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Marian Sawer
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EDITOR'S NOTE:

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the election of the first woman to an Australian Parliament, the International Review of Women and Leadership is fortunate to have as the guest editor of this special issue Dr Marian Sawer, Associate Professor in Politics at the University of Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.

Dr. Sawer has published over 100 academic titles as well as a number of books, including Sisters in Suits: Women and Public Policy in Australia (Allen & Unwin, 1990); A Woman's Place: Women and Politics in Australia (with Marian Simms, 2nd Ed., Allen & Unwin, 1993) and Working from Inside: Twenty Years of the Office of the Status of Women (with Abigail Groves, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994).

Dr. Sawer has represented the ACT Government on the Council of the Constitutional Centenary Foundation and on the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee. She was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 1994 for ‘services to women and to political science’.

Guest Editorial

Challenging Politics? Seventy-Five Years of Women’s Parliamentary Representation in Australia

Marian Sawer
Australian National University/University of Canberra, Australia

This year is the 75th anniversary of the election of Edith Cowan to the Western Australian parliament, the first woman to be elected to an Australian parliament. It is highly appropriate that the International Review of Women and Leadership should commemorate this anniversary with a special issue dedicated to women and politics. This has enabled us to use Edith Cowan’s experience of parliamentary politics as a prism through which to examine continuing dilemmas of women’s representation in public life - including concepts of women’s interests, equality and difference, separatism versus integration and independence versus partisanship.

Although Edith Cowan was alone of all her sex to become a legislator in Australia at the time, she was not the second in the British Empire to enter parliament, as inscribed on the tribute presented to her by the National Council of Women after the election. I am one of those guilty of perpetuating this myth (A Woman’s Place, 1984, 1993). We overlooked the social radicalism of the Canadian prairies during this period, of which women were very much a part.

By the time of Edith Cowan’s election (March 1921) she had been preceded into parliament by five women elected to provincial parliaments in Canada, as well
as by Lady Astor in the United Kingdom. Two women had been elected in Alberta in 1917, one in British Columbia in 1918, one in Saskatchewan in 1919 and one in Manitoba in 1920. So giving due acknowledgment to these Canadian pioneers, Edith Cowan was the eighth woman to be elected to parliament in the British Empire and the seventh to enter parliament. Twelve days after Edith Cowan's election to parliament, Mary Ellen Smith, already in her second term in the parliament of British Columbia, became the first woman Cabinet Minister in the British Empire.

There were a number of shared elements in Cowan's experience and that of other first women MPs in the countries with which Australia shared the 'crimson thread of kinship'. Characteristically the 'first women', as beneficiaries of the women's suffrage movement, were seen as representatives of women-at-large as well as being accountable to their own electorates. The first women MPs embraced these dual accountabilities, unlike the women politicians discussed in this issue, who are often fearful of the additional representational burden involved, its implications for political careers in today's highly disciplined party and factional systems, or simply because they do not identify with women as a group suffering from collective disadvantage.

When Edith Cowan crowned her lifetime of community service by standing for parliament, for what principles did she stand? The first plank in her platform, 'Law and Order and the maintenance of Constitutional Government', was very much of her era, when fear of Bolshevism was rife. In other respects her 1921 platform ranged from 'difference' demands, such as motherhood endowment and 'national kitchens in every suburb', to the 'equality' demand of equal pay. In between came elements relating to social welfare which capture both the continuities and the discontinuities of the last century of the women's movement.

Edith Cowan has now achieved iconic status, not only with her clock tower memorial at the entrance to Kings Park, Perth, Western Australia, but with both a federal seat of parliament and a university named after her and her face appearing on the Australian $50 note in time for this anniversary celebration. Members of all parties are anxious to claim her, although, as we shall see, in doing so they are unable to refrain from the 'old party spirit' she so disparaged. We shall explore further the extent to which those now claiming her mantle in fact would have endorsed the values for which she stood.

INDEPENDENCE vs PARTISANSHIP

The first women MPs were popularly viewed as representatives of their sex, in a substantive and not just a symbolic sense, and took this responsibility seriously. Not only would all women be judged if they were to fail, but all women would suffer if the interests of home and family did not gain proper representation and if women legislators did not work to improve the status and standing of women. The first women MPs were less enthusiastic about accountability to political parties. They inherited the well-earned distrust of the women's suffrage movement for political parties and viewed party politics with suspicion, even when they were endorsed party candidates. They saw the social reform issues which motivated them, such as temperance and child welfare, as being properly above party politics. The second plank in Edith Cowan's election platform was that parliamentary representatives should be responsible only to their own constituents. After election as an endorsed National Federation candidate, she said, "I am a Nationalist and belong to no party in this House". Cowan's attitudes were moulded by late nineteenth-century liberalism and the privilege of independent conscience as well as by suffragist
distrust of party machines. Her independence of mind helped fortify her in expressing unpopular views in defence of unmarried mothers or in favour of sex education in schools.

Cowan had been a moving force in the ‘non-party idea’ in Western Australia and in its local embodiment in the Women’s Service Guild. The ‘non-party idea’ took on organisational forms in all States in the post-suffrage era and at the national level through the creation by Bessie Rischbieth of what became the Australian Federation of Women Voters in 1924. The non-party idea was to meet the need for ‘education for citizenship’ so that women could fulfil the obligations of citizenship and realise their potential for political good. It encompassed the need for women to stand together, regardless of class or party, to achieve equal citizenship and to protect the interests of women, children and the home. The platform of the women’s non-party organisations generally included equal rights issues such as equal divorce laws and guardianship rights, the right of married women to retain their nationality, equal pay and equal opportunity. Because citizenship was construed in social liberal terms as service to the community, as well as in terms of equality of rights, the platforms also included welfare-oriented demands relating to juvenile justice and child protection, and the appointment of women as police, as prison officers, as jurors, Justices of the Peace and magistrates. Thanks to the influence of Catherine Helen Spence, the demand for proportional representation was also pressed at the national as well as State levels of the non-party movement and formed part of Edith Cowan’s electoral platform, along with compulsory voting.

The pull of the non-party idea in the post-suffrage era derived, as noted above, both from women’s experience of creating their own public sphere and from women’s ambivalence over the form taken by man-made politics, the perceived dominance of power-brokering and deal-making over virtue and principle. Many women, such as suffragists Vida Goldstein and Nellie Martel, ran for parliament as Independents, while, as we have seen, suffragists with party endorsement also attempted independence of the party system. In 1943 the wartime mobilisation of women led to a renewed attempt to mobilise women politically and both the Women for Canberra Movement and the Australian Women’s Party stood candidates. Women’s parties were an extension of the non-party idea and were forerunners of later ‘non-party’ parties such as the Australian Democrats or the Greens. Women’s parties have rarely been successful outside Iceland, where the Women’s Alliance peaked in 1987 with about 10 per cent of seats in the Icelandic parliament. Nonetheless a Women’s Party reappeared in Victoria in 1977 and in 1995 in Queensland. The Australian Women’s Party fielded candidates in all States except Victoria in the 1996 federal election. While such parties have not been electorally successful in Australia, they have helped bring pressure on the major parties to pay more attention to women and their concerns.

Canadian political scientist, Sylvia Bashevkin, has described the tension between independence and partisanship, the attempt to avoid corruption by politics, as the central dilemma limiting women’s political effectiveness (Bashevkin, 1993). Certainly the Queensland women MPs discussed by Sandra Broughton and Di Zetlin and their Israeli sisters, discussed by Hanna Herzog in this volume, believe that effectiveness often requires putting party or factional loyalty before feminist commitments. Even in Edith Cowan’s time, her independence of party discipline, voting sometimes with her own party and sometimes with Labor, caused her political problems which helped ensure that she was not re-elected after her first term. She enjoyed endorsement but not support from her own party, while Labor campaigned against her in the 1924 election, accusing her of voting against
extending long service leave to wages staff in the railways. In fact she was absent from the Chamber - attending an ‘urgent’ meeting of the Maimed and Limbless Men’s Hostel - and it was her absence that caused the defeat of the motion. She was unsuccessful in both of her attempts to regain her seat, in 1924 and 1927, despite the optimism of her maiden speech that her election had shown that “women can and do stand by women, and will stand by women in the future if only to help get rid of some of that painful party spirit...” (Western Australian Parliamentary Debates, 28 July, 1921).

In 1996 the sitting member for the Western Australian seat of Cowan introduced a motion into federal parliament to celebrate the 75th anniversary of her election and the happy conjuncture of the election of a large contingent of women to federal parliament. Twelve members spoke to this motion. While most of these speeches were serious in content, some partisan point-scoring was provoked by the wording of the motion, which included reference to the fact that the majority of the women elected “had entered on their own abilities without the need of a quota system”. This was a slighting reference to the adoption of a quota system of 35 per cent female representation in winnable State and Federal seats by the year 2002 by the Australian Labor Party at its National Conference in 1994. Although the increased number of women may have been a cause for congratulation, women still constituted only 15 per cent of the House of Representatives.

**SEPARATISM VERSUS INTEGRATION**

The non-party idea was intrinsically related to separate institution-building, something in which Cowan had been involved since the 1890s, when the Karrakatta Club (the first Women’s Club in Australia) was established, and was linked to social liberal ideas of the moral imperative of self-development through doing things worth doing in common with others. As a Dr Ryder, a visiting American speaker, put it at the founding meeting of the Club, it was “the duty of every woman to make the most of herself in all ways through contact with other women and interchange which would widen her mental horizons” (Cowan, 1978, p69). Separate institutions, many of which Cowan was involved in establishing in Western Australia, provided a framework for woman-centred debate and for the crystallisation of claims on the broader political system. As Estelle Freedman has put it, “The creation of a separate, public female sphere helped mobilise women and gain leverage in the larger society” (Freedman, 1979, p513). It also provided the possibility of practising a different kind of politics from that which had been institutionalised by men.

In the post-suffrage era, Laura Bogue Luffman set out the rationale of separate associations in terms of the need to give the political world the full benefit of women’s distinctive contribution (the ‘mother heart’) through associations acting with, rather than under, men “Associations free to make their own laws, think their own thoughts and work out their own political salvation” (Luffman, 1909, p282). This was again the rationale for the next great wave of separate institution-building in the 1970s, at which time women relied less on maternalist discourse and more on critique of the role of patriarchy in disempowering women. Women attempted to create prefigurative types of institutions which would pose an alternative to masculine hierarchies of function, expertise and power. The confluence of theory and practice in the development of feminist collectives and semi-collective forms of management is described in this issue by Wendy Weeks.

The collectivism and distributed leadership characteristic of these feminist organisational forms has usually limited their scale and their influence on public
policy at the national level. In the 1980s *ad hoc* coalitions were the most characteristic forms taken by attempts to influence the broader policy framework, and these were usually defensive in character. In the 1990s intensive efforts were made to create ongoing structures which would give women a more effective voice in public policy while retaining principles of distributed leadership. As Jill Vickers has said of a comparable development in the Canadian women’s movement, it was “motivated by a desire to participate fully in public life, while still challenging its very shape and underlying logic” (Vickers, 1989, p27).

Process continued to be as important as outcomes and, indeed, an essential element of the outcome of empowering women. The result in the area of women’s services was a ‘peak body’ based on networking principles, the Women’s Emergency Services Network or WESNET. For the women’s movement as a whole a networking structure known as the Coalition of Australian Participating Organisation of Women (CAPOW!) came into being. Over 60 national women’s organisations (themselves often federations or umbrella groups) participated in this network which, with the aid of modern telecommunication, enabled rapid transfer of information and co-ordinated responses where appropriate but had a self-denying ordinance concerning making statements on behalf of the organisations involved (see Sawer & Groves, 1994).

The development of organisational forms which are more self-consciously feminist in design may be a relatively recent departure, but women have long been most active in relatively small-scale community-based politics - in groups formed for ‘getting things done’ rather than for conferring status or promoting careers. As Jill Vickers has said, such groups “allow any woman to create her own mode of political competence, however technically limited her resources” (Vickers, 1989, p27). Women have felt at home in such neighbourhood politics in a way they have not in more formal and hierarchical organisations. For Edith Cowan, as for a number of other first women MPs, parliamentary candidature was simply an extension of a lifetime of politics in community-based organisations. The exceptions to this rule were political widows or daughters who inherited a seat from a male relative. Today, parliamentary representation is still only the tip of the iceberg of women’s political activity, which is heavily concentrated at the community level and has been relatively invisible as far as political science has been concerned.

When asked where the women are in politics, the answer is likely to be in resident action and environment groups, in social welfare, health and education advocacy or in some branch of the consumer movement. When women finally entered parliament they took these community issues with them as part of their agenda. The campaigns of women’s groups and early women MPs for pure food and clean milk foreshadowed the more recent role of women in the global consumer movement, outlined by Eileen Baldry in this volume.

Separate institution-building does not preclude participation in the broader political system and indeed can often become a vehicle for introducing new issues and new people into the polity. Cowan’s intense involvement in the formation of women’s organisations was accompanied by her interest in other forms of elective public office where these were open to her. For example, she was first elected to the North Fremantle Education Board in 1898, one of the few public offices then open to women. She became an endorsed Nationalist candidate as soon as women were eligible to stand for parliament.

Separate institution-building could take place inside or closely linked to political parties, as well as outside in the community. Edith Cowan was involved in
the Women's Electoral League which, like its larger namesake in Queensland, the Australian Women's National League (AWNL) in Victoria and Tasmania and the Women's Liberal League in New South Wales, gave women an independent base within Nationalist politics and influence over preselections. Indeed the Victorian-based Australian Women's National League had the largest membership of any conservative political organisation between the wars, with some 50,000 members at its peak. When Robert Menzies formed the modern Liberal Party in 1944, the AWNL leaders struck a hard bargain in return for merging their resources into the new organisation - half of all executive positions in the Victorian Liberal Party up to the position of State President were to be (and still are) reserved for women.

Women's organisations were also created within the Australian Labor Party and were important in the immediate post-suffrage era in promoting feminist policy initiatives such as maternal and child endowment. Later they were perceived as restricting the role of women in the party and functioning primarily as its 'catering division'. Those that survived were re-energised by the arrival of the second wave of the women's movement and played an important role in promoting affirmative action in the party. The consolidation of the factional system in the 1980s cut across this kind of female institution-building within the Party. As Broughton and Zetlin show in this issue, Labor women are aware of the advantages of cross-factional cooperation on women's issues, as achieved by the federal Status of Women Caucus Committee, but also realistic about the power and demands of factions.

Joan Kirner, Labor Premier of Victoria (1990-1992), has headed a cross-factional push by Labor women to establish an Australian version of EMILY's list - the American fund-raising organisation for women candidates discussed in this issue by Kate Sullivan. One delaying factor in bringing 'Olive's List' into operation has been the struggle over control, with Labor women wanting the organisation to be at arm's-length from the party rather than controlled by the national executive and State secretaries. This is not a problem in the candidate-centred political system of the United States, but does raise questions about the transferability of this funding mechanism for women candidates.

REPRESENTING WOMEN

One factor limiting the effectiveness of the first women MPs, striving for 'independence', was the contested nature of claims to represent women. Edith Cowan was given credit for her parliamentary achievements on behalf of women, such as her successful private member's bills enabling women to enter the law and other professions (Women's Legal Status Bill) and giving mothers equal rights of inheritance in the case of the intestacy of their children (a bill amending the Administration Act). She also lobbied successfully for a reduction in the charge for prams on suburban trams, for playgrounds and children's clinic funding and for women to be allowed into the Speaker's Gallery of Parliament.

But while Cowan had lobbied on a number of issues important to working class women, her middle-class perspective was evident in her ill-judged response to a proposal to bring domestic servants under the Arbitration Act. Cowan gave notice of an amendment of her own, which would enable wives doing domestic work to apply for their own award if the proposal went ahead, 'If it is good for the housemaid and cook to go to the Arbitration Court, if it is good for the washer woman to go to the Arbitration Court, it is equally good for the wife to do so' (Cowan 1978, p192). Cowan was concerned at the lack of economic independence of wives and owned well-marked copies of Charlotte Perkins Stetson's *Women and
Economics (1898) and Olive Schreiner's Women and Labour (1911). Nonetheless the resulting hullabaloo over her proposal distracted attention from the issue of the hours and pay of domestic servants, and was taken to trivialise industrial arbitration. In other forums, including her first speech in parliament, she pursued a more considered approach to the problem of economic dependence through advocacy of motherhood endowment.

It was not only class which complicated Cowan's representational status. Her rival in the Western Australian women's movement, Bessie Rischbieth, denounced her in the following terms (West Australian, 3 March 1927, quoted in Cowan, 1978, p222):

Mrs Cowan...has more than once from her place in the House, plainly implied, if she has not explicitly stated, that she was speaking for societies some of which would certainly not endorse her words, and for the women of Western Australia, very many of whom have been diametrically opposed to the views she has expressed'

The major issue in contention was Edith Cowan's support for compulsory notification of venereal disease. Cowan approached this issue from a public health perspective rather than from the earlier feminist perspective which saw such legislation as degrading women in order to make fornication safe for men. Bessie Rischbieth led the Women's Service Guild out of the National Council of Women, of which Cowan was President, when the Council supported notification during World War 1. Other bodies in which Cowan had taken a leading role, such as the Kindergarten Union and the Children's Protection Society, also departed from the National Council over the issue, as did the Labor Women's Association and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. The issue came up again during Cowan's term in parliament where she once again lent strong support to compulsory notification despite the objections of the Women's Service Guild.

Ethnicity and race are other factors which, like class and ideological difference, complicate the representation of women. Edith Cowan was active in trying to improve post-arrival services for immigrants coming to Western Australia under the Group Settlement Scheme, particularly for women and children. Although Cowan recognised the traumatic character of the settlement experience, and the often misleading nature of the information given to would-be immigrants, she shared much of the culture of these British immigrants. Today immigrant women from much more diverse backgrounds are staking claims for representation on the basis of experience and perspectives which cannot be shared by women raised, like Edith Cowan, in the dominant culture. Parliamentarians such as Helen Sham-Ho in the New South Wales Legislative Council articulate multiple political identities - in her case as a Liberal politician, as a woman from a non-English speaking background and as an Asian woman. One of the aims of the Australian version of EMILY's List is to encourage indigenous women and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds to nominate for preselection.

MATERNAL FEMINISM

The idea that women would introduce a new, purifying element into politics through non-partisan commitment to moral and social reform was found throughout the English-speaking democracies. A closely related idea was that women would be transporting the maternal roles they performed in the family into the larger home of the state, thus making possible for the first time the humanising of the latter. As Edith Cowan pointed out, state policies, such as those relating to juvenile offenders,
had been inadequate because of the absence of maternal insight and compassion as well as expertise with children. This idea was often expressed at this time across the world of organised feminism (see Sawer, 1996). Nellie McClung, elected to the Alberta legislature in the same year as Edith Cowan, was saying (Bashevkin, 1993, p7):

Women will I believe supply that new element, that purifying influence...and just as the mother’s influence as well as the father’s is needed in the bringing up of children and in the affairs of the home, so are they needed in the larger home, the state.

Opposition to the idea of the state as the ‘larger home’ was expressed in terms of the need to keep the two spheres distinct - the emotionalism and particularism of women should not be allowed to intrude into the objective world of public affairs.

Part of the purifying influence which the first women MPs hoped to exercise related to the removal of the sexual double standard from public life. This was a continuing concern of Edith Cowan’s - the protection of women and children both from sexual abuse and from stigmatisation as a result of such abuse. Another aspect of the purifying role related to temperance and accounted for the strong opposition of the liquor trade to women’s suffrage. While Edith Cowan was never a prohibitionist or member of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, she worked alongside temperance women in much of her community work and supported local option (the right of local councils to refuse liquor licences) in her electoral platforms.

Maternal feminism represented the confluence of a number of political discourses. From social liberalism came the idea of citizenship as service, and such service in turn giving rise to citizenship entitlements. Motherhood was depicted as a vital form of community service which should entail financial recognition by the community. From social liberalism too came the emphasis on the self-realisation of the individual and integrity of the person, and the obligation of the state to intervene in a positive way to ensure these values, even within the family. Lastly, social liberalism placed great emphasis on active citizenship and the importance of participation in public life both for the purposes of community building and for the full development of individual potential. Mothers were needed to help build the ethical state (see Sawer, 1996).

Maternal feminism also drew on the new ‘efficiency’ discourse which had risen to prominence during the First World War. The state was taking on a multitude of new functions in relation to child welfare and other matters which required maternal expertise. Conversely the expertise of mothers had to be enhanced through measures such as the compulsory domestic science courses for girls included in Edith Cowan’s election platforms (see Reiger, 1985).

As Lake (1992a) has pointed out, another important hook for the concept of maternal citizenship in Australia immediately after the First World War was constituted by the entitlements now available for the soldier citizens who had ‘given birth to the nation’ at Gallipoli. In the context of the high maternal mortality and morbidity rates which persisted in Australia, it could be argued that the service being provided by mothers to the nation was equally dangerous and heroic. The entitlements of citizen mothers should be no less than those of soldier citizens.

Strategically, maternal discourse was important for two other reasons. First, through depicting political participation as simply an extension of the maternal role, rather than an alternative to it, maternal feminism helped defuse fears that women’s
political equality would lead to a mass desertion of domestic duties. Secondly, through seeking to raise the political and economic status of motherhood, maternal feminism could be seen to be addressing the widespread fears of the birth dearth or of 'race suicide'.

Edith Cowan included 'Endowment of Motherhood' in her platform as part of the protection of child life, along with the 'establishment of creches, playgrounds and national kitchens in every suburb'. Cowan's interest in raising the status of motherhood and improving child welfare went along with her interests in housing and town planning. Women architects were needed for better design of housing and public buildings. The 'state kitchens' Cowan advocated for every suburb were to ease the burden on young mothers.

The concept of paying family support to the mother rather than including a family component in male wages was variously called family endowment, motherhood endowment, child endowment or family allowances, in accordance with different discursive strategies and political agendas discussed below. Family allowances were to address the problems of child poverty, particularly in large families; the decline in the birth rate; the lack of equal pay for women; the wasteful inclusion of a family component in male wages even where there was no family; and the 'Turk complex' among men encouraged by the economic dependence of women (Rathbone, 1924).

The concept of family allowances owed most to British feminist, Eleanor Rathbone, its life-long advocate and herself an Independent MP from 1929 until her death in 1946. Rathbone had worked out her case for family allowances well before World War 1 and first published on it in 1912. The family allowance committee she formed towards the end of the war published Equal Pay and The Family in 1918, linking family allowances to equal pay, and hence improved status for women both at home and at work. As in Australia, practical experience of separation allowances during the war helped build momentum for the campaign. In 1919 a government report in Britain had referred to the 'national endowment of motherhood' as a 'corollary to the absolute avoidance of sex distinction in connection with wages' (Land, 1992, p287). Rathbone published her great classic of feminist economics, The Disinherited Family, in 1924. It built the most detailed case so far, both for family allowances and for 'equal pay for equivalent work'. William Beveridge later said it had produced his own 'instant and total conversion' to family allowances.

Lake (1992b) has tracked the advocacy in Australia of proposals for motherhood endowment and child endowment among Labor women and their success in having these proposals adopted by the labour movement in the period immediately after World War 1. Proposals for child endowment to be paid to the mother were also put forward in the NSW parliament by a Nationalist MP, Dr Richard Arthur, during the war and by 1919 he succeeded in having it included in his party's programme. In the same year the radical liberal A.B. Piddington, heading a Royal Commission into the Basic Wage for the Federal Government, recommended child endowment to the Prime Minister and became its foremost Australian advocate. The Commonwealth Government introduced a system of family allowances for public servants in the following year but did nothing further until 1941. Piddington ran against the Prime Minister in his seat in 1922 to publicise the issue. The first general system of child endowment was introduced by the Lang government in NSW in 1927.

As suggested here, and as detailed by Bettina Cass (1988), proponents of family allowances had different agendas. Employers saw them as a means of
reducing the basic wage through the removal of the family component and for this reason the labour movement was often hostile to the proposal. The suspicions of trade unionists were confirmed when the introduction of child endowment was accompanied by downwards pressure on the basic wage. Feminists from the conservative side of politics, such as Edith Cowan and Irene Longman, who appeared before the Royal Commission on Family Allowances and Child Endowment set up by the Federal Government in 1927 saw them as essential for the economic independence of women as well as underpinning the case for equal pay, a view shared by Labor women such as Muriel Heagney and Jean Daley. The difference was that the conservative women also stressed the wastefulness of paying a family component in wages for bachelors.

Some Labor men, such as John Curtin who was one of the Commissioners, were sympathetic to the concept of child endowment to address child poverty, but rejected the concept of motherhood endowment. Curtin believed that working men must have an additional component in their pay either for the support of a wife or, in the case of a bachelor, to pay for the services which would otherwise be provided by a wife. He was joined in his minority report by Commissioner Mildred Muscio of the National Council of Women, NSW. The majority report rejected child endowment as removing financial responsibility from parents and hence reducing work incentives.

The Royal Commissioners as a whole rejected the concept of ‘motherhood endowment’, with its suggestion that mothers might become economically independent of husbands (Lake, 1992a). They appeared shocked by the evidence given by Irene Longman on the first day of the Commission’s hearings. Longman was a comparable figure to Edith Cowan, being the Honorary President of the National Council of Women in Queensland and about to be elected as the first woman MP in that State. She was queried by a Commissioner as to whether, according to her theory, “the State should pay the wife for services rendered to the State”. She responded: “Yes, we say that her services to the State are as great as those of the man; and, therefore, that those services should be paid for as an independent economic unit” (Royal Commission on Child Endowment, 1928, p7). The Commissioners were perturbed by the fact that this economic independence might encourage women to live apart from their husbands. Longman’s position was that, although revolutionary, economic independence was what was wanted; there were circumstances in which it was better for a husband and wife to live apart (Royal Commission on Child Endowment, 1928, p8). The President of the National Council of Women of Queensland who had accompanied Longman to this hearing, and was also President of the Mothers’ Union, appeared at a subsequent hearing and dissociated herself and the Mothers’ Union from any demand for economic dependence for wives. They were strongly opposed to the payment of child endowment to the mother, which they believed would undermine the basis of house life, and even more strongly opposed to its payment to unmarried mothers (Royal Commission on Child Endowment, 1928, p113-14).

Both Longman and Edith Cowan saw motherhood endowment as the prerequisite of equal pay, as well as the foundation of women’s independence within the family. This was not entirely clear in Cowan’s 1921 electoral platform where she included both motherhood endowment and ‘equal pay for equal work’, but qualified the latter by adding ‘with a preferential rate for married men’. She may have been thinking here along the lines referred to above, that motherhood endowment meant endowment for children paid to the mother, while there should still be a component for a wife built into male wages. By the time she stood for
parliament again in 1924 she had dropped the ‘preferential rate’. When she gave evidence to the Royal Commission in 1927, as Vice-President of the National Council of Women (Western Australia), she stressed that wages should be for work done, irrespective of sex, and that there should be separate endowment for wives/mothers and for children, the latter to be paid to the mother. The Commissioners were particularly indignant that, under the scheme proposed, wives would be handling more money through family allowances than the husband simply receiving his basic wage. The Commissioners queried whether husbands would find this acceptable (Royal Commission on Child Endowment, 1928, p434). They also asked whether organisations affiliated to the National Council were likely to disassociate themselves from motherhood and child endowment, as had happened in Queensland - a suggestion Edith Cowan firmly rebuffed. The rival Australian Federation of Women Voters and its constituent bodies in the different States did, however, give evidence to the Commission in support only of child endowment, believing like the Labor men that male wages should continue to contain a component for the wife or for purchasing services otherwise provided by a wife (Royal Commission on Child Endowment, 1928, p511).

Motherhood and childhood endowment, as envisaged by Edith Cowan, would have constituted social recognition of the value of women’s work. It would have enabled women to achieve economic independence while performing traditional roles in the family as well as equal pay in the workforce. The problem, as Cass (1988) has pointed out, is that in the form that child endowment and family allowances were eventually legislated they were neither indexed nor subject to regular renegotiation like wages. In the absence of strong pressure from the women’s movement their value was steadily eroded. The price of indexation, which occurred in the latter 1980s, turned out to be means-testing on family income, meaning that family allowances were no longer available on a universal basis as a recognition of the value of women’s work or as a source of independence for women otherwise dependent on disbursements from their husbands. This was an historic defeat for the movement of which Edith Cowan formed a part.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

As we have seen, the discursive strategies adopted by first-wave feminists sought to provide reassurances that participation in the public sphere would only be an extension of maternal roles and would not lessen women’s commitment to ‘home duties’. Spence (1909, p286) had suggested that “women may well take their share of housekeeping the State, without neglecting their own houses” - foreshadowing today’s ‘superwoman’, clearing tall buildings with her double load. In the 1920s Couchman’s version of this trope was “Women do not want to go into parliament because they are sick of home life. They want to get there to make the home better...” (The Woman, 1922, p264).

