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“The history of women in the Virginia General Assembly”

Their legislation, support groups, and leadership

By

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**Introduction**

The study of women and politics and their involvement throughout American history has lacked depth and consistency. While the changing role of women during the 1960's spurred many political changes, it was not until the second wave of the feminist movement, which was in a political activist direction, that the status of women in politics became a legitimate topic of academic study (Milano 5). The intention of this paper is to study the history of women in the Virginia General Assembly in terms of their leadership, legislation, and the impact of women's network groups on their political success. I hope to make connections between women's leadership behaviors, current leadership theories, political leadership, and gender based research.

By researching women in the Virginia General Assembly over the past forty years, I hope to build a solid picture of women and their developing styles of leadership. This research will help to fill the gaps in gender-based and political-based leadership studies. The areas I will be examining specifically in this study are the likelihood of women to introduce successful legislative agendas, the purpose and impact of women's caucuses and informal network groups, and finally how women perceive themselves and their women colleagues in terms of leadership roles. I will be studying these areas in terms of how they have changed and developed over the past half of a century.

**Literature Review**

The literature review for this study will combine research from several areas. The first subject of review is the past history of women in state legislatures in general. After
examining these trends I report on the agendas of women, and the purpose and effect of women’s networking and support groups. Finally I examine the leadership component of women’s political involvement in the legislature.

Women in the Legislature

I chose the 1960’s as my starting point for my research for two main reasons. First, up until this point the election of women to the House and Senate in Virginia was sporadic and there were never many women in the legislature concurrently. The number of women state legislators throughout the country increased from 5% to 17% between 1970 and 1990 (Thomas and Welch 1). The other reason I chose this date revolves around accessing past legislators for interviewing purposes. In addition, the forty year time span was considered adequate in terms of mapping change and patterns of women in the state legislature.

Since the election of the first woman to the Virginia General Assembly in 1924, only fifty-six women have been elected to the House and the Senate collectively (see Appendix 1). This study begins with the 1960’s and the fifty women elected since that point. Of these women only eleven have served in the Senate. Currently, for the 1998 session, twenty two women are serving in the House and Senate. The number of women currently serving is not indicative of the entire fifty years of my study. The numbers continue to increase with each successive election. Specifically, since the last election six additional women were voted into office.

The literature regarding women in politics suggests that women are under-represented for three main reasons. Women lack representation because of political socialization in the United States, situational and structural factors, and active discrimination against women (Ahern et al. 20). Political socialization is defined as “the process by which people learn what is expected of them in their particular political
system" (Ahern, et al. 20). Women's political socialization has suffered because women have typically been confined to certain behaviors which were accepted by their gender role. Political behaviors, such as running for elected office, were not ones which were accepted as part of the woman's role (Ahern et al. 21).

Women who do become elected to the state legislature, however, tend to follow rather unique career patterns including that of housewife, "bench warmer", traditional civic worker, "passive" women's rights advocate, and "active" women's right's advocate. These paths are not what are considered typical male "lead ins" to the political world (Milano 13). These positions revolve around women's rights and the importance of family. Because of this, women "face a struggle to be viewed as public figures not private individuals" (Ahern et al. 21). According to Milano, "Merely to have women among the employed will not guarantee that women will emerge as leaders. Leaders are largely business men and professionals. Unless women can attain importance in these feeder hierarchies, they will never amount to much in government" (15).

Research also indicates that when women do make the decision to run for political office they are less likely to run and win in a competitive district. A competitive district is considered one in which there are many potential competitors (Milano 13). Women tend not to run or win in these elections because the stereotypes of the traditional women tend to resurface during campaigns and serve as an excuse for people to cast their vote in the other direction. This restricts the number of districts in which women are willing to run.

*Agenda Related Research*

Classic studies of gender differences among legislators in terms of their attitudes and behavior are now over ten years old (Thomas and Welch 445). Those studies
revealed that women legislators tended to come from "traditional" female backgrounds (community volunteers and homemakers) and had limited political experience (Thomas and Welch 445). While more recent research tends to indicate that this information may be outdated, little is still known about whether the increasing number of women in legislatures has had an impact on women, leadership, and the legislative process (Thomas 958).

One of the major differences between men and women is the origin of their legislative agendas. The difference is based, in large part, on society's perceived differences in the functional roles between men and women. Men are perceived as the breadwinners for themselves and their dependent families whereas women are viewed as mothers and wives dependent on family and husbands. These women are typically economically dependent on the men (Shapiro 227). Because of these cultural factors sponsoring legislation is usually an independent and individualistic experience for men. Women, on the other hand, find the idea of creating and sponsoring legislation to be an exercise involving inter-dependence and reliance on others.

These perceived differences may be partially responsible for the fact that while men and women are equally likely to introduce and have bills passed, the policy priorities are very different for the two genders. Women tend to place priority on issues concerning women, children, family issues, and health more often than men. This position stems logically from the above stated gender differences. Male legislators, or breadwinners as stated earlier, tend to place emphasis on business and economic issues (Thomas 959).

Shapiro reported that regardless of the issues introduced by the genders, both males and females should be held to the same moral responsibility. "Our fundamental moral responsibilities spring from the situation of being able to help those who are vulnerable and dependent, and especially those who are vulnerable to us. We have these responsibilities regardless of gender. One cannot shirk moral responsibilities on
the basis of a functionalism of gender” (Shapiro 236). This statement while holding both genders equal seems to be more applicable to female legislators. Women tend to introduce the socially responsible legislation and policies while men tend to take on the ‘hard nosed’ issues. Women’s legislation often revolves around social programs, ways to assist the needy and other community outreach legislation.

In terms of legislation introduced, a longitudinal study of Arizona’s state legislature suggests that as the number of women has increased there has been a corresponding increase in legislative attention to women’s issues (mainly children, family, women, and health issues) (Thomas and Welch 447). The study found that one reason women's attitudes have translated into legislative agendas related to women and family issues is because the burdens that women experience (i.e. maintaining homes and careers) have become more publicly evident over the past several decades (Thomas and Welch 447). As long as women continue to be socialized in dual roles women legislators will give high priority to issues relating to this dual status (Thomas and Welch 447). This same study also found that as the numbers of women in the state legislatures increases so does the support for them while they are in office (Thomas and Welch 447).

In terms of passing agendas, research indicates that women and men are equally successful. There are certain activities which tend to help legislators pass bills. These activities include presenting patron bills to sub-committees and committees, defending them on the floor and being extremely familiar with these issues. Early studies of women in legislatures indicated that women state legislators tended to participate less than their male colleagues in speaking in committees and on-the-floor. Women were also found to be less likely to bargain with colleagues to achieve political goals and did not meet with lobbyists as often as their men counterparts (Thomas 959). Recent research, however, indicates that these previous gender disparities have been eliminated in the last few years. Because women and men are equally likely to engage in these activities, it makes sense that women’s legislative agendas are equally successful as men’s.
To review, research findings indicate that, as the numbers of women increase in state legislatures, the gap between the genders in terms of their behaviors, attitudes, participation, and agendas shrinks. Women engage in legislative activities almost as often as their male counterparts. They are equally likely to have agendas passed as well. However, differences do remain in terms of types of legislation introduced and the origin of legislation. Throughout the remainder of this literature review other differences will become apparent in terms of women's leadership styles and the ways in which women rely on support groups to compensate for their lower numbers in state legislatures.

Women's Caucus and Informal Network Groups

Because women have been limited in terms of numbers in the Virginia State legislature, similar to the other 49 legislatures, the need for women's support networks has been critical to their political success. According to Cantor, women's organizations and networks play an increasingly important role in providing support for female politicians (86). These organizations are crucial to women during their campaigns and during their tenure as legislators. The caucus and other network groups reflect the collective mobilization and utilization of power and influence by women in public office (Cantor 2).

The main reason that women's support networks are critical to the success of women governmental officials is that women lack power in terms of numbers in the legislatures. They have always been and still are in the minority in the legislatures. According to Cantor, the legislature is a place of male dominance and has historically been viewed as a men's social club. "It can be argued that the successful functioning of the legislative process in a pluralistic society is dependent upon bargaining, accommodation, and compromise, which are facilitated by an atmosphere of amiability and collegiality. Women in this social club environment are likely to feel like outsiders
or strangers" (Ahern et al 118). While women do not necessarily become members of the men’s ‘social clubs’ they fill this void by forming and joining bipartisan women’s networks and support groups.

