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THE POLITICS OF WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE CAUCUSES

By

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Written under the direction of

Professor Kira Sanbonmatsu

And approved by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Politics of Women's Legislative Caucuses

By

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According to the Center for American Women and Politics, 1,749 women are serving in state legislatures in 2012, making up 23.7% of legislators across the country. The impact of women in elected office has received much scholarly attention with analysis of the different priorities and legislative styles of women, but little research exists on the effects of women's caucuses in the 50 states. My dissertation identifies opportunity structures and legislator motivations that facilitate the creation of women's legislative caucuses. The project employs case studies to test hypotheses about caucus creation, original quantitative and qualitative research on the existence of women's caucuses throughout the states, and a quantitative analysis of key variables and their relationships with women's caucuses. I argue that women's gendered identity influences the goals and structures of their organizing efforts within gendered political institutions. Beyond the traditional purpose of a caucus, to directly influence the policy process, these organizations offer women a supportive environment from which to challenge the status

quo, which has sometimes served to exclude women from full participation in the legislature.

## **Acknowledgements and Dedication**

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In spite of all of the support and assistance from all the aforementioned, any errors that have found their way into this dissertation, are the sole responsibility of the author.

## Dedication

For My Bates and the Worm

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Luke 1:37

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## Chapter 1

### Women Take/Create Their Place in Legislatures

In 2001, the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) stated in a national study, “Most women legislators report that women in their legislatures meet together to discuss legislation that affects women, either formally through a women’s caucus or informally on a bipartisan or partisan basis, and most women legislators attend at least some of these meetings” (“Women State Legislators: Past, Present, and Future” 2001, 2).

#### Introduction

Three-term Senator Olympia Snowe announced on February 28, 2012 that she would retire from the U.S. Senate. She was dissatisfied with her work environment within Congress. Partisanship had made government unfriendly and ineffective. She vowed to find new ways to “best serve the people of Maine” (Steinhauer 2012). Senator Snowe did not leave the Senate without trying to change it. She and her female colleagues had tried to avoid the pitfalls of heightened polarization by participating in a women-only supper club to foster camaraderie across the aisle and keep debate civil (Carlson 2012). Unlike the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues (CCWI), created in 1977, this women’s organization was created in the late 1980s to better the quality of life for the legislators themselves (Carlson 2012). Bipartisan policy is sometimes a by-product, though not the objective, of the group.

The different contexts in which these women’s organizations within Congress were created produced groups with different goals and activities. The CCWI was founded by women legislators during the second wave of the women’s movement in the U.S. to

address women's issues they felt had previously been ignored. They were responding to a political environment which was ripe for attention to particular constituents' needs. They faced unique challenges from their institution and the gender dynamics therein. The Senators' Supper Club, on the other hand, was created during a different political climate by women with a different need. Their primary goal was not to address women's issues but rather to improve their own working environment, "to restore some of the natural camaraderie" (Carlson 2012).

The example at the federal level of women's groups taking on different characters is evident in the states as well. Women legislators across the country have created women's organizations at different times, for different reasons, all with various effects. Women are motivated at different times to create organizations and, as the context changes, so do the challenges they face. The fundamental question posed in this dissertation is what factors facilitate or obstruct the creation of women's legislative caucuses?

How political parties are related to the creation of women's caucuses is one of the main aspects of my study because of the central role these parties play in the organization of legislatures. Shor and McCarty (2011) report that state legislatures are following the national trend of heightened polarization but caution that this trend is uneven across the states. By examining the context in which women's bipartisan caucuses emerge, we can better understand the effects of party polarization on women legislators specifically. Has party polarization prevented women from creating these groups? Have women responded to polarization by creating bipartisan groups to ameliorate the negative consequences of party strife? Understanding how women legislators negotiate their party and gender

identity across these various contexts is important to evaluating quality of life for women legislators and party strength as organizers of legislative life.

