THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN ON AMERICAN

SCHOOL BOARDS

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This thesis examines the representation of women in politics, specifically their representation on school boards. The presence and circumstances in which women are on school boards is a topic that has not generated much scholarly research. This research project is an attempt to bridge this research gap by examining the correlates of women serving on American school boards.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

<u>Background</u>

In the past few decades, we have witnessed an increased growth in the number of

women around the world entering the political arena, an arena which has been

traditionally male dominated. In 1992, characterized as the "Year of the Woman,"

women made substantial gains in U.S. congressional office by winning 24 seats in the

House of Representatives and five seats in the Senate. Today, in 2008, women are

represented in the U.S. Congress in record numbers, with 70 representatives and 16

senators. Additionally, for the first time in American history, a woman, Senator Hillary

Clinton, almost captured the presidential nomination for a major political party. Yes, it

seems, the times are changing. Yet, despite these gains, women still lag behind in terms

of equitable representation. For example, women constitute over 50 percent of the U.S.

population, but hold a scant 16 percent of all political offices (CAWP).

<u>Statement of Purpose</u>

This study will provide information concerning the representation of women on

big city American school boards. In addition, the correlates that explain the election of

women to school boards are identified. As such, the study attempts to fill the void in the

literature that exists about the representation of women on American school boards

Purpose of Study

Few systematic, comparative studies examine the representation of women at the local level. And those that do exist examine women on city councils. No study, to my knowledge, systematically examines the representation of women using a large sample of U.S. school boards. This study will fill this research lacuna.

Methodology

Survey data were collected from school boards in American cities with a student enrollment of 10,000 or more students. The survey yielded information regarding the gender and racial composition of the school board members, as well as other structural and political and variables. School district profile data were collected from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Significance of Study

This study is significant because, as stated previously, little research is devoted to examining and explaining the representation of women on school boards. This study is important because it offers a systematic, comparative analysis of the appointment and election of women in local government.

Outline of Thesis

The first chapter provides background information about the thesis. The statement of purpose, purpose of the study, methodology, and the significance of the research project are addressed. The second chapter offers a general review of the literature on women in politics. The review is comprised of three parts. First, an examination of the political opportunities, or lack thereof, afforded women historically in the U.S. is presented. Next, the story of women's political mobilization and their struggle for

suffrage helps explain the current state of women in politics. The third section addresses

contemporary issues and concerns of women and politics. Finally, chapter three

examines the extent to which women are elected or appointed to positions at the local

level, particularly women on school boards. This background review provides a context

for the thesis of the research, which is: Women do not hold positions on big city school

boards in proportion to their numbers in the general population. Variables that are

significantly associated, positively or negatively, with this underrepresentation are

identified and discussed.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN POLITICS

<u>The Traditional Apolitical Role of Women in Politics</u>

When the first settlers reached what would later become the United States in the early 1600s and established the political statement the "Mayflower Compact," women and children were not considered to have any political status. Politics was viewed as male-dominated. Women were largely forced into traditional stereotypical sex roles. The legal political role of women in colonial times, however, was not clear (Darcy, et al., 1987). Political rights were based largely on birth, property, and religion (Darcy ,et al., 1987). There was no consistent and universal barrier to the participation of women in political life, until the period of the American Revolution (Darcy, et al, 1987).

Prior to the American Revolution, a woman's status depended on many factors, including her race, economic position, and whether she was a slave, an indentured servant or free woman (Harrison, 2003). Women played important roles in the colonial era and economy. Because of the shortage of labor, men allowed white women to fill positions that were traditionally accorded males (Harrison, 2003). The American Revolution forced awareness of women's importance as consumers, potential boycotters of British imports, producers of vital goods and general managers of the household economy (Bolt, 1993). As the conflict with Britain heightened and many women's husbands were taken

away because of the war, women assumed men's jobs and debated political issues (Bolt, 1993). These new activities brought women no direct political return, instead by 1807 they along with blacks were disenfranchised (Bolt, 1993). Issues of ensuring the survival of the young Republic were more important objectives than sexual or racial equality for male politicians (Bolt, 1993). Many countrymen during this time suggested that the only individuals that "had established their political identity in the Revolution were subsequently in a position to struggle for their concerns'; and women, like non-whites, had not effectively done so" (Bolt, 1993). Ironically, the country had just become a democratic Republic, a government created for the people and by the people, but the consequences of this new democratization and the Revolution was disappointing--particularly for women.

During the period of the American Revolution newly drafted state constitutions explicitly barred women from participation in political life (Darcy, et al., 1987). In contrast, the political rights of women in the colonial period were inconsistent and loose, but new state constitutions specified political rights at the national and local level as well as the state level (Darcy, et al., 1987). During the revolution-era women were forced into rigid gender stratification (Harrison, 2003). Although women had gained confidence and awareness of their capacity to function as citizens in society, they were legally excluded from political life under the assumption their rights were not based neither on the constitution nor tradition (Darcy et al., 1987; Harrison, 2003).

The Revolution, not yielding many political gains for women, did prompt the first serious debate in America about the position of women in society (Bolt, 1993). Prior to the Revolution, the colonies had a political structure based largely on common law, or

tradition rather than written codes (Harrison, 2003). Women commonly held property, and because it was a common practice to restrict voting to propertied individuals, often women in colonies did vote (Harrison, 2003). After the Revolution common law was abandoned and state constitutions were created. As a result of the more formalized political structure women loss political status. The public role of the American women was defined. The emerging concepts of women were that they were afforded the responsibility of rearing virtuous children to become patriotic citizens, and guardians of social morality (Harrison, 2003).

The long standing issue of educating women was also addressed. Between 1790 and 1830 educational provisions for women improved dramatically, particularly in the northern states. The case had been made for schooling women beyond basic literacy (Bolt, 1993). The newly created U.S. Constitution did not mention women or their rights or privileges, and by excluding them this codified women's inferior role (Harrison, 2003). The ratification of the Constitution left women disenfranchised.

<u>The Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Women's Political Rights</u>

Due in large part to the Industrial Revolution, the women's political movement began in the nineteenth century. The transformations associated with the Industrial Revolution altered the ways in which women worked, the places they lived, and their relationship to the larger social community (Buechler, 1990). The effects of the Industrial Revolution mediated changes in the family and the role of the woman (Buechler, 1990). Throughout the colonial period and into the early nineteenth century, the family functioned as a major unit of economic production (Beuchler, 1990). This was also a part of the highly patriarchal system in which women played a major role in

household production and familial survival (Beuchler, 1990). The process of industrialization undermined the productive role of the family unit by fostering larger non-familial units of production for a capitalist market (Beuchler, 1990). The woman's productive role began to decrease along with reproduction. Increased industrialization did not affect all women the same, but had a major impact on white middle-class women. A new role of domesticity arose and focused on women being "pure," submissive, domestic and obligated women to maintain the household, care for children, and emotionally support their husbands (Beuchler, 1990). This new role of domesticity for some women introduced new confinements, limitations, and restrictions on women's behavior by posing a narrower and stricter standard of acceptable female behavior (Beuchler, 1990).

Prior to these new stricter standards placed on females, women exercised a great deal of freedom. During the time before the industrial revolution women played an increased role in helping to support the family; women contributed much economically to their families. As a result of the industrial revolution, the new standard of womanhood allowed for a more limited role of domesticity.

The dissatisfactions and grievances felt by most women about their place and role in society led to the emergence of the woman's political movement (Beuchler, 1990). Exclusion and confinement of women allowed many of them to create friendships and homosocial relations among each other, which in turn produced a collective identity and solidarity that later became essential in the later mobilization of the movement (Beuchler, 1990). There were key institutional forces that added in the production of the women's movement, among them being organized religion and the educational system. Religion

was the only acceptable means of women to relate to the public world allowing them to come together and take active stances on religious issues. The second important institutional force was education (Beuchler, 1990). Educating women beyond the primary level was more acceptable and deemed valuable to women in performing their domestic roles.