Despite such discursive strategies, a major objection to women standing for elected office was that they must necessarily be neglecting their primary responsibility to husband and family and, through being in the public eye, encouraging other women to do so as well. Edith Cowan did not escape this censure, despite her advanced years. She was accused of heartlessly neglecting her husband and children, although her youngest child was 30 at the time her husband was out canvassing for her (Cowan, 1978, p162).

Such accusations of neglect of primary roles as wife and mother were to remain standard fare for women parliamentary candidates up to the present day (see
Sawer & Simms, 1994). To achieve public acceptance women were expected to demonstrate their commitment to these roles, but at the same time these roles were constructed as an almost insuperable impediment to political careers. Women could certainly not risk embarking on political careers until their children were grown up, by which time it was usually too late to be taken very seriously. Women’s first responsibility was to home and family, not to public life, so it was unlikely that ‘womanly women’, the only ones one would want to see in parliament, would actually be seen there.

It was only with the arrival of second-wave feminism that there was serious questioning of the way public institutions were based on a formal separation between public and private spheres. This separation, supposedly dividing the realm of the particular from the realm of the universal or abstract rationality, was a male construction resting on the assumption that there was someone else to take care of family responsibilities, namely women. In the 1970s there were increasing demands for changes to the way that public life was organised so that those with family responsibilities might have an equal chance to participate. There was also much resistance to these demands, which included campaigns for childcare in parliament houses and more family-friendly sitting hours. The Federal Government, elected in 1996, moved to rescind a curfew on sitting hours, despite the increase in women MPs (to say nothing of the parliamentary staff whom it affected).

At the same time there were new challenges to the old assumption that it was women who must always be the primary carers. At least in-so-far as the Labor Party and the minor parties are concerned, this assumption can now be regarded for the most part as a nuisance rather than as an absolute barrier to the parliamentary aspirations of younger women. In the 1970s women with young children started entering parliament. By the 1980s some women were having babies while holding elected office, and soon this was true even of some Cabinet Ministers. A young woman arrived in the Senate in 1996, at the age of 26, wearing Doc Marten boots and paying little deference to wife and mother roles. Gender roles remained somewhat more constrained among the conservative parties, where it was still unlikely in the 1990s that husbands would take over domestic responsibilities.

BEING IN A MINORITY

As we have seen, female institution-building has been an important concomitant of the women’s movement over the last century and has provided the possibility for the alternative modelling of politics, or a base for the transformation of politics. Some women MPs, however, have disassociated themselves from female institution-building and seen it as limiting and constraining women’s political contribution. Such rejection may derive from an individualistic perspective or from a perspective which views other forms of collective identification as taking precedence over gender. Women with an individualistic perspective may emphasise the significance for other women of their success in a male world (showing that it can be done) and the importance of being inside that world rather than trying to influence it from the outside. This perspective is reflected in the views of some of the Québec mayors discussed by Manon Tremblay in this issue.

One problem with this perspective is that women have often supported women candidates because they believe they will make a difference to politics rather than simply model success in a man’s world. When women MPs fail to speak out on issues of central concern to women, disillusionment follows. One recent example comes from Australian federal politics, where the increase in numbers of women
parliamentarians, particularly on the government benches, appeared to coincide with a decrease in concern for the impact of policy on women (Horin, 1996, p2):

*What is the point of having 26 Coalition women in Federal Parliament when they remain silent on a serious Government attack on women’s rights? Why haven’t we seen women backbenchers holding doorstep interviews at Parliament House to take the Government to task on its industrial relations legislation?*

One explanation of the wariness of some women MPs in being identified with women is the effect of the role of proportions in group life. Rosabeth Moss Kanter has put forward influential propositions on this subject, deriving from her study of American corporations. Transferred to politics, these would predict that, as a small minority, women MPs would be highly visible and more likely to be subject to loyalty tests. As a small minority they have to work harder to earn trust, because of the distrust generated by their ‘difference’ (see Kanter, 1977). Distancing themselves from other women may be one way of demonstrating reliability and support for dominant group values. One former woman MP told Rosemary Whip that she had been convinced that her role must be as a member of parliament not as a woman member of parliament: “My role was just to act so that I in no way alienated men from the idea of women being in politics” (Whip, 1991, p11).

Moreover, issues relating specifically to women or of major concern to women are often of little interest to male MPs. Women MPs may be warned that to raise issues regarded as being marginal or of low priority may impose career costs and result in the women themselves being marginalised (Whip, 1991, p17). Male colleagues, who do not have to work so hard to gain acceptance, may find it easier to adopt unpopular positions. By contrast with the frequent outspokenness of the first woman MPs, in recent years it has sometimes been the men in conservative ranks who have taken risks on behalf of equal opportunity. In 1987, for example, Senator Peter Baume resigned from the front bench over his party’s decision to oppose government equal opportunity legislation and six of his male colleagues, but none of his female colleagues, joined him in crossing the floor over the issue.

Despite their minority status and the extra pressures imposed on them, women MPs have been successful in introducing new subjects and new perspectives into parliamentary debate. Cowan’s maiden speech included a striking example of this. She suggested that if the Minister for Railways was made to parade the streets of Perth for the whole of one afternoon with a heavy infant on one arm and a bag of groceries on the other, it might make him more sensitive to the plight of mothers unable to bring perambulators to town because of the shilling charge for them on the train. The introduction of women’s experience into the content of politics, and the measurement of policy by its impact on women, have been notable outcomes of the 75 years of women’s participation in Australian parliaments.

Women MPs have given first-hand accounts of experiences such as the relinquishing of children often forced on unmarried mothers up to the 1970s, testimony which has helped promote the extensive legislative and policy changes which have taken place both in relation to adoption and sole parent support. In the 1996 debate in Federal Parliament celebrating Edith Cowan and the contribution of women MPs, one new MP spoke of the damage to families, and hence to the social fabric, being perpetrated by men who had failed to adjust to women’s expectations - the fact that today’s woman did not want a provider but rather someone who would be a companion and share equally in household chores. She invoked Cowan’s concern about children in speaking of the need for women legislators with insight.
into this crucible of adjustment of male and female relationships (Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debate, 1996).

As Broughton and Zetlin observe in this volume, the small minority of women MPs in Australia have had an unexpectedly large influence on the legislative and public policy agenda. Broughton and Zetlin attribute this in part to the collaboration between women MPs and feminist bureaucrats and to the relative strength of feminist policy machinery in Australia. Women MPs and femocrats who are networked with each other, as well as with community-based movements 'outside', are more likely to be sustained in a set of values at variance with the dominant values manifested in political life.

Women MPs from either side of politics with a close relationship with non-party organisations such as the Australian Federation of Women Voters or its successor, Women's Electoral Lobby, have historically been more likely to risk the disapproval of male colleagues by raising issues of equal opportunity and women’s rights than women who eschewed ‘running off into women’s groups’. The peace movement and the environment movement have played a similar sustaining role for some women MPs. Those without such a community base or networking structure to provide reaffirmation of an alternative value system were more dependent on the approval of their colleagues, which was easily withdrawn if dominant priorities were challenged.

The professionalisation of politics in some ways makes such sustaining relationships harder to achieve than in Edith Cowan’s day, when parliamentary careers were less all-consuming. Cowan’s parliamentary work on issues such as women’s legal status, the treatment of juvenile offenders and the registration of nurses was very much a continuation of her work in community organisations and she continued to be active in the National Council of Women and the Housewives League among other bodies. On the other hand, the allocation of paid staff positions and other important resources to today’s MPs means that these resources may be shared with community organisations. In her article Tremblay suggests that even exposure to feminist lobbying may sensitize women MPs to representational tasks.

Despite all the drawbacks of being in a minority, women MPs have succeeded in introducing women’s experience into the content of politics. For example, few men were able to appreciate that sexual harassment could create a hostile and discriminatory working environment for women (even in parliament), although most women knew this. It was women who made sexual harassment a public policy issue and a subject for legislation. Women have had relatively little success in influencing the process of politics. Although many women MPs express their discomfort with the highly adversarial and confrontational style of Australian politics, particularly on the floor of the House, they have had little effect on the dominant political culture.

CONCLUSION

Edith Cowan would certainly be disappointed that 75 years after her election women still constitute less than 20 per cent of all Australian MPs. She would point sharply to the fact that those Australian houses of parliament where women constituted more than 30 per cent of members were invariably elected by proportional representation - part of her own platform. She would also be disappointed at the failure of the non-party idea to dislodge the sway of party and faction. She would be gratified on the other hand about the progress made on many of her issues and the role that has been
played by women parliamentarians in this—whether in areas of equal opportunity legislation, childcare provision, health and community services or the ‘endowment of motherhood’ (at least for sole parents). She would be heartened by the broadening of women’s choices as they became the majority of students in higher education (something she was denied), and around half the students in professions such as law and medicine. The professionalisation of nursing would also have enjoyed her support. She would have been disappointed that women had still not achieved equal pay and that most had still not achieved financial independence within marriage.

But the major problem that she would find with Australia in the 1990s would be that legislation was still being passed without adequate regard for its human and social consequences. The burden of her maiden speech was that, as a woman in parliament, her function was to remind men that these questions should be given more consideration. She would have found it inconceivable that after 75 years of women’s representation the belief that the economy must take precedence over social considerations was stronger than ever. The realm of man-made abstractions had proved more resistant to the intrusion of women’s particularism than she could have ever guessed.

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FOOTNOTES

1Countess Markievicz was in prison at the time of her election and was subsequently part of the Sinn Fein boycott of Westminster.

2One of the first topics debated in the Karrakatta Club was jury service. Cowan strongly supported the need for women on juries, something not achieved in Western Australia until after an amendment to the Juries Act was passed in 1957 with much assistance from another woman MP, the Hon. Ruby Hutchison.

3In 1927 Cowan was nominated for parliament by the Women’s Electoral League.

REFERENCES


Why So Few? The Political Culture of Gender in Israel

Hanna Herzog
Tel Aviv University, Israel

ABSTRACT

The paper provides a historical and comparative overview of the place of women in Israeli politics. The basic claim is that two major contradictory trends operate simultaneously in the Israeli political arena. On the one hand, women are recognised, treated, and organised as a social category, yet on the other hand, political action on the basis of their social identity has been denounced and its legitimacy denied. The contradictory way in which women are organised in and out of politics stems from, and is often justified by, a recurring rhetoric: national ethos, security needs, Jewish tradition and Israeli familism. Therefore, Israeli politics have always been characterised by limited numbers of women deputies, who enter politics as an expression of the democratic idea of minority representation, but who almost never fight openly for their group interests. The analysis is organised according to the formal power structure of Israeli politics, which serves as a magnifying glass through which general social-political processes can be examined.

'Why so few' is a repetitive question asked while dealing with women's under-representation in leadership positions. Political culture is mentioned in an increasing number of studies as an important determinant that shapes the political activity of women within a given society (Duchen, 1986; Gelb, 1989; Kolinsky, 1989; Lovenduski & Norris 1993; Lovenduski & Randall 1993). Although these studies share much in common, each society has its own structural and cultural traits that shape the development, goals, structure, and values of women's political activity and organisations. The Israeli case adds to this growing body of knowledge the analysis of a social paradox in which political culture includes and excludes women simultaneously. Women are defined socially as a group and marginalised politically as a group.

The Israeli political system and its historical origins might have been expected to facilitate the incorporation of women in politics. The idea of gender equality has its roots in the socialist orientation of the nation's founders; Israeli Jewish women, who constitute half of the Jewish voting population, are conscripted into the army and hence can claim a part in the Israeli military ethos. Israel's multi-party system, with its proportional representation and list system - which has been found in other countries to be correlated with greater representation of women - could have paved the way for women's parties.

The figures that are presented and discussed in the following tables, however, show otherwise. This paper analyses the low rate of women's participation in the formal political structure of Israel, and the changes over time, highlighting the social mechanisms of their inclusion and exclusion. Its major purpose is to unveil the various ways, explicit and implicit, by which the Israeli political culture has restricted and de-legitimised women's activity.
Although I do believe that politics embraces power relationships in all aspects of life (Herzog, 1994), I have restricted the current analysis to the formal institutions that are active in the public political sphere. The analysis is organised according to the formal power structure of Israeli politics, which serves as a magnifying glass through which general social-political processes can be examined. It deals with the Israeli parliament (Knesset) and government, and the system of political parties. These institutions are examined through two-fold analysis: the rate and the forms of women’s participation.

The statistical data are based on the official results of elections. The author’s claim is illustrated in each sphere of politics by one or two examples only, because of space limitations.

The basic claim is that two major contradictory trends operate simultaneously in the Israeli political arena: on the one hand, women are recognised, treated, and organised as a social category, yet on the other hand, political action on the basis of their social identity has been denounced and its legitimacy denied. The contradictory way in which women are organised in and out of politics stems from, and is often justified by, a recurring rhetoric: national ethos, security needs, Jewish tradition and Israeli familism.

THE ISRAELI PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNMENT

The Israeli parliament (the Knesset) and the government are perceived as the most prominent institutions of Israeli political power. Hence, the mere presence of women within them carries symbolic meaning, regardless of these women’s actual influence on the political agenda. It is therefore not surprising that most of the studies on Israeli women in politics have focused on women’s representation in the Knesset (Azmon, 1990; Brichta, 1975; Brichta & Brichta, 1994; Etzioni-Halevy & Illy 1981; Weiss & Yishai, 1980).

The Knesset

Representation

Elections for the Knesset are held every four years, except in times of governmental crisis, when elections may be moved forward. Israel has a multi-party proportional electoral system, in which about 20 lists compete in each election for 120 seats. Such a list system is assumed to be easier for women, since it gives different interest groups, presumably including those representing women’s issues, greater influence. At the same time, when there is a large number of parties, the competition for women within each party list is tougher, since the number of places guaranteed to win a seat is relatively small.

Table 1 shows that among the 120 parliament members, the percentage of women has always been low, never surpassing 9.1 per cent. This percentage is found in the first three elections (1949, 1951, 1955), after which there has been a generally steady decline in the number of women in the Knesset. The smallest number of female Knesset members was found in 1988, when 7 women were elected. A year after those elections, another woman joined the Knesset. The 1992 elections returned the percentage of women to its initial size (as in 1949-1955).

The gradual decline in the number of female Knesset members up to 1992 stands in contrast to the general increase in the number of female parliament members in many Western countries.
Table 1 Women in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset)

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The 1992 elections brought some - though not dramatic - change. In the leading political parties, women actively demanded that a safe place be secured to them on their respective party lists to the Knesset. Even as the number of female Knesset members has grown, Israel still remains far behind many democratic societies. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union survey, Israel is ranked at the 51st place in terms of representation of women in its national parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1995, p42).

Historically, the Labor parties have tended to promote women more than other parties in Israel. However, as Table 2 indicates, while women have represented a wide range of parties and political blocs, they have achieved no more than token representation in any party.

Table 2 Number of Female Parliament (Knesset) Members in Political Blocks

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Although parties consider women to be an electoral asset, and most election campaigns address them as a separate category (Herzog, 1987a, p78-79), they have not considered them as a powerful interest group. Public surveys do not reveal a meaningful gender gap (Yishai, 1995), and, moreover, they indicate that the responsiveness of parties to women’s demands for representation has no significant impact on women’s vote. Therefore the political parties have tended to give women only some representation in order to show ‘fairness’.

Representatives Without Representativeness

Women are selected as representatives of women, yet at the same time they are expected to prefer the general interest of the party over their so-called particularistic interests as women, and often they do tend to give party interests priority over women’s needs. For example, in a concession to the religious parties that joined the government coalition in 1977, women dropped their objection to the repeal of ‘clause 5’ of the Abortion Law, which permitted abortions on grounds of emotional and social problems (Azmon & Izraeli, 1993, p15).

There is considerable pressure on women to use channels ‘from within’ their parties, with respect to both the demands they support and their modes of career development. If they do not, they risk being stigmatised as narrow-minded and selfish. Although there are formal mechanisms to ensure consent, such as coalition and party requirements for discipline, these are not needed. The subordination of
women's interests to the dominant definition of the general good is largely self-imposed; it is taken for granted. As one leading woman Knesset member said:

*The women in Israel have submitted a separate list for elections but we (the women Labor party members) are first and foremost party members, hence we have no interest in a separate list. We do, however, want to participate in our country’s political life (cited in Weiss & Yishai 1980, p169).*

Even women who are identified with women's causes and who are active in women's organisations tend to lower their profiles on these issues when entering the national arena and even abandon them totally in the course of time. As Table 2 indicates, most of the women Knesset members have been from the Labor bloc. For many, the women's labour movement (the former 'Working Mothers', now called Na'amat) was an important place for political matriculation, and a springboard to party politics. Yet as Knesset members, many of them did not focus their activities on women's issues. The general secretary of the women's labour movement in the 1970s, who became a Knesset member in 1977, explained this phenomenon:

*There are certain facts of life. Therefore, with all the good will, and though women's rights are part of my party platform, I am saying that there are more urgent issues (La'Isha [a women’s monthly], September 8, 1975).*

In many cases these ‘urgent issues’ are foreign and security affairs and/or keeping the coalition together. For example, a female Knesset member of the Liberal party who fought against changes in the abortion law that would limit women's options to abort gave in and voted in favour of the changes when the vote was defined as a motion of confidence in the government:

*I believe that this is the best government we have ever had. For years we were in the opposition, and now that we have finally come to power with the confidence of the public, I feel that it is my obligation to give the government my confidence (La'Isha, December 24, 1979).*

In a similar dilemma, the female members of the Civil Rights party, Meretz, elected in 1992, withheld their struggle for the article on women's status in the basic law of human rights, for the sake of keeping the coalition together and sustaining the peace process.

Women's issues, issues which are more generally associated with women's concerns such as education and social welfare, or issues that relate directly to women's status and social rights, are not considered to be social problems of any great importance. It is quite common that when such issues are brought to the fore, they are detained with the excuse that “time is not yet ripe to deal with them; that other concerns are more pressing”, namely issues of security and defence (Chazan, 1989).

Often it has been easier to pass legislation when defined as addressing social problems or meeting the needs of the disadvantaged, even if women were the major beneficiaries (Izraeli & Tabory, 1988). The de-legitimation of 'gender issues' has affected the way that female Knesset members act: they refrain from women's politics.

In her biography, Marcia Freedman, a feminist activist elected to the Knesset in 1974 as part of Shulamit Aloni's Civil Right Movement, describes how the abortion bill was defeated “by a carefully engineered vote of seven to six.” The engineer was the female committee chair, Chaika Grossman, a member of Mapam, the Labor Alignment's left wing (Freedman, 1990, p96):
With patience and enormous skill, she moved the committee from a majority in favour of choice to a majority in support of the Baki Commission recommendations with the addition of a 'poverty clause'.

The Baki commission recommended that poor mothers of large families, in addition to the infirm and the victimised, would be exempt from the general prohibition of abortion. Only by framing abortion in terms of a general social problem was it possible to gain legitimation.

Summing up feminist movement activity in the abortion case, Freedman writes: “the country was pro-choice but once again anti-feminist” (1990, p95). Reviewing her activity in the Knesset, she concludes (1990, p105):

My role in politics was to place feminist issues on the agenda and try to keep them there. It was a mission that, in political terms, was doomed. Unless I turned my back on the cause that had put me in office, I was bound to fail as a politician. To succeed, I would have to fail as a feminist” (1990, p97)...I was known in Israel as a radical extremist, not because of the positions I took, but because my subject matter was unseemly. I raised issues that were either believed not to exist or not to be issues.

Inclusion and Exclusion - The Legislative Presumptions

Most legislation related to women’s status has assumed that women are primarily wives and mothers or potential mothers. The 1949 Military Defence Law, which defined military service as the epitome of ‘Israeli citizenship’ and ascribed the Israeli army with the status of supreme ‘social educator’ and ‘social integrator’, exempted married Jewish women from compulsory service and mothers from reserve duty. In the Knesset discourse, motherhood is constructed not as a private role but as a public one that bears national significance (Berkovitch, 1992). Similarly, the Women’s Equal Rights Law (1951) gave women formal equality but at the same time conceived of them as mothers, ready to sacrifice for the unity of the house of Israel (the nation), ‘coalition unity’, and, above all, for the ‘preservation of traditional family life’. Perceived of as mothers, women were neither altogether excluded, nor merely marginalised. In the light of such social construction, it is not surprising that the feminist minority in the Knesset claimed that any formal equality that ignores the social context prevents real change, and objected to the law (Berkovitch, 1992; Lahav, 1993).

Has There Been Change?

In the late 1970s, a change began to emerge. It began with the activities associated with the United Nations Decade for Women, the report of the Prime Minister’s Commission on the Status of Women (1978), and the nomination of an Adviser to the Prime Minister on Women’s Status in 1981 (see discussion later on). However, the impact of these trends was curtailed by changes that have evolved in the political constellation since 1977. With the rise to power of the right-wing Likud and its coalition partners, the ultra-Orthodox splinter parties, the commitment to egalitarian principles declined. Israel ceased to be dominated by the Labor party bloc; the ensuing close political struggle between two blocs, the Right and the Left, enabled the small ultra-Orthodox parties - which opposed gender equality in principle - to impose their positions more effectively (Azmon & Izraeli, 1993, p18). Consequently, although feminist ideas penetrated into women’s social organisations during the 1980s, most of them were barred at the Knesset gates. The two legislative changes - equal retirement age for men and women (1987), and equal opportunity in
Why So Few? The Political Culture of Gender in Israel

employment (1988) - were achieved, mainly as a result of decisions of the High Court of Justice and intensive activity of women's organisations.

It was only in 1992 that women elected to the Knesset brought with them a beginning of change from within. Having begun their political careers in feminist organisations, these women declared themselves feminists, initiated a multi-party lobby for the promotion of women's rights and equality, and became a dominant factor in the Knesset Committee on Women's Status. Despite party differences, they share a commitment to addressing gender inequality. The critical question still remains as to which interests will take precedence when women's interests conflict with their respective parties' demands.

The Government

Several Israeli governments have included women as ministers and vice-ministers (Table 3). The most prominent among these women was, of course, Golda Meir, who served as minister of labor, minister of foreign affairs, and finally as prime minister. However, while her achievements have been cited as testimony to the existence of open channels for women in Israeli politics - the Golda Meir Effect - in practice, this case is the exception to the rule, as are Indira Gandhi in India, Tansu Ciller in Turkey, Sirimavo Bandaranaike and her daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga in Sri Lanka, Begum Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh, and Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan. Furthermore, Golda Meir never considered herself as representing women or women's organisations. In her autobiography she reports (Meir, 1975, p107):

_The Women's Labor Council and its sister organisation abroad, the Pioneer Women, were the first and the last women's organisations for which I ever worked. I was attracted to them not so much because they concerned women as such..._

In fact, a review of the history of the women's labour movement in the Jewish community in Palestine during the first decades of this century suggests that Meir played a crucial role in undermining the women's struggle for equality (Izraeli, 1981). In the early 1920s, the women in the labor movement were deeply divided between 'radical' feminists, who put women's self-transformation above party politics, and the 'loyalists', who demanded women's undivided commitment to the wider interests of the party and its affiliated organisations (the Histadrut). In this internal dispute, Golda Meir, who had been appointed by the male leadership of the party to serve as general secretary of the Women's Labor Council, supported the 'loyalists'. Throughout her career she defined the interests of the party, the Histadrut, and the state as broader and more important than women's interests (Herzog, 1993, p115).

As Table 3 indicates, no women were appointed to ministry offices in the 1960s and the 1970s. Even during Meir's terms as Prime Minister (1969-1974), no female ministers were nominated. The 1988 elections, which resulted in the lowest number of female parliamentarians ever, were also bad for women in the government. Although the government that emerged after the elections was one of the largest in Israel's political history (26 ministers), it did not include even a single woman. This situation improved after the 1992 elections, when Shulamit Aloni was appointed Minister of Education (later to become Minister of Communication) and Ora Namir received the Ministry of Environment (and later, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare). A third woman, Masha Lubelski, was nominated as deputy Minister of Industry.
The latter two are former heads of Na’amat, the women’s labour movement. Yet, it is notable that the female ministers are not leading the women’s campaign in the Knesset. Indeed, Masha Lubelski, the deputy Minister of Industry, who was elected to the Knesset after serving many years as general secretary of Na’amat, is the least active member in this respect. In response to a journalist’s question she said:

That’s right. I am almost not active at all in the sphere [of woman’s status]. I am much more passive in all the activities that regard women’s status. This is because I was elected to be a deputy Minister of Industry and it changed my life.

In the same interview she told the journalist that she had refused an offer to be deputy Minister for Women’s Status (Al-Hasharon, March 3, 1995). It is quite clear that she has found ‘general issues’ more attractive and prestigious, and perhaps more important, than ‘women’s issues’

The dual attitude towards women’s issues is demonstrated clearly by the role of the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Women’s Status. The nomination of a Prime Minister’s Commission on the Status of Women (1978), achieved to a large extent as an outcome of the World Plan of Action adopted at the UN International Women’s Year Conference in Mexico City in 1975, should be understood as recognition of women as a social category that should be addressed and heard. The commission, headed by Member of the Knesset Ora Namir, delivered a detailed report to then-Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, the head of the Likud. The report included 241 recommendations to enhance women’s equal opportunities in all spheres of life. The only issue that could not be decided by the commission was the marital status of women, due to the absence of separation between state and religion and the dominance of Jewish tradition.

The importance of this commission was not only in its recommendations, but rather in the opportunity it gave to women from various spheres of social activity to work together. It represented an affirmation by the society and by women themselves of their identification as a social group. However, the political achievements were very poor. The commission recommended that a state authority to deal with issues related to women’s status be founded, but instead, the position of an Adviser to the Prime Minister on Women’s Status, carrying limited authority and a minimal budget, was established. Most of the recommendations were ignored. Women’s issues were simultaneously co-opted and marginalised.

The Knesset Committees

An important part of the Knesset’s work is done in committees. The seats on committees are divided among parties according to their relative political power. The presence of women on the Knesset committees can be examined from two perspectives: (a) the overall ratio of women’s representation in the committees, and
(b) the distribution of female members among different committees. The latter reflects the extent to which women participate in Knesset activity as equal members and the extent to which they take part in all spheres of political activity.

To what extent are female Knesset members equally distributed among the different committees? The percentage of women in each Knesset and their percentage in each of its committees is presented in Table 4. In order to examine the meaning of women's representation in the various committees, I have adopted the rubric of gendered occupations, according to which a feminine occupation is defined as an occupation where women are over-represented, while the opposite occurs in masculine occupations. A committee in which the percentage of female members exceeded the percentage of female members in the same Knesset is defined in the table as a 'female friendly' (feminine) committee. A committee in which the percentage of female members is lower than their overall percentage in that Knesset is defined as 'female unfriendly' (masculine). The last column in Table 4 shows four types of committees.

The first type includes those committees that have been 'female friendly' (feminine) throughout the different Knessets: the Culture and Education Committee, the Public Services Committee, the Labor Committee, and the Committee for Immigrant Absorption. The most 'female friendly' committee of all is the Culture and Education Committee.

The second type includes those committees that have been 'female unfriendly' (masculine) throughout the years. The most unfriendly of all is the Committee of Foreign Affairs and Security, which is considered the most important committee of the Knesset: "issues of foreign affairs and security have always been the major focus of Israeli political activity" (Weiss, 1977, p198). Being in a situation of prolonged tension and under a constant threat of annihilation (Kimmerling, 1985), Israeli society has developed a militaristic ethos which is also male-dominated (Ben Eliezer, 1995). Consequently, women have difficulty in articulating their position on matters of national concern, because these questions have been defined as issues requiring an expertise that only men have acquired (Chazan, 1989). This domination has also been reflected in the masculine character of the committee, "whose membership became a privilege intended for the select" (Arian, 1985, p278), namely men. The total 'masculinity' of this committee was altered only in 1992, when two women became members. This is another reflection of the 1992 feminist shift, when female members demanded a break of men's monopoly on security issues.

The third type consists of those committees that were 'male friendly' during the majority of Knessets (mostly masculine). These include the Finance Committee, the Economics Committee, and the Committee of Internal Affairs. These are considered important committees, since they are attached to ministries that control large budgets. Arian (1985, p278) claims that the Finance Committee plays an active role in determining government policy, while Weiss (1977, p200) states that:

> the Finance Committee has more power than any of the others. It has certain influence on resource allocation to different sectors...It is hence the target for intensive sectarian lobbying. This is another reason for that committee's popularity.

The fourth type includes those committees that have been both 'female friendly' and 'male friendly' during the different Knessets. These are the Knesset Committee (which controls the Knesset's agenda), the Committee of Law and Justice, and the State Control Committee. These committees are not strictly identified with
either ‘women’s’ or ‘men’s’ domain of activity. Rather, they deal with administration, law and justice - domains of both public and private life alike.

