to the capital, or live there, that is a different story.

Jill is listening intently and quickly speaks up.

I don’t know how [mothers] they do it! Being single with no children, I find life...responsibilities...so difficult I’ve never been able to imagine how women with small kids literally do anything – how they have businesses, how they practice law – I don’t know!

I mean so yes, it's a stress – politics is very stressful because you start in January and you go through April and then from April through December you meet with constituents and committee meetings. There are interim meetings – the largest piece of work – the constituent work...there's nothing I can do about this and I wish that there were but there's nothing you can do...only understood what you're there for.

[As for advice], Assess the situation and see if there was a real chance for victory and what's the goal. If victory is the goal, is there a shot at victory in the situation. It's a tough battle, very tough...Bottom line; I'd actually like to find some people who are young and groom them because I think we need strong voice and people who aren't afraid to stand up for things. And I think I definitely inherit my beliefs from my father. I wasn't that exposed to him; it's just kind of natural, within me.

Katy nods in agreement with Jill and makes the observation that more women are needed in the legislature.

I don't have a family so there's not someone at home that's waiting for me to come, to be there for dinner. I don't have children that I'm trying to juggle those kinds of things. I don't know how people do it.

[As far as a young woman who is interested], I would definitely encourage her because it is important to have more women – I'm delighted where our state is in the scheme of things but I would encourage her to get involved in lots of different activities in community organizations.

I think the more well-rounded you are as a person, as well as through your activities, the better legislator or any form of government, delegate, county councilman, school board or whatever you're going to be. Because it's just a very broad responsibility and there are broad issues. If you just come with a single focus, I think that you are not as effective.

Oh, and think about timing – try a place where it would be best to run from - not have your life dictated by it but if it's something you're considering, then at least look at who's your delegate and who's in office now and how long have they been there.

Lisa, sitting upright, is excited, and obviously in agreement with the contributions of the women.

I love to talk to women in government classes. I don't have a thing about being a woman. I'm not big on women's caucuses because I like to be with the men because you better be there and not sitting in a room with all the women. Most of the women I serve with feel the same way...very independent, toe-to-toe, we hold our own.

You have to fight for every little thing that you get. And you better be that type of personality that you are willing to be able to stand up for yourself. I never feel, you know, the thing about all the women will get together and then everyone will quake in their shoes.

I go out and talked to some very liberal women's groups. I'll often talk to them because I do just fine with them. Obviously we don't agree on some issues but pretty much you find things to agree on. I encourage, and I don't know what party. I mean, they're women's groups! I don't know who belongs to what. I did such a good job at one that one of the women who was a Democrat ran against one of the Republican supervisors and he still doesn't speak to me.

[Laughing hard]

She said, 'We should get out there and run for office!' So there's a danger in that, you know. I said, 'Well I didn't tell her to run against you!' I just must have done a really good job being excited and getting her excited about it!

"When it comes to deciding to run, my advice is easy! Do it! I would start with that, with no hesitation. Just sign your name on the dotted line." Leslie leans forward, nodding.

I hosted a candidate's 'How to' forum a couple of weeks ago for every candidate – Democrat, Republican, Independents, Greens, I didn't care! I said, 'Here is the deal, everybody who wants to know how to run and win, I am going to show you.'

[Laughing, she places both palms on the table, excitedly]

We had 50 of the 100 and some candidates come in and we taught them everything!

Mary nods enthusiastically, in agreement with the other women, “The drawbacks are that your time is never your own, frequently and during the winter, it is definitely 70 hour work weeks!” With those caveats in mind, her advice for young women is simple.

I would say to weigh what she has to lose, that if you don’t try you’ll never know. I encourage people to think through their lives and think is there anything embarrassing that would upset you if it came out?

And the other thing is you have to brace yourself to be able to fail. You focus on winning but you know, I lost the first primary and but hey, I met so many people and I made so many new friends. I had a good time and I didn’t really lose anything. My self-respect was there; my self-esteem was even better. My family was not criticized; I didn’t have anything in my background that would have been embarrassing. So, think about that.

Just think about what kind of doors you can open for yourself and other people, particularly for people like women who would want social work kind of things or business or people with any kind of background. I think the opportunities for helping people are there and that’s really kind of the way I looked at it.

Departing

The time we have allotted for our meeting has passed. As the women gather their possessions, I express my thanks; some are already quickly heading towards the door. I know some still have appointments yet to make before the day is over. I know Barbara is heading home. While the others express their thanks for having a chance to share their stories, Mary seems to be waiting. Pausing before the door, she reaches for my hand, and offers a final insight that seemed to sum it up succinctly. Looking at me, she notes,

There have been a lot of times when the guys don’t realize [it wasn’t just women’s issues], particularly in the early days; they just didn’t give us

credit for anything. It was really difficult and it was very lonely because the guys would go out to eat and I'd be left...

[Her pause was very long, and she appears sad].

A lot of night I'd eat crackers at my desk. Today, I think a lot of it has to do with people being in the right place and the right time and the right circumstances. I think the opportunities for helping people are there and that's really kind of the way I looked at it. It's an opportunity to make a difference for an awful lot of people that you never, ever had any idea about.

Wishing me luck, she turns and walks out the door. As I watched it close behind her, I find myself thinking over what I have just experienced, the literature I have read while I was researching this topic, and what appears to still be missing.

THE THEMES

Moving from the narrative, and in keeping with the protocol of phenomenological research, I now provide a more thorough “theme analysis.” Van Manen (1990) notes that theme analysis is the “process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work” (p. 78). In seeking to “see” the meaning within this research, I believe it is wise to revisit the original research questions. They are:

- How do state-level elected women describe their experiences of deciding to run for office and what meanings do they attach to their descriptions?
- With regard to their experiences of deciding to run for state-level elections, what knowledge, skills and dispositions have these women developed?
- What activities and processes, as well as skills and dispositions that the women associate with deciding to become state-level elected officials, fostered the development of that knowledge?

Gender

Gendered Behavior and Candidacy

Gendered influences are apparent throughout this research, beginning with the women’s experiences related to deciding to identify themselves as candidates. The literature (Carroll, 1994; McGlen and O’Connor, 1998 and Whitaker, 1999) notes that it is the rare woman who just decides to run for political office. This is because this behavior is so contrary to the more submissive and dismissive gendered upbringing that is experienced within our society by females. Much as

women wait to be invited and asked for dances and marriage, women will wait to be asked by the dominant political parties to be a candidate.

Several scenarios do exist to create the opportunity for political parties to proffer an invitation to a woman to be a state legislative candidate; these include the death of the elected spouse, incumbency indiscretion, and political parties rewarding individuals for their party loyalty (Carroll, 1994; Braden, 1996; McGlen and O'Connor, 1998). Within this study, half of the participants resembled this literature. Ali, Barbara, Leslie and Lisa were all recruited by the major parties to run for their state legislative office, and the constructed narrative illustrates these experiences.

According to the literature (Margolies-Mezvinsky, 1994; Thomas and Wilcox, 1998; and Woods, 2000), women who decide to run for state office as a result of incumbent apathy, scandal, as well as demonstrated indifference to issues such as community health, safety, and education are motivated to challenge the status quo. As noted in the narrative, only one participant within my study, Mary, readily expressed her anger with the indifference exhibited by the party system, and it was this anger that forced her to decide to personally take action.

Of the remaining three participants, Jill, Joy, and Katy, the literature that addresses how they decided to become candidates is sparse to nonexistent. One of the women, the daughter of a deceased premiere Civil Rights leader, could be considered a member of the elite families within the African-American community. While there is research on elite African-American families

(Birmingham, 1977, Graham, 2000, Willson, 2000, etc.), I was not able to identify any research on elite African-American families *in politics*. There is also very little research about elite father to daughter political activity as it is a relatively new phenomenon (Brownstein, 1998). And, as there have been very few African-American women who have held state (or federal) legislative office, this is also an unexplored phenomenon.

The two remaining women, Katy and Joy, did not wait to be asked but decided on their own that they wanted the job of legislator. Once they made that decision, they proceeded, in a business like manner, to determine and acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to fulfill that job! Carroll (1994) would describe these women's decision-making descriptions as simply incompatible within the gendered definitions of appropriate behavior for women.