The Abolitionists Movement and Women's Political Rights

The increased involvement of women during the 1820s and 1830s led to their participation in the abolitionist movement.   Along with this increased involvement also brought to the forefront the tensions over the role of women in the antislavery effort (Beuchler, 1990). Discontent with their position in society motivated many women to participate in the emancipatory abolitionists movements (Dubois, 1978). Women's participation in this movement proved vital.

Women served in many capacities in the abolitionists movements. For example, in 1833 in Philadelphia when the American Anti-Slavery Society was formed women were allowed to attend and speak but could not join or sign founding documents (Beuchler, 1990). Although women's participation was restricted, this was a considerable gain because they were able to be involved in an important social movement. Involvement resulted in experience that would help them lead the women's movement. Ultimately, as a result of their inability to join this organization they formed the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. In 1837 a National Female Anti-Slavery society met in New York with eighty-one delegates from twelve states (Beuchler, 1990). Women were eventually extended membership into the American Anti-Slavery Society after allying with the Garrisonian wing of the abolitionist's movement. However, women

were still not recognized nationally. The abolitionist movement also sparked the emergence of many female leaders, who were vital to the abolition movement and the suffrage movement. Finally, women's participation in the abolitionists' movement allowed the concerns of the antislavery and suffrage movement to be linked (Beuchler, 1990; Harrison, 2003).

The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848

As women participated in the abolitionist cause, many female reformers acquired important skills in speaking, organizing, and agitating for social change at the very same time that they encountered resistance to their participation in the abolitionist cause (Beuchler, 1990). The skills acquired by these women would soon yield triumphal results. As a result of the grievances of women, in 1848 many women participated in the Seneca Falls women's rights convention in New York. While at Seneca Falls the women present drafted a "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions"-- an adaptation of the Declaration of Independence (Dubois, 1998). At this convention issues such as women's economic position, legal status, occupational possibilities, educational opportunities, familial roles, and political disenfranchisement were addressed (Beuchler, 1990). The central idea of the resolutions was to protest against the denial to women of "the first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation,……oppressed on all sides" (Dubois, 1998). The declaration went on to enumerate the whole range of women's grievances, including women's civil death in marriage, their lack of rights to their own wages, their taxation without representation, and their treatment under divorce and guardianship laws that favored husbands over wives (Dubois, 1998).

After 1848 many women's rights conventions were held in various locations, in the North, South, East and West, up until the Civil War (Beuchler, 1990). These women's conventions disseminated and popularized ideas about women's rights through the network provided by the abolitionist movement and by female anti-slavery societies in particular (Beuchler, 1990). Also in 1848 the demand for political equality rested on the popular republican tradition that insisted on the equal rights for all, with universal suffrage sitting as the crowning jewel of individual freedom (Dubois, 1998).

When the Thirteenth Amendment to abolish slavery was proposed in 1863, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed the National Women's Loyal League and collected nearly four hundred thousand signatures on petitions urging Congress to pass the amendment (Beuchler, 1990). Once slavery had been abolished, the political status of former slaves became a very important constitutional question. Black suffrage had become key in the Republican party. Women's rights leaders took advantage of this constitutional crisis that swirled around black suffrage (Dubois, 1998). As a result of women's work on behalf of the Thirteenth Amendment, that the principle of unconditional emancipation led directly to that of universal suffrage (Dubois, 1998). Women emphasized that the right to vote was a natural right, hence these arguments were about the abolishing of slavery, which helped to strengthen the suffrage women's leaders' arguments. After the passage of the 14th and 15th amendments, women sought to bring the issues of black and female suffrage together as one universal reform (Beuchler, 1990). Abolitionists did not want to couple the two groups together because male reformers who worked hard to get the Thirteenth Amendment passed argued that it was "the Negro's hour," and that it would be to risky to link the goal of black suffrage and

civil rights with that of female suffrage (Beuchler, 1990). The struggle for suffrage

became a more complex political battle for women. The individuals battling for women's

rights and black rights eventually split and begin pursuing their group's own personal

interests.

<center>Women's Political Rights After the Civil War</center>

Organized efforts to secure woman's suffrage began in 1867 with a state

referendum in Kansas, which failed. The referendum was intended to ensure women's

suffrage before Kansas' statehood (Dubois, 1999).   The leaders of the women's

movement began a state by state initiative to ensure suffrage instead of trying to obtain

approval of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The leaders knew that difficulties

that would be attached in trying to persuade an all male Congress to vote in favor of

women's suffrage.   Although the referendum was defeated, there were gains in the

movement towards universal suffrage. In 1869 two national women's suffrage

organizations appeared (Beuchler, 1990). The National Woman Suffrage Association,

founded by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the American Woman

Suffrage Association founded by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell. The suffrage

movement then suffered a series of setbacks beginning in January 1878 when the voting

rights amendment was first introduced in Congress (Dubois, 1990). The full Senate did

not consider the amendment until 1887 and voted to defeat the bill. The two women's

suffrage groups merged in 1890 thus creating the National American Women's Suffrage

Association to create an even more unified front (Klein, 1984). In this same year

Wyoming entered the Union as the first state with full suffrage for women (Klein, 1984).

Colorado followed with the vote for women in 1893: and Utah and Idaho enfranchised women in 1896 (Klein, 1984).

The move for women's suffrage had come to a halt in the early part of the 1900s. As a result, women's activism shifted from suffrage to social reforms, such as health and housing inspections, consumer protection, child labor restrictions, and minimum wage and hours for women workers (Klein, 1984). It was not until 1908 that women begin to revitalize the fight for women's suffrage. Victories were won in 1910 in Washington, and in 1911 in California. The following year Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon gave women the right to vote, and in 1913 Illinois also passed measures supporting suffrage as did Montana and Nevada in 1914. Women in eleven states voted in the 1916 presidential election (Klein, 1984). By this time the United States was also involved in World War I, which brought national attention to the suffrage movement as well as to the important role women played in the war effort. During the war, an unprecedented number of women joined the depleted industrial and public service workforce (Klein, 1984). Women became an active and visible population of the labor sector that benefited the national economy. By the end of 1918, four more state Michigan, Oklahoma, New York, and South Dakota had approved women's suffrage (Klein, 1984). In January 1918, the U.S. House of Representatives with a two-thirds vote introduced the Nineteenth Amendment. After much debate the bill was passed, ratified by the states and was added to the Constitution August 18, 1920.

Women's Political Rights Following Ratification of the 19th Amendment

The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment represented a fundamental shift in the formal role of women in American society (Harrison, 2003). But the ratification did

not translate into an absolute shift in society's values or its view of women's role in society (Harrison, 2003). A new way of thinking about equality emerged from the Supreme Court rulings that had taken place in the 1920s. In *Adkins v. Children's Hospital* (1923) the Court ruled that protective measures laws that gave special status to women in the workplace because of their "delicate nature" were no longer necessary (*Adkins v. Children's Hospital* 261 U.S 525). The Court said that the Nineteenth Amendment demonstrated that the "revolutionary changes" that had taken place in society regarding men and women rendered these laws unnecessary (Harrison, 2003).

After the victories in 1920, the National Women's Party, created in 1917, proposed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to Congress in 1923 (Beuchler, 1990). The Equal Rights Amendment stated "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdictions (Harrison, 2003)." The ERA was not submitted without opposition. Those who opposed the equal rights amendment, which demanded equal rights for women, suggested that men and women are inherently different and occupy different social and economic roles in society. Sadly, the biological view of women's role in society prevailed and the ERA was not approved.