Table 4 Percentage of Women in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) Committees

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The gender bias of the different Knesset committees corresponds to their respective domains of responsibility and it is very similar to the gender-based division of the labour market. The ‘female friendly’ committees deal with issues that are close to ‘feminine’ occupations, while ‘male friendly’ committees to a large extent overlap ‘masculine’ occupations (cf. Cohen, Bechar & Reijman, 1987; Izraeli, 1982). It is also immediately evident that the ‘gender’ of the committee also corresponds to its prestige. Foreign affairs and security, finances, and economy - the most prestigious domains of activity and those most directly connected with the public sphere - are also those dominated by men. Thus, women’s activity in the Knesset is constrained by assumptions about women’s social roles and abilities. Women enter the active political arena of the Knesset but are pushed into ‘feminine' niches.
Especially prestigious is the position of committee chairperson. Formally, the chairperson is elected in the first meeting of each committee, but, in effect, this position is actually determined in advance, through party negotiation. Sometimes a party that is negotiating its entry into the coalition may demand the chair of an important committee instead of the position of a minister or vice-minister (Arian, 1985, p277). Relative to the number of women in the Knesset and considering that there are only ten regular Knesset committees, there has been a large number of committee chairwomen. However, close observation again reflects the segregation of women: they have been most likely to chair the ‘female’ committees (education, welfare, immigration, services, labour, and women’s status).

Before 1992, the only case in which a woman chaired a markedly ‘male’ committee occurred in the Twelfth Knesset. The Labor party granted this position (chairperson of the Economics Committee) to a woman (Shoshana Arbeli-Almozlino) as a gesture of compensation toward its female members, after their strong protest against the absence of women in the government at that time (Ha’aretz, December 22, 1988). While there is no doubt that this appointment was a power achievement for the Labor women, there is also no doubt that the nominated woman was not the women’s choice nor was she women’s-issues oriented.

Although women have served as Knesset vice-chairpersons, they were only part of a large group of vice-chairpersons, and no woman has ever chaired the Knesset itself.

The above analysis indicates that, while women have been included in the Knesset’s routine work, they have been pushed to the margins, to the sphere of activities that are considered as secondary in importance according to the dominant agenda. The feminist Knesset members elected in 1992 are employing two strategies to change this political culture phenomenon. They strive to join the more prestigious committees, apparently accepting and reproducing the dominant perception of order of priorities. At the same time, they also serve in the ‘women-friendly’ committees, expressing a challenge to the meaning ascribed to these social spheres. Their gender politics consists, then, of an effort to incorporate women in the men’s domain as well as changing the social significance of women’s issues.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Representation

In all parties, women are under-represented relative to their proportion in party membership and, moreover, relative to their proportion in the population. There is a gender representation gap between the top-level and the broader party organisations in most of the parties. The analysis shows markedly fewer women in the party cabinets, which determine party policy and ideology, than in the larger assemblies, which fulfil a function of confirming or advising.

There is a clear difference between right- and left-wing parties in terms of the representation of women. In 1986, women comprised 17 per cent of the Labor party convention, but only 10 per cent of the Likud, the largest right-wing party (Herzog, Shamir & Zuckerman, 1989, p7-8). Throughout its history, women have been better represented in the Labor party’s organisations as well as in the local municipalities to which it was elected. Nevertheless, the gap between the number of women in the broad party institutions and those in the party’s top executive persisted in almost all parties until the late 1980s. An exception has been Ratz (The Civil Rights Movement), in which women not only enjoy greater representation, but are also more strongly
represented in the executive institutions than in the broad party organisations; in fact, the party founder-leader is a woman. Ratz also gets a disproportionately high percentage of women’s votes.

Table 5 compares the number of women in the broad institutions (party centre, convention, or council) and the top-executive institutions (party cabinet or secretariat) of different parties, in 1977, 1987, and 1994. In almost all parties, the ratio of women in the broad party institutions has increased, between 50 per cent to 100 per cent since 1977.

Between 1977 and 1987, despite the overall increase in the number of women, the gap between the broad party institutions and the top-executive party institutions remained. Since executives have more political power and influence, these data indicate that women were less likely to wield such power. In 1994, while this gap continued to exist within the religious party, Mafdal, it has almost disappeared in the other parties (Table 5).

Segregation

Most parties have special departments assigned to dealing with women’s affairs. The two major parties, Labor and the right-wing Likud, and some of the minor parties, have ‘women’s divisions’. The National Religious party (Mafdal) does not have such a division, but this function is served by its affiliated religious women’s organisation, ‘Emuna’ (Azmon, 1990).

Women party members are expected to join the women’s division, which might be expected to serve as a power base. In practice, these special departments become a means of restricting women’s activity to separate enclaves. Within these groups, women compete with each other for the role of representing women in the party, the ‘men’s department’. Until recently there has been a tendency among women in the parties to accept their minority status and to believe that only limited numbers can be elected. This belief became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Women tended to compete among themselves for presumably limited space available to them, instead of working together to promote each other and increase the percentage of women.

The women’s leaders act as gatekeepers between the female enclave and the male establishment, allowing only a select few, sponsored by them, to enter the central bodies of the party. Such a role renders them token women, the ‘proof’ of the common belief that there are channels open for ‘capable’ and ‘suitable’ women, who can ‘make it’ if only they wish to. Very often, women’s divisions within the parties are not organisationally autonomous; they are dependent on party funds and controlled by the male party machine. Their leaders are selected and/or confirmed by the men who dominate the party apparatus, and are usually co-opted. Most of the chairwomen of Na’amat, the women’s organisation of the Labor party, arrived at such an impasse. They were elected as women’s organisation representatives, yet, their co-option resulted in most cases in their renunciation of women’s issues.

Structurally, women’s divisions in the parties reflect gender categorisation of women; they focus mainly on the traditional ‘feminine’ spheres of activity: education, health, senior citizens, and so forth. Yet there has been no ideological legitimisation for them to act as an interest group. Women have been expected to prefer the ‘general interest’ of the party over those of women, which are defined by the leading (mainly male) party activists as particularistic.
Table 5 Women representation in Israeli parties' institutions

| Year | Large Party Institution | 1977
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<td>Mapam</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mafdal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Labor</td>
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<td>Herut</td>
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<td>Ratz</td>
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| Year | 1987
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<td>Herut</td>
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Sharfman (1988, p131) for the 1995 data - Parties spokespersons


Mafdal - National Religious party.

Herut (freedom) - A right-wing movement founded by Menachem Begin. In 1965, Herut and the Liberal Party formed the Gahal list; in 1973, it formed the Likud.
Thus paradoxically, instead of being power bases, women’s divisions have become instruments by which women’s public voice and careers are controlled. Such was the case in many parties all over the world. Nevertheless, with the arrival of the ‘second wave’ of the women’s movement, women’s cells within political parties often became re-energised as a political base for feminist activism within the parties (Sawer & Simms, 1993). In Israel, too, some first sprouts in this direction are traceable in the Labor women’s division’s struggle to increase women’s representation at the 1996 elections. A Labor party decision to secure 10 per cent female representation prompted public demonstrations by Labor women demanding 30 per cent representation and threatening to boycott the elections. The result has been a compromise of 15 per cent.

WOMEN’S PARTIES

In the Israeli multi-party system, where approximately 1 per cent (1.5 per cent in 1992) of the vote entitles a party to a seat in the Knesset, it might have been expected that women’s parties, as other interest groups, would mushroom and perhaps even enjoy political success (Herzog, 1987b). A women’s party could serve as a means to bypass the various obstacles women face within ‘regular’ parties. In the 1949 elections (to the first Knesset), there were two women’s lists. One of them, a satellite party of women who had separated from a religious party (Hamizrachi Workers) in protest against lack of representation, failed to reach the required 1 per cent of the votes. The other list, which did gain a seat in the Knesset, was part of WIZO (Women’s International Zionist Organisation), a voluntary women’s association. It benefited from the organisation’s experience and resources. Nevertheless, its activities were considered by the dominant culture as ‘feminine’, marginal, and irrelevant to politics.

Rachel Kagan, a member of the first Knesset (1949-1952) representing the independent WIZO women’s list and initiator of the Women’s Equal Rights Law (1951), denounced the dubious co-operation she received from other women in the Knesset, whose party or fractional loyalty always took preference over their feminism. She was even told by one of them: “Stop talking about women all the time; you are becoming a joke” (Freedman, 1990, p98). In fact, after the elections, WIZO decided that it should refrain from political activity and Rachel Kagan joined the General Zionist party.

Only in 1977 did a women’s list reappear in a national election. Headed by Marcia Freedman, a recent immigrant to Israel from the US, and including former members of the Civil Rights Movement, the list attempted to put feminist issues on the Israeli political agenda (Freedman, 1990; Sharfman, 1988, 1994). The party, and particularly its feminist activists, were defined by the media as ‘extremist’, ‘scandalous’, ‘shameless’, and ‘hysterical’ (Freedman, 1990, p94-95). Under the headline ‘The Battlefront Has Shifted to the Home Front’, a woman journalist wrote that (Freedman, 1990, p50):

\[
\text{Israeli men will soon have to defend a third front. It's not enough that they have to sit in the trenches and on tanks at the borders defending our cities and towns from terrorists. In the future they will also have to defend themselves at home, against their wives.}
\]

This quote not only delegitimises feminist ideas but also sustains the traditional division between gender roles. This division is reinforced during war, which inevitably transforms the image of society into a very male-dominant one.
The insignificant number of votes (6,000) gained by the 1977 women’s party serves as direct evidence of the denial of the legitimacy of a separate political organisation of women in a culture that emphasises such issues as national security and militarism. In such a culture, women’s attempts to organise are easily discarded on the basis of gender, and feminism is depicted with negative and hazardous connotations.

The most recent attempt of a women’s party to get elected, in 1992, was also the most unsuccessful. The party won only 2,866 votes - next to nothing. On the surface, it seemed to have much greater electoral potential than its predecessors. It was established in an atmosphere of emerging awareness among women of their social inequality, and increased political and social activity among women’s organisations (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 1992).

The formation of this party was preceded by debates in various political women’s forums, associated with both the Labor and the Likud parties, over the ways in which women’s representation could be increased. One of the suggestions that was discussed in various women’s forums was to form two satellite parties, Left and Right, so that women could also express their stance regarding the burning question of the Israel-Arab peace process. This suggestion, however, was dropped. The new women’s party that was formed was rejected by both major parties. Right-wing women did not even consider supporting it since the party’s position on the Arab-Israeli conflict was much closer to that of the Left. On the Left, however, a typical reaction was the argument presented by Shulamit Aloni (the woman leader of the Civil Rights Movement): “I don’t believe that this country needs a women’s party... Only those who discriminate psychologically between men and women think they need a women’s party” (Hadashot supplement, 23 April, 1992). She also portrayed a conflict between the general good and the separate organisation of women: “[The establishment of the women’s party] is an impairment of the peace alliance” (Davar, 28 April, 1992). Although since the late 1980s women had become increasingly aware of their social status, this was not enough to alter the dominant discourse. As the main issue in the 1992 elections campaign was the peace process, women’s issues were still considered marginal and less urgent.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Israeli politics are still predominantly a male domain. Although there has been a small increase in the representation of women, the figures are still low. Their entrance to the political arena is shaped by two contradictory forces that operate simultaneously. On the one hand, women are recognised, treated, and organised as a social category. Their role in the collective is determined mainly by their social roles as wives and mothers. When entering politics and within the party, their participation is prescribed in gender terms. They are channelled into ‘women’s divisions’, and into specific activities in special traditional women’s roles. This is part of the inclusive political culture. The tendency to have a ‘token woman’ in most parties, or a quota for women’s representation, reflects this inclusive prescription.

On the other hand, the politics of identity have been restricted by marginalising and denouncing social identity as a basis for political action. If women try to organise within the parties on the basis of gender, they and the issues they represent are marginalised - if not completely delegitimated. On the symbolic-ideological level they are not ‘allowed’ to make demands on behalf of women’s interests.
So-called ‘women’s interests’ are placed low on the public agenda, which sees the public sphere, defined mainly by issues of security and the economy, as the most significant. The private sphere - that is, domestic issues, child care, and health, and their extension in sphere to education and welfare - are of little importance on the public agenda. As women in politics concentrate on these spheres of activity, they are accused of diverting public attention from the ‘real’ problems of society. Moreover, women have difficulties in articulating their position on matters of general concern because these questions come to be defined as issues requiring an expertise that only men have acquired. The prolonged Arab-Israeli conflict glorifies, on the one hand, military experience and macho-like norms in the public sphere, while sanctifying on the other hand, caring, concern and support in the private sphere.

Indeed, it seems that the traditional distinction between the public and the private spheres, and the allocation of men to the former and women to the latter (Pateman, 1988, 1989) still dominates Israeli politics to a large extent. This dominant world view is reproduced through the mechanism of sexual segregation, workings of which were observed in this paper. Sexual segregation is responsible for constructing ‘male’ and ‘female’ domains, which are then structurally embodied within political organisations. In the labour market, this mechanism defines ‘feminine’ occupations, while in politics it generates a whole organisational apparatus of ‘women’s divisions’, ‘women’s interests’, and ‘women’s domains of activities’.

Sexual segregation, within political or labour organisations, is a means to open the public sphere to women while simultaneously preserving the distinction between the ‘women’s world’ and the ‘men’s world’. These ‘worlds’, of course, have no ontological basis: they are social inventions. Incorporating women into the public (political, occupational) sphere excludes them from certain domains while including them in others. These non-discursive as well as discursive practices of exclusion and inclusion reproduce the dichotomous perception of ‘public’ and ‘private’ and presumptions regarding ‘women’s natural place’. Most significantly, such practices eliminate the possibility of free competition between men and women over political resources and positions. Women find themselves competing with other women over the few positions allocated for them within the backyard of politics.

Israeli political culture accommodates this dichotomy comfortably and charges it with a unique character. Paradoxically, the building blocks of both - the inclusive and exclusive forces - stem from the same origins. The prolonged Arab-Israeli conflict, the overriding role of Jewish religion as the social definer of the collective (Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1983), and the centrality of the family (Azmon & Izraeli, 1993, p2-4; Katz & Peres, 1986) as agent of the nation’s solidarity and continuation have created a political culture that aims to incorporate most segments of Jewish society - including women as an important social category. These ideas have been articulated in inclusive laws such as the Women’s Equal Rights Law and compulsory army service for men and women, and in organisational terms, mainly by the existence of separate women’s divisions in the public sphere, in politics as well as in the army.

At the same time, identity politics has been denounced in the name of these very same elements of the political culture. The duration of the Middle East conflict and the consequent dominance of security (Chazan, 1989) has resulted in centrality of the army and its way of thinking on the one hand, and commitment to women’s traditional roles as ‘bearers of the collective’ (Yuval-Davis, 1980, 1987), on the other
hand. The latter has been supported by Israeli familism and Jewish tradition, which perceive women as mothers, wives, and housekeepers who care and nurture. The ethos of familism and militarism penetrates to all spheres of life. In such a political culture, women get contradictory messages: they are recognised as a separate social agent, but at the same time are marginal in the dominant public and political ethos.

As a result of these contradictory forces, women have not succeeded in translating their structural differentiation into political claims and power. Israeli politics have always been characterised by limited numbers of women deputies, who are included in politics as tokens of the democratic idea of minority representation, but who almost never fight openly and independently for their group interests. Although since the late 1970s there have been changes within the political structure as well as growing activity of an emerging feminist movement (Azmon & Izraeli, 1993, p17-19), the political culture with its contradictory messages is still actively shaping the political behaviour and claims of women in politics. The penetration of feminist ideas into Israeli political discourse is constrained within this double message.

Other groups, such as ethnic groups or national groups that try to organise on the basis of social identity face similar difficulties. As with the Sephardim (Jewish ethnic groups of Asian and African origin) in the past, and the Arab minority until now there is structural recognition and ideological delegitimation (Herzog, 1995). Women in politics, like members of other groups based on social identity, find themselves in an ongoing dilemma regarding their political identity. If they choose to be elected as ordinary members of a party and political activists in general terms rather than as ‘women’, they still find themselves categorised by the party members and political bodies as ‘women’ and are channelled into traditional women’s roles. If they choose to organise within the parties on the basis of gender, or as independent parties, they and the issues they represent are marginalised - if not completely delegitimated.

Only in the last decade have women challenged these dominant prescriptions. This challenge has been partly articulated in the formation of new, politically-oriented women’s groups; it has been partly expressed in the attempts of women to enter political ‘male domains’, for example, by radicalising traditional women’s organisations towards political involvement. This latter trend may perhaps account for the moderate but growing number of women in political positions. However, there is still a long way to go before true change is achieved in the political culture and thus in women’s place in politics.

REFERENCES


Democratic Leadership Practices in Australian Feminist Women's Services: The Pursuit of Collectivity and Social Citizenship?

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a small qualitative Australian study of ten coordinators of feminist women's services in terms of what can be learned about their leadership aspirations, styles and practices. The study provides an opportunity to explore women's leadership within one site of women's social participation, feminist women's services. Women's leadership and social participation outside the formal structures of representative democracy are of interest for understanding the diverse nature of social and political participation and women's social citizenship. The author argues for a diversified, interconnected and inclusive understanding of women's leadership and social citizenship.

Women's pursuit of collectivity has a long history, rooted in their families, neighbourhood and community activities, and visible also in their attempts to transform some earlier social and political action organisations (Rowbotham, 1992). In the 1970s, in a number of Western countries, the pursuit of collectivity became politicised within the women's movements in the way women developed their action and community groups. Initially some groups within the women's movement attempted to organise in collectives, as total organisational forms. More recently feminist organisations have employed designated leaders, who nevertheless have attempted to continue democratic and collective practices. This article will discuss the emergence of feminist women's services in Australia and their pursuit of collectivity. It will then report on a small qualitative Australian study of ten coordinators of feminist women's services, in terms of what can be learned about their leadership aspirations, styles and practices.

The study provides an opportunity to explore women's leadership within one site of women's social participation, feminist women's services. The exploration of women's leadership outside the formal structures of representative democracy is useful for understanding the diverse nature of social and political participation and women's citizenship. A substantial amount of discussion about women's citizenship and participation within the state has focused on women's access to and successful election to public political positions. That is, it has been concerned with political citizenship rights (Sawer & Simms, 1993). The extent of women's presence in public office, the time lag between their legislated right to participate and their successful encumbancy, and the personal and public barriers to their pre-selection and election
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have all received attention. Alongside attempts to participate publicly through elected representation, women have been active in making social contributions as citizens through their community action. Social movement theorists have also emphasised women’s protest through trade union and political struggles, and the women’s liberation movement (Burgmann, 1993).

The terrain of women’s leadership to be explored here is within feminist women’s services, which operate at the often uncomfortable intersection of state-funding for services, and the women’s movement commitment to social change for women (Carmody, 1995; Fried, 1994; Ng, 1988, 1991; Reinhelt, 1994; Sawer, 1990; Weeks, 1994). This article focuses on the efforts by women in Australian feminist women’s service organisations to organise their decision-making and work non-hierarchically, collectively and democratically.

FEMINIST WOMEN’S SERVICES

Feminist women’s services are one of a number of sex-specific organisational forums through which women have made a social contribution to the community. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have a long tradition of women-specific activities or ‘women’s business’ (Watson, 1994). The term originally described gathering in women’s circles; now women’s committees and congresses meet to express their views on both women’s and community business. There are a number of organisations which have been developed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and their philosophy expresses commitment to giving voice to women; to working for ‘civil and family’ rights, not only women’s rights; and to linking with indigenous women internationally. In Australia, women’s associations, mainly organised by white women, such as the National Council of Women, formed in 1896, and the Union of Australian Women, in 1950, have actively lobbied for women’s rights in the public sphere. However, it was the women’s liberation movement of the 1970s which initiated many small feminist women’s organisations. These have developed into a network of government-funded, gender-specific women’s services, supplemented by volunteer labour.

Feminist women’s services, as defined here, are run by and for women, and are either independent non-government community organisations, or autonomous units of an auspice agency, usually a large non-government organisation or health centre. The women’s services operate according to an explicitly feminist philosophy about social change. The key philosophical quest underpinning feminist services is linking the personal powerlessness of women and issues in their personal everyday lives, to social, political and economic structures and reinforcing ideologies. Australian feminist women’s services identify a triple purpose. They operate services to individuals and groups of women; take social action initiatives to contribute to policy reform and legislative change; and are extensively involved in community education for women and for the wider community about women’s concerns. The commitment to community education is based on the belief that attitudes and knowledge must change to empower women, and to ensure society is organised to meet women’s needs. The services are staffed by paid and/or unpaid women.

The earliest form of Australian twentieth century women’s liberation movement organisations were multi-purpose centres or houses (Sawer, 1990). They provided a ‘women’s space’ for meetings, forming action and support groups, and running educational or reformist campaigns. By telephone networks, bulletin boards, the provision of meeting space, information telephone lines, newsletters and literature, centres provided a focal point for a network of women and feminist
support and action. Many multi-purpose centres were the base for starting specific focus services in Australia as elsewhere.

While at least one central women's centre existed in all major Australian cities in the mid-seventies, a more widespread Australian development was that of Women's Learning Centres and Networks. In Victoria, Australia, the Neighbourhood House Movement, primarily, but not exclusively run by and for women and their children, developed more widely than feminist women's centres, and received government funding during the 1980s. Neighbourhood Houses are viewed as family and community support services, and not all centres are identified with feminist social change.

Refuges or shelters are a common organisational form of feminist women's services. Elsie, Sydney's first refuge, and Women's Liberation Halfway House in Melbourne, opened in 1974 several months apart. The terms 'refuge' or 'shelter' are variously used in different States. 'Refuge' is secure accommodation within a geographic area which is likely to be safe for women and children leaving a violent situation. Unlike parallel developments in north America, the Australian model has been one of communal living in a typical and unidentified suburban house. The refuges have not developed into mini-welfare agencies, as, for example, have their Canadian counterparts. Australian refuges have housed women and their children who have been escaping violent situations. They have had a high profile in campaigning for changes in law, for priority treatment in public housing, and for increased community and professional education about violence in families.

A third type of service organisation consists of women's telephone information services. Following volunteer lines at women's liberation centres, the first funded telephone line was Women's Information Switchboard in Adelaide, opened in 1978. The rationale for gender-specific telephone services is the extent of women's social isolation in private homes and their double workday if in the paid labour force, reducing access to community resources. The personal nature of requests requires knowledge of women's lives and 'woman-friendly' sensitivity. Women's information services have typically run day-time services; subsequently twenty-four hour crisis lines have been a necessary supplement for domestic violence, sexual assault and refuge referral. Multi-purpose, specific purpose and women's health centres also offer telephone information, support and referral. Over the last two decades Government in all states and territories has become active in direct operation of women's general information telephone services, perhaps a reflection of the benefits of technology becoming a substitute for face-to-face information, support and affordable counselling services.

Working Women's Centres are a generalist community organisation run by and for women in the paid labour force. They exist in most Australian States. Such centres have established multi-lingual newspapers, worked toward equal pay, occupational health and safety, child care and earlier the Working Women's Charter, adopted by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in 1977. Some visit women in factories, having first persuaded union officials that women have unique issues and concerns (Hargreaves, 1994; la Marchesina, 1991).

A 1993 survey indicated that the most typical form (58 per cent) of Australian feminist women's services were those which focus on specific issues (Weeks, 1994). For example, the Council for Single Mothers and their Children, formed in Victoria in 1971, continues to be a support and lobby organisation, with many successes including the introduction of government income support for single mothers. Another example is Children by Choice developed in the same year, in Queensland,
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to support women's wish for access to safe abortion. Subsequently women's legal services, domestic violence resource centres and women's housing shopfronts have been established (Grew, 1995; Petrochesvsky, 1994; West, 1991).

Two types of specific-issue services, developed on a wide scale, are women's health centres and centres against sexual assault. By 1989 there were thirty-eight women's health services opened (Broom, 1991; Stevens, 1995) and this number has subsequently expanded. The 1989 launch of the National Women's Health Policy was a landmark in ensuring women's health services. Challenges have included the 'Proudfoot case' in 1991, which questioned the legitimacy of gender-specific services under anti-discrimination legislation, and State government policies of 'integration' and 'mainstreaming' which continue to thwart the autonomous management of some centres. The response to rape and sexual assault emerged in the early 1970s in Australia. By the late 1990s a network of such centres exist: some attached to hospitals, others retaining more organisational autonomy (Breckenridge & Carmody, 1992; CASA House, Gonzales & Gilmore, 1992; Gilmore, 1994). The 1990s have, however, also been marked by amalgamations of specific-focus women's services under pressure of economic rationalism, and service leaders have felt the associated impact of corporate managerialism.

THE PURSUIT OF COLLECTIVITY

As elsewhere, Australian feminist services have attempted to create women's safe space and women's organisational culture. In particular, they have organised their work according to collective or participatory authority structures internally, and networking and coalition-building mark their inter-organisational relations. The history of white western feminist action has been in groups coming together to create a programme, organise an event or develop a campaign. Observation suggests that often one or two women initiated action, but what was significant was that the group or collective became the 'voice' of the women, subsuming individual identities and keeping the issue in the forefront. While many feminist services originally developed as collectives, it appears by the 1990s that the principles and processes of collectivity can be espoused in a variety of organisational forms. For example: collective as the total organisational form; a wider collective managing a worker collective, which is responsible for day-to-day operations; mixed or hybrid organisational forms, with a management committee, and a worker collective; and coordinated, participatory democratic organisational structure.

The philosophy of collectivity is associated with conscious political action to develop an alternative to the hierarchy of patriarchal relationships. It is 'prefigurative' in trying to put into practice feminist visions of the democratic process in social relationships. The service organisation demonstrates shared leadership, flat or low hierarchy and shared and often rotating tasks. In the tradition of Australian trade unionism, in contrast to North American feminist organisations, they have been active in obtaining adequate award-based working conditions, and a number have been involved in industrial strike action to this end.

Women's attempts to challenge the split between private and public spheres, and to introduce personal, family and community issues into the agendas and practices of political organisations are not new. Rowbotham's (1992) study of the wide range of social movements in which women have been involved, identifies this as a repeated theme. Many nineteenth century women activists saw changes in the household and community as central to women's participation (Rowbotham, 1992, p88). Rowbotham (1992, p130) suggests that a major stream in the revival of
socialism in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth century, and one attractive to women participants, was a focus on 'cultural transformation' and transformation of human relationships. Goldman’s vision of anarchism was a challenge of authority and hierarchy, similar to the pursuit of twentieth century women’s liberationists, and Goldman was critical of the American women’s movement focus on suffrage, just as more recent radical women have been of a liberal feminist focus limited to equal rights. Kollontai’s criticisms of Russian political party hierarchy in early twentieth century socialism reflect a similar range of concerns about democratic human relations and political processes (Rowbotham, 1992, p188).

Phillips’ (1991) exploration of the relationship between gender and sex-differentiated experience and democracy, revisits the classic debates about democratic forms, representative democracy, participatory democracy and civic republicanism. She locates the twentieth century women’s movement activities within the wider interest in participatory community participation, as a popular model of democracy, and the associated interest in workplace democracy. In her view, “The contemporary women’s movement has been almost an experiment in participatory democracy, with a politics of grass-roots activism, a radical critique of authority and a commitment to collective decisions” (Phillips, 1991, p41). Phillips, however, is interested in the possibilities of a form of citizenship which is not gendered, and where the typical correlation between gender and public participation is not gender-linked. She does not emphasise what might be special about women’s social contribution or leadership as an expression of social citizenship.

In summary, then, it appears that women in nineteenth-century political organisations, and in the twentieth-century women’s movement, have challenged the separation of private and public, and tried to introduce attention to the processes as well as the outcomes of political organisation. These attempts to introduce ‘collectivity’, challenge hierarchy and promote more democratic human relationships have been within formal organisations in the public sphere.

When one moves outside these structures to examine women’s social participation and contribution, re-theorising the common threads in women’s activities is subject to epistemological difficulties, as well as the current critique of the quest for common ground among ‘all’ women. Different degrees of formal reward and remuneration, legislative considerations, and formality in relationships exist, within wide variations. It is possible, for example, to understand women’s interest in the ‘collective’ within their tradition of leadership in families and communities, where women have been that largely invisible group, neighbourhood and community workers, doing caring and servicing work for men, children, older and disabled persons, developing the social and emotional processes of support and nourishment. Their social contributions provide the ‘glue’ which melds community cooperative activity, by their attention to the processes of the group and community. Their work creates new forms, initiates and pursues social action, and makes a widely valued, if not well-remunerated, social contribution. I suggest that this type of social contribution is a form of leadership. If this is so, it diversifies the sites of women’s experience and pursuit of collectivity and how we can understand both women’s leadership and their democratic participation.