There are two main types of these support organizations. The first is the caucus. The National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC) is defined as a “multi-partisan group created in 1971 for the expressed purpose of aiding women to take more substantive roles in politics” (Milano 3). The NWPC is now comprised of 35,000 women involved with state and local caucuses (Milano 3). The women’s caucus and the women’s political movement supports bipartisanship in theory but that is not always the case in practice (Mandel 214). The issues of support within the women’s caucus is a delicate one for politically active women who have strong partisan ties.

Research has found that public endorsements, party loyalty, and political self-interest complicate the issue of gender based support (Milano 213). Gender based support assumes that women can overcome their party differences and place those ties and loyalties behind those of being a woman and a supporter of women. Republican women frequently encounter the issue of party loyalty when an appealing Democrat woman runs for office. Democratic women who favor increasing the numbers of women in general within the legislatures face conflicts in supporting Republican women and consequently abandoning acceptable male candidates of their own party. Virginia is a highly partisan state and until recently the mass majority of women in the legislature were Democratic. Now the numbers are much more even but this issue of partisanship versus general support for women is one of concern in Virginia. One of the goals of my research is to explore whether partisan support and gender support conflict, and if they do which turns out to be more powerful. If a conflict is found between the two there could be implications for women’s leadership and its chances of success in Virginia.

While the women’s caucus is the primary formal support and networking group for women, other groups exist on a more informal level. Reference groups influence
women state legislators in terms of their self-evaluations, political judgments (attitudes toward need for change in women's roles and statutes in society) and their implications for political behavior (activity in legislation, initiating and supporting women's issues). Reference groups may also support and reinforce women's political ambitions, and serve as political resources for female legislators (Milano 4).

Reference group theory "has been used to designate the sources from which one derives one's goals, standards for erecting aspirations and for gauging one's performance (Milano 20). Reference groups are defined as "Groups to which one relates oneself as a member or aspires to relate oneself psychologically" (Milano 21). The reference groups with which women tend to defer are partially responsible for the development of women state legislators' political behaviors, goals, and decisions (Milano 21).

There are two basic forms of reference group theory: the Lewinian Approach and the social identification model. The Lewinian Approach is the older of the two models but is the most applicable to this study since it argues that face-to-face interaction on a regular basis is key to the effects groups have on members' attitudes and behaviors (Koch 14). Because regular interaction is an essential component of my definition of network groups the Lewinian model is most applicable.

This model of reference group theory suggests that individuals seek to join groups which others have similar positions on issues. Group members like to identify one position as that of the group's. What distinguishes this model from other reference group models is that this approach focuses on blending together the individual and the group and "the individual's sense of interdependence with the group" (Koch 15). Individuals feel a strong sense of bonding within this group and they find that they have similar interests to one another (Koch 15).

Research has also indicated differences between the sexes in terms of the effect of coalitions and reference groups. Women are less likely to exclude powerful people
from their reference groups and they are less likely to take advantages of others' weaknesses (Forsyth 374). Men are most likely to view a coalition or group as a competitive situation whereas women are not. "Therefore, women strive to maintain smooth intermember relations as the men maximize their payoffs" (Forsyth 374).

Reference group theory relies on their being an association between a person's self-system and attitudes, and the perceived social proprieties of the group (values, beliefs, and status criteria). Because women often join more than one reference group they must try to maintain their individual identity as well as find support within the group. My assumption is that women feel the need to join more reference groups than men, in order to maximize their support networks.

For the purpose of this study, reference groups/support networks may be either composed solely of legislators or may be a combination of legislators and others (women's activists or political activists groups). The reason for allowing for two possible frameworks of reference groups is because women may find support in a group even if they are not official members of the group. Therefore, I want to distinguish between the groups in which women are members and the groups in which they simply participate on a regular basis. "The rapid changes in the political world and the prolific growth of female activist groups, such as the NWPC, offer diverse instances in which the woman state legislator's reference groups are co-extensive with her legislative membership groups as well as distinctive from them" (Milano 21).

To summarize, it appears that women need support groups and networks for the foundation and dependable relationships they provide. The groups provide a support network for women in order to help them network and overcome their weakness in terms of numbers. While groups provide women with information, valuable discussions, and support, it is important for women to maintain their individual identities and values as well.
Leadership

According to many political scientists, the study of political leadership, while recognized as a legitimate topic of study and importance, is neglected in political science studies. Gender based political leadership research is even more limited (Genovese 1). Political leadership refers to more than mere office holding. It is the ability to move others in desired direction (Genovese 1). “Successful leaders are those who can take full advantage of their opportunities and their skills. Institutional structures, the immediate situation, the season of power, the political culture, regime type, and the dynamics of followership define the opportunities for the exercise of leadership” (Genovese 1).

Simply having women in the legislature, however, does not guarantee their leadership. Past research has proven, however, that the greater the percentage of women in the legislature, the more women hold positions of leadership in these bodies ("...Legislative Policy-Making" 134). In other words, the more women there are in the legislatures, the more opportunity women have to display their competence and ambition and consequently engage in leadership. This increased display of these characteristics allows all legislators to become more comfortable with women in political roles ("...Legislative Policy-Making" 135).

While women in state legislatures are increasing in numbers and trying to increase their leadership roles, there is still considerable debate over the types of leadership women legislators should and do exhibit. One researcher says, “It’s a Catch-22. If you argue in an emotional way, they say you’re ‘only a woman’. If you debate logically and effectively, they say you’re too mannish” (Shapiro 117). The one concept most political scientists do agree on is that out of the different bases of power -legitimate, expert, referent, coercive, reward- women are most likely to use referent power. Women do not necessarily choose to use this type of leadership but rather institutional discrimination
forces them to and prevents them from using expert or legitimate power. I would also hypothesize that because women are constantly forced to reaffirm their leadership abilities it is difficult for them to build a firm foundation to develop their expert power. In other words, because women are not given the opportunity to hold leadership positions which result in enhanced expertise and legitimate power, they are unable to develop these power bases as resources. Instead, they rely mostly of referent power.

Another reason women tend to be referent leaders is because they have a tendency to be consensus building leaders. Women build consensus among themselves and tend to have a coordinating style and policy orientation rather than the command and power orientations often associated with men (Jewell and Whicker 177). Consensus leaders have a low need to control the behavior of others. They tend to be accommodators when resolving conflict. These leaders also use party and gender caucuses to solicit input of the senior members when making policy decisions. They try to facilitate open dialog with forums for their colleagues. Consensus leadership emphasizes an open flow of communication including debate and discussion (Jewell and Whicker 128).

Consensus leadership is advantageous because it is very conciliatory and compromising. This type of leadership is effective in bridging conflicts among constituencies or colleagues. The major disadvantage, however, to consensus style leadership is that at times consensus leaders lose direction and let the issues at hand drift from the table. This stems from the aversion to conflict felt by these types of leaders (Jewell and Whicker 130).

In addition, research indicates that women are most likely to be transformational and situational leaders. Situational Leadership theory revolves around two types of behaviors. The first is task behaviors, which are defined as the extent to which leaders spell out the responsibilities of a group or individual (Yukl 396). Task behaviors consist of a variety of behaviors including conveying tasks to people and telling them how and
when to do them. The other type of behavior is that of relationship behavior. These behaviors include how the leader communicates in a reciprocal manner with the followers. Leaders strong in relationship behaviors are good listeners, facilitators, encouragers and supporters (Yukl 396). The success of the situational approach depends on the leader’s ability to emphasize these behaviors, task and relationship, to the necessary degree when placed in particular situations. In other words, situational leadership is the “notion that individual leaders change their behavior according to the needs of followers and that in certain circumstances one style of leadership is more effective than another” (Kelly 29).

Situational leadership is crucial for women in state legislatures because of the lack of hierarchical relationships within the government structure (Kelly 29). The success of agendas and legislation depends on the power sharing ability of the genders and the parties. Because power sharing is so crucial leaders must be able to lead and act according to the situation.

There have been several studies that illustrate why women often lead situationally. The first reason is that research shows that women need to reaffirm their competency and abilities with every new group which they encounter (Kelly 29). Followers tend to need reassurance from women leaders so women leaders are constantly being tested. Male leaders, on the other hand, do not need to prove their leadership qualities passed their first display of them.

The second set of research findings which supports the idea behind situational leadership is related to works on organizational culture and its impact on gender related behaviors. “The ease with which women ‘fit’ into agency cultures and the conduciveness of various agencies to female leadership tend to follow gender stereotypes quite closely” (Kelly 29). Depending upon the culture of the committee, the state, or the House or Senate, women must adapt their behaviors accordingly in order to fit in. Men are less likely to have to adapt behaviors from one setting to the next.
because all of their roles are accepted by society. Because of this, men can formulate one type of behavior that is appropriate for most situations, making only small modifications instead of major changes. While men must make slight adaptations, on occasion, women are more likely to regularly recreate different types of behaviors for varying situations.