Social Capital

Social capital refers to the individual's personal ties, memberships, and relationships with the community, groups and other institutions that shape and enhance their status and influence in the society (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2000). Within the literature, many of these valued connections and relationships are identified as being forged during post-secondary education, military and professional associations that are housed within the public domain. This domain is usually dominated by men. Indeed, much of the difficulty that women experience trying to acquire this social capital is primarily due to childrearing requirements

that remove women from the public domain, as well as the lack of access to professional/managerial positions.

The literature describes social capital as a critical component to acquiring highly desirable positions within society (such as political office) (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2000). All of the participants in this research revealed that, within their knowledge, skills and abilities, they had accumulated social capital that was beneficial and sufficient for deciding to run for office. It is interesting to note that only two women identified themselves as holding or possessing insufficient social capital. This was noted as a specific deficiency that might keep them from securing this job of politician, and once this critical acknowledgement had been made, specific and deliberate actions were taken to address this weakness. These actions included joining civic, religious and other various organizations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study affords an opportunity for adult educators to realize and address the gendered nature of learning and society's perceptions of the value of women's lived experiences, in all forms, within the public domain of the legislature. Through more inclusive educational opportunities, as well as less gendered social structures, more women may feel capable of accessing, and subsequently influencing, the legislature. As a result, the issue of "Insiders" and "Outsiders" to the political system may become less of a function of gender, and women will be able to use this opportunity to be a part of the system that prioritizes and determines our country's future.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

“Indeed, we believe that women’s different perspectives will ultimately reshape the public policy agenda.” (Women Make a Difference, Center for American Women in Politics, 1983, p. 19.)

Introduction

The opening quote of this research, “Toto, I don’t think we are in Kansas anymore” is more than just Dorothy’s observation about the evolving and bizarre landscape she encountered on her way to Oz. It is about a woman’s learning and moving from acceptance of transmitted knowledge as fact to constructing knowledge, based on the context and understanding of her lived experiences (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986). In particular, this research is about women making sense of their lived experiences in order to decide which paths to take, including being able to choose a pathway to the state legislature.

The purpose of this study was to understand the *meanings* that individual elected women in Maryland and Pennsylvania’s legislatures gave to lived experiences on their pathway through life that lead them to overcome recognized and documented barriers, as well as maximize opportunities, in order to decide to run for the state legislature. The study brings to light the very contextual nature of these experiences, as highlighted within their stories. This chapter will discuss the relevant findings of my study, draw conclusions from the participant’s stories, discuss the implications of my finding on practice and make recommendations for further study.

Relevant Findings

Within chapter two, my research focused on the historically identified barriers of the media, culture and political parties on women's ability to decide to venture onto the pathway to the state legislature. While this literature provides a framework for exploring my questions, it tends to merely identify and list the triggering events and other factors. There is limited discussion within this literature of the nuances of these various factors on women, and this is a deficiency because, as evidenced, some women did overcome these barriers and did decide to run for office!

The pathway to the legislature, within this literature, tends to reflect only two pathways for women to access the legislature, with few of the contextual nuances that help to explain how women decide to run for office. The influences of the nuances that are present within the rich, contextual data that comprised each woman's story of deciding to run for office, and within my research, these factors are almost inexorably intertwined within her decision-making capabilities.

Gendered Social Capital

Social capital, according to the literature, refers to the individual's personal ties, memberships and relationships with the community, groups and other institutions that shape and enhance their status and influence in the society (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2000). The literature also describes social capital as a critical component to acquiring highly desirable positions within society (such as political office) (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2000). There are no overt mentions of

gender within these descriptors. However, many of these valued connections and relationships are made during post-secondary education, military and professional associations that are housed within the public domain. This domain is usually dominated by men.

Indeed, the literature identifies challenges women face as they try to accumulate sufficient social capital to successfully run for office. This paucity is primarily due to childrearing requirements that remove women from the public domain, as well as the women's continued inability to easily access professional/managerial positions within the public domain.

I would argue that this research highlights a need to reexamine the broad acceptance of these definitions and model of social capital, as it reflects a male or gendered model. Based on the literature, though not specifically stated, it would appear that there are recognized and *valued* forms of social capital, and these are, predominantly, based within the public domain. Then, I would argue that there exists *other* social capital, located within the private domain, which does not appear to be as valued. This conclusion is drawn because the literature is relatively silent on the value of these non-public domain community connections, except as secondarily contributory, to an individual's ability to successfully seek public office.

Much like the reevaluation of many accepted models of learning were found to be based on male research led to the recognition that women may learn differently from men, some of these participants model a new perspective on

social capital. Based on this small group, it would appear the origination of these women's social capital is only *different*, but not deficient from that social capital that is accumulated in the public domain. Several of the participant's stories highlight the value of the social capital that is realized within the private domain, as a result of the connectedness experienced by the women within their lived experiences.

Mary, who was predominantly a stay at home mother, explains the benefit of this connectedness to her community, "I got those polling places totally covered with friends in the AAUW, with neighbors. I had had my own little interior design business and my clients came out and helped me on election day." Some of these connections were realized as a result of associations that began in post secondary education, but they were not part of the post secondary experience, such as the AAUW.

Lisa, also a stay at home mom, was also active in her community, organizing fundraisers, even establishing a church! "I love to put things together and make them work. That was quite an experience (founding the church). And I really enjoyed that!" These women's experiences and the resulting social capital appear to be sufficient, as they successfully ran for office.

This gendered model also reflects the continued devaluation of women's lived experiences (and contributions) to society. The literature cites women's **absence** from the public domain due to childrearing as one of the primary reasons for her inability to accumulate social capital; much like the absence of women

from public discourse was believed to signify women's inability to be logical (Bloch, 2001). This model presumes childrearing women who are not functioning within the public domain are either unable or incapable of contact or growth during this time period. It is as if, by staying home with her children, she has vanished into some abyss!

Anyone who has left the public domain to raise children realizes the wealth of connections and skills that can be developed. Conversations happen informally while waiting in line at grocery stores, at schools while picking up children, as the neighbors walk their dog, and connections and relationships result from these casual interactions.

The literature is also silent about the knowledge, skills and abilities that are learned during this time period of childrearing, such as financial and time management. As a result, this model of social capital serves to assiduously perpetuate the perceptions that this time in a woman's life is detrimental to her personal growth and career aspirations, simply due to the lack of paid status. Indeed, continuation of this perspective may continue to dissuade more women from running for office, as they will believe that their time spent within the private domain will render them without any skills, knowledge or abilities to offer as a candidate.

The second contribution of this study is a robust description of the three pathways that women selected when deciding to run for the state legislature. Two of the three pathways were already identified within the literature; only the third

is new. The unique contribution of this study is that my description of the pathways goes beyond a mere listing of factors to providing rich contextual nuances – which I refer to as intersecting trails.

The literature within chapter two discusses two dominate processes or pathways that women use when they decide to run for the state legislature (and many other public offices): the pathway related to triggering events, and pathways made available via political party recruitment.

This study identifies an additional pathway, as well as intersecting trails, within all three pathways. In this third pathway, women's decision to run for office is expressed as a normal career progression. I have not identified any literature that fully acknowledges or explains this third pathway group's decision-making process, except to note that it is considered aberrant, though this group does share some of the characteristics of the other two groups. This is a very important distinction because, within my study, each pathway articulates a very distinct decision-making sequence, and this final group is different.

The intersecting trails, which I have identified as present within all three pathways, reflect the variation within the women's lived experiences: they are the contextual nuances that explain and give color to each woman's experience. My discussion of these intersecting trails also includes illustrations of how gendered social capital is acquired within each pathway.

Pathway #1: Women Running as a Result of a Triggering Event

I will begin by discussing the pathway selected by women who decide to seize control from the political party, and make a run for political office as a result of triggering events. The literature highlights triggers that launched women onto this pathway that include incumbent apathy, scandal, as well as demonstrated indifference by the incumbent to issues such as community health, safety and education (Thomas and Wilcox, 19987). The most well known example of a triggering event that led to women selecting this pathway may be found within the 1992 “Year of the Woman” elections. Large numbers of women were outraged over the (male) committee’s handling of one witness, Dr. Anita Hill, during the Senate Judiciary Confirmation Hearings for Clarence Thomas. Significantly greater numbers of women not only voted in the 1992 elections, but also decided to run for office, in order to clearly signal their displeasure with this gendered and insensitive behavior of the incumbents.