LEADERSHIP IN WOMEN’S ORGANISATIONS

In the organisational literature there are increasing claims about women’s new approaches to leadership. Metzendorf (1990) identified the leaders in fifteen North
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American feminist organisations as committed to feminist principles, concerned to manage in accordance with them and showing considerable continuity of leadership and length of service. Brown (1992) observes that most organisational theory assumes hierarchy, leaders and followers, yet this was not so for her sample of British women's centres. Women shared and distributed leadership and negotiated their social order, just as the Australian women were doing. Brown argues that leadership is about skilful organising, suggesting that it is more useful to talk about 'leadership acts' than leadership as a personal property or attribute. Fenby (1991), Fried (1994), Reinelt (1994) & Rodriguez (1988) also document aspects of feminist efforts to transcend bureaucracy. An earlier review of themes in theory and research on leadership and their implications for management, by Bargal and Schmid (1989) suggests that leadership within organisational theory is implied in the concept of 'good' management, although often the relationship is not explicit. They note agreement in the organisational literature that, "leadership in organisations plays the key role in their foundation, maintenance and adaptation to changing conditions" (Bargal & Schmid, 1989, p53). The authors identify four themes: the leader as creator of vision and a strategic architect; the leader as the creator and changer of organisational culture; the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers - from which they infer 'the importance of introducing participative democratic leadership styles and more flexible and egalitarian leader-follower roles' (p43); and the strengths of transformational leadership. This is described as involving increasing staff capacities through intellectual stimulation; considering staff as individuals, responding "to their emotional and personal needs' and promoting 'their growth and self-fulfilment" (p44); and charisma, which attracts trust and confidence. The last three themes are partly consistent with the efforts of the Australian feminist coordinators described below.

THE STUDY OF COORDINATORS

Researching the experience of coordinators of feminist women's services was a response to the difficulties some local women described in being 'true' to the feminist commitment to collectivity, while trying to fulfil their funders' requirements. Some saw their task as to develop leadership practices which drew the best lessons from the collective and participatory decision-making which had become a benchmark of feminist structure and process, but also hoped to learn from the 'new' management science. Beyond my feminist commitment, personal interest was sparked by experience with the tensions between feminist ideals and administration. The study involved structured in-depth interviews with ten experienced women from two Australian States who were coordinators of feminist services between 1990 and 1992. The services coordinated by the women were all funded, and included two women's health services, two women's drug and alcohol services, three centres against sexual assault, a refugee, a migrant women's resource centre and a feminist neighbourhood house. A small qualitative study was chosen to identify hypotheses and themes, given the scarcity of data available on both Australian feminist services and their leaders. Findings concerning conception of role, vision of leadership and approach to their work will be discussed here, for the purpose of illustrating the coordinators' pursuit of principles of collectivity.

For purposes of comparison, the core competencies of managers identified by the Victorian Public Service Board will be used as an example of the dominant model of corporate management locally in vogue at the time of this study, and presented in Table 1. The chart of 'Core competencies required by Victorian public service managers' produced by the Public Service Board of Victoria, 1989, in 'A Framework
for Training, Management Education and Development in Victoria’ is reproduced from Donovon and Jackson, 1991, p37. Their own discussion of human service management can be found on p360 ff.

**Table 1 Core Competencies of Managers.**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Managing people</strong></td>
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<td>* Leading with vision</td>
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<td>* Communicating clearly</td>
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<td>* Managing team performance</td>
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<td>* Managing conflict and negotiating</td>
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<td><strong>Delivering client services</strong></td>
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<td>* Setting standards</td>
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<td>* Researching needs</td>
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<td>* Improving services</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Acting strategically</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Responding politically</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Managing stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Achieving results</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Planning, organising and controlling</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Adding value to products and services</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Accepting responsibility</td>
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<td><strong>Creating solutions</strong></td>
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<td>* Making decisions</td>
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<td>* Solving problems</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Acting entrepreneurially</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Managing change and complexity</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Creating options</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Continuing self-development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Assessing needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Initiating self-development</td>
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**WHY THE TITLE CO-ORDINATOR?**

All services in this study identified the job title as ‘coordinator’, rather than manager, to emphasise feminist collective intent, consciousness of the workgroup as central and to dissociate the role from current imagery of directors or managers. One auspice organisation initially wanted a ‘director’, consistent with their corporate management structure, until the founding coordinator persuaded them, with the support of a community committee, that the desired role was indeed ‘coordination’.

25
The women described this as ‘coordinating a complex response to an issue’; ‘giving cohesion to a team, rather than being a driving, directive force’, based on the assumption that the staff team was the driving force; ‘facilitating the process of people working together, and how the operation would pull together, taking account of the diversity of a group of staff’ and ‘being responsible and accountable for day-to-day operations’.

The coordinators emphasised that the staff team was the primary organisational resource. Unlike visions of leadership which put one person out ahead and in front, and in a position to direct, the women coordinators took their role as team coordinator very literally. One summed it up in saying: “My practice was one of working cooperatively, believing that authority does not reside in an individual, but in the team of women as a whole”.

VISIONS AND GOALS

Five main themes were identified in the coordinators’ stated visions and goals. Emphatically first was creating an effective and accessible service for women. Second was creating a service based on a feminist analysis of issues and practices, developed by listening to and learning from the women. For example, according to one coordinator, this perspective related to commitment to:

*analysis and our [own] minds...we tried to do what we thought, rather than what the powerful experts, psychological and psychiatric dominance, implied and suggested. The reduction of sexual assault and violence in the home to a medical/psychological problem for the woman is too limited and inaccurate an analysis of the service issues. We had to overcome the myths and issues about victim-blaming.*

The third shared vision was about developing a service based on feminist organisational principles. According to one, the challenge was:

*empowering the organisation to become a survivor - not a victim of its patriarchal surrounds...Empowerment had to be secured at all levels (of the organisational practice) in order to empower the women victim/survivors who were service users.*

Another stated, “We wanted to develop a feminist service - between collective and management hierarchy”.

A fourth theme emphasised creating rewarding work for women. The challenge was described as “creating a way of working which empowers women to be more active, involved and powerful, particularly women who were not well-resourced to begin with”. As another said: “Because the personal is political, without clear consciousness, women are doomed to reproduce their typical responses to gender power relations in their group and organisational culture”. The challenge then is ‘how to create an empowering and energising workplace, where women can feel and be competent and confident, and avoid burnout’ so prevalent in a hard working community services sector.

The fifth common theme was that the coordinators held service-specific goals as would be expected of any organisational leader or manager. These goals reflected an analysis of the community relationships; staff needs and views; stage of organisational development and potential for either consolidation or expansion.

‘Leading with vision’ is named in the core competencies of ‘managers’. The women coordinators’ visions are notable for their insistence on social purpose;
service effectiveness; feminist analyses and principles of practice; quality working conditions for women and responsiveness to service users and the community.

**CONCEPTION OF ROLE**

To illustrate the extent to which women were preoccupied with collectivity, shared decision-making, and the staff team, it is instructive to contrast the language of the management model with the way women named their guiding principles and practices. While the former assumes large organisations, there is no suggestion that smaller work units might ‘manage’ any differently. ‘Manager’ implies being a leader out in front, conveying an impression of doing to, rather than working with. Active verbs, implying different approaches to leadership, are used in both the management chart and the women’s words - the managers are required to initiate, lead, make, control, set; the women speak of facilitating, clarifying, supporting, focusing, learning, sharing.

In the emerging approach of feminist or women-centred democratic coordination the eight recurring processes identified in their conception of the role are those described in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Feminist Conception of Leadership Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* facilitating the process of people working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* focusing a complex response to an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* taking account of diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* mediating and negotiating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* giving cohesion to a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* being responsible and accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* working cooperatively</td>
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</table>

Working cooperatively was based on the belief that authority resides with the group (including staff and committee), and ensuring service user involvement in service development. The concern with valuing diversity recurring in the women’s responses is absent in the managerial model.

**WORKING WITH THE TEAM**

In contrast to the first managerial task of ‘managing people’ (see Table 1), the women spoke of working with the team. In spite of the ideal of shared leadership, the coordinators described particular responsibility for organisational processes. Their way of ‘leading with vision’ included working with staff and service users to spell out and articulate women’s needs and issues; challenging powerlessness and supporting women’s personal and social power. They valued open communication processes, honesty and information-sharing.

The women coordinators’ way of ‘managing team performance’ included valuing individuals, working out constructive relationships and providing support and feedback. Feedback ‘creates a more honest atmosphere’, according to one woman. She added that it was hard to learn to be direct with staff in areas where they were not performing well - particularly hard to criticise the performance of peers for an inside appointed coordinator. Her approach was “This is my observation - what do you think?”
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The coordinators' approach to the managers' role of 'managing conflict and negotiating' was to name and clarify power differences and maximise participation. The women also spoke about their mediating and negotiating roles and emphasised talking things through, reflective of participatory democracy. Women spoke about often feeling like 'the meat in the sandwich' or a 'go-between'. Women's interconnectedness, and the extent to which they/we personalise was identified as an issue. It was also viewed as a strength, in that women share the personal, and so the personal level of interaction becomes part of the processes within the group, to be worked through. Being the go-between included liaising between committee of management and workers, and any sub-groups which developed among the workers. In one service, this became polarised for a period between women with professional qualifications and others with the experience of addiction. In one organisational crisis, the relevant coordinator felt that she was made a scapegoat when, in her view, staff and committee members were experiencing 'burn-out'.

Coordinators were responsible as managers for industrial issues. The solutions were found in acknowledging conflict resolution, mediation and liaison elements in the role. Taking time out to analyse what was going on was helpful. Taking the dilemma as a personal burden was when it wore heavily. The coordinator is a 'groupworker', according to one woman, and this is both tiring and critical for personal support. Techniques such as checking how everyone is at the end of meetings by asking each member to comment in turn, writing down and sharing activities, were used. Another, who saw her overall experience as positive, decided to move on because she 'did not want any more process', and felt the staff group expected a greater time investment than she, as a self-described 'task oriented person', wanted.

Working with the team was time-consuming and sometimes difficult. Issues around job differentiation and clarity of roles were identified at particular times within the service development in some organisations. A common concern was how to delegate 'better', not wanting to overload others, inclined to take on too much oneself. The issue of supporting someone in the process of doing something, to the extent that 'you might as well have done it yourself'. But doing it oneself might be more effective in the short term, then in the longer term 'you have to do it again because someone else does not have the knowledge or experience'. Tensions were identified between wanting shared responsibilities and the pay differential between coordinator and staff in two services. At one point in one service, where workers were very low paid and feeling 'burned out', they reminded the coordinator she was paid more, 'so you do it'. The dominant model of delegation tends to be an individualistic one, about putting boundaries around oneself and passing on to others the work which comes in. This raises a dilemma for women who are group-oriented because they notice when others are also overloaded. The preferable solution, then, is to analyse the workload in relation to resources and remuneration, and reframe the 'problem' as one of the fair organisation of work, hence the women's language of clarifying roles and responsibilities. Another tension identified as in conflict with managerialist expectations was submerging women's talents into the group or collective; that is, 'anonymous performance'. Some women felt that coordinators empower and give ideas, may work extremely hard, and take more work home than the others, take the 'hard' responsibility, but share the credit.

Without structures and processes for decision-making, one woman commented that the coordinator is 'set-up' to take the decisions, as well as carrying too much of the service responsibility. Participation in the decisions means that staff support and enact that decision, and the coordinators found it useful to document the service model and policies for practice, to inform new staff members, so they, too, 'own' the service practices. For some women this included a persistent effort
toward improving the working conditions. Developing relevant structures and processes also depended on a capacity to maintain an overview of the service, which was not always easy. For example: "Even when keeping on the roster, it is easy to become distanced from the day-to-day crises and pressures of the staff - and yet sometimes it seemed they became too caught up with the trees to see the forest".

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE SERVICE

In contrast to 'delivering client services' (see Table 1) the women described 'developing and maintaining an effective service'. Space permits only a brief account here of the ways in which the coordinators put their feminist principles and purposes into practice. However, to convey the concern with democratic and shared leadership reflected in the different languages, I will summarise some other elements of the contrasting approaches. The managerial model sees 'setting standards', 'researching needs' and 'improving services' as key practices in 'delivering client services' (Table 1). The women coordinators emphasised working out ethical, excellent and professional policies and practices with the team. They too were interested in research. For them, this meant listening and being accountable to service users and documenting and disseminating their needs and issues.

While, for the entrepreneurial manager, 'acting strategically' means 'responding politically' and 'managing stakeholders', the women coordinators were preoccupied with focusing on purposes (of political and social change as well as service) and on empowering women by a sound analysis of context and issues. Rather than 'managing other stakeholders', their inter-organisational relations were developed by maintaining an open network of information, networking and coalition building, dialogue and negotiated collaboration.

For the women, 'achieving results' was about reaching their goals through structured processes, ensuring the relevance and usefulness of goals, being accountable to service users and sharing responsibility. Instead of 'creating solutions' by 'making decisions' and 'solving problems', the women emphasised reflective practice; shared decision-making; and working out with the team the appropriate responses and practices. The key elements in the women's approach to 'acting entrepreneurially' were analysis, mutual support, and developing sound work practices to meet the demands; sharing ideas and information for discussion; and obtaining resources for industrially sound work practices. Instead of 'continuing self-development', as suggested in the management model, the women's approach was to take account of developing both self and team, by reflection and review processes, self-care, giving and receiving support and mutual learning processes.

Whether the women coordinators' approaches were different 'in fact' to those of experienced leaders who call themselves 'good managers' is a topic for further exploration, and comparative study between work practices in different types of organisations. However, for the purposes here perhaps enough has been said to convey that women were seriously engaged in organisational leadership, attempting to honour and develop a feminist, democratic pursuit of collectivity. They named their issues with care, in the tradition of re-theorising women's experiences. One striking theme in the coordinators' descriptions was their conception of staff as the primary organisational resource. As a researcher-listener, another striking observation was the dominance of commitment, the humility and passion for doing their best for their sisters, consistent with Metzendorf's (1990) and Hyde's (1994) American observations. Far from 'selling out', as some feared, it emerged that the women coordinators in feminist organisations, just like the collectives before them,
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were breaking new organisational development ground in initiating new practices, processes and structures which were women-friendly.

LEADERSHIP IN FEMINIST WOMEN'S SERVICES AS AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP?

This article has attempted to link women's leadership with their pursuit of collectivity which has been such a distinctive form of women's social contribution across the boundaries of the traditional 'public/private' dichotomy, in the community and in organisations. It illustrates women's social and political participation and their sometimes invisible and unaccounted social citizenship.

Feminist scholarship has been concerned with whether or not a universal, gender-neutral conception of citizenship follows from equal rights, or, alternatively, has questioned the nature and relevance of gender differences in any conception of citizenship applicable to women. If gender differences are to be considered in conceptions of citizenship, then on what grounds should such differences be ascribed? The earliest and most obvious difference identified concerned women's reproductive capacities, subsequently called 'maternalism'. The relevance of the tradition of women's public social service, sometimes paid, sometimes not, has been identified as a possible basis for social citizenship (Sarvasy, 1994). Social and community service raises questions about the location of such citizenship activity; whether contribution in the community is of less or equal importance to that in the formal structures of the state. Phillips (1991, p7) argues for sex-differentiated participation as transitional affirmative action “for I do not want a world in which women have to speak continuously as women - or men are left to speak as men”. However, the gendered nature of humanity makes it hard to imagine how women cannot speak as women, nor men as men. Some authors, such as Young (1990), emphasise the marginalising aspects of gender, class and race, and see valuing cultural diversity as essential for democratic participation.

Assuming the social nature of both gender and leadership, there is no biological likelihood of women leading differently to men, nor similarly as a sex: common social purposes are more likely as the explanatory ground. The theoretical and practical importance of research on women's leadership lies in diversifying our understanding of women's social purposes, contribution and citizenship.

If account is taken of women's experiences of social contribution, such as those of women's leadership in feminist women's organisations briefly described above, the concepts of leadership, social and political participation, and social citizenship within the state can perhaps be understood as diversified, interconnected, and inclusive. 'Diversified' signifies the variety of models of leadership in which social purposes and principles of practice lead to different social processes, not only different end-goals. 'Inter-connected' suggests the way in which women's personal experiences and pursuit of collectivity is expressed in their social and political participation. An 'inclusive', rather than exclusive, approach to understanding social citizenship is suggested. This is in contrast to the rigid academic categories which separate organisational studies from political action theory, and, in so doing, fail to recognise or value women's social participation and contribution as expressions of their social citizenship.

Power can be consciously used in different ways, and to serve different people and purposes, as the coordinators and participants in feminist women's services have demonstrated power 'for women and children' and power 'to do' rather than power 'over'. Feminist practice and theory suggest that monolithic
models of leadership, whether political or organisational, are anachronistic, and some women appear to be demonstrating an emerging democratic approach to leadership and social citizenship, embodying principles of collectivity.

FOOTNOTES

1 The language of 'services' is used to reflect colloquial usage. The term 'women's organising' used in Canada refers, in Australia, to community action, as does 'activism', not to organising services.

2 The activities of feminist women's services have been documented in a large number of ephemeral publications and women's movement magazines and journals. The source of specific information used here rests on a national survey of feminist women's services undertaken in 1993 and written up in greater detail in Weeks, 1994, Chapter 3.

3 It is my assumption that women have diverse class and cultural experience and that feminist women's services work daily with this reality, given that about a quarter of the population was born in a non-English speaking country or had at least one parent born in a non-English speaking country.

4 I acknowledge the knowledge and experience of Kate Gilmore, Lyn Walker, Anta Carroll, Ronnie Egan, Phil Slattery and four other women who preferred to remain anonymous, in sharing their knowledge about coordination and leadership. The women were from services in two Australian States, and their experience included women's refuge work; community development; education; counselling; group work; being a refugee; being addicted. They had worked a total of 116 years in generalist services, an average of 11; and 68 years in women's services, an average of 7, so were very experienced workers. Five are mothers, one is also a grandmother, and five are child-free. All are respected in the women's networks for their local social contributions - and several are or have been on important advisory committees at local, State and National levels. The differences the women brought to the discussions were different length of years of experience, especially in coordination, which ranged from 16 months to over twenty years; different service issues; different ages and cultural backgrounds and different degrees of confidence and consciousness about their visions and strengths.

5 A more lengthy discussion of the organisational practices of Australian feminist women's services is available in Weeks, 1994, Chapter 7.

REFERENCES


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Do Political Women Represent Women? Views of Discrimination and Representation Among Female and Male Mayors in Québec

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University of Ottawa, Canada

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article was to investigate how Québec female and male mayors perceive the role of women in politics. The basic hypothesis was that gender does influence opinions about the experience of women in local politics. As predicted, female mayors are more likely than their male colleagues to support a feminist point of view. This general conclusion should be qualified, however, since women and men are not systematically polarised on each of the topics, and female mayors differ among themselves.

INTRODUCTION

It has been suggested that municipal politics facilitate the political participation of women. In effect, being locally-based, this level of government tends to favour the harmonisation of public and private obligations, notably by reducing distances between home and work and absences from the family (Lovenduski, 1986, p215). Moreover, questions of interest for municipal government may be more compatible with what have been traditionally defined as feminine roles, responsibilities, and activities (Andrew, 1984, 1991). Finally, municipal office, being a less competitive and a less desirable level of power for men, should be more winnable for women (Trimble, 1995; Vickers, 1978).

There is, however, no statistical evidence to support the hypothesis that municipal politics encourages the political involvement of women. In Québec, in 1995, there were more female members of the National Assembly (MNAs) than female mayors (18.4 per cent vs 9.0 per cent respectively), and only 19.0 per cent of

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local councillors were women. These intriguing numbers suggest that factors are still working to discriminate against women interested in participating in local politics, factors which, in turn, might influence the role of women in municipal politics.

This article investigates how Québec female and male mayors perceive the role of women in politics. More specifically, I compare the opinions of female and male mayors about the experience of women in municipal politics by raising the following questions: 1. How do Québec female and male mayors explain the low numbers of women elected to office in municipalities? 2. Do they perceive discrimination against women in local politics? 3. Do female mayors consider themselves representatives of the female population? The basic underlying hypothesis is that gender influences female and male mayors' opinions about the experience of women in local politics; more specifically, women are more likely than men to support a feminist standpoint. In conclusion, I consider some implications of this research for the future of women in Québec municipal politics.

SOURCE OF DATA

The data presented here were drawn from a larger study of Québec female and male mayors. This research was concerned with the similarities and differences between women and men mayors on several points, including perceptions of discrimination against women in politics and the role of women in representing the female population.

The methodology used in the present study was both quantitative and qualitative. On the quantitative side, a self-administered questionnaire was mailed to the population of 116 female and a representative sample of 415 male mayors serving in City Halls in the province of Québec in September 1993. The questionnaire asked for individual characteristics, and addressed political activism and experiences, motivations, goals, and opinions on women in politics - this last topic being analysed in this article. The total response rate was 63.5 per cent - 75.9 per cent for women mayors (88 out of 116) and 60 per cent for men (249 out of 415). The qualitative methodology involved semi-structured personal interviews ranging from one to two hours in length were conducted with 36 female and 34 male mayors from across Québec during the summer of 1994. All but one of these interviews were recorded. The goal of these interviews was to elaborate on responses given in the questionnaires. They consisted of open-ended questions on several topics, notably the presence of women in politics (including questions on the perception of sex discrimination, the political representation of women's interests, and the perception of gender differences on the municipal scene). This article is concerned only with this last topic.

WHY ARE THERE SO FEW WOMEN IN POLITICS?

When this study was begun in 1993, less than 10 per cent of Québec mayors and less than 20 per cent of municipal council members were women. Many reasons have been put forward to explain the under-representation of women in political office. In general, they fall into one of two categories: blame-the-victim or blame-the-system.

On the one hand, explanations which blame the victim attribute causality to personal deficiencies of women; they find in women themselves the reason for their exclusion from the political scene. Consequently, this alternative sees as legitimate the under-representation of women in politics since it is believed that they could alter their political status if they followed the rules of the game. Here, for example,
women are seen as not being interested in politics or as being frightened by politics because of criticism from both the population and their male counterparts. They are perceived as lacking the self-confidence and ambition necessary for electoral involvement. In sum, this approach views women themselves as responsible for their low numbers in the corridors of power, ignoring socio-political factors which influence women’s opportunities for political activism.

On the other hand, explanations which blame the system take into account the private-public split, recognising that this constitutes a barrier to women interested in politics. This approach considers both social (specifically, socialisation and gender roles) and political factors to explain the rarity of women’s presence in politics. In other words, the blame-the-system approach attributes to structural, situational and cultural arrangements the gap between women’s and men’s numerical representation in politics. Emphasising both socialisation and gender roles, it postulates that cultural norms determine the identity and expectations of females and males through childhood and adult role socialisation. Throughout their lives, women are associated with the private sphere and are responsible for domestic chores and child-rearing while men become identified with the public sphere, as full citizens. This is what Sapiro (1993, p73) calls privatisation: “the concept that exposes the domination of women’s lives by private roles, concerns, and values.” Since all important political figures are men, and values which prevail in politics are masculine (e.g. rationality, independence, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and so on), politics is seen as a man’s world. In sum, women are discouraged from being interested and participating in public affairs because the political world is foreign to their socialisation; they do not envisage political involvement as a possible orientation for themselves.

Gender roles reinforce this pattern by limiting women’s opportunities for intensive social action; they prevent women from being qualified for an informal ‘pool of eligibles’ from which political elites are selected. Women are handicapped by family obligations which limit the time available to acquire the personal and social resources associated with political participation, such as high levels of education, prestigious occupational status, or a supportive social and fundraising network.

The blame-the-system approach also focuses on the fact that the political environment is more favourable to men than to women (Carroll, 1994). Barriers in the political opportunity structure refer to the rules of the game and prejudices against women in politics. It has been suggested that women’s access to political institutions is limited by a ruling class (of men) desirous of preserving its hegemony. The male political elite may maintain its power by using partisan and electoral rules in a way unfavourable to female candidates. In federal and provincial politics, for example, women are more likely to run for minor parties than men (Brodie, 1985; Erickson, 1993; Tremblay, 1995a). As aspirant-candidates for a major party, they are more likely to be poorly funded and disproportionately run for unwinnable seats (Bashevkin, 1993; Brodie, 1991; Maillé, 1990).

Our survey found that men were more inclined than women to place the blame for under-representation on women themselves. The interviews with Québec female and male mayors were quite revealing in this respect. Table 1 shows statistically significant differences between women’s and men’s responses: male mayors were more likely than their female colleagues to explain the under-representation of women in municipal politics by the blame-the-victim approach.
Table 1 Reasons to Explain Why There Are So Few Women in Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>Female Mayors</th>
<th>Male Mayors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blame-the-System</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame-the-Victim</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other responses*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
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$\chi^2$: 4.420, df: 1, $p < .05$

* Including both 'don’t know' and no response.
** The chi square test was performed excluding the 'other responses' category.

Table 1 also reveals that a clear majority of women (that is, three out of four compared to one in two for men) believed that socio-political factors (socialisation and gender roles, the rules of the political game, and so on) were responsible for the low number of women in municipal politics. Following is a review of some of the most common arguments which were put forward for each of these approaches.

The argument most frequently referred to in the blame-the-victim discourse was that women are frightened by politics. Among other things, women may be intimidated by the criticisms of the electorate and their male counterparts concerning, notably, their way of conceptualising problems and managing municipal government as well as their political priorities and styles. According to certain female and male mayors, women may be uneasy about lacking the appropriate knowledge and experience to put forward their candidacy. Finally, some interviewees suggested that women with young children may be afraid of being perceived as bad mothers who are neglecting their primary responsibilities. Such a fear shows that the private/public split is still alive and well and should be considered as an obstacle hindering women's access to the political scene.

In contrast, the political environment is a central point of the blame-the-system approach whose arguments can be divided into three categories - that is, structural, situational and cultural arguments. Structural argument points to the socialisation of women which, because of its privatised nature, does not facilitate the development of interests, abilities and competencies generally associated with political involvement. For example, since socialisation is still a process through which women are associated with the private realm as the principal caretakers of emotional life, it does not encourage them to envisage politics as a legitimate activity. In addition, women may lack female politicians as role models. Closely related to the structural explanation is the situational argument which suggests that female gender roles in the family may impede women from being part of the pool of eligibles from which candidates for public office are drawn. In this respect, it is argued that the under-representation of women in politics could be due to their feeble presence in business and the professional occupations (time-flexible jobs) from which most political elites are recruited. Moreover, women having a more precarious financial status than men may be constrained by lacking the monetary resources important for those who aspire to become political leaders. The last category of arguments, cultural arguments, concerns popular prejudices against women public officials. Here, it was suggested that the perception of gender discrimination discourages would-be female candidates from running for municipal office.
IS POLITICS STILL AN INHOSPITABLE WORLD FOR WOMEN?

Extensive literature shows that women in politics are still suffering from discrimination (for a recent statement of this assumption in Canada, see Sharpe, 1994). The same is true in the province of Québec. In 1990-1991, Tremblay and Pelletier (1995, p87) surveyed Québec female and male legislators in the National Assembly and in the House of Commons. They concluded that, even if the relations between women and men on the political scene are characterised by partnership, paternalism and sexism still exist. The interviews with female and male mayors brought me to suggest that this observation holds true for municipal politics; paternalism and sexism are also present in female-male relations at this level.

According to Tremblay and Pelletier (1995), the paternalist model of relations between women and men consists of protectionist attitudes and behaviour of males towards their female colleagues which take on at least two forms. The first type of paternalist behaviour takes the form of 'chivalrous gallantry', whereby men exhibit courtesy towards women: opening doors, pulling out chairs, helping them with their coats, and so on. Going beyond strict politeness or rules of etiquette, men’s courteous attentions towards their female colleagues reveal power relations between the sexes. From a symbolic viewpoint, it implies the subordination of women to men (Guillaumin, 1978a, 1978b). Akin to father-daughter relationships, the second form of paternalist model is based on age and men’s longer experience in politics. Since women have arrived more recently on the political scene, men act as their guides and protectors against the vicissitudes of political life. They advise them, for example, on how to behave in politics or reassure those who lack self-confidence about their capabilities. Because of their longer presence in politics, men have the moral and natural authority to care for women.