The final reason situational leadership theory may be applicable to women legislators is related to male dominance (Kelly 29). With males numerically dominating the House and Senate by large margins and maintaining most of the assigned leadership roles, women must adapt their styles. They must adapt their styles so that they reach a level of understanding and find an efficient manner in dealing with their male counterparts.

Now that I have explored the importance of situational leadership I will review the impact of gender on transforming leaders, especially within the government. The notion of a transforming leader was originally proposed by James McGregor Burns when describing political leaders (Yukl 350). He described transforming leadership as a process in which “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation” (Yukl 350). Transforming leaders raise the consciousness of their followers by appealing to their sense of morality using concepts such as justice, peace, equality, and humanitarianism to do so (Yukl 351). One of the key tenets of transforming leadership is that it may be utilized by anyone on any level. It does not require the support of a traditional leadership or managerial position.

This is one of the major reasons it is so applicable to women legislators. Because women legislators have a more difficult time obtaining ‘formal’ positions of leadership they must often function as leaders without the formal title or position. Transforming leadership allows them to be effective leaders regardless of the formality of their positions.

While I have introduced the concepts of situational leadership, transforming
leadership, and the power bases from which women derive their leadership, there is another area of leadership theory which is relevant to my project. Dorothy W. Cantor and Toni Bemay, in their book Women in Power: The Secrets of Leadership (1992), to which I have already referred, created a theory of leadership specifically for women in powerful and governmental positions. They developed a leadership equation based on their studies of women leaders throughout the country. Their study was based on in-depth interviews with twenty-five successful political women. Their sample was limited to U.S. women currently in elective positions and holding high federal, state, or local offices. The equation that developed based on their research may be particularly useful in understanding the data collected in my study. This equation is as follows:

\[ \text{Leadership} = \text{Competent Self} + \text{Creative Aggression} + \text{Woman Power} \]

The first factor of this theory, competent self, proposes that women are not defined by the situations in which they exist nor the people who surround them. Instead, they have a strong sense of self which prevents them from being threatened by outside factors. Having a strong self enables women to see possibilities instead of obstacles, which is often the woman's focus (Cantor 25).

Creative aggression, the second factor, includes women's taking initiative, and speaking out in groups. Aggression has typically been deemed an inappropriate attribute for women so Cantor suggests that some might prefer to look at it as assertiveness instead. Importantly, she does suggest that aggression be viewed as "in the service of life and growth" (27).

The third and final component of this equation is that of Woman Power. Woman Power combines the best of women's and men's qualities. It is the power used to advance one's agenda and make a noticeable difference in society (Cantor 187). This factor in the equation provides women with the opportunity to combine their power in
making a difference for society with their nurturing and caring side.

This equation appears to house the three leadership ideas mentioned earlier. Situational leadership, for example, seems to fit in the creative aggression and Woman Power categories. These categories account for the need to adapt to various situations according to the followers and the context. The idea of transforming leadership is presented in the Woman Power variable. This is the variable that accounts for making a difference and appealing to people through morals. Finally, the power base of women is in relationships and the self. The basis for forming these relationships is in the self-confidence area. Because women have the self confidence, they can successfully rely on the use of referent power.

In summary, while the equation is not founded on ideas associated with transforming and situational leadership, or power bases, these leadership theories appear to fit into the equation rather easily. For this reason, I believe these two theories to be the best suited for framing my study and for learning about and tracing the development of women's legislative activities and leadership roles. Through interviews with women legislators I hope to identify their leadership styles and those styles with which they associate with their colleagues. I also hope to discover the similarities between the genders in terms of their leadership styles within the context of the Virginia General Assembly.

**Methodology**

After having completed a thorough literature review on the subject of women's legislative activities and leadership opportunities I continued the study by engaging in interviews and reviewing secondary documents. I interviewed current and past women delegates and senators within the Virginia State Legislature to gain a better understanding of their legislative activities. I asked questions that revolve around the
three research areas of this paper: legislative agendas, network and support groups, and leadership activities. My questions were intended to be open ended in nature and allow for the women to guide me in finding related probing areas. An example of this is the following question: “In your own words, what does leadership within the context of the General Assembly mean?” This type of question allowed me to obtain a wide variety of answers. I also asked them to further explain any characteristics which they mentioned that were related to leadership and for examples that illustrated the definitions with which they provided me.

**Sample**

I limited this study to the Commonwealth of Virginia. I lacked the resources, including time and money to conduct an in-depth study of other states. I chose Virginia because of proximity and my basic familiarity with the structure of the House of Delegates and Senate. I chose to study state government officials because they are more accessible than federal government members. I also decided that local governments vary in too many ways throughout the state to provide an adequate sample for this study. All of these decisions are based on arbitrary preferences; consequently they impose limits on this study and the validity of the results.

The selection of my sample was also arbitrary. Due to the time frame within which I was working and the small number of possible respondents (22 women), I interviewed all those women who were available. I began by setting up interviews randomly and hoped to interview 50% of the women in the General Assembly. I did not use a planned selection process for choosing the sample because the state legislators are under demanding time constraints and have hectic schedules. If I chose the exact people in the population I wanted to sample, I would run the risk of having too few interviews.
As noted above, I hoped to interview fifty percent of the women in the legislature. Assuming this group included both senior and younger members, I felt it would be a more than adequate representation of the women's population in the House and Senate. I also made every attempt possible to interview an equal number of women from each of the two parties. This was aimed at not limited the generalizability of my results because of partisan biases. Following these interviews I interviewed senators and delegates who served in the legislature in the past, but either retired or lost their seat in the legislature. By interviewing these members I expected to gain another perspective on the issues and develop a clearer picture of how the legislature has changed over time.

In summary, the purpose of my interviews was to gain an understanding of today's legislature as opposed to those in the past forty years. By interviewing women legislators I had the opportunity to explore the ideas discussed in my literature review, and in particular, gain an understanding of their leadership styles. Since this was the most vague area of my literature search, in terms of the quantities of supported research available, I hoped to add to knowledge in this area through the results of these interviews.

Procedure

I chose to interview legislators as opposed to collecting questionnaire data from them for several reasons. First, I expect to receive higher response rates with interviews than if I distributed questionnaires (Babbie 264). According to Earl Babbie's The Practice of Social Research, respondents are less likely to turn down an interviewer when he or she is waiting at the door, than a questionnaire that is lost in a stack of papers. Babbie also suggests that the respondent is less likely to answer with 'don't knows' when being interviewed than when filling out a questionnaire (264). Another
advantage to interviewing is that the interviewer can observe the respondents behaviors during the interview (Babbie 265). By observing behaviors I was able to note hesitations, long periods of silence, mannerisms, and facial expressions. These types of behaviors can indicate many things including uneasiness with the subject of discussion and nervousness. Tone of voice, another observable behavior, can indicate whether someone is strongly opposed or in favor of something. The respondent is also more likely to give more detailed answers during an interview than when filling out a survey.

The interviews were moderately structured and lasted approximately thirty minutes. This put a restriction on depth of inquiry but due to the legislators busy schedules and time constraints this short period of time was sufficient for the interviews. Because the interviews were under such strict time constraints, I attempted to obtain as much information about the legislators as possible, prior to the interviews. Before the interviews I researched how long each member had served in the House or Senate, her home district, the total number of bills she introduced during the session, and by the end of the session the percentage of her bills that were passed. By answering these questions prior to the interview I saved time and also had a better understanding of the respondent upon the start of the interview.

The interview itself was divided according to the categories mentioned earlier in this paper (See Appendix 2). I began with the agenda related questions because they were the most innocuous in terms of biasing the respondent. This section also gave the respondent time to feel comfortable with the interviewing process. The first question asked for the respondent to list their five priority bills during the current legislative session. The reason for this question was to better understand the priorities of women in introducing legislation. Research generally shows that women introduce a certain type of legislation. By asking this question I was able to see whether or not this is true of Virginia's women legislators.

My second agenda related question was in regards to why women introduce
certain legislation. I asked this question in hopes of better understanding what motivates women to introduce legislation. The next grouping of questions was designed to test whether or not women engage in activities which are perceived to increase the success of their policy agendas.