Between 1925 and 1960 a limited amount of activity revolving around women's rights took place. Women rights organizations still continued to lobby on behalf of women (Klein, 1984). Although, women had achieved the right to vote, this right did not necessarily translate into more influence. The women's movement for several years plummeted. During the depression the rights of working women came under increasing attack (Klein, 1984). As a result of the dire need for money, women were allowed into

the paid labor force, but were guided by strict gender-based occupational segregation. In

1932 Congress passed the Federal Economy Act that discriminated against wives of

government employees for federal jobs and stipulated that women with employed

husbands be dismissed first when cutbacks were needed (Klein, 1984). In 1935 the

National Recovery Administration established federal wage codes that were designed to

allow women to receive less pay than men who do the same job (Klein, 1984).

Women's groups did begin to organize to defend their economic rights and protect

women from financial disaster (Klein, 1984). Several different women's interest groups

formed to protect the rights of women.   Workplace issues and the debate over equal pay

and special protection continued throughout the 1940s. Another significant "women's"

issue also emerged during this period—political representation.

   As a result of the struggle for women to gain voting rights, many women gained

lobbying experience and contributed extensively to the work of political parties. They

also became dissatisfied with their positions and opportunities within the political system

(Klein, 1984). Women began to protest disparities of female representation. This pressure

and perseverance found its fullest expression in the contemporary women's movement.

<div align="center">The Modern Women's Movement</div>

   The release of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* sparked the beginning of the

women's movement.   Friedan's booked discussed the dissatisfaction of many women

who attempted and failed to live up to the idealized version of womanhood in the 1950s

(Harrison, 2003). On the other hand, much groundwork for the modern women's

movement was laid in the years between 1960 and 1966. During this time Congress

considered 432 pieces of legislation on women's rights (Klein, 1984). In 1961 John F.

Kennedy created a National Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to explore and document problems of sex discrimination and recommend policies that would reduce prejudice (Harrison, 2003; Klein 1984; Beuchler 1990). The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was a recommendation by the CSW. The passage of the act by Congress marked the first time in the country's history that legislation had been passed to prohibit discrimination based on sex. The Equal Pay Act requires the standard of equal pay for equal work (Harrison, 2003). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed by Congress also tackled the issue of discrimination for women and minorities. This act protects all Americans from discrimination on the basis of sex, color, race, religion, and national origin. As a result of the act the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was created to enforce the Civil Rights Acts (Harrison, 2003; Klein 1984; and Beuchler 1990).

The National Women's Organization created in 1967 continued to bring increased political recognition to women issues. Although, several gains had been made concerning women's political position, the government still failed to resolve several of the women's rights issues. The lack of congressional response to women's needs lead to the creation of a new feminist's voice and new organizations formed to demand sex equality (Klein, 1984). The new groups formed began to take more militant action than the groups of the past. It was not until 1970, the Strike for Equality, which established the presence of the social movement committed to sex equality, than the government begin to act on behalf of women (Klein, 1984).

In 1971 the National Women's Political Caucus was formed to promote the election and appointment of women to political office (Klein, 1984). Soon after, Congress in 1972 passed more legislation that favored women. Title IX of the Higher

Education Act prohibited sex segregation. Equal employment opportunities were extended to teachers and school administrators as well as to local and state employees. The Equal Rights Amendment was overwhelmingly approved by Congress and submitted to the states for ratification. Despite all the campaigning and advocating for the Equal Rights Amendment it was not ratified by enough states to become part of the Constitution.

After the 1970s more women begin to be elected to political office because of the women's (feminists) movement publicity and the acceptability of running for public office. The presence of the women's movement was central to achieving political representation (Klein, 1984). Women in state legislatures increased from 3.5 percent in 1969 to 13 percent in 1983 to 23.6 percent in 2008 (CAWP). Women holding local government positions increased from 4 percent in 1975 to 10 percent in 1981 to 23.5 percent today (CAWP). The election and/or appointment of women to political positions were a struggle during the peak of the women's movement and continues to be a current political issue. But, women have made significant political gains at the state and national level in being elected and appointed to political office. The remainder of this section discusses issues and concerns related to women and political representation, particularly at the state and local level.

<u>Women and Political Representation: Issues and Concerns</u>

Since the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, few women, relative to their numbers in their general population, have actually held national elective office (Clark, 1991). While women have gradually increased their participation in terms of voting and other forms of activism, they still remain

underrepresented in all levels of U.S. government (Clark, 1991). As a result of their limited representation, the extent to which women can directly influence public policy has been questioned (Clark, 1991). Research targeted at women's representation has debated if women must reach a "critical mass" in order to bring about political change.

Critical Mass

In the 1980s the critical mass theory was primarily applied to situations where women had not reached 30 percent in parliaments and local councils (Dahlerup, 2006). The argument for critical mass suggests that women will not create any political change until critical mass is reached within any organization (Dahlerup, 2006). Kanter (1993) in *Men and Women of the Corporation* addresses the importance of numerical distribution of males and females and its significant effects on the behavior of the organization. According to Kantor, there are different kinds of proportional representation of groups; uniform, skewed, and tilted. The idea of critical mass as it applies to women focuses on skewed groups. Skewed groups are those groups in which there is a larger preponderance of one type over another up to the ratio 85:15. Skewed groups represent the characteristics of women. In her findings, Kanter (1993) also states numerically dominant groups are in control. The dominant types also control the group and its culture in enough ways to be labeled dominants. Another skewed group can be called tokens, treated as representatives of a group or category of individuals.

The critical mass theory is used to explain variations across states between descriptive and substantive representation. Applying Kanter's work on the effects of the sex ratios on group behavior in corporate settings, political scientists studying state legislators have theorized that the degree to which women "make a difference" depends

upon their numbers or proportions within these legislative institutions. The theory posits

that when women constitute a small "token" minority, 15 percent or so, the pressures to

conform to male norms are too great, and the collective will and power to resist are too

weak (Reignold, 2006).

Representation

The critical mass theory is important since it suggests that women must be present

in legislative bodies in large enough numbers to either form coalitions or to constitute

majorities. It also suggests that even after women assume political positions, they must

develop a "representational style." The literature suggests two broad approaches to

representation—descriptive and substantive (Trembley, 2006). The concept of

descriptive representation suggests that the share of a subgroup that occupies a legislative

body should mirror that demographic group's share of the general population (Trembley,

2006). Substantive representation gives importance to what an elected individual thinks

and does, rather than emphasizing who the person is it requires deliberate actions. Both

concepts are developed further below.

Descriptive Representation

There are several different approaches to representation. Hanna Pitkin in *The*

Concept of Representation offers illustrations and examples. Descriptive representation

as argued requires that the legislature be so selected that its composition corresponds

accurately to that of the whole nation; only then is it really a representative body (Pitkin,

1967). As described by John Adams a legislature "should be an exact portrait, in

miniature, of the people at large, as it should think, feel, reason and act like them."

Representation according to this view must be an "accurate reflection" of the community

or general public (Pitkin, 1967). Theories of descriptive representation suggest that by excluding a particular group from certain positions of power, policy decisions and outcomes will be distorted (Clark, 1991). The ideal of this type of representation is that the officeholder represents those constituents with the same social characteristics as he or she. Black legislators represent black constituents, women legislators represent women constituents, and so on (Mansbridge, 1999).

Descriptive representation does have its critics. Pitkin (1967) argues that this type of representation is based only on characteristics, on what he or she is like, rather than what he or she will do. The representative in this case does not act for others; "he stands" for them, by virtue of correspondence or connection between them, a resemblance or reflection (Pitkin, 1967). As this relates to women in the political system, this type of representation is not always the best. Many assume that when a woman is elected into office that she will automatically advance "women's issues." Evidence regarding personal differences between male and female elected officials has been mixed. Some researchers suggests that there are differences in the behaviors of male and female elected officials, while others have found little or no differences between the two (see below).

Substantive Representation

Theories of substantive representation of women suggest that the individual officeholder will work to address the common interests and concerns. Past research concerning the substantive representation of women follow the voting habits of female legislators. Studies have found that women legislators tend to vote more liberally and feministic on issues when compared to their male counterparts (Reingold, 1992). Thomas and Welch have examined the policy priorities of male and female officeholders

and have found that women are more likely to take the lead on legislation dealing with women, children, and family (Thomas and Welch, 1992).