Gender inequalities characterise the sexist model of relations between women and men in politics. They consist of a system of gender relations in which men, consciously or not, behave unfavourably towards women. Men’s sexist attitudes may be expressed explicitly in words and gestures, or they may be implicit in their cultural values. Words and gestures are clear and obvious vehicles of sexism. They express incredulity, mistrust, denigration, contempt, and so on. Empirical indicators might include, for example, making jokes about women, ridiculing their reactions, doubting their capacities, assigning them powerless roles and functions or menial responsibilities, and so on. The expression of cultural values, on the other hand, may constitute a more subtle vehicle of sexism. It is often the case that women in politics are ‘privatised’ and their participation in public life is viewed as a function of their private roles, concerns, and values. In other words, political women are perceived primarily as wives, mothers and home makers instead of as parliamentarians. Sexist attitudes, whether they are manifested in words or gestures or, in a more general way, in the expression of cultural values, not only denigrate women’s ideas and identity, but influence women’s self-esteem.

Our survey found a clear gender gap between male and female mayors concerning the reasons for the under-representation of women in politics. As shown in Table 2, a clear majority of female mayors surveyed in September 1993 (48 out of 79, or 60.8 per cent) believed that political women still suffered from discrimination, compared with 7.2 per cent of men (17 out of 236). In fact, almost all of the men (92 per cent, or 219 out of 236) thought that women in politics did not suffer from discrimination. During the summer of 1994, we interviewed a sample of these same female and male mayors on their perception of sex discrimination in politics in order to better understand the responses they had given some months before. Table 2
showed that, while a statistically significant difference along gender lines persists, differences between women’s and men’s opinions were less polarised: eighty-three per cent of female mayors (30 out of 36) compared with twenty-one per cent of their male counterparts (7 out of 34) believed that there was discrimination against women in municipal politics. The difference between men’s survey and interview responses on whether they perceived discrimination against women demonstrates the importance of performing triangulation in social science research. In effect, if the questionnaire is an effective tool in identifying general tendencies (notably by means of statistics), interviews provide broad and in-depth understanding of phenomena. Open-ended questions, in particular, encourage nuanced responses and more subtlety of detail.

Table 2 Perception of Discrimination against Women in Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>1994</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Mayors</td>
<td>Male Mayors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is discrimination against women</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no discrimination against women</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other responses*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2: 103.661, \text{df: 1, } p < .0001 \]

\[ \chi^2: 23.915, \text{df: 1, } p < .0001 \]

* Including both ‘don’t know’ and no response.

** The chi square test was performed excluding the ‘other responses’ category.

How do women in municipal politics perceive discrimination against them? In other words, can models of paternalistic and sexist relations between women and men give us insight into the treatment of women in politics? As with Québec women parliamentarians in the House of Commons and the National Assembly, female mayors are confronted with both paternalism and sexism. For example, some men think of themselves as responsible for protecting women against the risks of political life. Others express compassion for women and incredulity about their projects for the municipality which are viewed as unrealistic because women are politically inexperienced. According to the sexist model, women are discriminated against through words and gestures such as sexist jokes and anecdotes, or pejorative opinions concerning their political style of management. Women are privatised as well, since some citizens, both men and women, believe that City Hall is not a woman’s place. Other people feel that the political integration of women in municipal politics is acceptable only inasmuch as it is a function of their private roles as wives, mothers and home makers.

Thus, since women in politics are conscious of discrimination against them and perceive their under-representation in political life as illegitimate, and because they are still considered to be privatised, one might hypothesise that they will be likely to represent women - i.e., to speak for women’s interests.³

DO FEMALE MAYORS REPRESENT WOMEN?

The recent growth of the number of women in government institutions has called into question the role of political women in representing the female population. Do
women in public office see themselves as representatives of women’s interests? How do men react to the idea that political women may have a particular responsibility towards the female population? In order to examine these questions, the concepts of ‘women as an interest-based group’, ‘feminist consciousness of women in public office’ and ‘representation’ must be defined.

In respect of women as an interest-based group, one of the consequences of the second wave women’s movement that emerged during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s has been to demonstrate that women have policy interests distinct from those of men. According to Sapiro (1981), since women’s and men’s social status differ, and the former face many problems due to sexist social processes and relations, objectively women and men have different interests. Women share a common goal of improving their everyday living conditions, although in different ways according to their class, race, sexual orientation, and so on.

In addition, many feminist political scientists have demonstrated that the political process is not gender neutral, but in fact contributes to making women a disadvantaged social group (see for example Andrew, 1984; Brodie, forthcoming; Burt, 1988; Gotell, forthcoming). Among other things, they have stressed that women’s issues have been largely overlooked in male-dominated political agendas, and that women’s perspectives have been left out in structuring and evaluating public policies. In the same vein, feminist academics have questioned the supposed neutrality of the welfare state, one effect of which has been to shift woman’s dependency from her husband to the state (as workers and/or as beneficiaries of social programmes). As well, it is worth noting that the role of women in creating the welfare state has been largely ignored. Feminist research has also shown how the state benefits from the division of labour along gender lines, and relies on the underpaid work and free domestic chores done by women for its maintenance and reproduction.

In sum, one feminist argument is to say that women constitute an interest-based group because they share the common concern of improving their day-to-day living conditions, and because, collectively, they are disadvantaged by a gender-oriented political process. Thus, some feminists argue, getting more women elected could be seen as a strategy likely to improve the daily living conditions of the female population. If, however, the mere presence of women in public office appears to be an essential condition for women’s representation, it is not a sufficient one; elected women must be feminists.

I now examine the reasons women in public office might be expected to exhibit feminist consciousness. In her well-known and now classic study entitled Gender Politics, Klein (1984, p6) suggests that although support for feminism derives from a variety of sources, “(w)omen who experience non-traditional roles are expected to develop feminist consciousness and support feminist politics”. Thus, since female mayors find themselves in a non-traditional role for women and, as established earlier, still suffer from sexist biases in politics, they are likely to support feminism which, at least in its liberal wing, pleads for gender-balanced political representation. In addition, Klein argues, women and men take different paths to feminism. Women sympathise with feminism through personal experience, while men’s feminist sympathy stems from liberal philosophy. Therefore, the former are more likely to become feminists in the broadest sense and, consequently, more likely to represent women.

I now move forward from the arguments concerning women as an interest-based group and concerning feminist consciousness to consider the concept of
representation. It is assumed on the basis of the former arguments that female office holders will represent other women, speak for women's interests, and make a difference in determining both the political agenda and public policy. Thus, demands for increasing the number of women in office go beyond the symbolic concept of representation to embrace substantive concerns as well. In this regard, Pitkin (1967) has distinguished two types of political representation, that is, descriptive and substantive representation. The former is based on who the public official 'is', whereas the latter is based on what she or he 'does'. On the one hand, one speaks of descriptive representation when a representative has similar characteristics to those represented. Accordingly, from a descriptive viewpoint, only women can 'stand for' women. On the other hand, 'substantive' representation implies that a public official shares opinions and concerns with those she or he represents. In this sense, a male representative can 'act for' women if he himself is concerned with issues related to women. To illustrate this, in a study of female and male candidates in the Parti Québecois, New Democratic and Liberal parties in the 1989 Quebec general election, it was observed that male NDP candidates were more likely to act for women than female Liberal candidates (Tremblay, 1993, 1995b). This result parallels findings in English-Canada (Bashevkin, 1985).

Previous research on gender and political representation in Québec has shown that a majority of political women consider themselves to be representatives of the female population; at least two-thirds of female candidates in the 1989 Québec general election, and about the same proportion of female MNAs and MPs in 1990-1991 felt that they represented women (Tremblay, 1992; Tremblay & Pelletier, 1995, p139).

This study found, however, that female mayors did not see themselves as women's representatives. The results in Table 3 indicate that the Québec female mayors surveyed in the summer of 1994 were overwhelmingly reluctant to see themselves as representatives of the female population: only 10 out of 35 (28.6 per cent) admitted representing women. These results differed clearly from those previously reported concerning Québec female provincial and federal political elites as well as those found in studies of American (see notably Burrell, 1994; Mezey, 1980; Reingold, 1992; Thomas, 1994; Thompson, 1980), Swedish (Hedlund, 1988) and Australian (Sawer & Simms, 1984) women in politics. In addition, Table 3 indicates slightly different patterns for women and men. In other words, in contrast with the two previously discussed topics which displayed significant gender differences, here a clear majority of both female and male mayors disagree with the idea that women office holders may have a special responsibility to represent female citizens. However, it should be mentioned that women are more likely than their male colleagues to accept such a role for women in politics (i.e. 28.6 as against 13.8 per cent).

Table 3 Opinions on the Idea of Representing Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Female Mayors</th>
<th>Male Mayors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree with the idea of representing women</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree with the idea of representing women</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>*35</td>
<td>*29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to scheduling problems, we were unable to ask one female and five male mayors this question.
I now review the key arguments put forward by female and male mayors regarding women's political representation.

The argument most frequently used against the idea of representing women is that political representation should be general - that is to say, it should be conceptualised from a universal point of view that would transcend any specific differences in group affiliation, situation, and interests. However, as Young (1989) has argued, the notion of universality is itself gender based since it is associated with the public realm, traditionally the men's sphere (of course, conversely, particularity is identified with the private realm, the women's domain). Universality implies that laws and rules are blind to personal and group differences, that they mean the same for all and apply to everyone in the same way. But, since women have been traditionally excluded from the public sphere where men's values prevail, thinking of political representation in terms of universality "imposes a homogeneity that suppresses group differences in the public and in practice forces the formerly excluded groups to be measured according to norms derived and defined by privileged groups". (Young, 1989, p255). Similarly, Phillips (1992, p89) claims that "[o]ur societies are not homogeneous: they are structured around systemic inequalities and recurrent exclusions. We exist not just as abstract citizens, but also as members of variously privileged or disadvantaged groups". In sum, when evaluated from a woman's perspective, conceptualising political representation as generality means not only ignoring women's specificities, needs and interests, but also entails judging women according to standards which take men as the human norm.

Inversely, some female and male mayors agreed with the idea of representing women. The most frequently cited argument was that women share a minority social status and a common vision that might serve as a catalyst for changing the content and direction of the political agenda and public policy. This, clearly, represents a feminist standpoint in the political arena.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This survey points towards a number of empirical and theoretical conclusions, each of which may improve our understanding of the role of women in municipal politics. This article began by suggesting that female mayors were more likely than their male colleagues to be feminist sympathisers. The results of the study obliged me to qualify this hypothesis. As might have been expected, female mayors were more likely than their male colleagues to support a feminist standpoint: in contrast with men, a clear majority of women both explained the under-representation of their sex in municipal politics by the blame-the-system approach, and were obviously conscious of sexist discrimination against them. In addition, although a gender gap is less evident on the question of women's political representation, here again a larger proportion of female than male mayors (while not a majority) endorsed the idea of a particular mandate of political women concerning the female population. How might the above findings be interpreted?

Firstly, how can one explain the clear gender gaps in rationales concerning women's under-representation in politics and discrimination against them? There are at least two possible explanations. The first takes into account the fact that female mayors are better-educated than their male counterparts (65.9 per cent of women have a college or university degree, compared with 39.7 per cent of male mayors); gender differences in responses may simply reflect differences in values acquired through education. This explanation should be explored in future work. The second
explanation reminds us of the aforementioned assertion of Klein (1984, p116) that women’s feminist attitudes are derived from their social position; the day-to-day experiences of a non-traditional lifestyle - and the discrimination such a lifestyle implies for women - lead them to reject traditionalism and support demands for equal opportunities (see also Mueller, 1982). On the contrary, men’s feminist attitudes are weaker, because they derive from an abstract ideological commitment to equality and social justice, and sympathy with women’s cause.

In the same vein, the thesis that Klein puts forward in Gender Politics can be used to explain why female mayors adopt a feminist position in order to explain their absence from the political arena and the discrimination they suffer in politics, but decline to do so when it is a question of representing women. Following Klein’s hypothesis, support for women’s interests derives from a variety of impulses; notably, for women, from their personal experience. Accordingly, one could propose that the first two topics are more likely to produce agreement since agreement has relatively weak implications for the day-to-day life of female public officials. In contrast, political representation of women implies a significant increase in the representational burden and is hence less likely to evoke agreement. This hypothesis is beyond the scope of the present study, but should be probed more deeply in future research.

The Queen Bee Syndrome (Staines, Tavris & Jayaratne, 1974) and the Closet Feminist Syndrome (Carroll, 1994) may also help to explain why female mayors are aware of discrimination against women in politics, but do not think that they are responsible for speaking on behalf of women. The Queen Bee Syndrome refers to women who consider themselves to be self-made women, who see their success as being the product of their own motivations and efforts. Accordingly, other women interested in being successful have to do just what they have done. The Closet Feminist label is applied to those women who consciously avoid expressing their pro-women opinions, for fear of being identified as a feminist, because of the political risks involved.

Thirdly, the survey data presented above show that women’s and men’s responses follow a similar pattern on the question of women’s political representation - that is, most female and male mayors reject this notion. A clear majority of women public officials refuse to see themselves as women’s representatives. Nonetheless, female mayors do accept the idea that women in politics should represent the female population to a greater extent than men. In addition, evidence suggests that those who endorse this notion embrace a feminist perspective. This, I believe, is an important finding of this research: if the election of women appears as a precondition to the numerical representation of women, their substantive representation urgently requires the election of females and males sympathetic to feminist ideology.

It should also be noted that if women often do speak in a different voice from men, they also speak in different voices among themselves. In this regard, an interesting finding of this research is that female mayors are clearly less likely to see themselves as women’s representatives than their sister legislators in the Québec National Assembly and in the Canadian House of Commons. One explanation might be that, because of the nature of their elective office, women parliamentarians are more pressured by women’s lobby groups than are female mayors. Consequently, female MNAs and MPs find themselves in a context more favourable to the development of feminist sympathy.
Finally, supporting the idea of a diversity of views among political women, Kelly, Saint-Germain and Horn (1991) have suggested a model of the different types of voices women office holders exercise in public office: the traditional politician, the traditional liberal feminist, the caring humanist, and the change-oriented feminist. How important each one is in the context of Québec municipal politics, and what kind of impact they have on municipal public office, the political process and the political representation of women, is a puzzle which deserves further attention.

FOOTNOTES

1 Since there were nine male mayors for every one female mayor in Québec, only a sample of male mayors was surveyed.

2 In the 1993 survey we asked female and male mayors if they perceived discrimination against women in politics, or not. Then, in the 1994 interviews, we asked a sample of them to explain their views on the discrimination against women in politics.

3 The notion of ‘women’s interests’ synthesises women’s demands in the pursuit of gender equality. These would include issues that affect women more directly and immediately than men: abortion, violence against women, sexual harassment, child care, maintenance allowance for children, maternity leave, etc.

4 It should be noted that the question of whether women constitute a social group or not has been extensively debated over the past 15 years. Young (1994), for example, has recently suggested applying Sartre’s notion of ‘serial collectivity’ to women. This allows us to conceptualise women as a collective without necessarily identifying common attributes they share or implying that women have a common identity.

REFERENCES


Do Political Women Represent Women?
Views of Discrimination and Representation Among Female and Male Mayors in Québec


Queensland ALP Women Parliamentarians: Women in Suits and Boys in Factions

Sharon Broughton and Di Zetlin, University of Queensland, Australia

ABSTRACT

Recent research into the impact of women in politics in the United States found that women legislators are pursuing a reformist policy agenda in line with feminist expectations but are adapting to the current rules of the political game in procedure. The women are not satisfied with an adaptive role, however, and desire reform. This study sought to determine if these findings hold for Australian Labor Party (ALP) women MPs in one state in Australia, namely Queensland. In the last decade, some two thirds of the women to enter parliament in Australia have come from the ALP. The ALP has also pursued a more overt policy agenda aimed at promoting women both to close the gender gap and to achieve organisational change. Despite small numbers, Australian women MPs have significantly influenced policy-making.

Women parliamentarians representing the ALP in Queensland were interviewed during 1995. The prime purposes were to explore their perceptions of public office, and how they responded to the influence of party and faction in fulfilling their roles. The focus was on two areas of study: the extent to which women make a difference to the legislative programme of the parliaments in which they sit, that is, the products of politics; and the way parliamentary business is conducted, that is, the processes of politics. The findings indicate that despite a number of obstacles - their numerical weakness, internal factions and the male dominance of the ALP - Queensland ALP women parliamentarians have confidence in their ability to change and reform legislative priorities. Nonetheless, their confidence does not yet translate into reform of the business of politics even though they desire change.

Despite an escalating public debate about the representation of women in parliament, the social science literature in Australia remains partial. The present cohort of women politicians represents more than fifty per cent of all women ever elected, but they still comprise less than twenty per cent of current parliamentarians. The women entering parliament now are different from the women who were there twenty and thirty years ago. But relatively little is known about how they experience public office, what impact they believe they have as women and what they believe needs to be done in order to enhance the representation of women and representation by women.

In the last decade, some two-thirds of the women to enter parliament in Australia have come from the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The ALP has also pursued a more overt policy agenda aimed at promoting women both to close the gender gap and to achieve organisational change. During 1995, interviews were conducted of women parliamentarians representing the ALP from Queensland. The
prime purposes were to explore their perceptions of public office, and how they responded to the influence of party and faction in fulfilling their roles.

**DO WOMEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

Research into the question of whether women office holders make a difference tends to concentrate around three main themes. The first is that as the pool of women office holders becomes more experienced and more diverse, less stereotypical norms emerge. The second is that the question of whether women will make a difference depends strongly on the institutional context of politics and parliament. The institutional context is held to effect how women are elected as well as what they can do once elected. The third is that women can start to make a difference once a 'critical mass' is achieved (Thomas, 1994, p.8).

Thomas' (1994) study is especially important in breaking down the particular arenas where women can make a difference. She points out that the persisting question of whether women parliamentarians will make a difference derives from a variety of sources. These include uncertainty about the newly emerging public role of women, expectations that women will transfer some of their privately acquired skills of nurturance and consensus making into the public arena, and specific feminist expectations that women will represent a set of women's issues that have previously not been part of the public agenda.

These various expectations may be broken down into two areas of study: the extent to which women make a difference to the legislative programme of the parliaments in which they sit, that is, the products of politics; and the way parliamentary business is conducted, that is, the processes of politics. Do women seek to reform the legislative programs of governments or do they adapt? Do women seek to transform the business of politics, or is the pressure of “socialisation into existing norms and folkways of legislatures” too strong a force for adaptation? (Thomas, 1994, p11). The typology of choices between reformist and adaptive behaviour may be represented diagrammatically (Table 1).

**Table 1 Typology of Expectations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedures</th>
<th>Reformist</th>
<th>Adaptive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reformist</td>
<td>Adaptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedural</td>
<td>Procedural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products</td>
<td>Reformist</td>
<td>Adaptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Productive</td>
<td>Productive</td>
</tr>
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</table>


In order to establish where women legislators fall within this range of possibilities, Thomas reviewed the literature on American women in State legislatures in the 1970s and compared them with the more numerous cohort of the 1980s. Her conclusions are that women of the 1980s exhibited significant differences from their sisters of the 1970s. They were achieving reformist goals in relation to the legislative programme of the State parliaments, whereas their sisters in the 1970s had tended to shy away from an active legislative agenda. She concludes that “women office holders were more supportive than their male colleagues of issues concerning
women, and children and families” (Thomas, 1994, p134). They wanted to see these issues raised themselves, but also measured their success by the extent to which men took up these issues. They were successful and confident in their roles, but clearly wanted more women to succeed (1994, p135). In this sense, not only did they want to benefit personally from the support of more women, but appeared to accept the symbolic function of role model for other women. Burrell (1994, p173) emphasises this as one of the most important functions women legislators can perform.

The long-term goal which has yet to be achieved is “revamping the standards that govern political decision making” (Thomas, 1994, p135). Although Flammang (1985) found that women contribute a different approach to the exercise of power and the resolution of conflict, Thomas finds that the pressure of “socialisation into existing norms and folkways of legislatures” (1994, p11) may be too strong a force for women to reform. Hence, Thomas points to evidence of a lag in reform of the procedures of the legislature in comparison with the policy agenda. Women parliamentarians exhibit some evidence of a desire to reform the way in which parliaments conduct their business, but are more inclined to be adaptive than reformist on this segment of the typology.

The short answer to further progress is more. It has required a move from token representation for women to find any confidence in their legislative programme. They are unlikely to achieve reform of the processes of politics until their numbers approach parity. Thomas’s study indicates how the movement of women into State legislatures between the 1970s and 1980s has enhanced more than their numerical representation. But at present rates of recruitment it will take many years before women achieve sufficient numbers to transform the business of politics itself.

PARTY, FACTION AND FEMINISM

Australian women parliamentarians have to confront the problems that come from small, albeit increasing numbers, in the pursuit of their reform agendas. Unlike their American sisters who were the subject of Thomas’s research, they also have to deal with stronger party systems and, particularly in the ALP, the influence of factions. In Australia, the party system exercises tight control over both preselection and the conduct of parliamentary business. Within the ALP, the factions dominate the preselection process. Within state and federal parliaments, the governing party controls the legislative agenda with virtually no private member’s bills or free votes. Factions exercise less influence within the ALP in government, although the influence tends to be stronger at the State than the national level.

Attention to party imperatives has presented a dilemma for second wave feminists. While feminists seek to transform parties into more ‘woman-friendly’ places, they have risked incorporation as they adapt to the rules of the game (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993). Women in the ALP have generally kept to the rules of the political game whereby party divisions outweigh gender divisions, and factions have played a major role in this situation (Sawer, 1989, 1994; Sawer & Simms, 1993). Sawer and Simms argue that party and factional conditions have led to claims of dilution or co-option of the women’s agenda in the pecking order of the ALP structure, and that the feminist voice in Australian politics is probably not as strong as it was in the first half of the 1980s, partly due to the growth in the significance of the ALP’s (unfeminised) internal factions (1993, p34).

The State of Queensland has historically trailed behind the other States in promoting women. The ALP in Queensland has not promoted women
parliamentarians with the same degree of success as some other States. For example, the Australian Capital Territory currently has 50 per cent women ALP MPs, South Australia 37 per cent and Queensland 13.6 per cent. This poor representation of women led to the adoption, at the 1994 ALP National Conference, of a quota of 35 per cent of winnable seats to be allocated to women by the year 2002. The Queensland branch of the ALP was opposed, along factional lines, to the introduction of the quota system in 1994, although they have indicated that they will cooperate now that it has become national party policy.

In 1996, the federal Labor government lost a general election and in Queensland, ALP government was lost through a by-election loss. In Queensland, this followed hard on the heels of a major swing against the ALP in a 1995 general election. At this State election three ALP women lost their seats, one woman resigned, and one new woman joined the parliament, leaving six State women ALP parliamentarians in Queensland. In an indication that the spoils may be shared more equitably in opposition than in government, five of these six women are on the front bench of the Queensland ALP opposition. At the federal level there were two Queensland ALP women members of the Commonwealth House of Representatives and one Senator. Both women members of the House of Representatives lost their seats in the 1996 federal election.

These factors indicate that ALP women in Queensland could be expected to be demonstrating the effects of 'tokenism' and to be adaptive in their approach to both policy and the procedures of the House. Do ALP women parliamentarians in Queensland consider themselves to be adaptive or reformist, and how important do they perceive factions to be?

The research was concerned with trying to establish how these women parliamentarians experienced public office, whether they think they have a distinctive role to play as women and what they consider to be the principal obstacles they face. A semi-structured interview guide was constructed using Thomas's (1994) interview guide, with modifications made to adapt to the Australian and Queensland experience and with new material added. Interviews were identified by the initials F or S to indicate federal or state parliaments, and a numeric for each interviewee. A total of eight of the 13 women parliamentary representatives of the ALP from Queensland in 1995 were interviewed; five State parliamentarians, two federal House of Representatives members and the lone Senator.

In order to provide a partial check against interviewer and respondent bias, the interviews were supplemented with a content analysis of speeches made in respective parliaments by all the thirteen women approached. This was to 'check' whether the perceptions offered in interviews by the women were reflected in the issue priorities of their parliamentary speeches and to provide another reference point for their sense of self-achievement. The data on federal parliamentarians was drawn from a cross-sectional analysis of their speeches. For the State women, the sample is the selection of parliamentary speeches identified by McCulloch (1994) as indicative of the views or interests expressed by the women MPs in the context of their parliamentary careers.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The primary focus of the questioning was around issues of the differences of women parliamentarians. Do they see themselves differently? Do they perceive their jobs to be influenced by their gender? Do they carry understandings of difference into their
parliamentary ambitions? Do they then seek reform or adaptation? Is there a difference in the way they approach their legislative roles and the other roles of their office? What assists and what detracts from their roles?

THE LEGISLATIVE ROLE

Because women in Australia, but particularly in Queensland, are still present in token numbers, they could be expected, in line with Thomas’s findings, to be more adaptive than reformist in their policy orientation. Our interviews reveal that women see themselves as more reformist than adaptive.

The process of identifying a reform agenda differs between America and Australia. A useful way to distinguish between the two systems is to use Considine and Deutchman’s (1994) distinction between legislation ‘sponsored’ in America and ‘spoken to’ in Australia. The control by Cabinet of the legislative agenda and caucus discipline over voting renders the legislative role of Australian women less visible. In the American system women's contribution to legislation can be measured by the number of bills they introduce and the way in which they vote on a set of issues, whereas women in Australia will express their legislative role either through the role they play as Cabinet members, or through their work on party or parliamentary committees.

Positions of leadership become crucial to the advancement of the legislative agenda in such a system. In fact, we found that the women in our study see their agenda being advanced through a complex interplay of leadership, factions and support networks. Women felt they had achieved much, but their frustration and consciousness of the limitations imposed by gendered institutions showed. Of particular importance was the role of factions which the women feel they must deal with, but which inhibit their capacity to consolidate women's networks.

All of the women in the study perceived that a good range of the issues were debated in committees and parliaments, and from a policy point of view women had done very well in both the federal and the State parliaments. Even though “there’s a whole lot of issues for just a few of us to cover” [3/F],

I think the few women we have in parliaments have made a difference...just by being there and...in discussions in Cabinet on various issues...we shouldn’t underestimate that [1/S].

Significantly, policy reforms have been achieved without the 'critical mass' or anywhere near parity for women in the Australian parliaments. Most of the women parliamentarians interviewed in this study perceived their impact on women's issue policy to be substantial in a collective sense. Some noted that it has been achieved despite women's low numbers, as one State MP said:

we have achieved a great deal...and that's from a male-dominated parliament...I can't say that any of those things are...from a groundswell from the women in here or that the women have battered down the doors [2/S].

Another MP offered an explanation for this:

a combination of women in parliaments who have consistently raised the issues...women's groups outside of parliament who have exerted enough political pressure to raise the issues...an understanding of the women's vote in the party [4/S].
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From the analysis of the thirteen women’s speeches it is possible to identify a
continuing link between their first speech and subsequent speeches in the
parliaments. All of the respondents referred to women as a ‘special interest group’ at
least once in their first speech, while some speeches deliberately mentioned the
priorities and issues of concern to themselves, their party and to their electorate from
a woman’s perspective:

The contribution of women to the establishment of Australian society has
never been fully recognised...Women should be educated out of their
dependent, secondary role...The majority of those who are marginalised in our
community are women...If we are to work for a fairer, just and more
compassionate society, all of us must be able to participate (CAPD, House of
Representatives, 1987, p89)

I speak today in my first address to this chamber as a member of the
Australian Labor Party, as a woman and as a senator for Queensland. These
three loyalties shape my experience and determine my priorities as a member
of this chamber (CAPD, Senate, 1983, p82)

Women representatives in this Government will help to strengthen the
nurturing principle which dictates that the greatest attention should be
devoted to those in greatest need...Modification of the public agenda by
women active in the formal political arena will be part of the broader
economic and social changes that will influence the lives of Queenslanders in
the 1990s...I am pleased to represent a party which, after many years of soul
searching, has come to accept this challenge. This Labor Government will
consider the implications for women in all its policies (McCulloch, 1994,
p152-3)

Table 2 ‘Pro-Woman’ Content in Speeches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Issues</th>
<th>Child &amp; Medical Care</th>
<th>Criminal Justice</th>
<th>Energy, Environment &amp; Development</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Civil Liberties &amp; Aboriginal Issues</th>
<th>Welfare</th>
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As Table 2 reveals, of the eight categories used to organise and clarify the
women’s issue priorities, the category women’s issues was the only category that all
of the women have spoken on in their time in parliament, and they did so in two
ways. First, to broaden the agenda - to put a women’s perspective and to raise
awareness of a women’s perspective - when debating legislation not specifically
dealing with the status of women; and secondly, to consolidate the women’s agenda
in debate on legislation dealing specifically with the status of women, for example,
anti-discrimination legislation.

Some of the women interviewed felt that while women focused on different
legislative priorities than men, other factors tended to influence women MPs areas of
commitment. ‘Gender-neutral’ factors such as representing rural electorates were
given as the reason for taking up and speaking on the more traditional male issues:

when you represent, when you live in a rural area and you’ve got to deal with
the canegrowers and deal with the fisher-people, and all of that, you tend to
diversify your areas of commitment [3/F].