The next section of the interview focused on leadership. I specifically chose not to introduce a definition of leadership to the respondents because I wanted to probe for their opinions on leadership and learn what they perceived to be the leadership styles exhibited by legislators. I asked about accomplishments of which they were the most proud and what motivates them as legislators. Here I hoped to find out whether or not their focus was on leadership or on other legislative activities.

From here I asked the respondents to define leadership within the context of the General Assembly and discuss whether or not it was different in this context than in others. This part of the interview was crucial to illustrating and further explaining the ideas discussed in the literature review. I hoped to identify the overriding themes they associated with leadership and analyze whether or not these themes are in sync with expert research in this field. I also want to learn how, if at all, the definition has changed over time and if it has why.

Also in terms of leadership, I asked if the women perceived women’s leadership to differ from men’s. My motivation here was to distinguish whether or not there is a difference between the genders in how they lead. I also wanted to investigate how leadership within the General Assembly compares to leadership in other contexts. I chose not to define these other contexts because I predicted that respondents would be most likely to make comparisons with contexts in which they were familiar. I continued the leadership section by asking who they would identify as a leader and why. I asked this question for two reasons. First I was curious to see whether or not they would mention any women. Secondly, I was curious to know whether or not the reasons for identifying these people were consistent with their given definition of leadership.
Finally in terms of this section of the interview, I asked the respondents how they viewed themselves in terms of leadership. Again I was curious to see if their answers were consistent with their earlier responses and to see the frequency with which they willingly named themselves as leaders.

My third area of inquiry focused on network and support groups. I placed this section of the questioning near the end of the schedule for two reasons. One, it is probably the section of the interview that might contain the most sensitive and potentially biasing questions. I did not want these questions to affect the answers to my earlier questions, especially those in regards to leadership. I also placed these questions at the end because in the event of a shortened interview this section would be easier to condense than the earlier ones. I hoped that this would never have to become an issue, but knowing the hectic, unpredictable schedules of the delegates and senators, I did not want to risk having the leadership questions at the end of the interview.

In this section of the interviews I asked whether or not the respondents attended the women’s caucus meetings and the women’s round tables meetings as well as the frequency with which they did so. I asked about their motivations in joining these organizations and the advantages and disadvantages they perceived in attending the meetings. I did this to get a better grasp of whether or not these support organizations are as needed as past research indicates. If they answered that they did not participate in these groups, I asked why they chose not to.

My next area of inquiry was in regards to informal network groups. I defined informal groups as ‘any group of women who provide support and influence one another’s behaviors in the elected position; I also indicated that this group must meet at least once a week. I asked them to explain their involvement in these groups, the advantages and disadvantages with belonging to them, and the groups’ effect on their individual legislative activities. I asked these questions in order to distinguish between the influence of the formal and informal groups. I also included in this section
alternative questions for women who were not involved with informal groups or women who had once been involved, but had since discontinued their involvement.

I concluded the interview by asking two questions regarding how the legislature has changed since their freshman year and their predictions about the future of women in the legislature. While the later question asked respondents to "guess," I believed that their answers would reflect the current general mood toward women in legislative positions.

In addition to my interviews, I also attended two women's caucus meetings and women's roundtable meetings. I observed the proceedings of these groups and attempted to learn more about their effect on women and the opportunities they provide for women in terms of leadership and support networks. My observations at these meetings were important for several reasons. First, I was able to compare the process and content of these meetings with what the research suggests they are supposed to do. I was also able to evaluate whether or not those respondents who did not attend the meetings, have an understanding of their content. Finally, when I attended these meetings I was able to observe whether or not those women who claimed to attend all of the meetings, actually attended them. In addition, I was able to observe the audience in terms of their reactions to the women legislators and their participation during the meetings.

My observations revolved around the process of the meetings, their content and the behaviors of the women legislators who attend them. When I attended these meetings, I was not able to have a set of formal questions, per se, for which I was looking for answers. Instead I looked for general trends and patterns of behaviors in the meetings. By attending these meetings I was also able to make comparisons between the women's caucus and the women's roundtable.

For my research on women legislators during the 1960's, if past legislators were difficult to contact, or even deceased, I did secondary research to gain as much
information about these members as possible. In terms of interviewing past legislators, I made whatever contacts I could with past members. I did not utilize a systematic sampling method in selecting secondary data. I used the Richmond Times-Dispatch and other state and local publications to gain information about some of these members. I also used the resources available through Legislative Information Services and the Virginia General Assembly library.

Data Analysis

After completing my interviews and my various observations I realized that most of my resulting data was qualitative in nature. The only truly quantitative data I gathered were statistics pertaining to the number of women legislators over the years and the percentages of bills on each woman's agenda that pass the 1998 session. Beyond these numbers my data reflected the qualitative stories of women in the legislature in terms of their leadership, legislation and involvement in network groups. While the qualitative information limited my ability to generalize beyond my data, it did answer the questions that were the focus of my research project.

In terms of analyzing data like I collected, Babbie gives several suggestions in The Practice of Social Research (1995). First, he suggests looking for similarities and dissimilarities among answers of respondents. Similarities, or norms, are behaviors that all of the respondents tend to mention. Norms are defined as "those patterns of interaction and events that are generally common to what you are studying" (Babbie 296). The dissimilarities or differences are the deviation from norms. Hence, in the following pages I note both the norms and differences and attempt to draw conclusions about women in the legislature from them.

In addition to looking for patterns of similarities and differences among the responses, I also tried to categorize responses. I did this by inductively identifying
common types of answers and dividing the responses into groups. This allowed me to draw conclusions regarding the data and to suggest tentative links between various concepts.

**Results**

*Interviews*

I was able to complete sixteen interviews, eleven of which were interviews of current senators and delegates and the remaining five were of former legislators. After completing all of the interviews I categorized responses to each of the various interview questions. These are reported below along with information I obtained through the interviews, as well as information I gained through attending the women's caucus and women's roundtable meetings. In analyzing results, I first identified the questions to which both current and former legislators answered similarly. Then I address the questions where differences arose between the two groups.

The first question dealt with legislative priorities. While the responses for this category were quite varied, two specific categories of bills arose repeatedly. These categories were education and local issues. The first, education was mentioned in approximately half of the interviews. Bills addressing education or schools ranged from looking at the need for school nurses, to getting disruptive students out of the classrooms, to better training for principals. The range of bills and their objectives were quite varied but a large number of women's priorities focused on education in one manner or another.

The other commonality I found in the answers to the first question was that the legislators interviewed tended to give priority to bills which specifically impacted their community. These bills obviously varied greatly in terms of content but were identified by most of the respondents as 'local bills'. One such 'local' bill hoped to regulate
parking in specific residential areas. Other community related bills included bills regarding local business issues. Respondents emphasized the importance of representing their localities because those are the people who voted for them and depend on them for representation. While these were the only two common themes among the respondents, other answers included bills regarding women's health issues, mentally disabled coalitions, income taxes, business bills, prostitution in neighborhood areas, and budget issues.

In terms of factors which influenced the types of legislation drafted and introduced, there were again several common themes. The two most common reasons for introducing legislation were personal interests and constituents needs. Personal interests greatly ranged in terms of subject matter but one respondent said this type of legislation is easy to introduce because each individual is an expert on their own interests. This makes researching the issue and realizing the needs of whatever group the legislation may affect much easier. The second common factor in terms of influencing what types of legislation is introduced is the district. The other two factors that were mentioned multiple times were committee assignments and study commissions that offer insights into needs and gaps in already existing legislation.

The question revolving around legislative activities (including speaking on the floor and in committees) was answered almost unanimously by the legislators, past and present. All but three women responded that they spoke little on-the-floor. The reasons they cited varied from not being comfortable doing so to the restrictions put on freshman members in terms of “being seen but not heard”. One of the three women who claimed to have spoken a lot said, “It used to be freshman Senators were seen but not heard. I was seen and heard.” Another legislator responded that she usually restricted her speaking on the floor to issues that males are ignorant about, such as legislation affecting pregnancy.

The second part of that particular question asked about speaking in committees.
The respondents, again answered uniformly, that during committee meetings they spoke a lot. The reasons for speaking more during committee meetings included more familiarity with the issues, their expertise on issues before the committees of which they are a member, and the ability to make a difference in killing bad bills during committees as opposed to when they are on-the-floor. Several respondents also mentioned that speaking in committees was easier because there are fewer people to share the allotted time.

The question regarding bargaining with colleagues for votes again resulted in very similar answers among all of the legislators interviewed. The respondents answered this question with firm answers that they do not engage in such behavior but that their colleagues sometimes do. When they suggested that their colleagues do engage in this behavior they usually pointed toward their male colleagues. One delegate replied that the male legislators tend to view the legislature as a game and because of this they are willing to use whatever tactics are necessary in order to win. None of the women stated that they bargained for votes. While this could be true, answering that one does bargain for votes is most likely a socially undesirable response, thus it is hard to determine if the answers are entirely truthful.