Within my study, this pathway had only one participant. The triggering event was incumbent’s indifferent behavior regarding opening a newly built community mental health clinic. This occurred in 1978, when the state announced it would postpone opening the clinic due to funding issues.

I was really angry that our county was getting short shrift from the state, and that’s kind of the history of what’s been happening there. These three delegates that we had were all attorneys ... So, I went to them, with the fact we were being ignored. These people wouldn’t even return my phone calls! Here I was chairman of the rehab committee and they wouldn’t do anything. Just brushed me off like they didn’t know why what I was dealing with was important.

Contextual Gendered Behavior on Pathway #1

This participant provides an excellent example of the contextual and gendered nature of her location in the culture. The literature would have presented this candidate as running for office on “women’s issues” as the triggering event appears to be the clash between the commonly held perceptions of the defined public and private domain in 1978. She was seeking to bring mental health care services to the county, and, at that time, health issues were perceived to be part of the private domain. Children’s mental health concerns, in particular, did not become part of the public discourse until 1999, as a result of Columbine (Wahl, 2004). As a result of these perceptions and realities, her concerns are discounted because the male legislators do not see this situation as anything but a health, rather than an economic, problem.

The contextual nuances of the story, however, demonstrate the gendered nature of this triggering event. In 1978, women have not integrated very far into the public domain and traditional, as well as gendered, stereotypes exist regarding women’s behavior. This participant’s story reflects her gendered experiences as the committee chair of a mental health group. She knows, within her purview, of the state of affairs, as well as the cost to their community, of mental health care for children. As chair, she has researched the financial background of the subject and she knows that children’s treatment, when sent out of state, is more expensive than if the services are provided within the state. She knows parents experience

hardships and are incapable of supporting their children's out of state treatment, which results in longer care being required. To her, clearly this was a decision that belonged within the public domain because it concerned the allocation of limited state resources, tax dollars.

The lawyers/elected representatives react to her in a very patriarchal and dismissive manner. This woman, they conclude, is not an accountant, nor is she a doctor. To them, she is but a community volunteer; she is not paid to offer her expertise, and as a result, she does not have credibility or credentials. With these cultural nuances in place, the male legislators perceive her concern for this health care problem as a "woman's issue." Regardless of documentation, her committee's recommendations are summarily discarded, without examination, regarding the many costs of mental health delivery methods in the state. She exclaims, indignantly, "I got somebody to put together some numbers for me and I showed that it was cheaper to bring those kids back plus their families could come for counseling. These guys, these lawyers, they didn't care anyway."

Gendered Social Capital on Pathway #1

As noted earlier, social capital refers to the individual's personal ties, memberships and relationships within the community, groups and other institutions that shape the quality and quantity of social interactions that can lead to enhanced stature and status within the community (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2000). As argued earlier, there appears to be a difference between the value of social capital accumulated in the two spheres of society. The social capital that

females tend to accumulate, within the private sphere, appear to be valued less than the social capital accumulated within the public, or male dominated, sphere.

While this participant's story speaks of a triggering event, many women experience similar events in their lives, and they do not decide to run for public office. The trail that Mary selects, along this pathway, reflects and encouragement by close friends to do this. If these neighbors and friends had not spoken up, but had only provided a sympathetic ear for her frustration, Mary may not have decided to run. However, she states that it was the advice of several close friends that propelled her to decide to step outside the stereotypical behavior of middle class, middle-aged white men, and to challenge a political incumbent.

So about a week before the final deadline, I was in the grocery store and one of my friends said, 'Well, you're going to run, aren't you?' I said, 'No, I really don't think so.' She said, 'Ah come on, I'll help you. You've got to do it. You've got to try. I'll knock on doors for you after work.'

I said to my next door neighbor, 'Maybe I should wait a few years because the kids are still home' and this savvy friend, said, 'If you haven't taught them what they need to know by now, you haven't done your job. They'll learn more from you if you get this job.' I said I would look into it.

And I looked into it and there were seven men running for three seats. And that was 1978. I went in... That was perfect timing.

As a middle-aged, middle class, married white woman with young teen children, in the 1970's, she was the typical housewife, as she did not have to hold full time employment. She had the time, interest, and ability to get involved with her community, and these activities resulted in the establishment of many

valuable connections and relationships. Her story identifies many different opportunities to develop relationships, the critical social capital needed to mount a successful political campaign, however many of them do not fit into the gendered model, as I discussed earlier.

I was on the county's health planning board and the state mental health advisory board and I chaired a commission in the city of Rockville and I was on another one and I was just a full time volunteer with school and all this, that and the other thing.

So I (decided to run but) didn't have anybody's endorsement except the newspaper because I was involved in everything and they knew me. I had gotten an incinerator stopped – a pathological waste incinerator they were going to build out by this hospital that was eventually built. I was everywhere. I was a busybody.

On Election Day, I had friends at every polling place, all day long. I got those polling places totally covered with friends in AAUW, with neighbors. I had had my own little interior design business and my clients came out and helped me on Election Day. I came in first in the general election.

This relationship also reflects the reciprocity existing within this environment. She had invested significant and positive energy to the community, and the community responded by overwhelmingly supporting her run for office.

As illustrated in the earlier narrative, Mary was knowledgeable regarding political activities as she had assumed many elected and appointed leadership roles as part of her college and sorority experiences, as well as run campaigns for others. The literature recognizes the value of these opportunities and notes that college activities provide good preparatory grounds for women to gain experience and confidence in their abilities (Witt, Paget and Matthews, 1994). However, his

literature would appear to reinforce the assumption that this model of social capital accumulation, a male-centered form of social capital, as the *only* form of social capital as no other pathways are identified for accumulating this asset.

Mary's experiences, rich in female-centered forms of social capital, were archetypical of those women who selected this pathway and decided to run for office after the beginning of the most recent Women's Rights movement and many examples exist across the United States. Like Mary, Patty Murray was an at-home mom who volunteered in a pre-school. When she heard that the legislature was cutting funding, including for the pre-school program, she was amazed. "I assumed that the legislators were just uninformed...and convince them of their mistake." Deciding to go to the capital, she was told by male state legislators, "You can't make a difference, you're just a mom in tennis shoes" (Mikulski, Hutchinson, Feinstein, Boxer, Murray, Snowe, Collins, Landrieu, Lincoln, 2000, p. 40). Because mother's connections and friendships do not carry the weight and power of male, public domain social capital, the women's social capital – those friendships made amongst mothers on the block, at school, in PTO, and in their religious services, were dismissed by the legislators. Once back home, Patty got on the telephone and called all the pre-school parents, who called other parents, building a coalition of 15,000 parents. Now, Senator Patty Murray observes that she proved that voters do make a difference and getting involved to address the decision making process was much better than sitting at home saying "Oh well, that's too bad!" (p. 42). But Mary, within this study, while representing

the quintessential of the women who decided to run for office after the beginning of the Women's Rights movement, is only one of eight participants in this study.

Pathway #2: Women Running as a Result of Party Recruitment

This second pathway begins to exist primarily after 1976, when the major parties begin to recruit women (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998). This time period signifies the beginning of the political change – recognition of women's contributions to the party, as well as the need to incorporate women into the system in order to quell women's challenges to the political status quo occurring as a result of the Women's Movement. Women's stalwart support as the behind the scene forces and administrators within the party allowed them to easily identify, and subsequently reward, faithful party women as candidates.

Thomas and Wilcox also note that party recruitment of women usually occurs as a result of one of three factors: whether the seat is winnable, whether a viable candidate can be identified, and if this can be a reward for a loyal party member. Carroll (1993) also adds that women on this second pathway are frequently the recipients of party recruitment in order to fulfill a deceased husband's term or as a preemptive strike to avoid losing control of the party selection process due to the incidents that motivated or compelled women onto the first pathway.