Many contend electing women to office is the only sure way of providing "substantive" representation of women's interests in the policy (Saltzstein, 1986) The problems that have occurred with substantive representation is researchers have focused on background, personality, and attitudinal differences between male and female elected officials, on the assumption that such differences will be reflected in behavior (Saltzstein, 1986). Evidence regarding personal differences has been mixed, with some analysts finding differences, while others see little or no difference between male and female elected officials (Saltzstein, 1986).

 Sanbonmatsu suggests that state policies are shaped by the presence, or absence, of women in public office (Sanbonmatsu, 2004). She suggests that women in state legislatures are much more likely than men to feel an obligation to represent women, children, and families. Men and women officeholders bring different issues to the table and frequently take different policy positions as well (Sanbonmatsu, 2004).

Historically only a very small percentage of women have been elected to public office. Since the 1970s, however, women have increased their representation on local governing councils, in state legislatures, and executive branches (Clark, 1991). In 1992, women achieved substantial electoral breakthroughs. Twenty-four new women were elected to the House of Representatives and four to the US Senate, increasing the total number of elected women on Capitol Hill to fifty-three (Maytal, 2005). Despite the growing representation of women in American government, the United States lags behind other societies in the representation of women. Although the United States record of

getting women into public office has not been that great, current trends are encouraging

(see statistics below in Chapter 3).

Campaigns and Elections

The number of women in political office has increased since the origins of the

women's suffrage movements, but the retention of women in elective office continues to

be a struggle. Women face more criticism and ridicule than men when running for a

political office. Carol Gilligan in her book *In a Different Voice* describes several

characteristics that are attributed to women and men. Commonly held stereotypes of an

ideal political candidate is one who is masculine and has expertise in the fields of

business, economics and the military. Often time women are associated with being

compassionate, caring, and kind. Gilligan theorizes that women possess an ethic of care

and men possess an ethic of justice. This "ethics of care" suggest that women define

themselves in the context of relationships, and also judge themselves in terms of their

ability to care (Gilligan, 1993).   Repeated findings in studies find that qualities deemed

necessary for adulthood, the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision-making,

and responsible action are those associated with masculinity and considered undesirable

as attributes of the feminine self (Gilligan, 1993). These stereotypes have crossed over

into politics and have left women fighting twice as hard to get elected. Despite women's

political gains they are still met with opposition in campaigning.

In fundraising and vote totals, often considered the two most important indicators

of electoral success, researchers have found that women fare just as well as, if not better

than, their male counterparts (Fox and Lawless, 2004). Based on a national study of

voting patterns, Seltzer, Newman and Leighton found: "A candidate's sex does not affect

his or her chances of winning an election. Winning elections has nothing to do with the sex of the candidate" (Fox and Lawless, 2004). Fox and Lawless offer two explanations for the disparities that exist between men and women and electability. The first is the incumbency advantage (Fox and Lawless, 2004). Incumbents in all offices have advantages, including name recognition and ability to gain financial support that can lead to enhanced vote totals (Darcy et. al, 1982). Their findings regarding the effects of incumbency are supported by research reported by Darcy at el. (1987). Re-election rates for incumbents, who have been traditionally been white men, are consistently above 90 percent (Fox and Lawless, 2004). As a result, groups such as women and minorities who have been traditionally excluded from the political system have a harder time getting elected. Second, Fox and Lawless (2004) point to the "eligibility pool" to explain the low numbers of women candidates and elected officials. Simply, not enough women occupy positions in the professions, positions that open doors to careers in politics (Clark, 1994).

Most of the first female elected officials, especially at the national level, were widows of a former incumbent (Herrnson et al., 2003). Today most contemporary female candidates for state legislatures and US Congress are typically members of the political elite. They are first elected to a lower state house seat and then encouraged to run for the legislature (Fox, 2000). Female candidates tend to face fewer barriers today than in the past. Women raise just as much campaign funds, assemble professional staff, and contact voters just as frequently as men (Herrnson et al, 2003). Despite their similarities, women and men tend to campaign differently. Women, as compared to males, are often times viewed as more liberal regardless of whether they run as Democrats or Republicans.

Voters perceive women candidates as more competent than males on certain issues and less competent on others (Herrnson et al, 2003). The most significant gaps are found with issues concerning "force and violence," such as capital punishment and nuclear war. Female candidates appear to be not as competent as males on these particular issues. Women candidates, however, tend to demonstrate more knowledge and expertise on compassion issues--such as income, redistribution, education, and programs to assist the poor and "traditional values" (Herrnson et al., 2003). When candidates distinguish themselves on compassion issues, women voters are more likely to vote for the candidate perceived to have the "kinder and gentler" policy stance (Herrnson et al., 2003).

While women have proven themselves able to raise just as much funds as men and are now more likely to run for office, they face many campaign obstacles. The role of the media in elections is very crucial to the success of any candidate, especially women. Women do receive the same amount of media coverage as men, but they are not covered on the same issues. Since women have increased in state and congressional offices, there has been an overwhelming amount of research that suggests that the depiction of women politicians is skewed. Women politicians often complain that the press focuses too much on their appearances and their personalities and too little on their policy proposals and actions. Norris (1997) in her study of press coverage of international state heads found little evidence of gender role stereotyping in terms of appearance, traits, and issues. However, studies of U.S. Senate and gubernatorial candidates suggest that the common complaints of female politicians are real and do exist. For example, Kahn (1994) has extensively studied how the news media covers women candidates relative to men. Her findings indicate that women have a harder time

controlling the media's agenda than do their male counterparts. The debate over women not being able to control the media's agenda centers on the fact that a majority of media outlets are owned by males, thus, so the argument goes, making it harder for them to control the content that those media outlets display of them.

Women politicians are often times held to stricter standards than their male counterparts. Women have to exceed all the qualifications of a comparable man running for office (Rajoppi, 1993). Experience reflects one of the high standards of measurement (Rajoppi, 1993). According to the Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP), women in office are as qualified and have as much, if not more, political experience than their male counterparts (Rajoppi 1993). Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) suggests that voters are not to blame when it comes to the low number of women in elected national positions.   However, this does not imply that voters are not biased against women candidates (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1991). There is a large amount of scholarly research that suggests that in statewide and legislative elections women are just as successful as men (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). As a result of this many are led to believe that voters are not biased against women. Yet, a second group of scholars demonstrates that voters use a candidate's gender to make inferences about candidate traits, beliefs, and issue positions (Sanbonmatsu, 2002).   For example, voters may perceive men as being more competent in areas of war and the economy and women more competent on education and healthcare issues. Sanbonmatsu's (2002) research on gender stereotypes and vote choices suggests that despite the tremendous liberalization in attitudes toward women in politics, voters do take gender into account when they evaluate candidates. In State legislative elections women win at the same rates as men (Sanbonmatsu 2006).

Women do not appear to be disadvantaged in state or congressional elections. A candidate's chances of winning office depend much more on the type of elective office they are running for than on the gender of the candidate (Sanbonmatsu 2006).

<u>Electoral Structure</u>

Previous studies suggest that the type of election system used to elect representatives at the state and local levels is related to variations in minority/ethnic political representation (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). In the words of Alozie and Manganaro, electoral structure helps shape women's ability to participate in politics (Alozie and Manganaro, 1993). Factors such as community size and regional location have also been found to impact the representation of women on American city councils (Sanbonmatsu, 2004). Similarly, the presence of women in statewide office varies based on region (Sanbonmatsu, 2004). For example voters in the state of Washington are used to seeing women on the ballot, whereas in South Carolina fewer than 10 percent of state legislators are women (Darcy et. al., 1994). Ultimately, most women who hold public office in the United States do so at the local level, as members of city councils, school boards, county commissions, and other elected groups governing cities, counties, and other local entities (Darcy et. al., 1994).