Finally, in terms of speaking with lobbyists, the respondents answered almost uniformly that they talk with lobbyists often. One respondent said there is no avoiding it because the lobbyists are part of the scenery. The only women who said they do not meet with lobbyists often were freshmen who said that they were not sought after by the lobbyists because they are at the bottom of the pecking order. They did not, however, indicate that they were unwilling to speak with lobbyists.

Motivation was another subject of the interview which resulted in very different answers. The answers were not just different between current and former legislators but rather they differed equally within both groups. Several answers revolved around their hoping to help government fulfill the needs of the people. Several also answered that
they thought the role of legislator was important and that factor alone motivated them to serve in the capacity of legislator. One current legislator, however, differed from all of her colleagues when she responded that she was motivated out of anger. She continued by saying, "When I first entered (the legislature) I wanted to make things better, now I just want to slow down making it worse." Another former Senator answered that because she suffered as a woman she wanted to make a difference and prevent other women from being discriminated against. Her view of women and their lack of voice has lead her to want to be a voice for other women.

The question revolving around leadership and its definition was probably the most difficult for the respondents to answer. Most of them took much longer to think about this question and formulate an answer, prior to responding, than they did the others. The answers varied greatly but several characteristics were common in most of the respondents' answers. While a single definition cannot be derived from their answers, some basic characteristics of leadership can be extrapolated from their responses. The most common component of their answers was the ability to persuade. Respondents mentioned needing to persuade one another, constituents, and other government officials as essential requirements of successful leaders and legislators. They mentioned, in various ways, that the ability to persuade means that one is confident enough in their decisions and platform to present them to other people and hopefully convince them to change their opinions. Other types of persuasion mentioned were the ability to persuade others to become active and politically involved. Persuasion was the most common element in these women's responses as to explaining leadership.

The next commonality I found in the various respondents' definitions of leadership was possessing knowledge and information. They attributed succeeding to being smart and having the knowledge necessary to make well-informed decisions. They reported that having knowledge was a way of proving themselves to their male colleagues in terms of their competence and abilities. Several women reported that the
characteristics were mentioned by at least three respondents.

The next question the respondents were asked built upon the definition of leadership each respondent had previously offered. This question asked them to identify any differences between leadership in the General Assembly and leadership in other contexts of society. The majority of respondents found a difference between leadership in the General Assembly and leadership in various other contexts. The majority of the respondents mentioned the importance of the seniority system in appointing and developing leaders. Respondents were quick to mention that this is a system unlike many in the corporate and civic sectors. Because the system is different they answered that the leadership must also be different. Four respondents mentioned that the seniority system does not always guarantee that the most qualified people obtain the leadership positions. Instead, those with the longest tenure are those who inherit the leadership roles. Several of the respondents mentioned that those who do inherit the formal leadership roles often see them as positions of power rather than positions of leadership. With the roles comes a certain amount of power and the individuals who fall into these roles capitalize on the power aspect rather than the opportunity to lead. After accepting these roles, it is mostly up to their own discretion as to when to relinquish them. Colleagues have very little influence on who is awarded which leadership positions.

Some also attributed the differences between governmental leadership and leadership in other sectors to the responsibility that legislators have to represent others. Others believed leadership within the General Assembly to be different because of the necessity to find compromises. One delegate said, “An important aspect of serving in the legislature is finding a balance between fighting for what you believe in and compromising to meet the needs of the people.” Other respondents echoed this sentiment. Respondents stressed the importance of legislators working together to meet the needs of all Virginians. They answered that in other sectors of society the need for
compromise is not as critical because the constituencies are not as large and diverse. Yet another belief was that the system instilled at the Capitol is one which is designed to make people feel "powerful" even when they may not be. One legislator said the General Assembly is "artificially inflated unlike leadership positions in other contexts."

Answers to the next question again resulted in some common themes. The women typically agreed that there are differences in the ways in which men and women lead. The major theme in their answers was that women are much greater consensus builders. The respondents generally included wording such as "conflict avoiders" and "consensus oriented" in their answers when describing women and then they identified men as competitive. One respondent mentioned that in striving to create consensus women are more likely to "bring along others" and build upon the strengths of everyone while minimizing their differences. Respondents mentioned that men are much more competitive and are more likely to fight against one another than work together to find a compromise.

Another trend in the responses was that women are quieter and less aggressive in their leadership style. Some women even said that they feel uncomfortable and less effective when they shout, scream, and insist on a position. Others claimed to be quiet and less aggressive. They, in turn, described men as aggressive, yet more effective in passing legislation.

While these were the strongest commonalities among the answers, both mentioned over 50% of the time, other commonalities, were also evident. The women tended to be more concerned with content of legislation and less concerned with the political aspect of being a legislator. In other words, their priority was in passing legislation, not advancing their political careers. They also answered that men are much more likely to use "hardball tactics," such as bargaining with other legislators, making trades, and threatening to fail other legislators' bills either in committee or on the floor, when trying to get tasks accomplished. Women responded that they generally stay
away from such tactics, as is consistent with their tendency to build consensus and
avoid conflict.

When the respondents were asked to name leaders within the General Assembly they all named men. Only two women’s names were mentioned out of the forty-eight responses (some names were repeated but forty-eight total answers were given). Almost all of the names that were mentioned were names of leaders in official positions. The leaders included the Speaker of the House, the caucus leaders, the party leaders, and men who have had lengthy political careers behind them.

The next question was in regards to how women’s leadership opportunities have changed since each member was elected. This question resulted in three different types of answers with former and current legislators equally divided in their answers. The first category of answers was that indeed the leadership of women has changed. The majority of respondents, answered that women now hold more official leadership roles and have an easier time gaining support in running for elections. They also answered that the caucuses have given women new opportunities to persuade each other on different issues and build coalitions. The next group answered that the role of women has not changed except in terms of numbers. One former legislator who responded that the role of women has never changed also mentioned that women who are currently serving have fooled themselves into believing that indeed women now have more leadership opportunities. Finally, the last group of respondents answered that the role of women has gotten worse. They offered two reasons to explain this: (1) now the women who are elected are just as conservative as the men, negating the need for them, and (2) with increasing numbers of women elected to office the amount of respect they receive is actually decreasing rather than proportionally increasing.

The second major set of questions concerned support and network groups, including the women’s caucus and women’s roundtable as well as informal networks. Almost all of the respondents answered that they attended the women’s caucus
meetings. They mentioned a variety of reasons for attending the caucus meetings but there were definite commonalities in their answers. The women who regularly attend the meetings did so because they present women with an opportunity to gain knowledge about important issues in a small group setting. This smaller group setting gave women the opportunity to voice their opinions and have discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of bills. They also cited the caucus as a good place for consensus building among the women. Other reasons for attending the caucus were social reasons and to gain support of women who often have similar experiences or beliefs.

The several women who claimed not to attend the caucus mentioned that they had in the past and were forced to stop attending due to time constraints and pressing schedules. One former legislator mentioned that the one major disadvantage to the caucus is that spending the time to meet with the caucus never guarantees you more votes than the few women who are there. Finally, one former legislator mentioned that the Senate did not have a women's caucus when she was in office because two other women legislators were afraid that the men would get mad if a women's group was formed.

In contrast to the caucus, women were not as likely to attend the women's roundtable meetings. Over half of the women answered that they did not attend the women's roundtable meetings. Their reasons were almost unanimous in that the roundtable is too liberal and often too domineering in one opinion of thought. Other women also stated that the meeting time was too difficult to fit into their schedules. The women who did attend, who were split between former and present legislators, said they did so because it was an opportunity for all interested people to voice their opinions. One former legislator mentioned that she felt it was the women legislator's responsibility to the people to attend the roundtable meetings and have an open dialog with an interested audience. The women who attended these meetings answered that they were effective in getting people involved and gaining support for women's issues.
In terms of informal networks, about half the women answered that they were a part of an informal network. The other half of women said that due to time constraints or a lack of opportunity they are not members of informal networks. These women stated that being on good committees and having close friends was a substitute for an informal network. The women who answered that they do participate in informal networks said they do so for various reasons. One current delegate said she was invited to participate with a small group of leaders who meet on a regular basis. Another current delegate mentioned that she has a regular meeting network with women lobbyists to offer support on certain issues. One legislator mentioned that she is a part of the ‘inner circle’ of leaders due to her tenure in the House of Delegates. Other women answered that they have formed informal support groups with the freshman women and with women from each party.