Within my study, I have identified a variety of trails that I believe feed into this pathway. These trails include seats that open due to redistricting, incumbent succession, damage control and a blend of redistricting and succession.

Four of my participants could be placed on these trails, on this second pathway, as their stories closely resembled this literature. These women told stories of holding highly public and powerful positions within the community that garnered them credibility and recognition. Their positions and experiences, while offering the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, ability, reflect the emphasis on male centered social capital that is recognized within the literature as being critical to successfully running for a state legislative office.

Redistricting and Party Recruitment

This trail reflects the willingness of the party to approach women to fill vacant seats, and the woman's willingness to entertain the idea of running for office. With high visibility due to the national exposure, there was interest among some very strong party members to have Lisa run for a seat that was recently created due to redistricting. By its very nature, redistricting favors the controlling state party and, with no incumbent, this kind of open seat also creates opportunity for either local or state reward. Lisa was also a viable candidate because, as a Republican in a Republican controlled area, she was recognized as leading the charge in an area of concern (anti-drug campaign) that fit within the Republican national platform and was recognizable due to her prior commitment and connection to the community.

Contextual Gendered Behavior on Pathway #2

Lisa is an older woman, raised during the 1940's and 1950's. While she held a variety of jobs, she does not define herself by any paid career. Her priorities were her children and her community.

While probably financially, I should have worked, I stayed home because I just dearly loved taking care of those kids. I wouldn't have left them unless there was absolutely nothing to eat.

I was one of the stay at home moms and, while I stayed home, I was the premier volunteer person. I kept busy.

She describes her life in terms that reflect very typical and gendered behavior for women of that time, and she heartily embraces those socially defined roles and expectations. With the time and ability to become involved in the community and a self-described premiere volunteer, she accumulates significant female-centered social capital by focusing on improving quality of life issues within the community. Her activities have included fund raising events for a hospital, parental involvement within the school, and even starting a church, so that children could have access to a local, faith based youth organization.

However, when her stepson became involved with drugs in high school, she sought to not only help him, but to address the whole issue of drug usage that was becoming rampant in the schools. Her protective instincts for her children evolved into her assuming the mantle of "crusader," as she explains, "I became involved in the whole drug issue and that's how I got educated and became the

anti-drug crusader, which is what I did for pretty much my whole married, having children life...and still do!”

While this behavior may be considered as uncharacteristic for the gendered roles she embraced, contextual nuances clarify this behavior, as initially, conforming to her traditional roles. Nancy Reagan, wife of then President Ronald Reagan, originally championed this anti-drug campaign and, as discussed earlier, health concerns are considered part of the private domain. While this program held high visibility due to its’ sponsors, women’s involvement, initially, were accepted because children’s drug usage was a family problem.

As time passed, however, the scope of the exposure that Lisa experienced evolved to the national level. It was **then** that Lisa gained positive recognition by the political party – for her male centered social capital, despite her previously acquired and abundant female centered social capital.

This prominent woman and her husband, who was in the House and chairman of appropriations, was supporters of the drug free program. He had gotten money to fund this drug prevention program so we worked together all the time. She said, ‘You know, you ought to go into politics. We don’t have any women talking about it.’ And I said, ‘Oh, don’t be silly.’ And then a couple of guys who worked at Republican headquarters approached me and said, ‘You ought to...’

When the opportunity in 1992 came up, it was a brand new seat, through reapportionment of a very rural area, and I was asked, ‘Why don’t you think about it?’ So, I did.

Lisa’s approach to the value of her knowledge also reflects gendered and contextual nuances. She did not finish any post-secondary education, and her

story reflects an acceptance of the lack of value attributed to learning and knowledge acquired via lived experiences and common sense.

“I really don’t know anything. I really don’t. But, what I am good at, where my strength lays, is finding people who are. So, if you have a bad problem, I’m very good at finding the right person to talk to, to connect you. So, that’s my focus.”

Lisa frames her alleged ignorance as an asset; her constituents have stated that they appreciate that she does not have preconceived ideas about their needs, but learns about their needs by asking. She believes this is because she does not have knowledge, rather than bias. She is unable or unwilling to articulate or recognize the value of her own knowledge as being an open minded, creative woman politician who is able to process information differently, utilizing the connections and relationships she has forged. While she acknowledges within her story that constituent’ observations reflect negative experiences with her male predecessors, her tone remains somewhat dismissive regarding her own strengths.

Lisa’s process for deciding to run, while bearing some resemblance to the other women of this study in that they have demonstrated a community focus and were in highly visible positions, is also different. Her meaning making regarding the events of her life holds a dimension that is not stated within the stories of other women participants. Her stories reflect the value and importance of community service she learned from her immigrant grandparents. As privileged Europeans, the World Wars radically altered their lives, and clearly influenced the value of citizenship they held. The prominence of their lived experiences, within

Lisa's stories, emphasizes the meaning she continues to hold for these messages within her own values.

Incumbent Succession and Party Recruitment

The second trail is that of party succession and the inclusion of women within that plan. Barbara's story resembles Lisa's in that the party recruited her, and she was recognized as a well-known and respected individual who had worked within the county Public Defender's office. She also has significant experience at the state level and positive exposure within politically oriented offices. These experiences are a significant asset for her because she knows how to garner nonpartisan support, and is knowledgeable and well acquainted with the workings of the state legislature. Barbara, like Lisa, was also approached by multiple and influential people who were associated with the dominant local party to run for the office because of their recognition of the significant, recognizable and highly coveted male-centered social capital she had acquired within these experiences.

However, party succession plans requires party control of the process, a willing electorate, and cooperative potential candidates. While there may be voiced aspirations for future vacancy, the candidate has little personal control over the plan. This model resembles the traditional male dominated political machines that rewarded party loyalty with political promotions, while continuing to control and hold the individual office. Barbara recognizes the importance of this political loyalty, and emphatically states that she would never have

considered running for political office, had the incumbent Representative not been selected to succeed a retiring Senator because “he (the promoted incumbent) has always been there for me. He is a dear friend and I would never do that!”

While this respectful behavior may appear to reflect the more typical candidate acquiescence and recognition of the power dynamics within politics, Barbara’s ensuing behavior is atypical. In line with gendered behavior, Barbara waited to be asked to be a candidate; however, she makes it clear that she will accept the nomination only under her terms. “So, I don’t even have to run, if I don’t want to. I know they have a vested interest in me running because I am a good candidate and they like me and I do a good job. But I don’t **have** to do this!” Based on Carroll’s (1994) assessment of political women, Barbara’s “hard-ball” negotiations are atypical.

Barbara had experienced the time commitments of working at the capital before, and perceived it as detrimental to the welfare of her four children. According to Barbara, the long hours of her previous job resulted in the second child’s high school grades slipping. Barbara felt her absence had caused it; she had not been there to provide the maternal guidance that was needed. “My husband was there, but he is not as attentive to these things,” she explained. As a result, her daughter did not get into the post-secondary program that she wanted, and, again, Barbara felt responsible. To her, there was no other possible explanation for the daughter’s poor performance and Barbara experienced guilt for having career aspirations. Her story illustrates not only the traditional conflict

of working mothers, but also the conflict she experiences between having and enjoying the power that she has acquired within the male dominated public domain.

While this reality looms large over her decision-making, Barbara realizes she has the power to negotiate a resolution that will accommodate her. She realizes that, while the party may be controlling the succession options, she is a very viable and attractive candidate to the party because of her significant male centered social capital. This is important because, since the party, while influential within the geographical area, does not control the area and a strong, recognizable candidate will further contribute to the likelihood of controlling the seat. Barbara's ability to negotiate the conditions of her candidacy reflects a new power dynamic for women within the political party that is not yet found within the literature. She is aware of not only the changing dynamics within politics today, but also of her ability to capitalize on her male centered social capital.

Damage Control and Party Recruitment

The third trail identifies those women who are recruited by parties as a form of damage control, usually as a replacement for a, typically, male incumbent whose behavior has put the seat at risk. Various authors (Carroll, 1994; Thomas and Wilcox, 1998) note that this action on the part of the political party reinforces the public perception that women politicians are more honest and above scandalous behavior.