Political parties have historically been understood to be the organizing mechanism of legislatures. Affiliation with a political party, most often Republican or Democratic, has influenced individual votes, committee assignments, leadership positions, and resource allocation (Rosenthal 1998). When a legislator enters the office, he or she is expected to behave as a loyal party member if not exclusively, at least primarily. Party affiliation can sometimes determine seating arrangements on the floor and office location. In some states, party caucuses are the only caucuses. Others, however, have identity and issue caucuses that do not challenge party supremacy as the primary organizer of behavior, but can influence legislative agendas and outcomes. These groups have various priorities, strategies, and levels of success in achieving their goals. This dissertation illustrates the conditions that lead to the creation of a women's caucus with particular attention paid to gender and party constraints on legislative behavior. Women carry both of these identities with them as they represent their constituents' interests. In this dissertation, I explore the development of women's legislative caucuses today and the influence both gender and party have on women's ability to organize collectively.

How women of both parties represent women has been considered by researchers who seek to reconcile descriptive representation with substantive representation. Individual women's lives are the construct of many political identities. This is one reason a monolithic political group of women has not emerged in U.S. politics (Sigel 1996). How women's substantive political interests can be represented is complicated by

these competing political identities. In the seminal work, *The Concept of Representation*, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1967) defines representation as

Acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them. The representative must act independently; his actions must involve discretion and judgment; he must be one who acts. The represented must also be (conceived as) capable of independent action and judgment, not merely being taken care of. And despite the resulting potential for conflict between representative and represented about what is to be done, that conflict must not normally take place. (209-210)

Pitkin gets at one of the key problems of descriptive representation – competing interests of a multi-identified individual: “But what becomes of terms like ‘interest’ and ‘justifiable’ if there can be lifelong, profound disagreement among men as to what their interest is” (213).

Women legislators do feel an obligation to represent women, but how this takes practical form varies based on who is doing the representing (Hawkesworth et al. 2000; CAWP 2001; Barrett 1997; Dodson et al. 1995; Tamerius 1995, Osborn 2012). Appreciating that representation might be complicated is natural when given that defining the parameters of “women’s issues” has been a challenge to the discipline. Many scholars have wrestled with defining “women’s issues” in attempts to associate women legislators with particular priorities or legislative successes. In analyzing the impact of women’s caucuses in particular, scholars have a wide range of issues they consider (Thomas 1991, Swers 1998, Dodson and Carroll 1991).

With questions as important as representation, collective action, and political party governance at stake, understanding women’s legislative caucuses’ role in legislative life is not simply an exercise in political correctness or niche research. Women’s legislative caucuses are examples of collective action within institutions. By considering these groups within an institutional context, we can examine party reactions to legislators

who attempt to identify as something beyond party members. Further, women's caucuses can document what strategies women choose and the challenges they face as they represent their constituents. With the importance of women's caucuses explained, I will now outline the main questions that I seek to answer in this dissertation.

### **What is a women's legislative caucus and where do we observe them?**

Answering these initial questions will establish the current state of women's caucus existence across the 50 states. This investigation is necessary to establish the relationship between institutional factors, such as party control, and the existence of women's legislative caucuses. It is a big picture view of the subject matter that sets up the more in-depth analysis of four individual case studies analyzing the process of caucus creation.

### **What conditions contribute to a successful attempt at caucus creation?**

None of the factors expected to explain women's caucuses emerge from my national analysis. We find women's caucuses all over the country, in all types of political environments, with all proportions of women in the legislature. It is necessary then to start at the beginning, at the initial attempt to discover the opportunities, resources, and frames that result in the creation of a caucus. By establishing which factors are most relevant to a successful launch, this analysis explains the conditions under which women successfully employ their gender as a legislative strategy. I will focus specifically on the political opportunities, resources, and frames associated with attempts to caucus.

### **Why do women's caucuses take different forms across the country?**

The National Conference of State Legislatures is a bipartisan organization that provides research and technical assistance to state legislatures and their staffs (NSCL

2013). In 2005, their assessment of women's caucuses categorized them into two groups.

My own 50 state data analysis results in an even more specific breakdown of caucus varieties. However one categorizes these groups, discovering why they take different forms and under what circumstances can help to explain the challenges women face within the masculine institution of the legislature and the challenges they face in their attempts to represent women. Do these group take different forms because of external pressure from party leaders or legislative structures or because women decide on different strategies and goals for caucuses? What influences their decisions?

### **Why do women in some states choose not to act collectively as women within legislatures?**

Finally, though my primary interest is in the successful formation of these caucuses, it is important to consider the decision making process of those women who do not attempt to form a women's caucus in their state. Do they not see a need for such a group, or are they obstructed by certain institutional features? By examining when and where caucuses don't happen, we are contributing to the story of gender as it impacts women's experience within the legislature.