The final question which the respondents were asked was to predict, on the basis of their knowledge of women in legislature, the future of women and their opportunities. All but one respondent answered that the future for women in the legislator will be filled with opportunity. These women recognized that the increasing trend of women in the legislature will lead to more women in leadership roles. Women will tend to be more accepted early in their careers and more women will be elected because constituents can see that women truly care about the issues. The respondents also answered that now due to the power-sharing arrangement in the House and Senate, the argument of seniority cannot be used to eliminate women from leadership positions.

The one respondent who answered that women would have a more difficult time in the future cited rising campaign costs as the predominant reason. As campaign costs and the competitiveness of campaigns increases she predicted that women will have a much more difficult time getting elected, especially because PAC’s such as “Make Women Count” and VEA support incumbent males over female challengers.

The question regarding proudest accomplishments resulted in very diverse
answers due to the personal nature of the question. The former Delegates and Senators tended to answer in terms of general accomplishments. They answered by mentioning their impact on women in politics, earning respect of male colleagues, and helping with large movements such as the desegregation of schools. The current legislators tended to answer in terms of personal legislative victories. Only three answered in terms of general accomplishments such as helping women throughout the state. Their accomplishments in terms of specific legislation generally revolved around legislation affecting women, children, health care, and education.

Another question which provoked different answers from former legislators and present legislators was concerned their perceptions of themselves as leaders. I found three trends here: women who considered themselves leaders, women who did not consider themselves leaders, and women who thought they were on the track toward leadership and could see themselves as leaders in some instances. The first group who viewed themselves as leaders consisted of only one prior legislator who had aspired to higher political levels. She commented that she emerged as a leader in her freshman class of eighteen. She said because of her effectiveness she was able to “leapfrog” in terms of her influence. The middle group, those who did not consider themselves as leaders, was the largest. This is also the category where most of the former legislators described themselves. One of these former legislators said when referring to her lack of leadership, “I was perfectly happy to be an Indian not a chief”. This group tended to point out that due to their lack of seniority leadership opportunities were limited. They also mentioned that they were not forceful or aggressive enough to become leaders. Finally, the middle group answered that they found themselves to be leaders in certain areas. They mentioned that they were leaders in terms of their class or on certain issues which were important to them.
Archival Data

As part of my research method I also identified each piece of legislation introduced by the current women legislators and tracked them to determine the percentage of their legislative agenda that passed. When I did this I did not include House and Senate resolutions because I thought these percentages would not be reflective of the true legislation that passed. The resolutions were generally introduced to create a study or to commend an individual or group. I computed the percentages based only on the actual bills that were introduced. I also decided to consider those bills which passed the House and Senate as successful legislation. I did not take into account whether or not the Governor signed the legislation or vetoed it. I did this for several reasons. First, at the time of this study the Governor has not yet taken up all of the bills so if I included the Governor’s action, only certain bills would be able to be included. Secondly, I decided that because this study focuses on women’s leadership and influence in the legislature, the Governor’s actions are not crucial to the study.

Based on the above considerations, I determined that the average percentage of legislation passed by an individual woman is 40.2%. The percentage of legislation introduced during the 1998 session, by males and females, was 44%. For the four years prior to the 1998 session, the percentage of legislation passed by all legislators ranged between 49% and 50%. The range of legislation passed by women during the 1998 session ranged from 0% to 80%. The number of bills introduced ranged from two to nineteen, with the mean being 11.2. In general, the eight freshman legislators averaged fewer pieces of legislation introduced than did the more senior legislators.

Because there was a large range between the highest and lowest percentage of women’s legislation that was passed, I looked to legislators’ interview responses to unpack the reasons for this variation. In general, I found that those women who responded that their was little to no differences between men and women legislators
were most often those with the highest passage rates. The only women who did respond that a difference exists between men and women legislators and had higher than average passage rates were those women who have had longer than average tenures in the legislature.

Observational Data

The women’s caucus was formed to give women legislators an opportunity to meet and discuss issues of importance to them. The women’s caucus is held in a conference room of the General Assembly building and all women legislators are invited to attend. The setting for the meetings is very informal, although there is a chairperson, Delegate Gladys Keating. The caucus is held every Wednesday evening and lasts for approximately one hour. The women legislators sit around a small conference table while audience members sit throughout the room. The format of the meeting focused on discussion among the female legislators, not among audience members. The legislators present represented both parties. The Democrats had a few more legislators in attendance, during both caucuses, than did the Republicans.

This brings up an interesting point because according to one delegate, up until this year the caucus consisted of mostly Democratic women legislators. Because this past year’s election resulted in an influx of freshmen Republican legislators, many of them attended the caucus meetings. One Democratic legislator said this has caused the role of the caucus to change. Prior to this year she said it had almost been a caucus for Democratic women to ban together along party lines and also along issues of importance to women. This year she claims the purpose has become to hold a forum where the women legislators can express concerns and discuss legislation. Sometimes they agree and sometimes they disagree, but they learn from each other and usually find the support of at least some women legislators.
The agenda tended to consist of important legislation which was discussed and other upcoming issues and events that might have been of interest to women. The legislators spent time discussing bills that they had introduced and also bills that had been introduced by other members which might have an affect on women's issues, in particular. The caucus gives the women an opportunity to find support among their peers for legislation. The caucus is, as mentioned earlier, very discussion oriented.

The caucus also tries to bring in guest speakers to discuss issues and make presentations. Miriam Bender, an attorney from Charlottesville who is working on the women's health initiative is just one example of the types of speakers they bring to speak to the caucus. The speakers come to share information and provide the women legislators with additional resources which might otherwise be unavailable to them.

The caucus is open to legislative aides, lobbyists, and anyone else who may be interested. During the two instances when I attended the caucus, the audience was less than fifteen people during the entire meeting, with all females except for one male. There were between six and nine women legislators present during the caucuses.

The women's roundtable is quite different from the caucus. Rather than women legislators sitting around a conference table, legislators sit in the front of a much larger room facing the audience. The roundtable is sponsored and run by the League of Women Voters in Virginia. The role of the roundtable is for the legislators to come and make presentations on certain bills, which are of particular interest to women, and to answer question of the lobbyists, constituents, and other interested audience members. The legislators also spend time offering suggestions to the women on how they can become actively involved in passing and defeating legislation. While the roundtable serves as a forum to discuss bills they do not endorse legislation.

The women's roundtable had a much larger audience than the caucus did. The audience varied in size each time I attended because people continually entered and exited the room. The average audience size was 25 people, the majority of whom were
women.

A major difference I found between the two groups is that the women’s roundtable distributes a list of the bills which they are tracking and they offer suggestions as to ways you can support or help defeat certain bills. It seemed to be a forum aimed at empowering the audience. One Senator spoke about a particular bill which labeled mothers as abusers when their children are born testing positive for drugs. After giving her reasoning behind wanting to kill the bill she said to the audience, “In order to help provide statewide support, I elicit your help...” She concluded her speech by telling the women to remember how beautiful, charming, and knowledgeable, they are when they lobby their legislator. She told them to have confidence and smile.

The next legislator who spoke stressed the importance of women staying involved. She said “Eternal vigilance is what we have to be about in order to protect the family and the women. They’re vulnerable.” These were the only two legislators who spoke at the roundtable, or even attended the roundtable on the two times when I attended them.

Other speakers including lobbyists and representatives from organizations such as the Virginia Women’s Network and the Virginia Paranatal Association who spoke about legislation and the audience was able to participate by asking questions. The audience consisted of between fifteen and thirty members, all women except one man.

Overall, the results of this study were thorough and respondents tended to answer all of the interview questions. In the next section I interpret the results in terms of female legislators and their leadership styles.

**Discussion**

After reviewing the results of this study it becomes obvious that there are definite trends in some of the responses. The purpose of this section is to analyze those trends
and address any discrepancies in the results. I will also recognize any parallels between the results from studies described in the literature review and the respondents’ answers.

One of the major inconsistencies found throughout this study was the discrepancy between the respondents’ recognition of the importance of informal leaders in the legislature, but their failure to identify such persons when asked to nominate legislative leaders; all persons identified as leaders were “formal” leaders. On the other hand, as reported in the results section of this study, the respondents emphasized the importance of non-appointed/nonofficial leaders when they were asked to identify characteristics of leaders and define leadership. They attributed much of the actual “leading” in the General Assembly to these individuals who do not hold formal leadership positions. The respondents also mentioned during certain occasions they have doubted the effectiveness of the official leaders. On the other hand, when they were asked to identify the leaders within the General Assembly, however, they answered almost unanimously with names of individuals who obtained their formal leadership positions through the traditional system of seniority. They neglected to recognize any informal leaders, thus negating their claim that informal leaders are critical to the success of the legislature.