52
In Australia, the presence of women on committees has brought important changes, especially in the way women have been able to inject an increasing awareness of gender into the form of the legislation so that the needs of women are not overlooked. As Table 3 indicates, of the eight Queensland Parliamentary (all-party) committees, ALP women MPs were on seven. Four ALP women held leadership roles as Chairpersons of their respective committees.

Table 4 State Caucus Committees

| Environment and Heritage | * |
| Business, Industry & Regional Development | * |
| Education | *** |
| Tourism, Sport and Racing | * |
| Transport | * |
| Police and Emergency Services | * |
| Family Services & Aboriginal and Islander Affairs | ** |
| Health | * |

As illustrated in Table 4, the interviewed women were on eight of the committees set up by Caucus (the Parliamentary Labor Party) to advise ministers.

Five held leadership positions as Cabinet ministers. The portfolios awarded to women from both parliaments include family services, environment, education, consumer affairs, health, employment and assisting the leader on women's affairs, giving support to the claim that "women are still characteristically awarded the 'nurturing' portfolios in Australian governments" (Simms, 1993, p137).

Table 5 Federal Parliamentary Committees

| Joint | * |
| Public Accounts | * |
| Foreign Affairs, Defence & Trade | * |
| Certain Family Law Issues | * |
| House of Representatives | * |
| House | * |
| Employment, Education & Training | * |
| Legal & Constitutional | * |
| Senate | * |
| Senate Estimates | * |
| House | * |
| Community Affairs | * |
| Rural and Regional Affairs | * |
| Community Standards Relevant to the Supply of Services | * |
| Utilising Electronic Technologies | * |
Table 5 illustrates that the Federal women MPs were on 11 out of a total of 67 committees of the House of Representatives, the Senate and Joint Committees. They also held leadership positions as Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons. One woman has been a Minister and one was a Parliamentary Secretary. No Federal women was on any business or economic caucus committee but all were on the Status of Women Committee.

All of the women interviewed recognised factions as an important influence on how they could play their role. This issue was particularly strongly voiced in discussing the role of a women’s caucus. All of the State women belong to a state ALP faction, and two of the Federal women belong to both a State and federal faction, indicating a fairly evenly divided left-right split on the State factional/ideological spectrum: five Socialist Left, one Labor Left, four Labor Unity and three AWU (Australian Workers’ Union).

The role of a women’s caucus was referred to by all as an important way for women to act collectively both to influence the political process and product, and as a women’s network support mechanism. The Federal women believe they have a very effective structure:

our women’s caucus is very much across these [traditional priorities of women], for the impact of all our policies on women [3/F];

made up of women from all factions but we’re really non-factional in the work that we’re doing in terms of the status of women...on quotas...we have worked across the party, child care...our role is to monitor what is happening across all government departments...[legislation on] the whole women’s agenda is drafted and passed that might not be if it weren’t for the input of the women’s caucus [3/F].

The ‘women’s caucus’ being referred to by the Federal women is the Status of Women Committee of the federal caucus (Parliamentary Labor Party), established in 1981 and which meets weekly in sitting weeks.

Although the State women believe a women’s caucus would be beneficial (mentioned by all of them) they have not been able to effect one because:

while you’ve got four factions and half a dozen women it becomes difficult [3/S];

the men were incredibly threatened and...picked on a few women who were prepared to debunk the issues...the women in the right [4/S];

the factional system in the Labor party [Queensland branch] has driven the women apart, and so the Labor women don’t meet as a caucus and we don’t decide to do anything as a group of women. We have lost that potential source of power because of the factional system [1/S].

Very few of the women were members of an ALP faction prior to their election. A unanimous perception exists among the interviewees that, in order to be considered for higher leadership positions either in the party caucus or at the Ministerial level in parliament, women must obtain the support of a faction because, between them, the factions manage the process of ‘electing’ cabinet ministers.

This would explain why all of the women who were not factionally aligned before their election became members of a faction shortly after their election or after one term. It also suggests that most, if not all, of the women who possess the standard credentials are increasingly viewing a political career as viable.
However, while most thought women were just as ambitious as men because “we are all trying to make our mark...any backbencher has aspirations to be on the frontbench” [1/F], a few felt there was a difference in attitude between men and women with respect to how they pursue ambition: “women...are not as cold-blooded about it” [1/F]. The nature of a male career in politics was referred to in this way:

men seem to think they were born to become ministers. They seem to think they will or should be a minister as soon as they are elected. Women aren’t like that [3/S].

There is a perception by the Left members that the issue of gender and increasing the representation of women through affirmative action and quotas has been a left-wing agenda:

the only faction which allowed women to occupy prominent positions. The left was given the task of providing the women [for Cabinet]...[because off the dominance of the power-brokers of the right, women don’t get a role ...never been a single female candidate emerge of any status at all...The AWU tends to...go and poach independents...rather than bringing their own women through [4/S].

One woman from the Right indicated that “most women within the faction said that they would rather vote for a faction person than a woman from another faction...knew where they stood” [3/S], supporting the claim that “organisational loyalty is the precondition of effectiveness, let alone of career prospects” (Sawer, 1994, p89), and that factions have imposed their agenda on feminist aspirations.

Further direct evidence of the impact of factional ideology on women’s ideological stance can be found in the polarised debate between the Left and the Right over the introduction of quotas into the Queensland branch of the ALP in 1994. Many of the respondents refer to this episode in relation to their activity to get more women into public office. Consider the comments of a member of one of the Right factions:

I tried with my faction and failed totally. When the whole issue of quotas arose the position that our faction took was the position devised to cause problems and deride the Socialist Left faction. It wasn’t about women, it was about factional power, and the arguments that I had might have had had legitimacy but they were irrelevant [2/S].

The perceptions expressed by the women MPs regarding their legislative role suggest that leadership and factions interact in complex ways for the women parliamentarians. Overall, it would have to be said that the women see faction rather than gender as the key to change, and that the failure of the women to challenge the factional system is to some extent indicative of a privileging of non-gender issues over gender issues. This conclusion, however, needs to be considered alongside the fact that they are reluctant faction members and where they are stronger as women (at the federal level), they are conscious of the benefits of cross-factional support networks.

The responses to the question on pride in accomplishments suggest that respondents are most proud of their achievements in areas of traditional interest to women - education, environment, human rights issues, Aboriginal issues and women’s issues (violence against women) - rather than economic issues such as budgets or business. This indicates that despite their willingness to be on such committees as Budget Estimates, and one woman’s persistence in getting on the foreign affairs committee, they are proudest of their achievements in social justice.
Queensland ALP Women Parliamentarians:
Women in Suits and Boys in Factions

policy. While this, of course, is quite compatible with the ideology of the Labor Party, at the same time it corresponds with traditional women's policy priorities, and suggests that they are more comfortable with these.

We were not primarily concerned to establish whether these women were 'true feminists'. To some extent, the fact that the ALP has embarked on a reformist programme (however limited) made it easier to assume at least a pro-woman stand. Whatever else its failings, the ALP did develop a comprehensive women's policy in the early 1980s as part of a strategy to close the 'gender gap' (see Sawer, 1994; Simms, 1993), a strategy which resulted in an "Australian women's policy machinery" (Sawer, 1994) driven at the federal level by a combination of women's groups, female Members of Parliament, and 'femocrats' (Sawer, 1990). These networks consolidate their influence through Commonwealth and State legislation on sex discrimination and affirmative action and women's bureau in various branches of the bureaucracy. Their success may well be uneven. Sawer notes that (Sawer, 1994, p. 89):

Women have been able to make more progress in determining public policy in what has been regarded as a soft issue of relatively little interest to male decision makers [domestic violence] than in the area of pay equity.

Queensland lagged well behind the other states in establishing this machinery for monitoring government policy. Its Anti-Discrimination Act was not introduced until 1992 and the Labor government elected in 1989 was criticised for falling short of feminist expectations for abortion and prostitution reform (Sullivan, 1993).

Our primary interest was not to establish who was responsible for the development of this reform agenda, but rather to ascertain how the women members of parliament felt about their legislative role and whether they thought they were able to achieve things for women through that role. By and large, the women were positive about this and saw themselves as bringing about real change in the legislative agenda of Australian government. Given that they have not reached the critical mass that Thomas (1994) saw as essential, this is a considerable achievement. Significantly, most of the women pointed to either the desirability of a women's caucus or networks external to the parliament to allow them to overcome the deficiency in their number.

THE PARLIAMENTARY ROLE

The legislative role is but one aspect of the parliamentarian's work. In relation to the work women parliamentarians do, we were also interested in how they perceived the process by which their roles were structured as women and as parliamentarians. If Thomas's (1994) findings hold for Australia, we would expect to find Australian women more adaptive than reformist in these areas.

Overall, this expressed itself in the greater level of criticism that the women were prepared to level at process issues, anxieties expressed about performance and a greater degree of ambiguity about how much could be achieved in reforming the processes of the parliamentary career. Perhaps the most pessimistic statement of this is the response of one of the women to the question of how they thought they were perceived in parliament: "We have lighter voices, we are ridiculed about our dress, we are seen as a minority" [4/S].

Perhaps reflecting their greater sense of confidence about their legislative role, the women interviewed did not feel that they were pressured into assuming particular roles in committees. Despite this perception of freedom in the choice of
roles, it was also clear that women are acutely conscious of how their work will be reflected back in the electorate. They are extremely 'constituency conscious'. Interestingly, this is not an issue of such prominence in American studies, perhaps because of the importance placed on primaries and the extent to which representation is subsequently organised through lobbying. In Australia, it may also reflect the fact that so many women are first elected to marginal seats, focusing their attention upon securing their base vote for future contests.

Committee choices reflected what respondents perceived to be a "combination of things of interest to my electorate and things of interest to me" [2/S], and how they wanted to be considered by their electorate and colleagues:

one of the things I was conscious of when I came in was that I didn't want to be typed as a woman member. I actually chose caucus committees, parliamentary committees that reflected my electorate...I didn't get on community affairs committees and the ones that look after social security because that's what they expect women to do [1/F].

In this context interviewee responses to perceptions of their constituency (in terms of representation) and how they chose their legislative priorities (in terms of policy) gives a strong indication that they chose their legislative priorities to reflect their perceptions of how best to represent their constituency. This in turn determines on what they speak and in what they get involved as a politician:

One is, it's relevant to my electorate...the other area is issues...of principle, the general things that I think I should be there for ...Some of my best speeches have been on social policy debate but I try to actually speak on debate out of my area of expertise [1/F];

a combination of things of significance to the electorate and things that interest me [2/S].

How women represent their community/electorate was mentioned by most of the respondents in terms of the different approach they perceived women to have:

I think that women have to represent their whole community, perhaps from a different angle because I do think we come at it from a different angle...women tend to come much more from the community concern angle whereas men...come from the power angle [3/F].

A sense of divided loyalty between representing their constituency and representing women is one element of the women's ambivalence about role. Virtually all of the women feel the incidence of sexism in their parliamentary colleagues. They all appear to take seriously a responsibility for raising awareness of gender issues in the parliament. Hansard speeches reveal that most interviewees have become particularly vigilant in using the traditional standing orders of parliament by rising to points of order to call to account male politicians who display what women perceive to be a sexist attitude in their dealings with women politicians or in their references to women in parliamentary speeches.

One MP saw an implicit obligation on the part of women in the ALP to censure such sexist comments to raise awareness of the issue both in the party and in the wider community: "The message that we have got to get out to women is that there are women in the government who are concerned about these things" [1/F]. For example, when a woman from another party was referred to as 'sweetheart' by an ALP minister on the floor of the federal parliament, the ALP women MPs responded by speaking publicly to the media and privately to the minister.
concerned about their disquiet over such remarks [1/F]. In this sense, then, the women demonstrate they are actively seeking to change the attitudes and the behaviour of their male colleagues by utilising both formal and informal avenues of the parliament.

The longer serving, older members’ responses to the question of how they perceive their role in parliament in relation to the status of women politicians contrasted to the responses of the younger or more recent entrants to parliament. One younger MP said:

*my female colleagues who’ve been in there 10 years...they walked into a very different scenario. And they’ve had to play a lot of the games and massage male egos. But I’m not prepared to do that. I’m that next generation down who think we shouldn’t have to do this any more...I still play some of the games but I am much more prepared to be very up front and very assertive...otherwise you get ignored...I’m prepared to be aggressively assertive. Because for women if we’re assertive we’re seen as aggressive anyway [1/F].*

In terms of parliamentary procedures and women’s activity, most of the respondents indicated that they were not comfortable or satisfied with the way business is conducted in the parliament, describing it with comments like ‘appalling’, ‘too confrontational’, ‘antagonistic’, ‘totally uncomfortable’. Most identified the adversarial nature of the parliamentary system as the major obstacle to real change:

*Parliament is not about finding consensus, it’s about a battle, supremacy, opposition, about power, and when people are trying to retain and gain power they are not looking for consensus [2/S].*

They were “not...saying that the adversarial nature of politics is in itself bad...it can be misused and I think it is” [4/S]; nor that there is not scope for improving the system which is possible if “at the end of the day everybody does play by the rules” [1/F]. The reality, however, is:

*it’s got to be responsive to the tactics of the day, the issue of the week, and the Leader of the House...has to make his decisions to fit in with that. And it will ever be thus [2/S].*

Reform of Question Time posed a problem for most, represented by this quote:

*I think that we don’t help ourselves with what happens in Question Time...It’s actually very hard to withdraw from...that group environment [1/F].*

While they knew what they disliked about the way parliament is conducted, none was able to articulate a practical prescription for changing the rules or to reform Question Time, except to say:

*I would avoid these sort of grand occasions of Question Time, which is simply giving theatre to men to show off...I suppose you do have to have Question Time but I would really be trying to develop a set of rules that men could follow, you know, some of the language and some of the game playing just is out of order [3/F];

you will still have an adversarial context to Question Time, you can’t avoid that...[it] gives you a level of accountability that is necessary [4/S].*
Nearly all respondents identified sitting hours, the manner and style of debate, the noise and shouting, the length of time allotted for speeches as the worst aspects, and nearly all saw the system as very difficult to change for two major reasons. The first was the Cabinet system of government: “as a backbencher you have no influence” [2/S]. The second was a direct consequence of low numbers and factional division: “we have so few women and...the women aren’t a united group on anything” [3/S]. All indicated that they thought parliament should be a more “family-friendly” institution. Their goals reflected this: change the sitting hours, use committees to remove the adversarial nature of the chamber, reduce the time for speeches, try to reach consensus more often, reduce the shouting and heckling/harassment, and “I intend to have my children at Parliament House even though it’s not a very family-friendly place” [5/S].

All felt that having more women would give them the necessary confidence to pursue change in procedures:

in order to get a paradigm shift in the culture, the political culture that operates in parliament...you are going to have to have a lot more women involved...you have to have the numbers [1/F];

the more women that come in the easier it will be [3/F];

I don’t think adding another two or three women is going to make a difference [1/S];

only when you have got more women in Cabinet do you start to hope that things can change because that’s where the decision-making occurs, that’s where the power is...you’ve got to have more women in key positions in factions [2/S].

The reshaping of the mainstream political agenda has, they believe, also increased the willingness of men to be included in issues that previously men did not consider male concerns, or were best left to the women:

more men...have been prepared to raise [women’s] issues than previously...there are now more men talking on those issues than previously...Because of the broadening of the agenda women no longer have to bring those issues up themselves [4/S].

Respondents perceived some male legislators to be sensitive to women’s concerns and women’s issues, and that they were ‘getting much better’ with “more and more men ...taking up a number of those issues ...child care certainly and care of the elderly and even some women’s health issues” [3/S] due to a perception that “we have done a pretty fair education job in the last few years” [3/S]. One MP referred to:

the time a man...asked a question about tampons...To do with toxic shock syndrome...We had to be very careful that we didn’t behave like giggling schoolgirls. Because we were amused...and yet really we were very pleased...Whereas we were the first to raise them, men are gradually feeling more comfortable about discussing them [3/S].

CONCLUSION

The interviews conducted for this survey were not intended to provide generalisable data. They have provided some interesting insights into the self-reflection of women politicians. The women parliamentarians from the Queensland ALP present
themselves as a confident group who have a clear sense of their responsibilities as legislators and are quite prepared to define themselves as being able to change the legislative priorities of their respective houses. Given their numerical weakness, this is perhaps a surprising finding.

The MPs do have a common sense of the fact that being a woman is a distinct characteristic which imposes obligations and makes them aware of their distinctiveness. The three women from the federal arena appear to derive a significant strength from the existence of a cross-factional caucus, while for women in the Queensland House the dominance of factions is seen to be the only way ahead and has actively prevented the development of any cross-factional caucus.

The confidence that the women express in relation to their legislative role wanes when they turn to the business of politics. The parliamentary environment remains hostile and the women are at the stage of drawing attention to this fact, rather than developing an agenda for change.

The women we spoke to believe they have achieved more than might be expected when their marginal status is taken into account. Thomas (1994) would have them still confined to adaptive roles. But they do exhibit some of the lag she describes in developing a reform agenda around changing the procedures of the parliament.

All of the women indicated that they were interested in seeing more women run for parliament, and all of them had an understanding that this was not just about making the parliament more representative, but also facilitating the execution of a reform agenda that would make politics more responsive to women.

The interviews also draw out several important aspects of women’s political participation in countries with a different political system from the USA. The interviews draw attention to some deficiencies in Thomas’s (1994) arguments and show the need for placing more emphasis on wider political factors than numbers in the legislature. Three areas where Thomas’s conclusions about women’s political participation are problematic or inapplicable are: the relevance of factions and a strong party system to women’s political participation; the unexpected ‘reformism’ of Australian women parliamentarians (and the relationship of this to the existence of a significant ‘women’s policy machinery’); and the important effect of ‘constituency consciousness’ on the nature of women’s political participation.

These differences raise some important research questions about the influence of party and faction, and the relationship between the capacity of women to fulfil a reform agenda and their numerical representation in the house.

Feminists may draw some comfort from the strength of the will to reform exhibited by the women parliamentarians in this study. But it might well be argued that it remains a commitment additional to the existing demands of faction, party and constituency. It is also clear that the women’s agenda is not embedded in the practices of the institutions to which they belong. The security of the reform process remains tenuous while this is so.

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Early Money, EMILY’s List and Learning to Add the Zeroes

Kate Sullivan
Australian National University, Australia

ABSTRACT

Women were thought to have been disadvantaged in campaigns for the US House of Representatives by their perceived lack of fundraising skill. However, research on campaigns in the late 1980s shows that women are no more disadvantaged than other challengers. This article argues that women’s fundraising gap was partly assuaged by the advent of new fundraising bodies that were dedicated to pragmatic funding principles, the most notable example of which is EMILY’s List.

I used to say we need to teach women how to put zeroes on their checks. By 1986, we found a group who’d learned. We’ve created a product, if you will, that is tailored to women like us, who are over 35, involved in politics. We are political venture capitalists.

Ellen R Malcolm, President and Founder, EMILY’s List

From the rebirth of the feminist movement in the 1960s, women have attempted to raise money to help women get elected to the United States Congress. Many of these groups used the traditional fundraising methods that all interest groups use to fund favoured Congressional candidates, and it is an undeniable fact that the numbers of women in Congress remained woefully low throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Table 1). However, the late 1980s saw a rise in the number of women receiving both nomination and election to the House of Representatives. This rise coincides with the emergence of new funding groups pledged specifically to support women candidates, particularly in the raising of early money.

The largest of these groups by far is EMILY’s List, an acronym for ‘Early Money is Like Yeast’ as it ‘makes the dough rise’. EMILY’s List “identifies viable pro-choice Democratic women candidates who are campaigning for key federal and statewide offices. In the 1992 election cycle 98 percent of EMILY’s List support went to challengers” (EMILY’s List, 1994a). The US$8.2 million dollars the 33,000 members of EMILY’s List sent in to be ‘bundled’ by the List made it the biggest supporter of House and Senate candidates in 1994.

The expense involved in running campaigns for the US House of Representatives is legendary. Space precludes a full discussion of the problems candidates face in raising large sums of money for their campaigns (Alexander, 1992; Congressional Quarterly, 1992; Morris & Gamache, 1994).

However, Table 2 gives an indication of the rising expenditures in congressional races for both incumbents and open seat candidates through the 1980s. The much smaller expenditures by challengers can be attributed to the
difficulties of running against entrenched incumbents, and the generally uncompetitive nature of occupied House seats over this period.

Table 1 Number of Women in Congress
excluding non-voting delegates 1968 - 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONGRESS</th>
<th>HOUSE (435 Members)</th>
<th>SENATE (100 Members)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92nd 1971</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93rd 1973</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94th 1975</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95th 1977</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96th 1979</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97th 1981</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98th 1983</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99th 1985</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100th 1987</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101st 1989</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102nd 1991</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103rd 1993</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104th 1995</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2 Average Campaign Expenditures by Candidate Status
in constant 1988 dollars, primary and general election expenditures by major party general election candidates only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Incumbent</th>
<th>Challenger</th>
<th>Open Seat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>235,900</td>
<td>143,500</td>
<td>298,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>321,400</td>
<td>158,600</td>
<td>358,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>318,000</td>
<td>144,700</td>
<td>401,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>364,000</td>
<td>135,800</td>
<td>454,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>378,300</td>
<td>118,900</td>
<td>480,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The amazing rates of re-election enjoyed by incumbents can be seen in Table 3. With no public funding for congressional candidates, individual candidates and their campaigns are responsible for all fundraising. In addition, the need to run two very expensive campaigns in one election cycle makes fundraising a doubly onerous task, especially for challengers and open seat candidates.

Table 3 House Incumbency Rates at General Elections
1980-1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. Ran</th>
<th>No. Won</th>
<th>No. Lost</th>
<th>% re-elected</th>
<th>% re-elected with over 60% of two party vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>84.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Stanley & Niemi, 1994, p129.
While the role and incidence of women in Senate contests is interesting, this article will discuss only the House, as in many ways it makes for a clearer field of study including the larger number of contests, the higher level of female participation and the ability to make more meaningful generalisations across the country than the often idiosyncratic nature of Senate elections allow.

Congressional elections are regulated by the Federal Elections Campaign Act 1971 (FECA) and its subsequent amendments. The FECA, its amendments and the Federal Election Commission’s 1975 Sun-PAC advisory opinion together created the regulatory structure that has remained largely unchanged since 1980. The FECA’s sections proposing to limit the total expenditures allowable in a congressional campaign were ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in Buckley vs Valeo (1976) as a denial of First Amendment rights of freedom of speech. The equation of money with speech, whilst not without its critics both on and off the Supreme Court, has remained pervasive in the campaign funding environment. A summary of contribution limits under FECA is at Table 4.

Table 4 Contribution Limits in Congressional Campaigns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donors</th>
<th>Candidate or Campaign Committee</th>
<th>PACs</th>
<th>Overall Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>$1000 per election</td>
<td>$500 per year</td>
<td>$25,000 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACs</td>
<td>$5000 per election</td>
<td>$500 per year</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Candidates are able to raise campaign funds in four major ways - in contributions from individuals, political parties, multi-candidate or Political Action Committees (PAC) and by contributing from their own personal funds. All donations above $100 must be disclosed by the campaign committee to the Federal Electoral Commission, who report all contributions over $200. Donations, or contributions as they are usually called, may be either monetary or in kind. As the money this article discusses is early money, political parties are understandably not big players. No party can afford to alienate candidates and their supporters by backing one primary candidate against another. Also, parties rely heavily on election year momentum to swell their own coffers, and so the funds for any possible systematic support of women candidates might not be available.

Although FECA did not invent Political Action Committees it regulated their contributory behaviour and served to establish a transparency in campaign finance that did not exist under previous attempts at regulating campaign finance. With transparency comes the ability to learn from and within the system. Money has two important functions in congressional elections. Most obviously, it pays for a candidate’s campaign expenses - the personalised television advertising, the promotional efforts, the staff and the infrastructure that are all required for election in a candidate-centred electoral system. Secondly, it serves as an important touchstone for campaign watchers in two ways - as a measure of candidate seriousness, and as a measure of candidate viability.
Once women's organisations had decided to make an electoral assault on the Congress, they soon encountered the problems faced by all challengers. These problems were magnified by the 'outsider' tag that many women candidates wore in the early 1980s, as became apparent to these first women's electoral groups. It also became clear that most of these barriers were built into, and in some instances, caused by, the campaign fundraising regime. The difficulties of providing an adequate level of self-financing, the temptations and problems of going into debt to make such a contribution, the seemingly unbeatable status of congressional incumbents and, above all, the necessity to raise a substantial sum of money very early on in the election cycle, all contributed to the realisation within women's electoral movements that the task they had set themselves was arduous, and would require flexibility and versatility. The most important aspect of the change and adaptation that the women's electoral movement would undertake was the focus on early money as a valuable campaign strategy.

At this time women were also changing in their education, employment and income patterns. By 1989/90, more women than men received post-secondary degrees at every level except the doctoral level. As far as recipients of first professional degrees went, women were awarded 29.1 per cent of dentistry degrees (up from 7.3 per cent in 1976/7), 33.6 per cent of medicine degrees (19.1 per cent) and 41.9 per cent of law degrees (22.5 per cent). In 1992, women were 45.5 per cent of the labour force and their presence in the professions had substantially increased - for example, they constituted 21.4 per cent of lawyers and judges and 20.4 per cent of physicians (Costello & Stone, 1994, p275-298).

This was an important change in the status of women for two reasons. One was that it put them in better positions to make campaign contributions than ever before - many more women had independent incomes and control over their own or their family's money. Contributions were an important form of political activity for many. "In the 1980s, many feminists, busy juggling job and family, found it easier to give money to the movement than invest time" (Davis, 1991, p199). These feminists were also becoming better positioned for a run for public office (Darcy, Welch & Clark, 1994, p105).

Holders of elective office in the United States are not a random group of citizens. As a group, they are distinguished by their very high levels of income; their more prestigious occupational status, especially employment as professionals; and their high levels of education, often at the graduate level. In other words, office holders are part of the socioeconomic elite. (In 1993, Congress contained) no blue collar workers, and one-third of all Senators were millionaires. Over 45 percent of both houses were lawyers.

Table 5 Number of Major Party Female Candidates for the House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mandel, 1993, p44; Burrell, 1994, p134; Rubin, 1994, p2972
It is also important to note that the increase in women running as major party candidates through the 1980s was marked (Table 5). The attainment of a major party nomination is a significant step towards being recognised as a valuable and viable political player. Given the US primary system, winning a nomination is often the hardest part of a campaign, and usually the longest. Women who reach this stage have needed the support of funding organisations willing to take a risk on their candidacy prior to their receiving the party’s imprimatur.

FOUNDATIONS OF EMILY’S LIST

In 1982, Harriet Woods, Lieutenant Governor of Missouri, made an unsuccessful attempt to run for the US Senate. Woods, the Democratic nominee, lost by 27,000 votes, less than one per cent of the popular vote. Woods had been shocked to discover that the donation she received late in the campaign from the national party organisation was no more than a token contribution of $18,000. In an effort to raise more money, she contacted a Washington philanthropist active in women’s electoral circles, Ellen Malcolm. While there was widespread anger within the Washington feminist establishment at the treatment Woods had received from the party, all Malcolm was able to raise through a last minute desperate fundraising effort was $50,000. Woods ran out of funds, unable to reply to negative advertisements late in the campaign. Malcolm claims that she came to see lack of funds as the key ingredient in Woods’ loss - there was ‘too little, too late’ (Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994, p138). Malcolm, who had previously worked for the National Women’s Political Caucus, which ran a traditional style PAC (as did other groups such as the National Organisation for Women and the Women’s Campaign Fund), believed that it was important that women organise to help women candidates raise significant amounts of money. After gaining an MBA from George Washington University, she launched EMILY’s List in 1985 as an organisation that would help alleviate what she perceived as the stumbling block to the success of electoral feminism - that “women suffered the most when it came to raising the early money that could make them truly competitive candidates” (Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994, p138). Malcolm showed amazing foresight to get in at the ground floor in a new revolution in campaign finance, the specialised provision of early money as start-up funding for candidates. The electoral women’s movement had moved to the cutting edge of campaign finance, and EMILY’s List took it there.

THE CONCEPT OF EARLY MONEY

Early money is best thought of as seed money - money a candidate needs to get a campaign off the ground. There can be no set definition of when a contribution must be given to be ‘early’. What is true across all campaigns is that early money has been given increasing prominence in recent years.