### Caucuses in the States

Hammond, Mulholland and Stevens, Jr. (1985, 583) define caucuses as "voluntary associations...which seek to have a role in the policy process. These groups have standard organizational attributes: a name, a membership list, leadership, and staffing arrangements." Hammond (1998) observes caucuses in the U.S. House of Representatives and categorizes caucuses into six groups. Broadly speaking, three types

of caucuses exist in state legislatures across the country. All states except Nebraska have party caucuses. These are the fundamental organizations within legislatures. Members of these caucuses meet together to decide on leadership posts, policy strategies, and legislative agendas. The members of the majority party determine the leadership of the entire legislature and are appointed to chair committees within the legislature (Rosenthal 1998).

Issue caucuses also exist throughout the states but their prevalence is less well-documented. Issue caucuses are those organized around particular policy areas, and membership is open to those legislators who have an interest in the policy area. Examples from throughout the states include Sportsman's Caucuses which support gun rights, Kids' Caucuses which advocate for policy concerning children's health and educational programs, and Green Caucuses which advocate for environmental policies. The formality of these groups varies as does their vote cohesion on key issues.

Identity caucuses are those which Hammond et al. calls at the federal level National Constituency Caucuses. These groups are concerned with issues facing specific constituencies, although their membership may be open beyond those who share the same identity characteristics of the constituency. For example, 33 states have black caucuses (Clark 2010). Other examples of identity caucuses throughout the U.S. include those representing particular geographical constituencies within a state, like a Coastal Caucus, or sexual orientation like the LGBT Caucus in California. Again, the formality of these groups and their vote cohesion on key issues varies by state and caucus type.

As previously stated, caucuses are “voluntary associations...which seek to have a role in the policy process. These groups have standard organizational attributes: a name, a

membership list, leadership, and staffing arrangements" (Hammond, Mulholland and Stevens, Jr. 1985, 583). The NCSL goes a step further and defines a formal caucus as one that meets weekly or monthly during session, hires staff, is policy-oriented, and/or pays dues. Informal caucuses are defined as those which are primarily social in nature, meet less regularly than formal caucuses, and do not necessarily have a legislative agenda (Oliver 2005). While Hammond et al. require policy interest, the NCSL differentiates between those caucuses that seek to influence policy and those which are primarily social in nature.

The largest problem with the Hammond et al. definition for women's caucuses, made clear by the NCSL definition, is that by requiring a policy agenda, many organizations are excluded from consideration, even organizations that have a name, membership list, leadership, and staff. An example of this is the Colorado women's caucus, which has a very formal organizational structure but does not seek consensus on policy issues. This example also points out the flaw in the NCSL definition. What about groups with very formal organizational structures that do not have a legislative agenda – are they formal or informal? Some women's caucuses include all women as members, whether they volunteer to participate or not. While women may have their gender in common, other parts of their identity, like political party membership, sometimes preclude the possibility of directly influencing the policy process with any kind of consensus.

What this previous research demonstrates is a problem with past studies of women's caucuses. Hammond's work assumes an interest in influencing policy with an established structure. Oliver (2005) has identified two types of women's caucuses, formal

and informal, where informal caucuses serve more social needs for members than policy needs for constituents. If we are to properly measure the impact of these caucuses on policy and the legislative environment, we must properly categorize the purposes for which these groups were formed, regardless of their observed formality of structure. Examining the establishment of caucuses can help us to understand the factors influencing women's decisions when deciding the goals of the organization. Do certain institutional factors lend themselves to the creation of policy caucuses, while others result in more social caucuses? Do certain institutional factors motivate women to create one type of group rather than another?

Knowing that women's caucuses do not fit the definition offered by Hammond et al. and dissatisfied with Oliver's categorization, I will offer my own definition for a women's caucus in Chapter 3 with a defense of its parameters and measurable characteristics. With a developed concept established, observing and measuring it will be possible. Definitions will also be offered in later chapters for what constitutes a caucus attempt and success or failure in that attempt.