With credentials, prior elected public service and acknowledged high visibility; Ali's story resembles those of the first two members on this pathway. She has accrued significant male centered social capital and she knows it. However, unlike the two prior women who have articulated both male and female centered social capital, Ali identifies strongly with the public domain. She does not see herself as a *woman lawyer*; she is a **lawyer**. She is very confident of her abilities, which creates significant tension because she expects everyone else to see her as an accomplished and intelligent person, rather than as a culturally defined woman, with all the contextual nuances imbued upon women who are working mothers.

As a result, several incidents of gender discrimination have "blindsided" her. "I never saw that coming" was her reaction to running for office in college and having her gender be an issue within the race. She is indignant because she was raised in a house that was predominantly daughters, with the belief that they could be whatever they wanted. She excelled in all of the valued criteria of the male centered domain – high honors in high school and college, as well as graduation from a prestigious law school.

As a lawyer, she is successful, as well. However, when she tries to fulfill the traditional expectations of becoming a mother, and keeping her full-time legal practice, she experiences sexual discrimination again. Her partners did not care that she put in long nights so that she could have her weekends with her children; they opted to hire a male with fewer credentials, and pay him more. Discovering

their duplicity, she challenges them, and they quickly “fixed” the pay issue, but she realizes the remedy does not address the problem. Leaving the firm because she does not want to be partners with “people like that,” she starts her own firm. Her story reflects a manner that is very direct, and rather confrontational; there are no signs of being unsure or otherwise uncomfortable with challenging the male partner’s behavior.

When Ali is approached to run for office, crisis is looming due to the incumbent’s behavior and very significant stakes are clearly identified.

It was sort of a scandal, and to make matters worse, it was reapportionment year! The House was almost evenly divided R’s and D’s! Every seat in the suburbs of Philadelphia was considered a critical seat because how that seat went could determine who was in control of the House here and therefore, who was in control of reapportionment.

The party needed a viable candidate, but it was imperative that the candidate looks nothing like the two prior (male) candidates. With these requirements, the party appeals to her party loyalty to convince her to run in order to keep from losing the majority in the legislature.

That is the weird thing – much of it is serendipity! You know what I mean? So, now they need a woman. They decided they needed a **woman** to run against a **woman** and they decide, they look around the county, they look around the district, and okay they have to find someone in the district who is ready to run... They looked around and the reason they picked me was I lived in the district, I was a woman, I had a good reputation, I polled well and I had expressed an interest in moving up. But this was NOT the job I wanted!

Much like her earlier law partners, the party wants a quick fix for the situation (boorish behavior on the part of the male politician), rather than

addressing the root problem. Her concerns and wishes are not of concern to the party, and the party leaders appeal, successfully, to her male centered social capital tendencies to accept the nomination. She states that she has expressed an interest to the party leaders in her area for a promotion above the locally elected position that she has already held which will give her the ability to keep her practice, as well as continue to have time with her children. But, that is not what the party is offering. Ali acknowledges that this is not a unique situation for high profile women. However, while she is a highly desirable candidate due to her significant male centered social capital, she does not have sufficient male centered social capital to negotiate and secure the job *she* wants. Ali's stories, within this study, are unique in that, within the decision making process, she does not identify or articulate any female centered social capital as contributory to the process.

The Blend: Succession and Redistricting

This final trail demonstrates the conflict that occurs when a blending of two trails within the decision making process occurs. Leslie's recruitment came as a result of local succession, without as many gendered nuances. This is because, as a member of a long established political club, as a well-respected and highly visible public defender, Leslie also lives in a city that elects women on a regular basis. Like Ali, she has held elected positions, so her name is recognizable to the voting public and she has acquired significant male centered social capital. All of these factors combined, according to the literature, increase her ability to be

identified as a very viable candidate when a retiring state senator approaches her to be his successor. Similar to Barbara's story, Leslie realizes that it was not up to her to decide to run or to challenge the incumbent.

This senator is, was the icon for the state and city's politics. He had been a Senator, in this seat, for 32 years. Well-respected majority leader and I became his candidate of choice, but I can tell you, I never would have got there until he chose not to run.

According to the literature, Leslie is also a safe candidate to recruit because these many factors virtually assure the party would not be in danger of losing the seat, should a woman be selected to run. As a woman of color, Leslie lives in a racially diverse city that has already and frequently accepted women politicians, a factor that the literature highlights as being positive for women candidates (Carroll, 1994). Within this study, Leslie is one of two candidates that enjoy this positive political climate for women; Jill is the other. However, like Barbara, Leslie realizes that the succession plan rests within the plans of the senior Senator; she does not have sufficient male or female centered social capital to decide to run against the incumbent. It is not her decision to make.

Redistricting, however, occurs and overrides all plans. Unlike Lisa, the newly crafted districts create havoc for Leslie, who enjoys significant local and unchallenged support as a candidate. "The day before the redistricted map came out, the state treasurer gave me a check for \$1,000 because she said, 'You will make a great senator,' Leslie explains, "then, the following day, this woman, who

was the chairman of Budget and Tax committee and seeking a Senate seat, was redistricted into my area and, suddenly, it was a huge, contentious battle!”

Suddenly, there are two powerful women, both with significant male and female centered social capital, pitted against one another in the redrawn Senate seat. This is the only participant who notes that the nuances of race and class were center stage during her decision-making and subsequent running for, a legislative seat.

They (the media) characterized this as a race thing. I mean, there was a lot of race baiting and a lot of...it was something to write about. See, we could sell papers. The problem is Barbara’s race... look...this is a woman, she is 62 years old, Jewish, and 5’2”. I am 37, 5’9”, black, and a city girl. The contrast, the natural contrast presented in the race made for great copy! I mean we were in the paper every day! We were in major newspapers, every day! And **everybody** covered this race; it was the most covered race in the state!

Leslie notes she has significant female centered social capital, noting that she is very connected to and centered in her community. “We, all of us across the neighborhood, are still very close. My neighbors are still my good friends; a lot of us still kind of live in the neighborhood. I live in the same house; I was raised in this house! **I love my neighborhood!**”

These media experiences, as well as her earlier experiences as a temp and a public defender, reinforced her coping abilities. She acknowledged her need to ask for help because, consistently, the media polls and messages were that she could not win, and she did not hesitate.

Everybody helped! I mean, this was...everybody, and everyone still talks about the race. I can go into a grocery store today and people will say,

‘Do you know where I was when I heard you won?’ It happens today because to challenge this woman is a big deal. It is like challenging...to put it on a different scale...on a national scale, it is like me running against Bush, and winning because she was the second most powerful person in the state!

Leslie notes that knowing the stories of her community is important to her because “the issue with history is that it empowers us to look forward to the future.” Having this knowledge, as well as maintaining that connectedness and relationship, was critical to winning this highly charged and competitive race.

This research also identifies a third pathway, which is not identified within the literature. The stories from the women who found their way to the legislature on this third pathway do not include nor mention any political party as part of the decision-making process. I will now discuss that pathway.

Pathway #3: Women Running as Part of a Career Progression

The decision making process related to running for office was completely different for the group on this pathway, as they viewed this opportunity as just another career decision. This is not the norm in the literature, as Witt, Paget, and Matthews (1994), quote former governor Madeline Kunin as believing “women are deterred from entering politics or thinking about it as a career simply because the political world is still so alien to them (p. 104).

Carroll (1994) does speak of self-initiated candidates, but notes this requires that the candidate take the initiative and approach the political party for the nomination. In my research, this group did not approach the party, but rather their decision making process reflected a more internal orientation. These

women's stories speak of seeking a job, and the employers they are appealing to be the voters, rather than the party. Their stories do not include any motivating events; they do not speak about trying to change the world or conforming to party needs. Within my study, there are three members in this group and my findings reflect stories that speak of running for the legislature as part of a career plan.

Political Ambition

Within this final group, two of the three participants clearly articulated their political ambitions as part of a career decision. One participant, Joy, demonstrates very gendered and traditional orientation, as she left the public domain when she had children. She notes that, as a student and then a teacher, the September that she delivered her first child was the first year since she was five years of age that she was not going to school.