Research suggests that racial and ethnic minorities do better getting elected from single member districts than when they run in at-large election systems. Not only are such elections often less expensive, since neighborhoods tend to be racially segregated the odds of electing a minority from a minority-majority district is higher than when facing opponents using at-large systems. In contrast, women argue that at-large elections provide more opportunities for women to serve on city councils since women are not

geographically isolated into specific city neighborhoods, like minorities often are. Karnig and Walter (1976) argue that at-large elections are "kinder" to women than are single member districts. In contrast, Bullock and MacManus (1991) find that women fare well in both at-large and single member districts. The larger the number of seats at stake, the more likely slating groups is to recruit and endorse women (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). This find supports Welch and Karnig's (1979a) hypothesis that the less desirable the office is, the more likely women will occupy the position.

In sum, and as table 1 shows below, women do best getting elected at the local level. At the state and national levels, women are substantially underrepresented.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AND THE

POLITICS OF EDUCATION

Chapter 2 examined the historical role of women in politics, essentially focusing on issues and concerns about the representation of women in elective office. This chapter focuses on the representation of women at the local level; primarily on city councils and school boards. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of women on city councils, and then moves to a discussion of women on school boards. The latter discussion is placed in the broader context of the politics of education.

As previously noted, historically women have had a better chance of being elected or appointed at the local level of government than at the state or national levels. Based on the concept of proportional representation, we would expect to find that women should occupy 52 percent of the seats in all legislative bodies, regardless of the level of government. That is since women represent 52 of the general population and since women are not segregated into geographical regions, to achieve parity with their percentage of the population they should occupy 52 percent of, for example, all school board or city council seats at the local level, or 52 percent of the 100 seats in the U.S. Senate or 226 in the U.S. House of Representatives. A examination of the representation of women at all levels of government shows this "equity ratio" has not been achieved. In recent decades the representation of women at the national, state, and local level has

increased. And while these trends are encouraging, data from the Center for American Women in Politics show that in January of 2008, among the 100 largest cities in the United States, 11 had women mayors. Three of which are African American (Shirley Franklin, Atlanta; Sheila Dixon, Baltimore; Yvonne J. Johnson, Greensboro) and a Latina (Heather Fargo, Sacramento) (CAWP, 2008).

As of January 2008, of the 254 mayors of U.S. cities with populations over 100,000, thirty-eight, or fifteen percent, were women, including five African Americans and two Latinas. Of the 1193 mayors of U.S. cities with populations over 30,000, 187, or 15.7%, were women. Table 1 shows the gradual increase of women in the U.S. Congress, statewide elections, and state legislatures.

Table 1
Percentages of Women Holding Elective Offices, 1979 to 2008

Year	US Congress	Statewide Elective	State Legislatures	Year	US Congress	Statewide Elective	State Legislatures
1979	3%	11%	10%	1997	11%	25.4%	21.6%
1981	4%	11%	12%	1999	12.1%	27.6%	22.4%
1983	4%	11%	13%	2001	13.6%	27.6%	22.4%
1985	5%	14%	15%	2003	13.6%	26%	22.4%
1987	5%	14%	16%	2004	13.8%	26%	22.5%
1989	5%	14%	17%	2005	15%	25.7%	22.7%
1991	6%	18%	18%	2006	15%	25.1%	22.8%
1993	10.1%	22.2%	20.5%	2007	16.1%	24.1%	23.5%
1995	10.3%	25.9%	20.6%	2008	16.1%	23.5%	23.6%

Source: Center from Women in Politics Fact Sheet, 2008

Once again, these trends are encouraging, but the fact remains--women are still significantly underrepresented in American politics. Attention now turns to the representation of women on American city councils and school boards—the latter of

which is the primary focus of this research project

<u>Women on City Councils</u>

Women are afforded more political opportunities at the state and local level than at the national level. As such, it should come as no surprise that women are more likely to serve at the local level of government than at the state or national level (Dolan et al, 2007). One of the primary reasons is simple, there are more opportunities for women to serve and participate at the local level. With over 35,000 cities and towns and about 15,000 school districts, most of which elect (or appoint) councilors or school board members, the opportunity to serve is abundant.

Compared to the research focusing on women on city councils, comparative systematic studies examining the election of women to U.S. school boards is practically nonexistent. As we explain more below, this state of affairs may be attributed to the widely held belief that education policy is largely apolitical. The reality is that educational politics takes place in a highly charged political environment. Given the lack of studies analyzing the election of women to school boards, we turn to the literature explaining the representation of women on city councils for guidance to hypothesize the correlates of the representation of women on school boards. Two previous city council studies merit close attention.

In 1979, Welch and Karnig systematically investigated the impact of political structures and environmental factors on the election of women to city councils in 264 American cities with populations of 25,000 or more residents and a threshold of at least 10 percent black population (Welch and Karnig 1979a). The researchers tested two political-environmental explanations. According to Welch and Karnig, a women's ability

to gain office was dependent upon (1) the desirability and importance of the particular public office and (2) the degree of competition for the office.

Welch and Karnig hypothesized that the less desirable and less important the office, the more likely that women will hold it. Their second explanation was that women will do better when the competition for public office is low. When the elective position (e.g., a city council versus a mayoral position) is unattractive to men, often the competition for the seat is lower and women have a better chance of getting elected (Welch and Karnig, 1979a). Another type of competition, regardless of the attractiveness of the position, is competition from other groups in the community demanding representation (Welch and Karnig 1979a). For example, do white female candidates find themselves in competition with black or Hispanic males?

Welch and Karnig also tested the effects of ballot type (partisanship versus nonpartisanship) on the likelihood of female election.   The impact of partisanship on women's electability can be viewed in two ways. There is evidence that political parties fail to encourage and promote the candidacy of women. Partisan offices are also frequently used by men as "stepping stones" to higher office (Welch and Karnig 1979a). Nonpartisan elections on the contrary may be open to all political candidates since one does not have to join or be part of a political party or organization. Despite the openness of nonpartisan offices, they do put more weight on a candidate's financial ability since the party is not available to help (at least directly). Similarly, the candidate will have a greater responsibility to generate name recognition (Welch and Karnig, 1979a). In addition to political structures, Welch and Karnig also examined the impact of demographic variables on the election of women to city councils. Research, for example,

shows that women do better in communities comprised of better educated and more middle class people (Welch and Karnig 1979a). Also better educated, and higher income communities will have more women available to hold office.

The dependent variable used in the analysis was the percentage of the city council that was female (Welch and Karnig, 1979a). Several independent variables were tested as correlates. Variables used to measure the desirability and importance of the political office included the pay for serving in the office, the length of term for the office, and the ratio of council members to population. As noted previously, research documents with clarity the importance of electoral structures to electing minorities to city council seats. Specifically, studies find that minorities often getting elected in greater numbers using ward or district than at-large lections. Welch and Karnig measure the impact of electoral structure by including whether the city used district, at large with residence requirements, or purely at-large election systems. The variables were added to the regression equation as dummy variables. Competition indicators included for analysis was percent black and percent Spanish origin in the community and the ratio of representation to population of each of these minority groups (Welch and Karnig, 1979a). Finally the demographic, community wealth measures utilized were: proportion of families with over $10,000 income in 1970, the mean educational level of adults in the city, the proportion of females with college educations in the city, the log of city population size, and a dummy variable measuring Northern or Southern location (Welch and Karnig, 1979a).

The study found an advance in women's electability to city councils from an earlier study, from 9.7 percent of total seats held in 1975 to 13 percent in 1978. Nearly 40 percent of cities had no councilwomen representation, and only 2.3 percent of

municipalities had female representation higher than 50 percent (Welch and Karnig, 1979a). Women only occupy 25 percent of the council seats that their share of the population (52%) would justify (Welch and Karnig, 1979a). Only 6 percent of these cities had female mayors. This supports the finding that women tend more often to gain offices which carry less prestige and power (Welch and Karnig, 1979).