We must properly define the concept, observe and measure it in order to properly evaluate the impact of women's caucuses. By examining these groups, we can learn about the flexibility of party dominance in legislatures by observing where alternative mechanisms of organization are created. Further, observing where women legislators attempt to create these caucuses can help to explain how gender works across legislative contexts. Finally, according to a 2001 Center for American Women and Politics report, women who meet with other women are slightly more likely to work on women's issues

bills than those who do not. In order to determine the specific impact of women's caucuses, we must establish their structures, purposes, and challenges.

### Methodology

This study requires weaving theories about why people organize groups to achieve political goals with literature about the norms and rules under which women in legislatures may be organizing. My research also draws on studies of elite women's political behavior and experiences within institutions as gendered subjects. In this dissertation, to understand alternative organizing in legislatures, and specifically that of women, I will analyze the conditions under which formal women's legislative caucuses are created. I will establish where caucuses exist and analyze the resources, opportunities, and frames which result in successful attempts at caucusing. This study will have three phases: 1) quantitative and qualitative research about the existence of women's caucuses throughout the 50 states; 2) a quantitative analysis of key variables and their relationship with women's caucuses; and 3) case studies to test hypotheses to explain successful caucus creation.

### 50 State Analysis

This dissertation determines the current landscape of women's organizing across the 50 states, discovering a range of caucus types previously unidentified. I test several state-level variables for correlation with these caucuses to determine hospitable environments for women's organizing. In the fall of 2009, I began collecting data on the existence of women's caucuses within state legislatures. I conducted 139 personal and telephone interviews to collect these data. Thirty-four of these were conducted at the NCSL's July 2010 Legislative Summit. Questions were open-ended and included those

directed at determining the type (if any) of organizing among women, as well as the motivations and challenges to organizing within the legislature. Additionally, I collected information about party control, term limits, size of legislature, etc. in all 50 states. This information was procured from published reports by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

I used these data to explore expectations concerning certain institutional level variables and the existence of women's caucuses. Factors I expected to be correlated with caucuses were those indicated by other women and politics literature to be positively associated with women's experience within the institution of the legislature. I also used the information gathered through my legislator interviews to understand why women created the types of organizations they did across the states and why women in some states do not organize around their gender at all. These findings, however, do not tell us about the conditions under which caucuses were created. It doesn't say anything about the motivations of caucus creators and participants. Therefore, a different kind of analysis is necessary to address those questions.

### Case Studies

Through case studies, I explore the origins of women's caucuses and the factors associated with the successful launch of such an organization by examining both successful and failed attempts at organizing between 2006-2010. The questions to be addressed here include: Why and how do women create gender specific groups within legislatures? What makes some attempts at creating a women's caucus successful? What are the obstacles to establishing a women's caucus? Why do some women legislators not organize?

A case study “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Johnson and Joslyn 1991, 121). Within this dissertation, I use case studies to better understand the relationship between the legislative context and women’s attempts at creating caucuses. What decisions did women make when attempting a caucus, and how were they influenced by the norms and rules of the legislatures in which they serve?

George and Bennett (2005) define a case as “an instance of a class of events...the investigator chooses to study with the aim of developing theory (or ‘generic knowledge’) regarding the causes of similarities or differences among instances (cases) of that class of events” (17-18). The class of events considered here are recent attempts at creating a women’s caucus. My aim is to discover the opportunities, resources, and frames that lead to caucus creation. Cases studies are particularly conducive to this type of investigation (George and Bennett 2005, 19). Secondly, case studies also allow for the discovery of new relevant variables. As George and Bennett (2005) explain, “When a case study researcher asks a participant ‘were you thinking X when you did Y,’ and gets the answer, ‘No, I was thinking Z,’ then if a researcher had not thought of Z as a causally relevant variable, she may have a new variable demanding to be heard” (20). Case studies then may identify important causal variables.

Within this analysis, my expectations are that certain resources and opportunities are more important than others in creating a women’s caucus and that some frames are more useful in recruiting caucus participants necessary for a successful caucus launch. I will detail these more in later chapters but will introduce them here. Resources I expect to favor caucus success are professional legislatures, the presence of other caucuses, and

support from women's groups outside the legislature. Similarly, I expect certain opportunities like Democratic control and large Democratic majorities would favor the creation of a women's caucus. However, there are other legislative conditions and features that I expect to hurt the chances of a successful attempt. For example, a greater number of new women legislators, a highly polarized legislature, term limits, and legislatures with higher party competition would lessen the chances for a successful attempt. Finally, I expect the frames, or the arguments for the creation of a caucus, will vary and I will determine which of these are most associated with a successful attempt. I hypothesize that women legislators will point to dissatisfaction with the legislative agenda or culture when arguing for a caucus.