A partial explanation for the above finding may be related to the social pressure respondents felt to identify people in formal positions as leaders. While the women recognized the importance of informal leaders, people tend to be socialized to identify leaders as those who hold formal positions. The formal title can be seen as justification for the leaders’ abilities and behaviors. While this may be the case, it is interesting that the respondents did not even mention the names of any informal leaders in addition to those formal leaders who were listed.

The respondents also recognized that women are much more likely to serve as informal leaders than formal leaders. This raises the question of why women do not identify their female colleagues when asked to identify leaders. Based upon the
literature review and the results of the interviews, I think it would also be fair to say that women are most likely to identify their female colleagues as informal leaders who lead through the use of charisma and referent power. Yet, while they are likely to identify them as informal leaders they are not likely to list them as leaders within the General Assembly. Moreover, the respondents did not normally identify themselves as leaders; rather they pointed toward male legislators. This poses an interesting question about who women are less likely to identify as leaders: women or informal leaders. Because the women are the informal leaders, it is difficult to make this distinction.

Another interesting trend which can be extrapolated from the results is that respondents were most likely to describe men's leadership characteristics as unfavorable. The characteristics include their aggressive style and use of hardball tactics. The issue of aggression appears in the leadership equation previously presented in the literature review. In general, women legislators in Virginia appear to disagree with the creative aggression factor of the equation. Perhaps this is one explanation for their slow progression in terms of leadership within the legislature.

While they described the male characteristics as unfavorable, when asked to identify leaders in the General Assembly, they identified all males. This is most likely related to the earlier point that the respondents only identified formal leaders. Coincidentally, just as the females are usually informal leaders the males are usually the formal leaders.

This issue of the respondents' only identifying males and formal leaders as leaders is difficult to dissect because there are two variables here: sex and type of leader. However, in the legislature there are several women who hold formal leadership positions such as committee chairs. While they are in the minority, they have still acquired some formal leadership positions. Yet, they were not mentioned by members of my sample as leaders. As a consequence, it is likely that women are more likely to identify males as leaders, regardless of whether or not they hold formal or informal
positions.

This point is interesting because the women tried repeatedly to justify their legitimacy within the legislature and their growing roles as leaders. They consistently neglected to attribute themselves to any leadership roles though. They constantly discussed why women leaders are more effective than male leaders but they never identified themselves or their female colleagues as leaders. Theoretically, this should not be based upon the fact that women fail to hold many formal leadership positions because women deemphasized the importance of formal leaders and stressed the importance of informal leaders in their responses.

Another aspect of this study which deserves attention is the fact that the female legislators perceived men to be more effective in passing their legislative agendas, yet they disagreed with their aggressive style. As mentioned earlier in this section, the women disagreed with the men and their leadership styles yet the men were identified by their female colleagues as leaders and more effective in passing their legislative agendas. The women, however, repeatedly criticized the aggressive style in which men lead. Instead, they praised the leadership styles of women and emphasized why consensus leadership is more effective, and needed within the legislature. These responses all seem somewhat contradictory. When the responses to these several questions are integrated together it seems to mean one of three things: (1) women feel they are ineffective due to their weaker, but more preferred, styles of leadership or (2) women feel men are effective because of their forceful tactics, not because of their ability to lead or (3) the two sexes have differing opinions on the role of legislators, therefore it is impossible to identify successful leadership.

While the respondents seemed to disagree with the perceived aggressive techniques of the male legislators, this may be an issue resulting from the undefined role of the legislators. While women stressed the importance of coalition building and working to overcome conflict, they seemed to think that the men were too focused on
"winning the game." Respondents consistently mentioned that to their male colleagues the role of the legislature is often viewed as a game which has winners, losers, and bargaining chips. This leads me to believe that men and women have different interpretations of their roles as legislators. Until the role is more clearly defined in the eyes of both the males and females, I have doubts as to whether the females will grow to adapt or even understand the style of their male colleagues, nor will the males understand the females.

This issue of differing opinions on the role of legislators and of leadership styles presents a problem for women who currently want to be successful in their leadership roles. If what the women observed is actually true, then they must either adapt their leadership styles and begin to focus on using the more aggressive styles, find a way to make their less aggressive leadership styles more accepted and more effective, or develop styles that represent a combination of those currently displayed by successful legislators but are acceptable to both males and females.

If the women choose the first idea, to make adaptations to their styles, would they be ethical in compromising their values to find greater opportunities and successes or would they be playing the game as it was meant to be played. The second option, of finding a way to make their current leadership styles more effective seems to be the best alternative. The legislators, however, mentioned quite often during the interviews that as the numbers of women increase in the legislature so will their effectiveness because they will have a larger number of colleagues who understand and use similar leadership techniques. The problem created with this option is that waiting for additional female legislators to be elected could pose a time problem. There is no way to know how long women must wait to find equality in numbers within the legislature. Because of this issue of timeliness, the option of waiting for stronger numbers does not seem to be the most effective.

If the women are neither willing to change their styles or help their male
colleagues come to terms with their styles, then the only remaining option is to find a mutually accepted definition for the role of legislators. With the possible discrepancy in the way males and females view their legislative roles, there is an ethical dilemma. The legislative body as a whole cannot be successful in representing the people if they are not in agreement as to what their roles are. Also, with both groups playing the game as they seem to think it should be played, they are counteracting one another, instead of working together to fulfill their job obligations.

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia defines the role of legislators but various interpretations of it seem to exist. The women, as a group, appear to be much more process oriented. This can be seen because they stressed the importance of creating consensus and building coalitions. One woman legislator mentioned that women are much more likely to bring people along and help them understand whereas the men are more likely to leave people behind and focus on the outcome. The men, consequently appear to be much more outcome oriented. From the female perspective, they appear to want the ends and offer little consideration for the means.

The literature reviewed for this study appears to support this idea because it focuses on women as consensus builders, situational leaders, and users of referent power. These three ideas tend to lend themselves to process oriented leaders. Building upon relationships, adapting to situations, and developing coalitions are all aspects of focusing upon and creating an efficient process.

This difference between the sexes presents a huge leadership challenge. Finding a common, agreed upon role for legislators and acceptable methods for fulfilling that role is bound to be complicated by partisan ties, seniority, and all of the other cultural and political factors surrounding the legislature. If an agreement were to be sought, however, someone would have to take the first step in making a change. Unfortunately, the women perceive themselves as the group who feels change is in order, yet they also feel as if they are restricted in terms of their leadership opportunities. To make these
changes, though, a leader is obviously needed. The challenge then, for the women legislators, is to find effective ways to serve as change agents, with or without the backing of formal titles. They said repeatedly, that those who actually lead are not those who are official leaders in titled positions. Now is their chance to prove their point that informal leaders are those who do the most leading.

Just as respondents seem to disagree on the role of legislators, they also differed in their answers as to whether or not the role of women has been changing since their election to the legislature. Some women claimed that the role of women has been improving, while others answered that women are falling into worse positions than women were decades ago. This discrepancy seems to be over something that should appear fairly uniform to all of the women legislators. Discounting the fact that some women have held legislative positions for longer periods than others, the answers still drastically differed among those who have served for equal lengths of time. This again seems to stem from questions related to definitions of the role of legislators, and also what is individually important to certain people. One former legislator, for example, cited her successful quest for a women’s bathroom on the Senate floor. She considered the treatment and role of women to have improved, even if just slightly, when the Lieutenant Governor’s office was converted to a women’s restroom. Other women agreed that the role of women as leaders and legislators has been steadily improving over the years.

Some women, however, seem to think that the role of women in the legislature is worsening. Several female legislators questioned the usefulness of newly elected women who are as conservative as their male colleagues. The reasons women gave for the improving or worsening of their roles were all very different. This again leads me to believe that the role of a legislator is ambiguous. The role of legislators should not be to hold one particular ideology or to behave in one certain way. While individual views will always vary, it does not seem that a person’s point of view, conservative or liberal,
should have an impact on the leadership roles and performance of either sex.