In a multivariate analysis that included the political, structural, demographic, and community identified above, Welch and Karnig report women are more likely to be elected from at-large than at-large with residence requirements systems, and more likely to be elected in cities using at-large with residence requirements systems than in cities using district elections. While the Beta values were not significant at the .05 level for at-large elections, they were significant for district and mixed electoral systems. Once again, both district and mixed elections were negatively and significantly associated with the representation of women on city councils.

Community size is significantly and positively related to the election of female council members, as was the presence of families with incomes over $10,000. In cites with a larger percentage of owner-occupied homes, fewer women are elected to city councils. The relationship was significant, and unexpected. Region, entered in the linear regression model as a dummy variable, as South and non-South proved to be unimportant in predicting the election of women to city councils. In total, the multivariate model explained little variation in the percentage of women elected to city councils, 15 percent.

In another study, Bullock and MacManus (1991) focus on municipal electoral structures and the election of women to city councils. The structures analyzed are : (1) type of election system (pure at-large, at-large from posts, at-large from residency

districts, mixed, single-member districts); (2) majority versus plurality vote requirements, (3) staggered versus simultaneous terms; (4) council size; (5) length of council terms; (6) incumbency return rate; (7) and city size (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). The region in which the city was located was also considered.

Karnig and Walter (1976) suggest that at-large elections are "kinder" to women than are single member district elections. Although the correlation coefficient was weak, Bullock and MacManus (1991) report a similar positive relationship. Staggered versus simultaneous terms has been hypothesized to negatively impact racial and ethnic minorities, especially in pure at-large systems (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Staggered terms can limit the effect of single-shot voting by a minority group by reducing the number of positions at stake (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Staggered terms in general could reduce female city council representation and simultaneous elections would increase it (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Research has also suggested that smaller councils have fewer women, because "women will do better when the competition for public office is low" (Welch and Karnig, 1979b; Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Bullock and MacManus note, however, that few studies have found council size to be a powerful predictor of the election of women. Like council size, length of term is typically regarded as a measurement of the prestige or desirability of the office (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Incumbency is an important structure in explaining municipal electoral outcomes, particularly in nonpartisan settings (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). High incumbency rates impede women's rates of entering public office. City size is also an important factor to consider in council women's representation. Larger cities may be a disadvantage to women because campaigning is more expensive, and women may be less

able to raise campaign funds. Other researchers state that larger cities are less traditional and will be more open to female officeholders. Overall city size has been weakly related to the success of women city council candidates (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Lastly the region of the city is an important predictor in women's council representation. Researchers suggest that the political cultures of the Northeast and West "foster female participation in politics" (Bullock and MacManus, 1991:86).

Bullock and MacManus note an increase in women's council representation from the 9.7 percent reported in 1976 to almost three fourths of all cities having women on their councils in 1986 (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Western cities were found to be more likely to have female representation than cities in the South. Previous research suggests South cities may have a more traditional view of the role of women and this view will likely impact the lection of women to city councils in many rural areas, explaining the paucity of such women serving on these elected boards (Dolan, 1997).

There is no compelling evidence that at-large elections promote the success of women (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). The majority vote requirement is not related to substantial differences in the presence of councilwomen. Women were slightly less likely to serve on city councils where was by majority rather than a plurality election (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Staggered terms were also found to have the greatest potential to affect election strategies when they reduce the ability of a group to single-shot vote (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). There was a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between the length of term and percent of women (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). The correlation between council size and percentage of women is positive. No relationship was found between the proportion of seats filled by incumbents in the

election prior to the study and the percent of females on the council nationwide (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). There was a positive relationship between the log of the size of the city and proportion female on the council indicating no disadvantage for women in larger cities (Bullock and MacManus, 1991).

In sum, there was little evidence that structural features influence the incidence of council women (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). But as expected, women are better represented on councils in the West. Bullock and MacManus also found that women were disadvantaged by council size, longer terms or competing when more incumbents were reelected.

Women's Representation on School Boards

While there is a plethora of research examining minority representation on U.S. school boards (see, for example, Meier, Stewart, and England, 1989; Meier and Stewart, 1991; Wright, Hirlinger, and England, 1998; Robinson and Dye, 1978; Robinson and England, 1981), there is a paucity of studies examining the representation of women on school boards. In many respects this is because education, or for that matter serving on school boards, is often not viewed as a political concern. This conception, of course, is a misconception (Meier and England, 1984). The widespread election of school board members has made them directly responsible to the voters.

According to the National School Board Association (NSBA) school boards are created to represent the communities in which they exist. The top five reasons for school boards as mentioned by NSBA are to; 1.) look out for children, 2.) advocate for the community when decisions are made about children's education, 3.) set the standard for achievement, 4.) make education representatives accessible and accountable to parents,

and 5.) ensure that taxpayers get the most of their tax dollars (www.nsba.org). These key

functions make school boards political in nature because they are elected or appointed,

accountable to the people, and they make sure taxpayers get the most for their tax dollars

invested in education. Consequently, it is clear that school boards are a political

institution. School board politics are often times categorized as intense, rough and

tumble, and personal (as parents are concerned about their children), and always about

the allocation of values (Easton, 1971; Meier & England., 1984). Given this information

women's representation on school boards relates to the broader body of knowledge

concerning women in politics. This research is significant since it seeks to apply the

previous findings regarding women in local politics to school boards.

To our knowledge no study to date has examined or attempted to determine the

correlates of the representation of women to school boards using a large national sample

and multivariate analysis. Using previous studies discussed above analyzing women on

city councils as a baseline, the remainder of this thesis examines representation of

women on 400 plus large U.S. school districts.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Data

The data upon which this study is based were derived largely from a 2002 direct

mail survey of 831 American school districts having a 2000-2001 school year minimum

enrollment of 10,000 students as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics

(NCES). The mailing addresses for the school districts were taken from the NCES

website (http://nces.ed.gov). In total, 484 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 58

percent. The survey provided information about the composition of the school boards in

terms of gender and race. In addition, school board clerks provided information about

electoral systems used to select or elect school board members, whether the district used

staggered elections, the size of the school board, the length of school board members'

term of office, and the school district name. The latter data allowed us to code the school

district's region category.

Survey data were matched with community demographic data collected directly

from the Internet from the website of the National Center for Education Statistics

(http://nces.ed.gov/). Data was not available for seventy-three school districts, bringing

the total sample size to 411 large U.S. school districts. Although the sample only

represents about 5.7 percent of the 14,500 U.S. school districts, over a majority of all

students who attend public schools are found in these large school districts.

The dependent variable used in the study is the *percentage* of women school board members on the local school board. This variable was calculated by dividing the number of female school board members by the total number of school board members. Previous studies examining the representation of women on city councils calculate the dependent variable using this procedure.

Several independent variables were used to explain the variation in the percentage of women on the 411 school boards. Previous city council studies reviewed above provided the theoretical context for inclusion of the independent variables. The independent variables to be analyzed are political structure variables, including (1) type of election system (appointment, pure at-large, at-large with residency requirements, district or ward, and mixed), (2) size of school board, (3) and length of council terms. The length of term variable also serves as a "desirability" indicator, as discussed above in the review of women representation on city councils. Similar to previous studies, the impact of region is assessed (Midwest, Northeast, West, and South). Community wealth variables included for study are (1) percentage of college educated females in the district, (2) percent female households, with no husband present, (3) city size (population logged), (4) percent owner-occupied homes, and (5) per capita income. Variables that capture the concept of "electoral competition" in the community for women are percent black and percent Hispanic in the school district.

<center>Hypotheses</center>

Based on the representation of women on city council literature, the following hypotheses concerning women on school boards are tested below.

The form of electoral system used in the school district is expected to impact the election of women to school boards.