My four cases represent the universe of caucus formations between 2006 and 2010. I chose this timeframe because I wanted instances that would be recent history and fresh in participants' minds. I closed the timeframe at 2010 because, in order to evaluate if an attempt had been successful or not, I would need to observe it for one year. Within this five year time frame, there were attempts in four states: Iowa (2007), Pennsylvania (2009), New Jersey (2009), and Colorado (2009). The attempts in Iowa and Pennsylvania are both failed attempts. The 2009 attempts in New Jersey and Colorado are both successful attempts. Definitions of what constitutes an attempt, success, and failure are all included in Chapter 4 which introduces the case studies.

Finally, in Chapter 9, I discuss why women do not organize at all in 27 states. I offer the explanations shared with me during the interviews I conducted for the 50 state analysis. I also discuss how the cases I examine between 2006-2010 compare to the very first women's caucuses created in the U.S. to establish if there are any common themes

despite the almost 30 year time span between those discussed in detail here and the earliest caucuses in Maryland and Massachusetts. For this comparison, I utilize historical narratives provided by the caucuses and interviews with legislators.

### Chapter Preview

I will address my four main questions in the following chapters. Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework for the project, explaining gender as a process and behavior acted out by legislators. I will present how I expect gender to influence women's decisions and ability to caucus in the states. Chapter 3 describes the current landscape of women's caucuses throughout the 50 states. Within this chapter I define the concept, women's caucus, and establish a typology of the varieties within this concept. I also investigate with statistical analysis how women's caucuses are related to state level variables. In Chapter 4, I introduce the case studies which follow. Within this chapter, I discuss the background of the states included in the case studies and establish my hypotheses and methodologies for conducting my analyses. Chapter 5 consists of the New Jersey case study. Within this chapter, I examine my hypotheses and the evidence produced from my in-depth research of the state. Chapter 6 consists of the Colorado case study. Chapter 7 is the Pennsylvania case study, and Chapter 8 is Iowa. In Chapter 9, I discuss why women in 27 states do not caucus and how the cases discussed in this dissertation compare to the creation of the very first women's caucuses in the U.S. in the late 1970s. Here, I will also present explanations from legislators as to why they created the particular type of caucus within their state, using information from my 50 state data collection. Finally, this chapter summarizes my findings from the previous chapters and

offers a discussion on the usefulness of caucuses for both the representatives and the represented.

### Conclusion

The first women to serve as state legislators were three Republicans elected in 1894 to the Colorado House of Representatives. Since then, thousands of women have served in state senates and houses in all 50 states. Their proportions today vary between a high of 41% in Colorado to a low of 9.4% in South Carolina (“Women in State Legislatures 2012”). Our questions about these women reflect our cultural expectations of gender norms and traditional inquiries of political science. Some studies just come right out and ask, “Do women matter?” (Berkman and O’Connor 1993; Bratton 2002; Saint-Germain 1989; Swers 1998; Welch 1995). Others ask, “When and how do they matter?” (Beckwith 2007; Osborn 2002; Poggione 2004; Reingold 1996; Rosenthal 2000; Stanley and Blair 1991; Thomas 1991). As our understanding of gender as a concept has evolved, we have begun to ask not only whether women matter or how or when, but how gender as a constitutive process affects both the men and women who enter public office (Hawkesworth 2003; Sanbonmatsu 2006).

Previous scholarship on legislative life has paid little attention to the gendered environment in which legislators act. Gender and politics scholars who have examined women’s caucuses have only analyzed individual cases in isolation, compared only one or two states, or have focused only on their impact on legislative outcomes. Recent scholarship has begun to address women’s caucuses’ effect on the status of women in legislatures; however, study of the impact of women’s caucuses has not considered the purposes for which these groups were originally created. By ignoring the creators’ and participants’ goals in organizing, inaccurate or incomplete analysis of impact may result.