Like Lisa, she waited until her children were older teenagers before she decided to run for office. However, during their school days, she did not spend her days accumulating female centered social capital by becoming involved in community or volunteer work. She notes that one of her greatest achievements, accomplished through involvement in the AAUW, was the establishment of quality day care programs for low-income parents. This experience, led her to spend greater amounts of time preparing for her future involvement with the legislature by fulfilling jobs within the legislature. As she voices her decision-making, it is clear that she is describing a job promotion, and then lists the perquisites of that job, in terms that any job seeker recognizes:

I wanted to be in the decision making position. I had been danced all around the decision-making – I had been in the senator’s office and the delegate’s office and then been a lobbyist and the job I really wanted was the decision making one.

It had a decent salary; it had a parking place – indoor parking –and a little office. I didn’t have to carry my coat around all the time like I did when I was a lobbyist.

The second woman this is on this pathway, Katy, is unmarried. She has no children, and notes that she does not have the gendered time constraints to address, such as someone waiting at home for her. She expressed her intent to run as a very young woman, and then initiated the steps to make it happen.

My initial interest in government started when I was a senior in high school, I was actually a page in the Maryland House of Delegates. So that’s when I got hooked. My Bachelors degree is in government and then I went to law school. I have always intended to do this from the time I was a page, and it was just a question of, from a career perspective, when I could swing it.

According to several authors (Farah, 1972, Carroll, 1994, The White House Project, 2000, McGlen et al, 2002), this career orientation is not a part of the phenomenon of state level female candidates for several reasons. These include ambition not being a culturally acceptable trait in women, and time away from home would interfere with meeting family needs, as discussed in chapter two. However, the stories clearly reflected this purposeful decision making process, with a stated goal of election to the state level legislature.

Additionally, both of these women speak of consciously setting out to make their candidacy happen. Both women identify concerted efforts that are designed to increase their name recognition and include activities such as joining

community, political and religious groups. Joy explains, “I stayed in my job in renting space after hours, got involved in community activities and probably did some things that I wouldn’t normally have thought of doing because I wanted to make some contacts in the community. And those were all very good resources when I ran in ’86!”

Katy’s story is very similar, including buying a home in an area that could support her candidacy.

I guess about two years before I ran I started to try to get a little more involved in the Democratic Party and more community based activities as opposed to bar association activities. I had been very involved in the bar and held multiple different positions, but, I decided if I really wanted to try running for office that I was going to need to be seen in other areas than just in the practice of law.

These women do not speak of these involvements as entailing any emotional connection to their community as the women on the two earlier pathways have. Rather, these women view their community involvement as an opportunity to build the female centered social capital that they believed was needed in order to realize their career aspirations. They identify these engagements with others as a very utilitarian activity – it will increase the necessary social capital that the literature recognizes as facilitating election.

This is a new phenomenon, and it is unclear to me what might explain it. There are more differences, than similarities in their lived experiences, when their stories are examined. The nuances of time and location, for example, are very different within their stories. One woman has been in the legislature for many

years, while the other woman was seated in 2002. The context of their lived experiences is also very different, as one woman grew up as part of a poor family during the Depression and the Second World War; the second woman was part of a middle class family, growing up in the 1980's. The societal and gendered roles and expectations of women in American have changed, radically, within that contextual time.

There is little disputing that the shaping influences of the family and the socioeconomic conditions, as well as the opportunities afforded to each of these women, bear little resemblance to one another. Yet, both recognized the need to supplement their male centered social capital acquisition and very determinedly set out to acquire the balancing female centered social capital. I believe that understanding the meaning making that is demonstrated within these women's decision-making process bears further investigation and holds tremendous potential.

Career Progression

The third participant, Jill, was recruited by a quasi-governmental group, and initially resists the recruitment. Within her story, she speaks of struggling with the decision of accepting the recruitment. I said, "You're kidding me. I'm not interested in being in the House of Delegates; I'm absolutely not interested in that." And the group continued to push, to the point of driving her to the capital, filing an hour before the deadline. According to Jill, they kept saying, "Just file and see what happens."

The following morning, her phone was ringing, with the news of her candidacy in the morning paper. Jill notes that she had three or four phone calls from friends who were saying, “It’s so great that you filed. We’re so happy. We really need you in the legislature. I want to help you.” So, other people were excited about it and she continued to be resistant, “I was like, you’re kidding! You’re kidding, right?”

Jill does not seem to place much significance on the social capital that she has accumulated and the outpouring of support is puzzling to her. She does, however, recognize the power that she holds as an attractive young woman. As a public defender for a short period of time, she acknowledges that she sometimes used her gender and youthful appearance to win leniency for her clients. “Judges would look at me and figure that this guy must really be a petty criminal, rather than a big fish, because he can’t afford anything but this young lawyer!” She notes that many of the judges would treat her like a daughter, offering advice and being protective of her.

While acknowledging that this behavior is very patronizing and belittling, Jill also recognizes it as an asset. She realizes that their belief in her youthful inability is actually empowering, as she is more able to manipulate the outcome of the hearings for her clients. Moving from being a public defender, she becomes involved in social actions within the city and handles cases that involve protecting the interests of the minority populations. These activities earn her the reputation of

being a capable lawyer and a fighter for people, much like her late father had been.

As the pressure mounted to accept the nomination, she sought out a trusted friend who was a City Council member to help her sort through her feelings and options. Jill explains, “I asked her what she thought and she said the bottom line is that you have to ask yourself one question. If you were to get the job, is it the job you want?”

I got to thinking...there should be lawyers in the legislature and lawyers should have a part in making law.

There are certain ways you're trained to think about things in terms of not just how it impacts this group but what could be the unintended consequences and not reactionary. I really said to myself that it wasn't just a campaign spiel; the lawyers should really be involved, as well as diverse people. Leslie was the one to point out to me that I was the third black female lawyer to serve in the legislature, and she was the second.

Carroll (1994) notes that encouragement and guidance by family and friends are two of the most significant sources that women identify as influencing their decisions. This is typical behavior, according to Gilligan (1982), and reflects women's orientation of connection and concern for others. Rather than making an independent decision, based solely on her wants, knowledge and desires, women recognize the benefits of accruing the advice of others, and in line with the recognition of the power of female centered social capital, Jill sought an older, experienced woman who knew her and her family.

Also, within this decision making progress was articulated the recognition of the power of being a role model for other young women. Jill would have the

opportunity to provide a visible, educated, successful, strong young black woman in a position of power within her state. This serves a dual benefit because other young women, regardless of color, who are considering a political career may experience greater efficacy through vicarious observation of other elected young women (Zelden and Pajares, 2000).

Phrased in these terms, Jill places this opportunity in a career progression model that makes sense to her. She is the only woman within this study to articulate the recognition of her formal education as preparation for the career field of politician. She recognizes, and verbalizes, a connection between the formal and rigorous methods of logical analyses acquired within her law degree and the ability to competently perform the critical assessments needed to formulate public policy and law. This is an observation that is not reflected within the research on women in politics and this may be due to the perception that the field of law is still considered a male dominated, elite career field.

Jill is very different from all of the other women within this study as she is a member of an elite political family, with name recognition. As a result of her own activities as a public defender, she has accumulated some of the male centered social capital that has garnered the support of this grassroots quasi-governmental organization, but her family connections vaults her to a much higher level of visibility within her community.

My father was Walter P. Carter and he was a very well-known civil rights leader here and since he died there's an elementary school, a mental health center, part of U of Maryland and a library at Sojourner College and a

number of other things they named after him. The people who were around here believed he was the premier civil rights leader of that time. He died in 1971 when I was really young... He was one of the greatest community organizers, I think, that ever lived. Everyone says this.

This name recognition, provided by the numerous memorials to him within the city, enabled her to reach out during her campaign, beyond the scope of the original group that recruited her.

My campaign, my candidacy was extremely unique. In the history of Baltimore, there's never been a person who filed for office in the state legislature, coming from no political machine or group, going door to door, grass roots, independent, received no endorsements from any politician or major group like the unions or anything.