The most important use of early money is as honey to attract the bees of campaign financing. Money spent too early in the campaign on traditional vote-getting activities, while possibly helping to raise a candidate’s profile, is unlikely to be of any real direct use as far as election day votes go. Herrnson (1992) suggests that the most important use of early money is to assemble a high quality campaign organisation for two reasons. He notes that “... PAC officials ... include campaign professionalism among the criteria they use when making their contribution decisions (p859) ... candidates who assemble professional campaign organisations are far more successful at PAC fundraising than those who field largely amateur campaign committees”(p865). Jacobson (cited in Abramson, Aldrich & Rohde, 1994,
p279) believes using early funds to gain media and public attention is crucial, as "it is not the case that well known candidates simply attract more money; rather, money follows attention".

Another rationale for raising money early is related to the problem that challengers face when running against well-financed incumbents. No candidate can afford to find themselves at the wrong end of an irredeemable finance gap.

Early money can either be used or saved. It is the symbolic value of the amount of early money that is of prime importance, and whether that money is in the receipts or disbursements column is a secondary matter. Often the sources of the money will dictate its uses.

It must be remembered that, apart from timing, early money is exactly the same as all other campaign contributions. It can come from the same sources - individuals, PACs, or the candidate. As early money is primary money, it would be extremely rare for any candidate to receive money from a party committee. Contributions are also subject to the same FECA restrictions, whether they fall into the per election or per annum categories.

Biersack, Herrnson and Wilcox (1993) claim, on the basis of evidence from 1986, that early money is largely made up of contributions by the candidate and by other individuals. They also assess what impact, if any, the different sources of early money have on later fundraising success. Their conclusions are that early money from each source seems to indicate later money from that same source, but note that "early contributions by individuals are significant predictors of later money from all sources [while] later self investment and also later fundraising from individuals" is characteristic of campaigns that feature early self financing (1993, p542).

Data showing early money coming mainly from individuals and candidates underscore Sorauf's (1984, p49) view of PACs as risk averse in their funding allocations - early money is risky money, especially if it is for a challenger. However, he notes that early money, while being risky, also elicits a 'higher pay off' if the candidate is successful. Many PACs give only in kind contributions early in a campaign, which 'costs' them less than a dollar donation.

However, PACs often are constrained in their timetable of giving. Some may not themselves have the funds to contribute early - their own fundraising drives may not be early starters. Sabato (1984, p80) sees distinct advantages in PACs and other funding organisations giving early. Giving early to candidates or their committees allows organisations and individuals to give twice - because the FECA treats primary and general elections as two separate elections, a total of $2,000 from individuals and $10,000 from PACs may be given over the entire cycle. Also, giving early is a way for groups, especially those without huge resources, to actually get their donation noticed by the campaign.

DO WOMEN GET EARLY MONEY?

Biersack, Herrnson and Wilcox (1994, p548) suggest that experienced challengers and those facing incumbents perceived to be electorally vulnerable are the best raisers of early money amongst challengers. However, seed funds are especially important for inexperienced challengers, who appear to be disadvantaged in this area. (Biersack, Herrnson & Wilcox, like many commentators, judge candidate 'experience' and quality by previous office-holding experience.)
Burrell (1994) examined FEC reports for the first two reporting periods of the 1988, 1990 and 1992 election cycles, in an effort to examine the early money raising capacity of women candidates. It must be noted that to be obliged to file a report, a campaign committee must have received at least $5,000, including candidate contributions. It would be pure speculation to attempt to gauge if women were so disadvantaged that they were unable to reach even this threshold. Burrell reports that as expected, female incumbents were not disadvantaged in the raising of early funds. What is perhaps more surprising, given the perception of non-incumbent women candidates as poor early fund raisers, is that (Burrell, 1994, 119):

female challengers have raised money as early as their male counterparts. In two of the three election cycles they surpassed male challengers in amassing a treasury in the initial stages of the campaign season, and in all three years female challengers outpaced their male counterparts by the end of the second reporting period.

There is also no evidence that in these three cycles women candidates started disproportionately later than male candidates.

Early money is vital in the competition for open seats. Burrell (1994, p120) found that:

Once again, contrary to expectations, we find female contenders doing better than their male counterparts. Female open seat primary candidates were competing early on and showing fundraising prowess. First, a larger percentage of these female candidates reported having raised funds at the end of the first reporting period. Second, women had larger campaign treasuries in the early stages of the election cycle in each of these years.

Burrell also reports that women were not disadvantaged in the percentage of their funds coming from PACs. It should be noted that this data is from 1988-1992, and the concerns of the electoral feminist community as to fundraising may well have begun to be alleviated by then, in part due to the efforts of the electoral feminists themselves. The best known case where such an organisation is believed to have made a difference is EMILY's List.

EMILY: PUSHING THE EDGE OF THE FECA ENVELOPE

In 1962, the Council for a Livable World, a group opposed to nuclear proliferation, began to raise money for congressional campaigns by asking supporters to write a cheque to one of a number of suggested campaign committees but to send it to the Council, who would forward it on. In this way, the Council pioneered a practice known as the ‘bundling’ of campaign contributions. The CLW, who continued to use this method into the 1980s, wanted to give “individuals a greater opportunity to choose whom they want to support” than would be the case if the central office retained all discretion over the apportionment of funds (Mayberry & Heine, 1986, p77).

The FECA and its amendments did not close off this avenue, and it became popular in the early 1980s with PACs keen to attempt to overcome the multi-candidate committee limit of a $5,000 per election contribution. These ‘bundled’ cheques, made out to ‘Abigail Adams for Congress’ do not pass through the PAC’s coffers and so do not count towards the PAC’s contribution limit. They do, however, count towards the individual’s $1,000 per candidate per election limit, as well as their $25,000 per annum to all campaigns limit. The FEC has ruled that “the cost of mailing solicitations for funds is an in-kind contribution applicable to the
spending limits" the committee faces. This makes bundling an exercise in the economy of scale, as it would be prohibitive to mount a mail solicitation campaign for too few candidates. The committee must disclose the bundled contribution to both the recipient campaign and the FEC. This system is seen by many as being against the spirit of the FECA, because it amounts to the circumvention of the contribution limits, but it has not been outlawed. The FEC does not report bundled contributions of less than $200 (Mayberry & Heine, 1986).

In 1986, EMILY's List announced that it would attempt to help Democratic women running for Congress by acting to 'bundle' contributions to federal candidates from nationwide individuals. The PAC, or donor network as it prefers to be termed, is thereby able to circumvent the $5,000 per election limit. Bundling also allows the network's donors to earmark their contributions, thereby providing more autonomy over their contributions. This is seen as important to stop donors from feeling alienated by centralised decision making. EMILY is also believed to have brought more women into the fundraising sphere, as making a contribution was simple and easy. The List's chosen issues were fairly clear cut - and all it entailed was reading the candidates' profiles and writing a few cheques during a two year cycle.

To join EMILY's List a member must make a $100 per cycle contribution to the PAC and pledge to make donations to at least two candidates from the List. The List suggests that $100 is a suitable candidate donation, but does not enforce this. The $100 membership subscription is used to fund both the PAC's overheads, as well as the mainly in-kind direct contributions the network may choose to make. It offers help in fundraising techniques, Get-Out-The-Vote efforts, staff and candidate training, research on particular issues and on-call political operatives to offer help during the election season. The List has also involved itself in recruitment efforts, through both women candidate schools and through the targeting of districts as 'woman winnable' and attempting to find a suitable candidate for them. It is however, the bundled funds that have made EMILY a fundraising force in Democratic politics. To receive support candidates must be pro-choice Democratic women.

The network's head office looks at a complete range of campaign indicators to assess the viability of a campaign, including the district and its history, the possible opponents, the candidates' background (education, experience, etc.), their fundraising prowess and opinion within the state and the party as to the candidates' chances. They also occasionally do their own polling. All decisions as to endorsement and recommendation are made centrally by the List's staff. The List has been criticised because it will not consider any candidate who has not engaged in initial or 'benchmark' polling, at their own (and not inconsiderable) cost. The List's founder, Ellen Malcolm, says her 'No Poll, No Dough' philosophy is an important form of 'tough love'. The List has been far more discriminating concerning to whom it contributes than has been traditional with women's funding organisations. It argues that by targeting only winnable races and providing other services to enhance the prospects of victory, it is exercising a responsibility to its members that their money will not be wasted. The List claims to help candidates in two important ways: through the fact of early funding and through allowing candidates to tap into a national funding network of individuals and organisations that would otherwise be beyond the reach of many of the women candidates it supports.

"Its hard-headed willingness to choose among women candidates and concentrate resources on those Democratic women who...have a realistic chance to
Early Money, EMILY's List and Learning to Add the Zeroes

win” (Germond & Witcover, 1994) has generated criticism but, on the other hand, many say its ability to go beyond the token contribution has made a real difference. The network can quote impressive statistics as to the number of its endorsed candidates that are successful, but these may be distorted by the fact that the List only backs candidates whom it feels have a realistic chance of winning. The List, while endorsing all women who meet its tests, will not recommend a contribution to campaigns of ‘sure things’, as it sees this as a waste of its and its members’ resources. For instance, in 1994, the List endorsed 18 incumbents, all of whom were re-elected, 16 of them with 60 per cent of the vote or more. Of the 19 recommended candidates for whom contributions were solicited, eight were successful, but only four gained at least 60 per cent of the vote. The List concentrates its resources on those races where it sees it can make a difference, and it does this by foregoing the temptation just to channel money to ‘old friends’. The List has seen an increase in the number of Democratic women gaining congressional nominations from 30 in 1986 to 33 in 1988, 40 in 1990 and 70 in 1992, along with an exponential increase in the number of Democratic women in the House.

The insistence of EMILY’s List on the usefulness of early money appears to have paid off. As discussed previously, early funds can give a candidate a valuable symbolic edge as well as actual standing in the race. Women, who have been perceived as weak fundraisers (even if this is not actually the case), stand to benefit immensely from such an arrangement. The early money from the network can also help women who are unable to provide any significant level of self-financing beyond that required for initial polling and campaign establishment. The ethos of the PAC is different as well. While a commitment to reproductive choice is the policy criterion for inclusion on the List, the network does not lobby or canvass its candidates once they are elected.

1992: PUTTING WOMEN’S MONEY TO WORK FOR WOMEN

The much vaunted ‘Year of the Women’ 1992 saw a convergence of electoral opportunities that were advantageous to women candidates - a public mood that encouraged outsiders, the once-a-decade promise offered by the post-census redistricting and the inordinate number of congressional retirements, and a highly emotive issue of appeal to women - sexual harassment. This issue, generated by Anita Hill’s treatment before the all-male Senate Judiciary Committee during the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, was used by women in two ways - as signalling a policy problem and as a sign that Congress was still a men’s club.

That year saw the new generation of women’s funding groups, as well as the older organisations, ready to deal with the willingness of more women than ever to get involved in congressional elections. Many groups had been planning for 1992 since 1988. The first election after post-census redistricting is seen as advantageous to ‘outsider’ candidates, which is how women tend to be viewed. Congressional districts are liable to change, and incumbents often retire rather than choosing to contest a new district, possibly with another incumbent in the race. The 1992 election would also see a great many more ‘minority majority’ districts, which are often thought to be more accepting of candidates who wear the ‘outsider’ tag. In addition, 1992 was the last year that congressional incumbents who retired would be able to convert their unspent campaign funds into personal funds, and this was thought to be an added incentive for those eligible to take advantage of this ‘grandfather’ loophole to retire.
So in 1992 women were faced with both a changed campaign environment that emphasised early money, the promise of more open seats, the new-found ability of women’s funding groups and the mobilising factor of the Hill-Thomas controversy. It is common knowledge that women were elected to the House in record numbers, and that an unprecedented number of women stood as major party candidates. But how did the women’s electoral movement do behind the scenes?

The newer groups did better than ever, because they appeared to be offering a more effective approach to getting women elected. Many women who contributed in 1992 “were first time donors, and some had never been politically active before” (Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994, p142).

Women now had the ability to supply a significant amount of money at various stages in a campaign. The early money in 1992 made a real difference, in that it enabled women to be more ‘PAC ready’ - better equipped to solicit funds from the broader political community. Many commentators did not appreciate the new-found fundraising clout of women in politics. EMILY’s List was continually criticised for using bundling, a loophole that reform groups like Common Cause have called to be closed. (indeed, some versions of the 1993 attempt at campaign finance reform did include such closure, along with legislation currently before the Congress at the time of writing). However, imitation remains the sincerest form of flattery.

The WISH List (Women in the Senate and House) is the Republican version of EMILY’s List. Founded in 1991, its 2,000 members gave $400,000 to ‘viable’ pro-choice Republican House candidates in the 1992 election. This List was set up with the help of EMILY, which is eager to see more pro-choice women in the Congress. It is seen as especially important for WISH to fund and encourage its candidates, as the commitment to choice goes against the Republican platform’s commitment to an unqualified constitutional ban on abortion. Four of WISH’s eight pro-choice candidates were successful in 1992, and no anti-choice Republican challenger woman won that year. WISH is looking to expand its activities similarly to EMILY as its donor base increases (Nelson, 1994, p190-1).

Funding for women candidates has not been limited to organisations that specialise in supporting them. The entry of more women into the economy has influenced the flow of dollars to women candidates from business and professional associations. Most active have been PACs organised in occupations that are female dominated (Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994, p140).

Prominent among these groups is the American Nurses Association, which gave a total of $330,000 to 260 candidates in 1992. However, roughly half of this money went to 69 women candidates - and nearly all the candidates who received the maximum $5,000 contribution were women. Other traditionally women-dominated professions like teaching have also begun to flex their fundraising muscle on behalf of women candidates (Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994, 140).

PACs that have changed their agenda include the Hollywood Women’s Political Committee, a PAC of, but previously not necessarily for, women, which shifted its broader liberal agenda to a more specific aim of electing women. While bipartisan, its strong liberal bias makes it difficult for Republicans to qualify for contributions (Witt, Paget & Matthews, 1994, p141). This PAC is important for both its actual contribution, and its status within an extremely wealthy and politically active part of the community. The film industry is legendary in its generosity to candidates, and for women to have access to these networks is an important step.
CONCLUSION

There are now more women’s PACs than ever. “In the 1975-1976 election cycle, there were four women’s PACs; in the 1991-1992 election cycle, there were forty-nine women’s PACs registered with the Federal Election Commission” (Nelson, 1994, p185). Many of these PACs are List type organisations established to take advantage of this FECA loophole, and others are older groups that have been rejuvenated by their efforts to adapt to the new campaign funding environment.

For instance, the Women’s Campaign Fund has come to emulate EMILY in a new commitment to early money giving. Kelber (1994, p186) reports the Fund as starting to give contributions:

six months, nine months, even a year before a primary or general election. Sometimes WCF makes its contribution even before the formal campaign begins. We want women to have the ‘start-up’ capital they need to get their campaigns up and running.

1994 was a watershed year for groups moving to elect women to Congress. However, EMILY passed the tests posed to an avowedly liberal group in a conservative year. As noted earlier, EMILY’s List’s bundled contributions made it the biggest supporter of House and Senate candidates in 1994. As well, EMILY’s List trialed a new Get Out the Vote project in California designed to get Democratic women who were newly registered or had voted in the 1992 general election but not the 1994 primary to the polls in November. The project had a 46 per cent success rate of getting these voters to the polls, and EMILY’s List has launched a similar project nationwide in 1996.

Women’s funding groups are now in a better position to affect women’s campaigns. They have real money at their disposal, and have begun to be taken seriously. Newspaper coverage of these networks has moved from the style pages to the front page of the Wall Street Journal.

These new and changing groups have had a lot of press concentrating on their ‘different’ nature and how things are changing for women. What is changing is that women candidates and organisations are now doing what the political establishment has done for years - choosing an issue that will inspire and motivate donors, collecting their money and using it to the most advantage in races where winning is a possibility, and an adequate level of campaign funding will increase that possibility.

REFERENCES:


Women's Leadership in the Consumer Movement

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ABSTRACT

Along with other new social movements of the second half of the twentieth century, the consumer movement has developed critiques of social and industrial relations internationally and locally. It has become one of the actors struggling to influence cultural and social relations and change. Although men have been key activists and leaders, the movement owes some of its core values to the women's movement and much of its initial development and growth to women and networks of women. Much of the material on these early women leaders and on the way women worked to establish the social movement networks has lain unpublished in archives for some decades. What is revealed by this material is the influence women's community activism has had on consumer organisations and their values, and the key roles played by a few individual women who worked cooperatively and through networks and groups of women.

INTRODUCTION

The latter half of the twentieth century has seen the development of large and powerful groups of consumers determined to have a major influence on governments and producers through the use of legal and regulatory environments. It is this author's contention that the consumer movement is one of the new social movements of the second half of the twentieth century, and therefore part of the social relations and actions reforming and shaping values and political alliances throughout the world (Offe, 1987; Melucci, 1989; Touraine, 1981). Men like Ralph Nader have been depicted as consumer advocates and leaders, but women have been key leaders, activists and facilitators in this movement as well, and the women's movement has been crucial, in fact fundamental, to the consumer movement's development internationally and in local settings.

It has been argued that the so-called new social movements, the 'second wave' women's movement, environment, peace, anti-nuclear and human rights movements, and, I suggest, the consumer movement, have in common fundamental values (Inglehart, 1977, 1990). These include the right of all human beings and communities of people to live equitably in dignity and peace with others and the natural environment, to have access to the basic needs of life, and share in the decisions about how they live. These major social movements of the past 35 years have called into question the purpose and the very right to exist of powerful social institutions (Inglehart & Rabier, 1986). The key role of the women's movement in relation to all these other movements is noted by Eisler (1987, p164), "The only ideology that frontally challenges (the male-dominator) model of human relations, as well as the principle of human ranking based on violence, is...feminism. For this
reason it occupies a unique position both in modern history and in the history of our cultural evolution”.

As in much documentation and analysis of major changes in society, so in the consumer movement the key roles played by individual women and groups of women have been ignored or downplayed. Apart from the overwhelmingly patriarchal assumption that leaders and change makers are generally men, and are recorded as such, the different nature of some of the leadership styles women have exhibited in this field are also ignored or overlooked because they do not necessarily fit the image of leadership. It is a fact that the men in the movement have tended to publish more articles and books on consumer matters than women have. As Lerner (1981, p165) pointed out, an “historical interpretation of the community building of women is urgently needed”. Although such an analysis has been developing, there are numerous fields of activity that suffer from its absence. In the case of the consumer movement this is highlighted by the lack of published material on the role of women in the movement’s development, as contrasted with that on the role of men. For example, in most of the key literature on the consumer movement, there are lists of significant male consumer movement figures, with Ralph Nader the most prominent, but with very scant mention of females (Aaker & Day, 1982; Bloom & Smith, 1986; Braithwaite, 1994). It is also evidenced by the fact that, when the information for this article was being gathered in the early 1990s, virtually all the material in Australia on women’s participation in the movement was in the (at that time) uncatalogued Australian Consumers’ Association Archives. The references for much of the information in this article come from original unpublished documents in those archives.

A number of women and groups will be discussed in this article, by no means exhaustively; but at least giving a glimpse of the wealth of leadership and success of women and the women’s movement, in profoundly influencing values in the consumer movement. Brief sketches of the development of the consumer movement in Australia and internationally will be drawn, with discussion of some of the women at its forefront. Just as the women’s movement transcends national boundaries, so did women who were influential in the consumer movement. As will be discussed, women and groups of women across the globe, active in the consumer movement, drew on the international women’s movement, and on each others’ knowledge, ideas and ways of organising. This makes it impossible to speak of the Australian experience without discussing the influence of women internationally.

BACKGROUND TO THE CONSUMER MOVEMENT

The term consumer movement has been used to refer to a particular social movement concerned with the rights of people who purchase and consume products and services. This movement has evolved though, during the last 25 years to embrace a much wider value orientation than the monitoring of products and the protection of buyers from shoddy manufacture and high prices.

The earliest organised citizen groups in the modern era specifically dealing with consumer issues were formed in the United States of America. Harty (1983, p20-25) traces the early consumer consciousness in the America to unionisation in the early 1900s. She points out that it was during those years before World War I and in the 1920s that unionists began recognising themselves as consumers and as a significant and powerful sector of society. To this Harty adds the banding together of housewives during the depression to organise themselves over exorbitant prices for essential items and poor quality products. Then, with the beginnings of affluence in
the mid 1930s, middle-class women and professional men demanded better quality control and some form of redress over badly made goods and dangerous products. Consumer groups were emerging in Scandinavia at the same time in a slightly different way with the formation of cooperatives based on the United Kingdom model of union organised stores for workers (International Organisation of Consumer Unions, 1980). There was though a deeper vision of the potential and significance of these groups.

A fine example of such an early leader and of the connections and interdependence among the union, women's and consumer movements is Esther Peterson, who was the International Organisation of Consumer Unions' (IOCU) representative to the United Nations (UN) during the 1970s and 80s. She anticipated the value orientations which were gradually to gain dominance in the consumer movement during the rest of this century. In the 1930s, in America, Esther was a union organiser for textile 'sweat shop' workers and developed close alliances with the women's movement and the emerging consumer groups to gain better conditions for the women workers she represented (Australian Consumers Association, 1988, p.30; Harrison, 1980, p.639). She made the connections between justice and equity for workers and fair and just dealing for the consumer, evidenced in her co-founding the Consumers' League for Fair Labor Standards, through which she organised to have white labels sewn onto garments made under fair labour conditions. She also recognised the potential for consumers to struggle for basic rights such as safe, healthy and affordable food, homes and workplaces for all.

For the next 50 years Esther was a prominent and influential leader in the union and then the consumer movements. In the 1950s she was assigned as a union lobbyist, to Senator John F. Kennedy, a wonderful decision, as when Kennedy became President in 1961, he knew exactly whom to appoint as the new Director to the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department. Kennedy also appointed her as Assistant Secretary of Labor, from which position she was able to move very effectively for women's status in the workplace. She ensured that a Women's Commission (with Eleanor Roosevelt as Chair) was set up, that equal opportunity policies were introduced into the Civil Service, and that the Equal Pay Act 1963 was passed. She was involved in ensuring that women's rights were included in the civil rights demands of the time (Harrison, 1980, p.637). Harrison argues that Peterson's activities during this period laid a basis for more radical demands of the women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s (1980, p.646). She maintained that consumers can, and do, influence government and organisations' attitudes to human rights and working rights, and that they can use their buying power to indicate what is and is not acceptable policy and practice in these spheres by refusing to buy certain goods, complaining to manufacturers and demanding government regulation or intervention (Australian Consumers Association, 1988, p.29-31). In the late 1980s, at over 80 years of age, Esther was still energetically lobbying as the IOCU representative to the UN, this time for the UN Code of Conduct for Transnational Corporations, and for public health standards in the food industry (Australian Consumers Association, 1988, 31). Peterson indeed represents value and action interconnections amongst the women's, trade union and consumer movements, spanning six decades.

In Australia, Ruby Hutchison combined her struggle for women's rights and connections with the labour movement with her leadership in the development of the Australian Consumers' Association, which today is the pre-eminent consumers' body in Australia.
THE HON. RUBY HUTCHISON

Ruby Hutchison (1892-1974), widowed in her thirties, opened her house as a boarding residence to support her children and became a successful businesswomen. But it was not the acquisition of money and property that was Ruby's interest. She was a person of strong social conscience. She came across needs around her and energetically set out to meet them. She founded the Western Australian Epilepsy Association, slow learning children's groups and was an active member of the Mental Health Association (undated notes and clippings, Australian Consumer Association Archives).

She was also a member of the Australian Labor Party and when her children were no longer dependent on her, she stood for the Western Australian Upper House. She was already well known as a fighter for the rights of the disabled and poor women and had a reputation in the Labor Party for outspokenness and integrity. She was elected to the Western Australian Legislative Council in 1954, the first woman to serve in that chamber.

As a woman who had spent much of her life buying food and household products for her family and boarders, she was acutely aware of the effect price rises had on family budgets, of the effect of a poor quality product and of the exploitation of ordinary workers by companies and industries which had no accountability to consumers or in law. She was also thoroughly committed to women's equal participation and status and set about making these points in her Legislative Council speeches. Speeches related to the labour movement included *Price Control: Countering Greed for Excess Profits; Sharing Profits of Production* (WAPD Legislative Council 1.11.55); and *Long Service Leave in Private Industry* (WAPD Legislative Council 19.11.57). Those towards women's equality included *Jury System Reform; Recognition of Women's Claim for Service as Jurors* (WAPD Legislative Council, 1957); *Voting for the Legislative Council. Abolition of an "Obsolete" System Urged. A Move to Substitute Adult Franchise* (WAPD Legislative Council, 4.11.59) (This was to enfranchise all women).

Mrs Hutchison had therefore, a long and distinguished record of demanding women's and consumers' rights. She began to feel during the 1950s that a national organisation of consumers was essential if industry and government were to be responsible for their products and policies. She had heard of the United States Consumers' Union (CU) and felt an organisation based on such a model would be ideal. The CU had established itself by that time as a formidable analyst of private and public corporations publicly demanding accountability and reforms in the fields of environmental, health, aged care, manufacturing, nuclear and consumer rights policies. She knew such a group would have wide support as she was constantly hearing from constituents complaining about prices, misleading advertising and poor quality products, and she was keen to see broader accountability in government services as well.

THE FORMATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION

In Eastern Australia a small group of Hutchison's friends were thinking along the same lines as she was. Ruby Hutchison knew the Lord Mayor of Sydney at the time, the Hon. Harry Jensen, and Roland Thorp, Professor of Pharmacology at Sydney University. Both were keen to see such a group established. She wrote to the newly formed United Kingdom group, the Consumers' Association and to the CU of the United States. With their help and encouragement she decided to approach her
friends in Sydney about forming an organisation there, since she felt it would be impossible to get a consumers' organisation up and running from Western Australia. She had another good reason for choosing Sydney. Her daughter, Ivy-May Sheahan, lived there and was willing to take on much of the workload.

In 1959 the Hon. Hutchison held the inaugural meeting of the Australasian Consumers' Association (ACA) in Sydney Town Hall. Professor Thorp, Mrs Sheahan and committed friends and relations were in attendance. From the beginning it was to be non-profit, non-political and accepting of no government or industry subsidies or advertising (ACA, 1984). The ACA was incorporated in 1959, and in 1962 changed its name to Australian Consumers’ Association. Ivy-May Sheahan arranged most of the earliest meetings and publications of Choice, the ACA’s monthly magazine, from her home.

Hutchison's foresight and commitment to fairness and social justice, her use of the networks she had established, and her sheer energy and hard work helped pull together those who, at that time in Australia, were already aware of the need for a consumers' organisation. Her actions also raised the consciousness of tens of thousands of people who were at last able to become informed about products they were buying and services they were getting, and could look to advocacy on their behalf. The ACA took its place as the major national consumers' organisation and its growth and changes in direction were, and are, important factors in understanding the development of the consumer and health consumer movements in Australia.

FLORENCE MASON

At the same time as Hutchison was starting the ACA, Florence Mason was nearing her retirement from the CU in the USA. She was to take up a voluntary position as the newly formed IOCU representative at the United Nations, a position which helped revolutionise that organisation and the value orientation of the movement, including in Australia. This shift saw the consumer movement become truly international, with the main issues for IOCU becoming basic needs of living such as clean water, housing, community health, the provision of staple food at fair prices and citizens' rights to education, information and just treatment. The formative and persuasive leadership and lobbying by Florence Mason was vital to this development and is worthy of close examination.

Mason had spent 22 years on the staff of the Consumer Union of the United States of America as its foundation librarian, education officer and Group Leaders' newsletter editor, when she retired in August 1961 at the age of 65. She had been a most valuable member of the CU staff. But her contribution to the consumer movement was to enter an even more effective phase with her honorary assignment as an Education Officer with the IOCU, which had been formed in 1960 by the consumer organisations of the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, the Netherlands and Belgium. It was supposedly a temporary position, but one which broadened out to become the IOCU presence at the United Nations for the next 10 years, and the vital link between the many struggling consumer groups in developing countries. A substantial holding of letters from Mason to consumer group members around the world tell the story.

Sometime in early 1965, the Deputy Chairman of the ACA, Dr Henry Epstein, asked Mason to send him copies of her reports on the UN and her correspondence with consumer groups around the world. She did that with dedication, resulting in a fascinating insight into the massive influence she exercised through the interactions
of the UN and the consumer movement in the form of the IOCU and its scattered members (this correspondence is held in the ACA archives). It is clear from the increasingly strong bias towards Third World needs and the broad matters of health, peace and equitable world resource distribution, that Mason's consciousness of these areas was constantly being raised by her exposure to United Nations' forums and the letters she received from women leaders in developing country consumer groups. She in turn saw all these issues as the true focus of the consumer movement.

Whatever the shortcomings we now recognise in the UN, in those earlier days Mason began to see the work of the UN as a key instrument for consumers to use in their struggles. In a letter to the President of the CU in June 1965 she wrote,

Consumers need to know about the UN peace keeping efforts because consumers are the victims in shooting wars. Consumers need to understand such UN programs as the search for sources of natural energy... about UN work to conserve natural resources...because the future cost of living will be influenced by the success or failure of these programs.