Understanding how the strategic employment of gender happens in different institutional contexts is useful to political science because it can shed light on the importance of context in the outcomes of legislatures. I expect to find that gender is not a universal tool that is implemented uniformly or guaranteed to work in the same ways across different environments (Hawkesworth 1997). Similarly, understanding how and why women employ gender in their own legislative behaviors demonstrates the multiplicity of “women’s interests.” Gender does have consequences within legislatures, though they may be various. By caucusing, women legislators are strategically signifying their gender in a particular way but to a variety of ends.

## Chapter 2

### Collective Action within Gendered Institutions

#### Introduction

I have argued that investigating the environments in which women's caucuses emerge can illustrate important new understandings about legislatures as institutions, political party structures, and gender as it operates across contexts. I have posed several questions which I plan to answer in the course of this dissertation: What is a women's caucus? Where do we observe women's caucuses? What explains their variation? Why do some women choose not to caucus? What resources, opportunities, and frames are favorable to the successful attempt at caucus creation? The following chapter establishes the framework from which my questions emanate as well as my expectations for explanatory variables.

Research on women in politics has examined their routes to political office, their experiences within campaigns, their relationships to political parties, their styles of legislating, and the impact of their presence on legislative agendas and substantive outcomes (Barrett 1997; Freeman 1986; Wolbrecht 2000; Berkman and O'Connor 1993; Bratton 2002; Carroll 1984; CAWP 2001; Dolan and Ford 1995; Herrnson et al. 2003; Kathlene 1994; Thomas 1991; Niven 1998). Initially, it was necessary to observe and document women's contributions to politics as they had been excluded from scholarship for decades (Carroll and Zerilli 1993). Many of these studies understand gender as a process, something that is practiced and re-inscribed by individual actions and institutionalized norms throughout political systems (Hawkesworth 2003, Katzenstein

1998).<sup>1</sup> State legislatures, for example, are gendered institutions with historically masculine majorities which have marginalized women's participation and representation (Kenney 1996, Thomas 1994). To explain and ameliorate this marginalization, it is necessary to observe and document the processes by which this occurs and the potential opportunities for equalizing the gender power balance for more inclusive participation and more fair representation by and for women. Duerst-Lahti (2002, 381) more formally states that, "Researchers must explore the structure of preferences in the governing institutional environment that have disadvantaged women as a group, discover elements that have heretofore 'permanently' disadvantaged women, and devise means to transform institutions and resolve the permanent problems." This dissertation seeks to do that by examining the conditions under which women legislators' collective organizing is facilitated.

Gender is not just an identity of legislators, man or woman; it is a structure of expectations and behaviors which shape legislators' decisions and their opportunities to legislate. Their own gendered identity and the gendered institution of the legislature are likely to affect their decision whether or not to organize as women and their ability to do so successfully. Women's ability to organize, consolidate power, share information, and act collectively has implications for their own experience within the institution and the quality of representation for their constituents.

Women are not only acted upon within gendered legislatures. They can play a role in the restructuring of those structures and behaviors by accentuating or downplaying

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<sup>1</sup> Gender is only one aspect of the constitutive nature of political identities and institutions. Obviously, race, class and other similar categories of analysis are a part of this process. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and therefore, should be considered collectively for an accurate analysis of individual experiences and institutional structures.

their female identity. By caucusing around their gender, women are gendering the practices and norms of the legislature. Reingold and Schneider (2001) have identified women's caucuses as a gendered opportunity structure within legislatures, potentially increasing women's ability to act on behalf of their constituents. Additionally, Tolbert and Steuernagel (2001, 15) consider caucuses a signal of "women's institutional strength," while Kanthak and Krause (2012) present evidence that they can increase the number of women committee chairs within legislatures.

Women legislators' experiences in legislatures have changed over time. While the first women to enter legislative office may have had difficulty finding a women's restroom and been marginalized via assignments to less influential committees, the numbers of women in office and in leadership positions have increased, although not proportionately to their numbers in the electorate. Duerst-Lahti (2005) explains how governing bodies have been gendered with masculine preferences and power normalized, while characteristics associated with the feminine (and as a consequence women themselves) have been marginalized. Other studies have determined that legislators report different experiences within political institutions as a consequence of race and gender (Hedge et al. 1996; Barrett 1997; Hawkesworth 2003; Smooth 2008, 2001).