It kind of ties into when I said my family was unique. Everywhere I went when I was campaigning, whether it was community forums or standing on a street corner waving, inevitably people came up to me and said, 'Walter P. Carter was your father? You got my vote.' 'Walter P. Carter was your father? Here's a check.' Most of my money came from people over 50 and 60 who knew my father who gave small amounts of money - \$50 or \$100 or a couple. It was very unique.

Jill's story, while unique, also demonstrates two scarcely researched areas – that of elite daughters and African-American, political elite families (Brownstein, 1998). There is a dearth of information on these topics for a variety of reasons. They include the facts that, proportionally, few African-American women are in the legislature of either state, as well as the lack of research done of African-American women as members of the elite careers or families. Jill notes that Leslie was the second African-American female lawyer in the legislature, while Jill is the third. Within current literature, I was unable to identify any

African-American elite families within the political spheres of either Pennsylvania or Maryland.

Summary

There are several pathways for women to choose who are deciding to run for state legislative office, and this study reiterates the two dominant pathways that are recognized within the literature. However, this study identifies a third and different pathway. The findings of this research reflect that an under appreciated and unacknowledged force, female centered social capital, is present along these many trails. Through this discussion, as well as others, opportunity will be provided to challenge many of the assumed beliefs regarding the value and meaning making of women's lived experiences.

Women who decide to run for office are realizing the power that is to be gained by embracing and acknowledging the female centered social capital that has, traditionally, not only been ignored, but devalued, as well. The literature acknowledges measures and trumpets the power gained through traditionally male centered forms of social capital, such as post secondary education, acquisition of leadership roles in clubs, as well as memberships in elite career fields. No one disputes the necessity of this male centered social capital for achieving success and accessing highly coveted positions within our society. However, to posit that the same value may be gained though female centered social capital would render a sense of disbelief within the public domain, if not outright ridicule. Social capital that leads to elected office acquired and forged via children's play dates,

during trips to the grocery store, while waiting for children after school and as a result of community volunteerism – not likely!

Female centered social capital recognizes the value of the networks that women build in their every day life activities within the private sphere of home and community. Traditionally, our culture respects motherhood, but the mother activities carry many negative connotations within the public sphere. This time is dismissed as “wasted” time, considered a delay of personal accomplishments, indeed, lost productivity. Once the children are in school, and she can return to the world of work, her contributions to the family begin to have a monetary, and positively viewed, impact. As Ali notes, you can segue and come back, “but you won’t make partner!” Viewed as “missed opportunity,” the historical devaluation of the many activities that women engage in during childrearing, as well as the knowledge and connections that are gained, usually benefit the woman, her family, and her community.

It is because of this connection with their community that women are now deciding to run for state legislative office. They understand the needs of the community and want to address them via political office, and rather than waiting to be invited, they are utilizing this female centered social capital to accomplish it. The majority of these women did not state a need or desire for personal power or recognition, but rather, they spoke of recognizing a personal ability to create change, as a result of their lived experiences. The women’s meanings, embedded within the stories of their lived experiences, resonate with a connectedness to

others, public service, of giving back to the community and improving the life of others. These women realize that, through election to state legislative office, their knowledge, skills and abilities, which are different and equal to men, could positively help to shape and prioritize state agendas.

Future Studies

Within the process of doing this research, there were several concepts that were mentioned that warrant future studies, including female centered social capital and women as elites within our society. Through further research, I believe that greater understanding and illumination of these concepts will lead to greater numbers of women will see the positive aspects of being an elected legislator. This, in turn, will lead more women to consider this career field.

Exploring Female Centered Social Capital

The first study that I believe needs to be done is with regards to female centered social capital. Much of the research does not identify gendered social capital as much of the literature simply refers to, generally, the acquisition of social capital as being a fundamental component of running for office (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2000; M. Smith, 1999, etc). However, within the literature, many of the experiences that are identified as providing opportunities for social capital acquisition are located within the public domain, which remains dominated by men. Private domain/female centered social capital is not identified as having value for social capital acquisition, and is, as a result, rendered invisible. This

results in public domain/male centered social capital being value laden and tacitly accepted to be the norm.

I would argue that my research demonstrates that there are women who have accessed political office with social capital that looks very different from this public domain/male centered model of social capital found within the literature. Could one explanation for why some states, such as Maryland, have a higher percentage of women in the legislature be the recognition of the value of female centered social capital within that culture? Are some states cognizant of women's experiences as legitimately as valued and valuable, thus allowing an easier journey to the state legislature? Perhaps by understanding how female centered social capital has paved a pathway to the state legislature (or similar positions), more women may more readily recognize themselves within these stories.

This may be an avenue for adult educators to explore. In that culture is replicated through education, as well as many other modes of transmission, there is opportunity for adult educators to produce and legitimize more female centered social capital. Recognition of this phenomenon, I believe, creates the first opportunity for dialog amongst practitioners regarding how to best provide programs or content that will, in turn, serve to advance the recognition of not only the existence of female centered social capital, but also the equality of the two gendered forms of social capital.

Women as Members of the Elite Pool

The second concept that needs further exploration is the idea of women as members of the elite of society, which is defined in this research as the most common source of potential candidates. The literature notes the dearth of studies on women as elites; they are periphery participants, at best (Puwar, 1997; Jennings and Farah, 1981). This lack of exposure serves to reinforce the concept that women don't belong in the elite pool, are not seen as elites, and thus are not considered to be a part of the applicant pool. Again, increased visibility and knowledge of women as a part of the elite pool of potential candidates, reduces the perception of women legislators as being an anomaly and an "outsider" and increases the acceptability, by all parts of the public, of women in these positions.

Conclusion

Women as state politicians are, by definition, members of a non-traditional career field as they are less than 50% of the employee group (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, 2003). While women are still underrepresented within the state legislatures of the United States, it can be argued that the numbers are increasing, but very slowly. Unfortunately, this growth is not consistent or equitably spread across the 50 states. In 2005, the state of Pennsylvania has fallen to 46th in the nation for women in the legislature, a position it has held relatively consistently since 1981 (Center for American Women in Politics, 2004). Maryland, on the other ends of the spectrum, currently ranks 1st in the nation and has not fallen below 16th in the nation in that same time period.

As women's roles have changed, expanded and become less gendered, adult education can provide a tremendous service toward legitimizing female centered social capital. Adult educators who engage learners in recognizing and promoting the value of women's lived experiences as being different from, but not less than, men's lived experiences provides a number of services. First, this engagement encourages more tradition bound individuals to recognize the value of difference within this very fundamental civic job. Secondly, through the reduction or elimination of demeaning stereotypes of the value of women's contributions, this may provide the impetus for ongoing conversations regarding how to address and prioritize the issues of our country, with less regard for its domain of origination. By making the invisible, visible through dialog, there can be recognition and value imbued into female centered social capital.

It will also be through dialog that encourages a legitimization of female centered social capital that more tradition bound individuals will recognize the value of this different perspective within this very critical civic job. As a result of this new paradigm, there may come a day when female legislators are no longer considered outsiders and an oddity within the state legislative system. Then, perhaps, an interviewer questioning one of my participating legislators will be able to respond to the simple query, "So, what is it like to be a politician?"

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APPENDIX A**FEMALE LEGISLATORS
Of the
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
In OFFICE in 2003****SENATE**

Lisa M. Boscola
Jane Earll
Shirley Kitchen
Jane Clare Orié
Allyson Y. Schwartz
Christine M. Tartaglione
Mary Jo White
Constance H. Williams

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ellen M. Bard
Linda Bebko-Jones
Louise Williams Bishop
Jacqueline R. Crahalla
Mary Ann Dailey
Teresa Forcier
Julie Harhart
Kate Harper
Babette Josephs
Susan Laughlin
Marie A. Lederer
Beverly Mackereth
Sandra J. Major
Kathy M. Manderino
Jennifer L. Mann
Shelia Miller
Phyllis Mundy
Tina Pickett
Carole A. Rubley
Katie True
Patricia Vance
LeAnna M. Washington
Katherine M. Watson
Melissa Murphy Weber
Rosita C. Youngblood

APPENDIX B**FEMALE LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
In OFFICE in 2003****SENATE**

Gwendolyn Britt
Joan Carter Conway
Jennie Forehand
Lisa Gladden
Janet Greenip
Sharon Grosfeld
Paula Hollinger
Nancy Jacobs
Verna L. Jones
Delores Kelley
Katherine Klausmeier
Rona Kramer
Gloria Lawler
Ida Ruben
Sandra Schrader

HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Carmen Amedori
Susan Aumann
Gail Bates
Joanne Benson
Elizabeth Bobo
Joan Cadden
Jill P. Carter
Virginia P. Clagett
Mary A. Conroy
Jean B. Cryor
Ann Marie Doory
Kathleen Dumais
Adelaide Eckardt
Barbara Frush
Tawanna Gaines
Marilyn Goldwater
Melony Griffith

HOUSE OF DELEGATES (Cont.)