H1: The percentage of women on school boards is positively associated with at-large elections and negatively associated with ward/district elections.

The size of the council is tested because previous research suggests that the larger the council, the more likely women will hold a seat. Welch and Karnig (1979) suggest that since the council size is larger the competition for the office will be lower, thus creating a better opportunity for women to hold the office. Competition is inferred to be lower when more council seats are available (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). This leads to the second hypothesis.

H2: The percentage of women on school boards is positively related to the size of the school board.

In previous research, the length of the term of office has been linked to prestige. The longer the term the more attractive or desirable the office (Bullock and MacManus, 1991). Thus:

H3: Fewer women will be found on school boards with long terms because of the desirability and competition of the office.

The region in which the school board resides is also considered. Several studies on female council representation divide the nation into two regions—South and non-South. The South is usually considered to be the most hostile to women entering politics.

<center>39</center>

The Northeast and West cultures have been identified to support the political

participation of women.   The fourth hypothesis is:

H4: Women will be better represented in school districts that are in the West and

Northeast than in the South.

Several community demographic variables are included for analysis. (1) percent

of college educated females in the district, (2) percent female households, with no

husband present, (3) city size (population logged), (4) percent owner-occupied homes,

and (5) per capita income.   The hypotheses are:

H5: The higher the percent college educated females in the district, the greater

the percent of female school board members.

H6: Greater number of female-headed households is negatively associated with

women school board members.

H7: The larger the city, the greater the percentage of women on the school board.

H8: The greater the percentage of owner-occupied homes the greater the

representation of females on the school board.

H9: Higher community per capita income is positively associated with more

female school board members.

Variables that capture the concept of "electoral competition" in the community

for women are percent black and percent Hispanic in the school district. The hypothesis

is:

H10: the greater the percentage of the school district population that is black or

Hispanic, the lower the number of women school board members.

The major mode of analysis utilized in this study is frequency distributions, cross tabulations, and linear multiple regression. Regression analysis was performed to determine the strength of each of the variables in predicting female representation on school boards.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Survey findings show a total of 2,746 school board members across the 411 school districts. Women hold 1165 of the positions, 43 percent. Although this figure does not reach parity with the average percent of females in the general population (52%), in no other elected positions in America do women achieve greater representation. The average school board size among the 411 districts is 7, with the average school board represented with three women.

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of women on school boards. In 10 school districts no women were represented on the school board. In contrast, in five of the 411 districts women comprised the entire school board. But, on average, as shown in Table 2 women about occupy 40 to 49 percent of school board seats (N=123).

Table II
Distribution of Percent Women on School Board (N=411)

Percent of districts w/ women	N
0% women	10
10 to 19% women	33
20 to 29% women	80
30 to 39% women	16
40 to 49% women	123
50 to 59% women	57
60 to 69% women	53
70 to 79% women	20
80 to 89% women	14
100% women	5
	N= 411

Does the high mean representation of women on big city school boards support the philosophy that women will gain more appointive and elective offices that carry less prestige? It is unfortunate if this is the implications of these findings. As noted above, serving on school boards is a highly political experience. Duties and responsibilities are many, time consuming, and significant.

Table 3 shows the distribution of school districts by region. Based on the survey data, 24% of the school districts are in the Midwest, 9% are located in the Northeast, 36% are found in the South, and the remaining 31% districts are situated in Western states.

Table III
School District By Region (N=411)

Region	N	Percent %
Midwest	97	24
Northeast	38	9
South	149	36
West	127	31

The regions consist of the following states. Midwest: IL, IN, IA, KS, KY,MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, OK, SD, WV, WI. Northeast: CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT. South: AL, AR, FL, GA , LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA. West: AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, WA, WY, UT.

Table 4 shows the mean percentage of women on school boards by electoral structure. As the data indicate, the highest average percent of women on school boards is found in the 68 districts that use at-large elections with residency requirements (47.5%), followed by pure at-large districts (43.3%), mixed systems (43.3 %), and appointive

(41.5%). Women do the least well in ward/district elections (mean =.389). The overall

average for women in the 411 districts was, as noted above, 43 percent.

Table IV Mean Percent Women On School Board By Electoral Structure			
Electoral System	**N**	**Percent**	**Average % Women on School Board**
Appointive	12	3	.415
Pure At-Large	184	45	.434
At-Large w/ Residence Requirements	68	17	.475
Ward/District	96	23	.389
Mixed	51	12	.433
	411	100	.430

Following the lead of Bullock and MacManus (1991), a table was constructed

which shows the mean percentage of women school board members by region and type

of electoral system. In total, 25 separate regional/electoral categories are shown in Table

5. Also, the bottom of the table shows the overall percent women representation mean

for all regions and each electoral system. The data in Table 5 are provided for

comparative analysis. The independent impact of region and electoral structure are

shown in a multivariate regression analysis that follows.

Table V
Mean Percent Women On School Board By Region And Type Of Electoral System

	Appointive	Pure At-Large	At-Large Residency Requirements	Ward/District	Mixed
Midwest					
.445	.556	.452	.402	.424	.468
[.176]	[---]	[.189]	[.191]	[.177]	[.122]
(97)	(1)	(52)	(10)	(19)	(15)
Northeast					
.377	.360	.341	.593	.454	.414
[.184]	[.117]	[.193]	[.169]	[.201]	[.020]
(38)	(7)	(23)	(3)	(3)	(2)
South					
.387	.400	.367	.432	.375	.403
[.177]	[.187]	[.158]	[.191]	[.192]	[.157]
(149)	(3)	(37)	(21)	(60)	(28)
West					
.485	.714	.487	.513	.388	.488
[.216]	[---]	[.215]	[.219]	[.190]	[.252]
(127)	(1)	(72)	(34)	(14)	(6)
All					
.430	.415	.434	.475	.389	.433
[.195]	[.160]	[.201]	[.208]	[.188]	[.159]
(411)	(12)	(184)	(68)	(96)	(51)

*Standard deviations in brackets. Number of cities in parentheses

As Table 5 shows, women do best in the West, mean = 48.5 percent, followed by

the Midwest (44.5 %), South (38.7%), and the Northeast (37.7).   These findings are

consistent with Bullock and MacManus's findings about women on city councils in 1991.

Surprisingly, women do least well in the Northeast, which historically has been seen as being progressive (Bullock and MacManus, 1991).

As also shown in Table 4, Table 5 shows that women are represented in greater numbers first in districts that use at-large with residency requirements electoral systems, (47.5%), then in districts that employ pure at-large systems (43.4%), and followed closely by mixed systems (43.3%). Women do less well in the 12 districts in which they are appointive to the school board and in the 96 ward cities. This also adds support to the hypothesis and expected outcome that at-large elections will be more favorable to women.

An examination of the various mean percent women school board statistics across the various regional and electoral combinations yields some interesting findings. The highest rate is for appointive system in the West (71.4%), although this statistics is not a mean, but rather a single case. Women do best with at-large systems with residency requirements in the Northeast (59.3%), but once again with only three cases caution must be taken in making too much of the percentage. In general, the best mean representation seems to be in the West region using pure at-large (48.7%) or at-large with residency requirements (51.3%) systems. Moreover, these 106 cities represent about 25 percent of the sample.

In order to determine the independent effects of region and electoral structure, as well as the other variables hypothesized to be related to the representation of women on school boards in the pervious chapter, a number of multiple regression analyses were conducted. Table 6 presents the regression analysis that shows the factors found to be significantly associated with the representation of women on school boards. In addition,

the variable percent female household was included since it was significant at the .1 level.

Although no regional or electoral system variables reached statistical significance, given

the general interest in these variables their Beta values are shown in Table 6.