She went on to talk of the anti-apartheid, human rights and refugee programmes in the same vein, making the clear assumption that all these were consumer issues and were the right and proper domain for consumer organisations. Mason was answering the question already outlined as being a fundamental one for the ACA; that is, where should consumer groups be putting their greater energies - into product monitoring or into the larger, universal issues of equity and justice in people's quality of living? Her exposure to United Nations forums over those few years obviously convinced her of the necessity for seeing that question on a global scale and of convincing others. Her wide and energetic correspondence over the following five years was dedicated to raising consciousness on just those matters.

In a letter to Dr. Epstein in 1966, Mason lobbied persuasively for the IOCU to broaden its scope. She went on to warn that, if the IOCU did not give equal weight to those basic human matters, then "another international organisation dedicated to the broad needs of all consumers" would have to be formed. It is a tribute, in no small part to Florence Mason, that such a scenario did not eventuate.

The inappropriateness of transplanting western consumer groups' values onto developing countries became a constant theme for her. She wrote to Mr van Veen of the IOCU, in June 1966,

It is apparent that consumer problems in a developing country such as Tanzania involve much more than advice and information about wise spending. Consumer problems are interwoven with problems of adult education, literacy, nutrition, food preparation, sanitation, improved agriculture and many more...consumer education programs need to become part of all other programs that contribute to improved levels of living.

At that time she was unsure of how consumer organisations could contribute to solutions, but she was clear that non-government organisations (NGOs) were "the voice of the people, and that our interests are international" and that "NGOs prod the conscience of the nation" (Report No 75, 1966). Mason obviously equated NGOs with consumer organisations and regarded all as being part of the consumer movement. She later came to believe that consumer groups had to cooperate, even amalgamate, with other social change groups to achieve basic rights and that the UN path was a vital one. She recognised that consumer groups could contribute to UN work for the advancement of women, to UNESCO's literacy efforts and to FAO's food programmes (to Warne, in 1967).
During her time as the IOCU representative to the UN, Mason gradually developed and refined a Manual for Establishing a Consumer Organisation in Developing Countries. This she sent to the many inquirers who wrote to her seeking help and contact with the international network of consumer groups. The networking strategy she developed and used is the same as that later observed by Melucci (1989) in other social movement groups.

Along with this manual she sent a revealing letter in response to an inquiry from the President of the National Consumer Union on the Island of Mauritius, outlining the tasks consumer groups were tackling:

...Problems consumer organisations around the world have been, or are now working on, include: 1. legislation to improve the purity of food and drugs 2. water pollution 3. air pollution 4. prices 5. health services 6. credit costs 7. safety of consumer goods 8. quality of consumer goods 9. costs of necessary consumer services 10. insurance rates and coverage 11. weights and measures 12. food additives 13. comparative testing of consumer goods 14. consumer education. (Dec 4, 1967)

Such a list indicates a substantial network covering a wide variety of consumer problems.

Of growing significance in Mason’s letters was the critical nature of environmental pollution and the need for consumer organisations to be highly active in demand changes to industry and government practices to stem the tide of disaster. As well as the growing frequency, in her letters, of the problem of pollution, she gave much space to reporting the New York Consumer Assembly of 1968 at which Ralph Nader gave the keynote address. His major emphasis was on the threat to the whole quality of the environment due to air, water, chemical and radiation pollution and soil contamination, and he urged consumers to work to obtain government funds for technical, non-profit organisations to work full-time on environmental pollution. Mason backed up Nader’s call by urging the IOCU to take up the challenge (to Mr van Veen, in 1968).

She also constantly urged consumer group leaders to challenge the might of armament producers:

...the real enemies of mankind - poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance - are neglected because the wealth of the world is diverted to armaments. (to Warne, No 24, 1967)

That consumers should be forced to ‘consume’ the results of war and the diverting of funds to war machinery, were crucial matters to be dealt with by consumer groups everywhere. She argued for consumers to be fully informed of,

...the real hazards involved in the misuse of nuclear military power and the ever-present possibility of a nuclear accident. (Report, May 2, 1968)

In preparing for the 1968 IOCU Conference, Mason reflected on what she had argued should be central,

I tried to make the point that it should be possible to develop the theme that consumers have a right to an adequate level of living, and further that consumers have the right to live as human beings as well as users of goods and services. I would like to see some emphasis on the right of consumers to decide what is progress - building a peaceful world, reducing poverty, hunger, ignorance disease - or are consumers to think of progress as 2 TV sets and 3
automobiles? In other words, what really are our goals? ...our goals should go beyond...information about goods offered for sale. (to Mr van Veen in 1967).

That the IOCU used Mason's vision in its description of its aims (IOCU 1983) some 15 years later is tribute to her persuasiveness and to the large numbers of developing country organisations she had helped bring into the IOCU and who also demanded a broader agenda.

WOMEN'S NETWORKS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

It was due, in large part, to Mason's initiatives, her commitment to women's advancement and her prolific and persistent correspondence with embryonic consumer groups in developing countries, that those groups moved into the international consumer movement and were supported and encouraged.

Although she had made contact with some groups or individuals in developing countries before, it was the National Council of Women (NCW) Conference in Colombia, April 13th 1966 which spurred Mason on to systematic efforts to establish ongoing and formal links with them and the many others she knew were trying to form. She was particularly interested in women's groups. In her report to Dr Warne on the Conference, she wrote that current economic problems, the status of women, education, land reform, military governments, arts and culture were discussed.

She went on to say that these discussions, ...

...seem[ed] to indicate a need for consumer organisations in Latin America. Such associations could help to bridge the wide gap between the elite and the masses...Consumer organisations could help both women and men to give attention to new ideas, new ways and changes required to improve their condition (to Dr Warne, Report no. 74, 1966).

She expressed the hope that the Colombian NCW would start a consumer organisation and that other NCWs would then do the same. In August and September of that year she wrote to Señora Quezada, Honduras; Mrs Suarez, Argentina; Mrs Sosa, the Dominican Republic; Mrs Benavides, the Philippines; and Mrs Rog-Swiestek, Poland, encouraging them to set up consumer groups or build up any existing ones. Letters over the next year were to women leaders in Pakistan, India, Thailand, South Korea, Iran, Tanzania, Guatemala, the West Indies and Malawi. It is quite clear from these letters that all the consumer groups in these countries grew out of women's organisations or out of the energy and foresight of individual women and that, through Florence's energetic networking, they became part of the international movement and of IOCU. This way of organising and achieving change is one that is reflected upon by Vickers (1988) in her discussion of women's involvement in political life. She observes that women have traditionally formed groups and become personally involved to get things done (1988, p3-4). She goes on to note that women's political activity is more likely to occur in community-based groups or as a result of prior group activity (1988, p16). Vickers' analysis highlights the interactive, networking activity of women as a key to getting things done in the same way that Mason and the women she worked with got things done. It is testimony to the lack of knowledge of Mason's work that the argument was being made by McConnell & Taylor (1988) that consumer organisations should give more credence to the power of community work and networks to mobilise consumers. This is exactly what Mason did so successfully. Zaini (1988), President of the Education and Research Association for Consumers in Malaysia and coordinator
of the Health Action International News of IOCU, points to evidence, that women have formed consumer groups across the world.

Mason tried to convince van Veen of the vital importance of the support of women’s groups and in one letter quoted the words of Mrs Dyke of Malawi:

> It [organising consumers] can be done through women’s organisations and should be part of the educational activities in the programmes of the Associated Country Women of the World, the International Council of Women and the Women’s International (to van Veen in 1967).

During the mid-to-late 1960s the growth and inclusion of developing country consumer organisations in the IOCU was mainly due to Mason maintaining this network of women around the globe, getting them to conferences and meetings and supplying them with literature and information whereby they were able to develop independently, but in league with other groups.

The way things were developing in the affluent Western countries was still of great concern to Mason, even though much of her attention was on the developing countries. Her dedication to environmental conservation, peace and equity as key consumer matters has been noted. She was well versed in the political manoeuverings and lobbying needed to gain any ground in the United States of America. In that vein, her letter to the Australian Consumers’ Association in May, 1996 is of interest:

> A Bill has been introduced in the US Congress to provide for a Department of the Consumer with a Secretary in President Johnson’s Cabinet. It is not likely to become law but the discussion, press reports and hearings will give much needed publicity to the plight of consumers in our affluent society... automobile safety, air pollution, water pollution, commuter and mass transportation and slum clearance are all receiving much more attention than a few years ago.

It is, again, the scope of the consumers’ interests which is remarkable. In fact, Mason had taken the National Council of Women, USA, to task not long before, for their narrow, middle-class self-interest. She had attended a NCW Conference in March 1966 and had been appalled at the support given to advertising and the ethos of commercial profit. She stated in strong terms that it was “morally wrong to spend billions of dollars to develop 5,000 new products each year” (to Mrs Scarlatos, 28th March 1966) and criticised the NCW for giving no consideration to the problems of low income families. “Efforts on behalf of the ‘have not’ population seem to me to be more relevant than trying to push more and more goods and services at the affluent in the US.” By 1978 the IOCU with more than 100 affiliated organisations, one third of them from developing countries were espousing Mason’s argument (IOCU, 1980). In the USA the CU was setting up a lobbying office on just such matters in Washington (Herrmann, 1991, p125).

**CHANGES IN THE IOCU**

Mason’s influence upon IOCU directions can be seen in the increased emphasis on these broader issues in IOCU publications, in conference themes and in tasks undertaken by the IOCU, despite the rather patronising responses of some of the leadership. For example, Dr Epstein, then ACA’s representative to IOCU, replied to some of her letters thus: “your priceless enthusiasm...you do miss the point a little” (Epstein to Mason, 3.2.66); “You see Florence, this is not an idea...First, millions of your needy consumers can’t read” (Epstein to Mason, 15.2.66).
Due in large part to Mason’s strong urgings, in 1966 the IOCU organised a special meeting for consumer groups from developing countries to hear what they saw as their problems and solutions and to give what support it could. Such voice by the developing countries finally resulted in the establishment, in 1974, of an IOCU Regional Office in Asia - first in Singapore, then in Penang. This centre gradually took over much of the activism of the IOCU. Mason’s constant themes were taken up as the heart of the IOCU’s task:

> Clearly the consumer movement’s role in underdeveloped societies is a far cry from concerning itself with what is the best buy. People in these societies are not so concerned with the cost of living as they are with the cost of survival. (IOCU, 1983, p4)

During the 1970s and 1980s the IOCU set up networks reflecting the changed emphasis. These watchdog organisations - IBFAN (International Baby Food Action Network), HAI (Health Action International), PAN (Pesticide Action Network) and Consumer Interpol (international early warning system on the dumping of hazardous materials) - are a far cry from the product testing and comparison of IOCU’s early days and attest to the fact that the IOCU and many of its member organisations had begun to see the consumer movement as a citizens’ rights movement in the very way Florence Mason had urged in the 1960s.

In the IOCU document prepared by the Penang Office, Protecting Tomorrow’s World Today (IOCU, 1983), consumer rights and responsibilities are listed. These clearly establish the scope of the consumer movement as encompassing and working with the health, environment and human rights movements. At the IOCU Consumer Policy 2000 Seminar in New York, 27-29 May, a Consumer Manifesto was agreed to, reaffirming the direction set by the ASEAN statement and stating clearly that the agenda of the consumer movement is access to essential goods and services and fair choice, safety, information, representation, redress, consumer education, and a healthy environment (IOCU Annual Report 1986).

This framework in which the IOCU operates clearly reflects the earlier vision of Mason and the many women leaders with whom she formed an international network. The ACA and other local consumer groups in Australia continued to owe much of their development to women and women’s networks with, for example, Philippa Smith (currently the Commonwealth Ombudsman) and then Louise Sylvan being the public face of the ACA over the 1980s and 1990s, and Suzanne Russell, formerly Chair of the Australian Federation of Consumer Organisations, and currently Chair of the ACA. Dr Val Brown in Canberra has been a leader in Canberra Consumers and Health Care Consumers Association of the ACT (Brown, 1983) and more recently has illustrated the interconnections between the consumers, health, women’s and environmental movements with her work and action on ecological and social sustainability (Brown, 1992).

**CONCLUSION**

The kind of leadership and vision depicted in this article is of cooperation, building on networks and communities of women and raising consciousness by increasing information flow and access to forums. Both individuals and communities of women have provided both practical and value oriented leadership. The interdependence between the individual and the community and between ‘community development and the development of individual potential’ (Sawer, 1993, p8) is a clear theme in these women’s work and achievements. Local and international manifestations of
the consumer movement drew strongly on values being carried forward in the women's movement and found some of its most influential leadership in women and women's networks.

FOOTNOTES

1 IOCU changed its name to Consumers International in 1995.

REFERENCES

Note: Almost all information on the women discussed in this article was gathered from unpublished material in the Australian Consumer Association's archives. At that time the archives were not catalogued. The material was originally collected during 1990-1991 for the author's Ph.D research on the health consumer movement in Australia.


Australian Consumer Association (ACA) Archives, Marrickville, NSW Australia: Holdings of original letters, clippings, minutes, undated notes and memos dating from the inaugural meeting of the Association and covering national and international contacts with the ACA.


EDITOR'S NOTE:
This 'Historical Note' has been included in this Special Issue in view of the 75th Anniversary of the election of Edith Cowan as the first woman to an Australian Parliament.

Historical Note

Breaking the Monumental Mould: How the Edith Cowan Clock was Built

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Justice is not spoken of as a woman ... because women were thought to be just ... Liberty is not represented as a woman, from the colossus in New York to the ubiquitous Marianne, figure of the French Republic, because women were or are free (Warner, 1985, pxix-xx).

As Marian Warner suggests, the presence of the female form often signals the absence of flesh and blood women. The female form represents abstract ideals - 'liberty', 'justice', 'Australia' - her fragile 'leaky' status often sealed or strengthened with armoury of various sorts which 'shows that her allegiance lies with the fathers' (Warner, 1985, p250). Warner suggests that real women are less often represented in monuments; thus allowing their allegorical form to stand for community virtues. My own research reveals that women and men from the subordinate groups are represented in monuments, but in a pattern which I call 'hierarchical pluralism' (Bulbeck, 1988, 1991, 1992).

Memorials which record histories from below contrast unnamed and collective lesser mortals with the individuals who made the nation great. They describe lesser mortals as the helpmates of famous men, for example, Aboriginal guides who help white explorers. Unpleasant truths are confined to the past, where they can be safely celebrated, a constant refrain in worker memorials. Fourthly, the location of memorials supports hierarchical pluralism. The major concourses of Adelaide, for example, are dominated by monarchs, premiers and explorers. One has to travel to provincial towns, suburban parks, even lonely roadsides, to find memorials which commemorate history from below.

The final major way in which histories from below are included but distinguished is via the memorial form, both in size and function. The Macquarie Dictionary includes in the definition of monuments 'a building especially one that is not necessary or functional'. Such memorials tend to be more costly, for example, bronze statues, and are usually erected in busy locations as an outstanding element of the streetscape or parkscape. In contrast, the most common forms of memorial construction to ordinary folk are either the useful monument, for example, a seat, a clock, a bird bath, a drinking fountain, or the informative cairn, much loved by historical societies. In my own survey of unusual monuments in Australia, 19 per
cent of the statues, obelisks and busts were dedicated to women. In contract, 24 per cent of the useful memorials and 32 percent of the cairns and plaques were dedicated to women. Examples of hierarchical pluralism are the pioneer women monuments (to unnamed women as a collectivity) in Adelaide (1936), Perth (1965) and Melbourne (1975) which are sheltered in hollows, and half-hidden in gardens or fountains.

Given this context, the phallic clock tower erected to Edith Cowan high on a hill in central Perth contradicts almost all the elements of hierarchical pluralism. How did this monument come to be erected? Not without difficulty, is the short answer.

POSSESSING ‘THE MIND OF A MAN’ SHE DESERVES THE MEMORIAL OF A MAN

The Edith Cowan clock tower outside Kings Park in Perth commemorates the first female member of parliament in Australia. Cowan was “a member of an extraordinary number of committees and organisations, as well as participating in founding the Western Australian National Council for Women in 1912 over which she presided for nine years” (International Review of Women and Leadership, 1995, p64-5). She campaigned for female suffrage, women’s entry into the legal and other professions, the promotion of the welfare of migrants, children, deserted wives, and mothers. Edith Cowan clearly took her feminism into parliament, for example, proposing that women should be paid for their domestic work, and that this award should be included in the Industrial Arbitration Act (Sawer & Simms, 1993, p89).

The Edith Cowan Memorial Committee asserted that Cowan deserved to be recognised as a man would be remembered. The Committee resolved in September 1932:

That in view of the State and nation-wide activities of the late Mrs Cowan, in the interests of humanity, we, who are proud to look upon her as one of Australia’s greatest women, urge that any memorial to her memory should be of a permanent character and preferably should take the form of a monument to be erected in Kings Park where other great Australian pioneers are honoured. (minutes, 22 September 1932, Edith Cowan Memorial Committee Minutes, Accession Number 482A, Battye Library).

However, this view was not universally shared. The Kings Park Board wrote to the Committee in October that they were “disinclined to favourably view the erection of further memorials other than national ones, within the Kings Park”, thus denying Mrs Cowan the status of a national figure. A letter to the editor reiterated the theme of the Kings Park Board that “only a thoroughly representative national memorial should be placed in such a ‘unique’ place as the circus, seen by every visitor to Perth”. (enclosed correspondence, Accession Number 482A, Battye Library).

Given the response of the Kings Park Board the Mayor then sought and won the approval of the Perth City Council for the erection of the memorial at the entrance to Kings Park. At this point, the Royal Institute of Architects entered the debate, protesting publicly, later with the support of the Town Planning Institute, on the grounds that the “proposed memorial was not an inspiring work of art”. By the time tenders for the tower and clock were received, the Town Planning Commissioner had taken out an injunction to prevent the erection of the raised paving necessary to build the memorial. The injunction claimed that obstructions on main highways were dangerous, citing as proof a recent High Court decision on a South Australian case and the death of a motorist in East Melbourne. Dwyer refused
the injunction, stating that it had not been demonstrated that the memorial would be an undue obstruction, or that the Court should lightly arrogate to itself the responsibility for over-riding decisions made by the people’s representatives (unannotated newspaper article, Accession Number 482A, Battye Library).

Despite support for the erection of a memorial, Edith Cowan presented a dilemma to both friends and foes. In his attempt to justify her memorial, Councillor Boas reinscribed Cowan as a representative of the nameless women of the State. He wrote to the Memorial Committee:

Some questions have been raised as to whether Mrs Cowan’s services to the state warrant such an outstanding site. I, however, look upon the proposal not so much as a personal tribute to Mrs Cowan, as a memorial of the part which the women of Western Australia have played in the development of this great State - a part in directions and in extent no less than that played by our men (Statement submitted at his request from Cr. J.H. Boas, accession Number 482A, Battye Library).

But such a claim did not justify a ‘male’ memorial form for Edith Cowan. Thus, another strategy was the assertion that Cowan was an honorary man:

She was an excellent speaker and a brilliant thinker. She was one of the best read women in Western Australia ... It has often been said she possessed the mind of a man (unannotated newspaper article, Accession Number 482A, Battye Library).

However, while Cowan had achieved in a male domain, and therefore deserved a male memorial, her specifically female virtues could not be laid aside. To avoid becoming a monstrosity, Cowan must be both feminine and the equal of men in the public domain. At the funeral burial service it was noted:

In assisting to make the laws of the land, in helping to see that those laws were observed, in tending the sick and the needy, in doing her part during the war by helping those whom the fighting men left behind, in the Red Cross field where she did valuable work, in making the lot of others easier, and in many other directions the late Mrs Cowan had served the State and humanity. Also, she played a fine part in private life (unannotated newspaper article, ‘Edith Cowan Memorial Committee Minutes’, Accession Number 482A, Battye Library).

Edith Cowan’s private capacities were elaborated in an obituary by ‘Airlie’:

Edith Cowan was a marvellous friend, counsellor, and confidante, beloved by thousands of her fellow women, high and low, rich and poor, young and old. Not only can her own children ‘rise up and call her blessed’ but scores of other people’s children too. Her kindness, sympathy, and help were never withheld from any seeking it. Mrs Cowan’s public life occupied much of her time, but her home always came first ... she set her own house in order, and arranged first for the smooth running of the home before setting out to help in the activities of many organisations with which she was connected or directed.

Thus, perhaps the greatest tribute to her is to say she was true woman through and through, with a deep and everlasting love for her own sex.

Edith Cowan has ‘the mind of a man’ but is a ‘woman through and through’. On the one hand, then, she gains the right to be remembered by sharing the attributes of a man, the public status of a man and the mind of a man. Yet her difference cannot be erased: she must remain a woman ‘through and through’, dedicating herself first
and foremost to her private duties, whatever her public successes. The *International Review of Women and Leadership* (1995, p64) grappled with this dilemma in its own written 'memorial' to Edith Cowan, noting that the effect of her work concerned not only "the lot of women, but also children, families, the poor, the under-educated, and the elderly". It is not her domestic sphere that competes here with her public sphere activities, but rather the need to allay any suspicion that she worked 'only' for the needs of women, rather than all humanity. Thus, echoing the dilemma created sixty years ago, Cowan was a woman who took a female perspective into a masculine realm. A memorial which challenges hierarchical pluralism is thus a fitting way to remember her, as is a university, once the exclusive domain of men. The plaque on her memorial reminds us that Cowan brought her own meaning to public service:

ERECTED IN HONOUR OF
EDITH DIRCKSEY COWAN, OBE, JP
BY THOSE WHO ADMIRE
HER MANY GOOD WORKS FOR HUMANITY
1861 - 1932
FIRST WOMAN MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
IN AUSTRALIA
A LIFE OF SERVICE

FOOTNOTES

1 My thanks to the Institute for Cultural Polity Studies and to Hecate for allowing me to reproduce sections of work previously published.

2 Based on a survey in 1986 and 1987 in which the Australian Bicentennial Authority provided access to the 800 local Bicentennial Community Committee (BCCs) which covered most of Australia. Two-thirds of BCCs responded, submitting 600 monuments for consideration. The two major recording agencies were local history groups and councils. From this I compiled "A National Register of Unusual Monuments", defined as monuments erected to the 'other' Australians (Aborigines, non Anglo-Celtic immigrants, workers, Anglo-Celtic women) and to 'ordinary' people (As opposed to explorers, monarchs, political leaders).

REFERENCES


For myself, as for many women in the English-speaking world who reached adulthood in the 1960s, Gloria Steinem was ubiquitous, glamorous and always doing something courageous and meaningful. Like a politically-aware, literary Jean Shrimpton she presented us with a radical new image of ourselves and our potential. Carolyn Heilbrun’s book is a comprehensive but uncompromising account of the many facets of Steinem’s life beyond the media image of miniskirts, glamorous men and feminist confrontations. It includes anecdotes and analyses which will be of interest to the readers of this journal because of Steinem’s lifelong capacity to organise and lead.

Heilbrun is a retired academic whose specialties include British literature, the novel and feminism. The book is long but beautifully written and printed, and therefore easy to read. The fourteen chapters are chronologically arranged and represent discrete phases or influences in Steinem’s life including: the unconventional childhood with her larger-than-life and adored father; the role of sole carer of her disturbed mother which occupied her from 11 to 17 years of age (and the rat-ridden poverty in which they lived); the magical escape to Smith, one of the ‘Seven Sisters’ elite colleges of establishment USA; ‘finding herself’ as a grassroots advocate of the lower castes in India long before such experiences became fashionable; her return to become a New York journalist and companion to the glitterati; her growing political activism and conversion to feminism; her 16-year editorship of *Ms.*; her vilification by a spectrum of vested interests from fundamentalist Christians to radical feminists; and finally the physical and psychological crises which re-oriented her life after she turned fifty.

As a scholar of organisational and political relationships I find particularly interesting the accounts of the development of Steinem’s skills as a journalist, and political activist and facilitator; of how she penetrated and rejected the patriarchal structures of the media and presidential politics; of her ideological conversion to feminism and her pragmatic expression of that commitment in the form of a glossy magazine for and by women; of her long struggle to keep *Ms.* afloat despite the exercise of antagonistic power by corporate barons with huge financial clout in the form of the capacity to withdraw or deny advertising revenue; and of the physical and psychological toll she paid for absorbing such struggles into her conciliatory and non-hierarchical organisational persona.

Academics will also identify with the story of Steinem’s ‘sabbatical’ as a rare woman Woodrow Wilson Fellow, particularly one whose career had been established outside academe. Many women will recognise in themselves her desire to consider men as ‘the unopposite sex’ despite her feminist convictions. Some of the most piercing accounts of how she was treated by men come from the men who have loved her.
Heilbrun denies that her work is the definitive biography of Steinem, arguing that such a complex personality and career can only be fully appreciated through many different perspectives. Therefore she appraises quite critically Steinem's weaknesses of being over-responsive to requests for help; her inability to learn from experience that adversaries are not charitable; her failure to delegate financial decision-making responsibility for *Ms.*; and her almost fatal blindness to the fact that, in her management of *Ms.*, she was replicating the burdens imposed on her in adolescence by her mother's dependence.

The flaws in Heilbrun's book are minor. American-centricity is sometimes irritating, and is most obvious in Heilbrun's explanation of the effects of having a mother like Ruth Steinem. At the risk of over-generalisation I suggest that Australian women do not experience their mothers as "working to entrap their daughters exactly as they have been entrapped" in quite the universal way Heilbrun suggests that American women do.

The positives of reading, and re-reading, the book far outweigh the negatives. For all women Heilbrun offers a meticulously rigorous insight into the second wave feminist maelstrom in the USA which inevitably affected the rest of the western world and beyond. Older women will enjoy revisiting the events and images which shaped their adulthood. For younger women, the book details the pain of pursuing liberation and ends with Steinem's energy turning towards helping them with their own particular needs. For men, Heilbrun shows how 'the sex object that objected' could be 'critical of a system which placed the needs of men at its centre' and also be a lover, a colleague, but most of all, a friend.

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Taking a Stand: Women in Politics and Society, edited by Jocelynne Scutt  
Published by Artemis, Melbourne, 1994.  
ISSN: 1 875658 12 2, 286 pages, AUD$19.95.

Yet another book compiled and published by the indefatigable Jocelynne Scutt who now has 25 titles under her name in the National Library Catalogue, plus nine works of feminist crime fiction under the name Melissa Chan. In her spare time Jocelynne is a barrister, law reformer, public speaker and publisher (Artemis is her own imprint). This is the fifth book in her 'Women's Voices, Women's Lives' series and contains the ongoing project of giving voice to women from a range of ethnic and social backgrounds.

In this volume women are talking about the processes whereby they became politicised and what has sustain them in politics. For some, the political awakening was through involvement in the women's movement or community activism; for others political parents gave them a head start. The form taken by their political activism also varies enormously - from Donna Jackson who founded the Women's Circus to empower survivors of sexual abuse to Judy Jackson who brought her feminist concerns into the Tasmanian Cabinet.

The majority of the contributors have been active at the community level, where most women's political activity takes place, but some have pushed into the
male-dominated arenas of trade union and parliamentary politics or into the newly feminised arena of student politics (Misha Schubert). Eva Johnson has expressed her politics through theatre, while Carmelle Pavan has used the medium of ethnic radio. Violence is a major concern of contributors, often stemming from personal experience, and encompassing domestic violence, sexual abuse, military and state-imposed violence, pornography and lesbian sado-masochism (Sheila Jeffreys).

The turning point is often of particular interest - whether Marlene Goldsmith at the age of nine being told she couldn’t be an altar boy (she now campaigns for equal opportunity from within the New South Wales Legislative Council), or Jean Arnot at the age of 30 being told she was only going to get 54 per cent of the male wage (she went on to another 60 years of active struggle for equal pay before her death this year).

The book as a whole, however, is somewhat less than the sum of its parts. The inspirational stories of women inspired by courageous mothers, helped along by the strength of other women, gaining joy in the struggle but also pain when sisters fall out, after a while begin to pall. I’m not sure to what extent this tendency to the formulaic is a consequence of guidelines given to the contributors or the role of the editor, which must have been considerable when contributors supplied ‘difficult tapes’ rather than written pieces. The book would gain from some methodological reflections and stronger analytic framing. There are a few factual errors in the Introduction where Premier Kingston is described as a conservative leader and wrong dates are given for Aboriginal enfranchisement at State level.

In short, an important source book like the others in the series, providing useful information on how women see themselves as doing politics and on how they were recruited to the women’s movement (one was disappointed there was no membership badge). But not a book to try to read at one sitting.

Marian Sawyer,
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