Ana Sol Gutierrez
Hattie N. Harrison
Anne Healey
Shelia E. Hixson
Carolyn J.B. Howard
Mary –Dulany James
Sally Y. Jameson
Adrienne A. Jones
Anne R. Kaiser
Nancy J. King
Ruth M. Kirk
Susan W. Krebs
Carolyn J. Krysiak
Susan C. Lee
Mary Ann Love
Adrienne A. Mandel
Salima S. Marriott
Susan K. McCormas
Maggie L. McIntosh
Pauline H. Menes
Karen S. Montgomery
Shirley Nathan-Pulliam
Rosetta C. Parker
Joanne S. Parrott
Carol S. Petzold
Joan F. Stern
Nancy R. Stocksdale
Veronica Turner
Mary Roe Walkup

Source: Maryland Archives, 2003, <http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us>

APPENDIX C

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

February 3, 2003

Dear Honorable _____:

Have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror and said: "I AM a state legislator!" As a woman legislator in Maryland, you are not alone. Relative to the other States, Maryland women enjoy a tremendous level of representation within the state legislature. According to GenderGap.com, your state legislature is ranked 8th out of 50 in the United States. However, this outstanding level of representation is not consistent across the country. In fact, Pennsylvania (my state) is ranked 45th out of the 50 states in women's level of representation within the state legislature.

As an elected school board member, an aspirant to higher public office, and a doctoral student at Pennsylvania State University, I want to understand more deeply why there are such large differences in women's representation across the states.

It is in this quest to understand that I would like to extend this invitation to you to be a participant in my study about this phenomenon. Specifically, I would like you (and other selected women legislators from Maryland and Pennsylvania) to describe what life experiences may have led you to decide to run for, and eventually be elected to, the state legislature.

I believe this study is very important for many reasons. First, women state legislators have been virtually ignored within the literature so little is known about what influences them to seek this level of office. This is important because, according to many studies, this office is often part of the "career pathway" to federal legislative offices. If we don't understand women's personal journeys along this pathway, how can we address this representative disparity? Knowledge could change this percentage at the state level and possibly even the national level.

Another reason this study is so important is that many studies related to women in political office have looked at comparisons and numbers – men versus women, political orientation of women, influences of socio-political voter turnout, as well as other barriers that women experience trying to secure an office. While these studies answer quantitative issues of "what kind" and "how many", these studies lack any exploration into understanding how some women, such as yourself, did overcome all of these factors! My study will address these shortcomings, and perhaps serve as a motivator for more women to visualize this career pathway as a possibility for themselves.

The study will include an interview with you that will be audio taped and will last approximately an hour. There is a possibility of a second shorter, follow-up interview. The interviews can take place in your home, office, or wherever might be most convenient for you.

I hope you will consider participating in this study. I have taken the liberty to enclose a self-addressed and stamped response form, hoping to make this as easy as possible for your office to respond favorably.

Regardless of your participation, I would like to thank you for your time and attention to this request. Should you have any questions, please either call or email me at the following addresses and I will do my best to answer them.

Respectfully,

Judith A.M. Higgins
Doctoral Candidate

12 Edith Drive
Windsor, Pennsylvania 17366

Email: Teammx@msn.com

Home: 717-246-2116
Cell: 717-968-6640

Enclosure

APPENDIX D**RESPONSE CARD FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

Date:

To: Judith A.M. Higgins

From: Honorable _____

Re: Study Participation

Yes, I would be happy to meet with you and participate in your study. Please contact my assistant to establish a meeting date, place and time.

Assistant's name: _____

Email contact: _____

No, I am sorry but I am unable to participate in the study at this time.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Protocol for Judith Higgins

Research Questions:

- How do state level elected women describe their experiences of deciding to run for office and what meanings do they attach to their descriptions?
- With regard to their experiences of deciding to run for state level elections, what knowledge, skills and dispositions have these women developed?
- What activities and processes, as well as skills and dispositions that the women associate with deciding to become state level elected officials, fostered the development of that knowledge?

Interview Questions:

1. Please describe for me your family and neighborhood where you grew up.
 - Siblings, birth order, parent and sibling occupations
 - Location, socio-economic levels, ethnicity and diversity
2. Please describe for me what you were like growing up
 - Educational experiences, religious experiences, early work
 - Community involvement, extra curricular
3. How did you end up living where you are today?
4. Have you ever held any other elected public office before this one? If so, can you tell me about those experiences that influenced your decision to run for public office?
 - College or university offices, PTO, School Board
 - Township, borough or city council, planning commission
 - Influences – race/class/age/gender
5. Have you ever held any appointed offices?

6. Can you describe for me how you decided to become a state legislator? Tell me about those experiences that influenced your decision to run for this one.
 - Family
 - Personal activism, community activism
 - Media representation, media bias
 - Professionalism of the legislature
 - Race/class/gender/age
7. If a young woman were to come to you, considering but undecided, about running for and entering state level politics, what guidance would you give her?
8. Within the context of my published study, how do you feel about the use of your actual name, or would you prefer to have a fictitious name?

APPENDIX F

TEN HIGHEST AND LOWEST STATES

FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGISLATURE IN 2003¹³

The ten states with the highest percentages of women state legislators are:

State	% Women	State	% Women
Washington	36.7	California	30.0
Colorado	34.0	New Mexico	29.5
Maryland	33.0	Connecticut	29.4
Oregon	31.1	Delaware	29.0
Vermont	31.1	Nevada	28.6

The ten states with the lowest percentages of women state legislators are:

State	% Women	State	% Women
North Dakota	16.3	Pennsylvania	13.8
Arkansas	16.3	Mississippi	12.6
South Dakota	16.2	Kentucky	10.9
New Jersey	15.8	Alabama	10.0
Virginia	14.3	South Carolina	9.4

Source: Center for American Women in Politics, 2003,
<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cawp/pdf/stleg.pdf>

¹³ In 2005, Maryland is ranked first in the nation, while Pennsylvania has fallen to 46th.

VITA

Judith A. McCormick Higgins

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Citizenship: U.S.
Address: 12 Edith Drive, Windsor, Pennsylvania
Email Address: Teammx@msn.com
Telephone: 717-246-2116

EDUCATION

BS, Political Science, 1984
University of Houston-Clear Lake;
Houston, Texas

MA, Human Resources Utilization, 1986
University of Houston-Clear Lake;
Houston, Texas
Thesis: Quality of Life Analysis of Friendswood, Texas
Chair: Dr. Gary Holtzclaw

Ed.D, Adult Education, 2005
The Pennsylvania State University;
State College, Pennsylvania
Thesis: Finding our way: Women's lived experiences leading to the legislatures of Pennsylvania and Maryland
Chair: Dr. Ian Baptiste

HONORS AND AWARDS

Floyd B. Fischer Graduate Fellowship in Adult Education,
The Pennsylvania State University, 2003

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS

University of Houston, Student Government, President, 1983
Omicron Delta Kappa, University of Houston-Clear Lake, 1983, President and member
Pi Alpha Alpha, University of Houston-Clear Lake, 1986, student membership
Pi Lambda Theta, The Pennsylvania State University, 2001, student membership
Pennsylvania School Board Association, 1993-present, member

EMPLOYMENT

The Pennsylvania State University, Lancaster Center, 2003 – Present, Adjunct Instructor

The Pennsylvania State University, York Campus, 1993 – Present, Adjunct Instructor

The Pennsylvania State University, York Campus, 21997-1999, York County School-to-Work Coordinator