Table VI
Percent Women School Board Members and Environmental Variables:
A Multivariate Analysis

Independent Variables	Beta Values
% Female College Educated	.179**
Length of Term	.147**
% Female Household w/ No Husband Present	-.073
Population Log Size	.100*
At-Large w/ Residency Requirements	.078
Mixed Elections	.050
Pure At-Large	.060
District/Ward Elections	-.040
Southern Region	-.103
Western Region	.037
Northeast Region	-.082

Total R^2= .13
Adjusted R^2= .10
F= 5.431**

** p<.01
  *p<.05

Table 6 shows three variables significantly associated with predicting the election

of women to big city school boards. First, size of city (population log) was significant

and positively related to the representation of women on school boards. This finding is as

hypothesized above. Second, the percentage of college educated women is significantly

and positively related to the percentage of women on school boards. This finding is as expected. Finally, the length of the term that school board members serve is positively and significantly related to the representation of women on school boards. If serving longer signifies greater prestige, as hypothesized above, then the "prestige" argument does not apply to school boards.

Pure at-large elections, at-large with residency requirements electoral systems, and mixed elections are positively related to the percentage of women on school boards. They are not, however, statistically significant. An interesting, but not surprising, finding is that district elections are negatively associated with the election of women to school boards. While the direction of the relationship is the same as reported by Welch and Karnig (1979a) for city councils, the relationship for school boards is not statistically significant.

Table 6 also shows that women are more likely to be represented in districts located in the Western region. The relationship was positive, but not significant. Surprisingly, the Northeast region was negatively associated with women on school boards, as was Southern region. Once again, none of the regional Beta values were significant.

Similar to research reported by Welch and Karnig (1979a) and Bullock and MacManus (1979) for city councils, the regression model shown in Table 6 was not very predictive, explaining 13 percent of the variation in the dependent variable – percent women representation on big city school districts. (adjusted R^2 = 10 percent).

In summary, some of the hypothesized relationships presented in the previous

chapter were supported, and some were not. More specifically, Table 6 shows that *H1--*
The percentage of women on school boards is positively associated with at-large
*elections and negatively associated with ward/district elections--*must be rejected. While
the direction of the relationships were as predicted, the regression coefficients were not
significant. *H2-- The percentage of women on school boards is positively related to the*
*size of the school board—*is also rejected. While not shown in Table 6, regression
analysis showed the variable to be insignificant. *H3-- Fewer women will be found on*
school boards with long terms because of the desirability and competition of the office—
is also rejected. In fact, this variable (shown in table 6) was both significant and
positively related to the election of women to school boards. It could be that men prefer
serving in elected positions for shorter periods of time so that they can move to more
prestigious positions.

The fourth hypothesis stated: *Women will be better represented in school districts*
that are in the West and Northeast than in the South. The hypothesis is rejected. No
regional variable reached statistical significance. Moreover, Table 6 shows that while the
hypothesized direction for the Western variable was in the expected direction, it was in
the wrong direction for the Northeast variable.

With respect to hypotheses related to community demographic variables, *H5--*
The higher the percent college educated females in the district, the greater the percent of
*female school board members--*and *H7-- The larger the city, the greater the percentage*
*of women on the school board—*were both supported by the data shown in Table 6. Both
were positively and significantly associated with the election of women to big city school
boards. *H6-- Greater number of female-headed households is negatively associated with*

women school board members—was rejected, although it was significant at the .10 level.

Table six does not show the variables related to *H8-- The greater the percentage of owner-occupied homes the greater the representation of females on the school board*—and *H9-Higher community per capita income is positively associated with more female school board members.* Separate regression analyses showed that the variables are not significantly related to electing women to school boards. Similarly, the concept of "electoral competition" in the community for women was not supported by the data. Regression analyses (not shown in Table 6) show that percent black and percent Hispanic in the school district is not related to the election of women to school boards. *H10--The greater the percentage of the school district population that is black or Hispanic, the lower the number of women school board members*—is thus rejected.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to provide a systematic comparative study of women on school boards using a large sample of U.S. school boards. The basic goal of this study was to provide information concerning women on school boards. Also to provide an examination of the correlates that explain the election of women to school boards. In sum this study attempted to fill the void in literature about the representation of women on school boards.

Chapter one of this thesis basically laid the foundation of the female apolitical role in the United States. This was discussed in detail to address the progress that women have made in politics since the founding of the United States. Upon laying this foundation it has been realized that women are still hindered when entering the political arena. Although, we established women are found in greater numbers in political office there are still a number of issues and concerns that affect women's ability to enter the political arena. Among the issues addressed were women's ability to reach a critical mass, substantive and descriptive representation, campaigns and elections and electoral structure. After addressing these issues, the research went into the thesis of the paper which dealt primarily with women's representation at the local level, particularly on school boards. The literature about women on city councils was thoroughly discussed because this helped to lay the foundation for the systematic study of women on school

boards. The research and findings on women on city councils was closely replicated in this study to examine the correlates that help or hinder women's representation on city councils.

The data consisted of a national school board survey to 831 school districts and yielded a 58 percent response rate. The survey data was matched with community demographic data collected from the National Center of Education Statistics. In total 484 surveys were returned and data for seventy-three districts were not available bringing the sample size to 411 U.S. districts. The findings presented in the study were solid and consistent with the previous literature examining women on city councils. The results of the data suggest that women are more likely to serve on school boards in cities that have a higher percentage of college educated females, in large cities, and in school districts were the length of the term is longer. Several political and demographic variables were tested but were not significant predictors of the election of women to large school boards.

<center>Limitations of Study</center>

As with any study there were several limitations. In the first chapter of this thesis several issues and concerns were addressed. This study did not test for the issue of critical mass, substantive representation or campaigns and elections. This study primarily focused on the descriptive representation of women on school boards and the environmental and structural factors that can help or hinder women's representation. All the issues mentioned are of equal importance to women in politics but could not be addressed by this systematic study.   Another limitation of this study was the percentage of survey responses received from the Northeast. The number of received responses distributed across the regions was uneven. The Northeast only yielded 9% of the surveys

used in the study. This low rate of responses could have affected the numbers in the

multivariate analysis.

<center>Recommendations for Future Research</center>

Future research should focus on the impact that women on school boards have on

school district policies. For example in school districts with 3 or more women present on

the school board would you expect to find an increased presence of after school care

programs in elementary schools? This topic was selected based on its categorization of

being a women's issue. As mentioned in chapter one women are often times associated

with supporting compassion issues.   This research could be done by looking at school

board agendas. This will help scholarly research in this area by determining if the

presence of women effects school district policies because according to Dolan (1997)

gender does have a slight affect on school board members. Also future research may

want to consider the average ages and racial make up of women on school boards. Also

an interesting topic to examine in detail is the racial make up of the communities and the

number of women that serve on the board. We could easily hypothesis that there will

more likely be larger percentages of minorities on school boards or we could go as far as

to say there will be less white women because of the competition between minorities to

hold office. All of these suggestions would be great in an effort to broaden the scholarly

knowledge about women on school boards.

In sum this research was not conducted to make women advocate for this office or

even to glorify their under representation on school boards, but to provide essential

information needed to accurately examine women's political representation at the local

level. Ultimately this research was designed to add to the larger body of knowledge

<center>53</center>

concerning women in politics research. In addition, the representation of women on

school boards is a more than worthy office to be considered in examining women's

political participation and activities.

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VITA

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Pages in Study: 58   Candidate for the Degree of Master of Arts

Major Field: Political Science

Scope and Method of Study: Despite the vast amount research on women in politics,
        little research has been devoted to examining the representation of women on
        school boards. This study provides information concerning the environmental
        factors that may help or hinder women from holding a school board seat. Survey
        data collected from 411 large U.S. school districts was merged with demographic
        data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Findings and Conclusions: The findings in this study are consistent with the previous
        literature examining women on city councils. Women are more likely to serve on
        school boards in cities that have a higher percentage of college educated females,
        in large cities, and in school districts were the length of the term is longer. Other
        political and demographic variables were not significant predictors of the election
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