One area which has yet to be mentioned in terms of the analysis is that of support groups. Generally, I found that the women viewed support groups as I would have expected based on existing research. The respondents seemed to feel as though the caucus was important and helpful to them. They basically agreed with reference group theory that having a core group with which to identify was important to their success and feeling of comfort within the predominantly male legislature. They recognized the importance of finding support in a group that shares common concerns, beliefs and qualities. They also recognized the importance of meeting with the group on a regular basis. They cited wanting to keep each other updated and wanting to learn from each other as important reasons for meeting often.

While the caucus appears to be successful and serves as a reference group for the female legislators, the women's roundtable, the other formal network studied, does not seem to serve the same purpose. The roundtable seems to be founded more on ideological positions. This creates a rift between the women and divides them along partisan ties rather than bringing them together based on an obvious commonality, their sex.

The two formal networks differed greatly and based on the respondents answers it appears the women's caucus serves as a referent group for most women legislators. The roundtable, however, is a referent group only for those with a very defined political ideology, so it does not serve as a reference group for women legislators in general. The basic concern of respondents when discussing reference groups was finding a group in which they felt comfortable and useful. The caucus was more likely to exhibit these qualities than was the roundtable.

Overall, the results of this study seem to coincide with the literature reviewed earlier. The major leadership issue appears to be finding a common role for legislators to fulfill regardless of their sex or political ideologies. The different interpretations of the
role, and of whether or not the means or the ends are most important, needs to be
decided before the legislature can be entirely successful. A greater understanding and
respect for the different styles of leadership must also be adopted by all those
concerned. Leadership does not come in just one form, nor is it effective in only one
form. When legislators can respect these differences they are more likely to respect one
another and the challenges they face as individuals and a group.

Limitations

There are several major limitations to generalizing the results of this study. The
first is the number of women interviewed. I interviewed eleven current women
legislators but only five former legislators. The reasons for only interviewing five former
legislators include difficulty in locating them, their lack of willingness to speak with me
regarding their past experiences, and unfortunately, many of the early women legislators
are no longer alive. The pool from which I had to sample was relatively small to begin
with.

Secondly, the absence of data from men is a definite limitation of this study. I
have gathered perspectives from only one group of people. The women are more
inclined to answer questions regarding the female population in a positive light than the
men may have been inclined to answer. Interviewing only women presents a limitation
because their perspective is of course a biased one. Incorporating men into the study
would have presented another view of women in terms of leadership and perhaps
counterbalanced the bias. This would also have allowed men to interpret leadership
styles and differences between the genders, as well as the women. By having the two
perspectives I could better understand whether the differences “actually” exist or if
they are only a result of limited perceptions.

Also by limiting this study to only women, I have no way of comparing women’s
leadership styles to men's. Women responded as to how men and women each lead but the responses may have been quite different had men answered how they perceive themselves and their male colleagues as leading. This study could even be expanded now to include men by having male legislators look at the female legislators' answers and respond to them. While this would not be entirely thorough, it would at least allow for a slight accommodation of the men. The exclusion of men was due to time limitations associated with this study, more than a direct attempt to leave them out.

Another limitation of this study is that I focused only on legislators in Virginia. By choosing to study leadership only on the state level I limited the generalizability of my results. I also have no means to compare Virginian women legislators to other women legislators on a state or national level. Additional research including comparative information about women legislators in other states could have strengthened the validity of the results I found.

A final limitation of this study is that partisan ties could have influenced current legislators' responses. When answering questions regarding political issues such as priorities and factors that affect decisions to introduce legislation, respondents may have been predisposed to answer in certain ways. The chance that respondents were swayed by their party platform is quite likely. The situation in which the legislators work is very subjective and legislators often feel responsible to several groups including their constituents and their respective parties. This cannot be avoided, nor can these groups' influence be forgotten. The only possible way to completely compensate for this would have been to distribute anonymous questionnaires. This option would most likely not have resulted in obtaining in-depth information I was looking for in this study.

**Recommendations**

This study was successful in that it answered the questions which I was
researching. I would, however, like to make some recommendations for future researchers who are looking to investigate female legislators and their leadership. First and foremost, the inclusion of other state legislative bodies would allow for greater generalizability of the results. By studying three or more bodies simultaneously one would be able to better understand what types of leadership are prevalent and successful throughout legislatures.

Studying other legislative bodies would also allow researchers to make comparisons between legislatures that have high percentages of women and legislatures and those that have low percentages of women. This would give more information as to the impact the percentage of women in the legislature has on their activities and leadership opportunities. Term lengths could also be better analyzed in terms of their effect on women’s leadership opportunities because there would be more women with longer tenure in their legislatures to study than was available in the Virginia General Assembly.

Researchers could also use this study as a basis to research political leadership on local, county, and federal levels. By expanding this study, researchers could identify possible common themes among female politicians at each of the governmental levels. Because of the limited group which I studied I was not able to conclusively develop a model or draw general conclusions about women legislators and their leadership. By expanding this study researchers would have to ability to do so. They could also determine if political actions are completely dependent upon the situation or if the situation is created by the political actions.

I would also recommend including men in the study. While my study focused upon women, the inclusion of men would allow researchers to make generalizations about men and women’s leadership styles, their development, and their effectiveness. My study was limited in that all of my results reflect the perspective of females. This was limiting because the females offered biased perspectives in terms of analyzing and
describing their own leadership styles. They also made generalizations about males' leadership styles which may not fully or accurately reflect their behavior. Including men in the study would allow the researcher to determine if any differences exist between the sexes in terms of legislative leadership and also how the sexes perceive each other and themselves in terms of leadership effectiveness and styles.

A final recommendation I would make to researchers conducting studies about leadership in any field, is to have the respondents clearly define their role (e.g., as a legislator) at the beginning of the interview/questionnaire. One of the main issues brought up in this study appears to be the different perspectives on what a legislator is responsible for doing. Without having a uniform understanding of their role, it is difficult for respondents to identify leaders because to each respondent the leaders will be quite different because they are judging them on different bases. With a clearer understanding of what the respondents feel their role calls for, understanding the leaders identified will be easier for the researcher.

In conclusion, I hope that this study has made a worthy contribution to the field of women's leadership, particularly in the political arena. There are many aspects of legislative leadership and gender based leadership which can be further studied and developed. I hope that the results from this project will help other researchers further the study of women and legislative leadership.
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## WOMEN IN THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
### 1924-1998

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</table>
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<td>Michele B. McQuigg (R)</td>
<td>1998-</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Prince William</td>
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Appendix 2

Questions to be researched prior to each interview

How long have you been in the House/Senate?

What was the total number of bills you introduced during the last complete legislative session?

How many of those bills were passed into law?

Interview Questions

Agenda related questions:

I am interested in your five priority bills during the current legislative session. What were those five bills?

Were they passed by the legislature (House of Delegates and Senate)?

(note if there are any women’s issues’ bills and if so probe as to their origination, reason for introducing them, and any related issue)

What factors affect the types of bills you introduce?

Please indicate, as best you can, the frequency with which you do the following in an average week of the legislative session:

(answer with: never, once or twice, 3-10, or over 10)

-speak on the floor in a week when there are many hours of floor debate
-speak in a committee in a week of committee hearings
-bargain with the other legislators to win support of your bills
-meet with lobbyists

Leadership

List one or two of the accomplishments of which you are proudest during your tenure as legislator.

What motivates you personally as a legislator?

In your own words, what does leadership within the context of the General Assembly mean?

How is this different from other contexts of leadership?

Do you see women’s leadership styles as different from men’s? How?

Who in the legislature would you be most likely to identify as a leader and why?

How do you view yourself in terms of leadership? Are there certain characteristics that you possess that make you a leader?
Appendix 2 continued

**Network groups**

Are you a member of the women's caucus? (How often do you attend the meetings?)

Do you attend the women's round table meetings? (How often?)

**IF YES:** Why did you originally decide to participate in this organization?

What advantages and disadvantages do you receive from attending these meetings?

**IF NO:** Why do you choose not to participate in these groups?

Do you belong to any informal women's networks within the legislature? (Informal groups defined as 'any group of women who provide support and influence one another's behaviors in the legislative position' must meet at least once a week)

**IF YES:**

Tell me about these groups.

How long have you been a part of these groups?

How did you become a part of these groups?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to such a group?

How often do you change your stance on an issue based on these groups?

**IF NO:**

What do you see as the purpose of the women's networks?

How do you view the formal networks for women in terms of their effectiveness?

How do you view the informal networks in terms of their purpose?

Have you ever been a part of a network?

**IF YES:** Why did you decide to discontinue your involvement?

In what ways, if any, is being a woman in the legislature any different today than it has been in the past?

What do you think these differences can be attributable to?

What do you see for the future of women in the legislature in terms of their leadership?