As Kanter (1977) explains, women in skewed organizations (where women make up 15% or less of the population) are pressured not to draw attention to themselves. Because they are already marked as different by their gender, they seek invisibility as a way to hide from increased public performance pressures. They want to be acknowledged for their competence not their uniqueness as women. Increasing their numbers within these institutions may not ameliorate the problem either. Kanthak and Krause (2012) find

that increasing women's numbers in legislatures may do nothing to improve women's status because when women's numbers increase, their support from male colleagues decreases and their ability to work together is complicated by contradictory pressures to conform to masculine norms of behavior. This is consistent with Kathlene (1994), who finds that, as the number of women in legislatures increases, men's verbal aggressiveness increases, leading to women's silence in spite of their presence. This is even the case when women serve as committee chairs. Smooth (2008) explains this is particularly true for African American women legislators who may achieve positions of power within the legislature without the accompanying influence because of their race and gender (177).

It is no surprise then that Gertzog (1995, 74) finds evidence of discrimination in the selection of Congressional leaders and that women "alluded to the 'male culture of the House' to explain the chamber's gender imbalances". This culture results in women having to put forth special effort to adapt to masculine norms and traditional gender norm performance (Stanley and Blair 1991; Rosenthal 2000; Reingold 1996). As Duerst-Lahti (2002, 382) explains, "Congresswomen must adapt to, not challenge, structures in order to gain credibility. In the process of fitting in, however, congresswomen face a lose-lose situation; their success inside the institution paradoxically reinforces masculinism, which in turn perpetuates their difficulties in gaining power and influence."

I have argued that the gendered structures of legislatures will affect women's ability to caucus together, but state legislatures are also raced institutions, and organizational norms which may constrain legislators of color from achieving influence within the institution may also have consequences for women's ability to act collectively. Hawkesworth's (2003, 596) theory of racing-gendering institutions posits that political

processes particularly marginalize women of color. She describes the practices of racial-gendering when she states, "Through tactics such as silencing, stereotyping, enforced invisibility, exclusion, marginalization, challenges to epistemic authority, refusals to hear, legislative topic extinctions, and pendejo games, Congresswomen of color are constituted as 'other'."

This differing experience for women of color means their perspective may not align with that of white women legislators. Generally speaking, the women's movement has been challenged by racial divides among women (Simons 1979; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983; Breines 2006). More specifically within legislatures, Barrett (1997) finds that "white women see women as less able to accomplish their legislative tasks, either because of personal attributes or because of barriers to access" (138). Interestingly, black women do not share these feelings of inadequacy, but do agree with white women that they must work harder to prove themselves and juggle a complicated agenda that speaks to their broad constituencies and to specialized groups of women and minorities (140). This indicates that women of color may be more interested in creating and participating in caucuses because of their more optimistic perspective on the likelihood of their success. They also may have the experience and skills gained from participation in black caucuses that would position them well as organizers of women's caucuses.

Further, African American legislators have demonstrated an ability to remain representatives of the marginalized despite their incorporation into the legislative ranks. Research on the political incorporation of African American legislators indicates that their policy agendas and interests are not whitewashed despite achieving leadership positions or greater proportions of seats (Haynie 2004). The question of their influence in

the body, however, remains. Smooth (2008) explains that “it is clear that they have not yet become the power brokers in the big leagues able to influence the legislative process across policy areas,” instead being better positioned in narrow policy areas or certain legislative environments, like highly professional institutions (195).

Latina legislators may be proponents of women’s caucuses based on findings by Fraga, Martinez-Ebers, Lopez, and Ramirez (2008). Their analysis of Latina legislators finds that they are more likely to support legislation advocated by women’s caucuses even when their constituents oppose the measure. Further, they are more likely to support a measure supported by the women’s caucus and opposed by the Latino caucus when a measure divides them (173). Combined with the strongly Democratic political affinity of both African American and Latina legislators, larger proportions of women of color in a legislature would seem to be a positive political opportunity for a women’s caucus (CAWP 2013).<sup>2</sup>

Women’s reactions to biased treatment in legislatures may be mixed due to race, political party, or personal experience. Barrett (1997, 137), in surveying Democratic legislators, finds that women perceive a need to prove themselves and feel an obligation to legitimize women’s issues in the legislature. However, the consequences of gendered identities within masculine institutions may vary for women across party or race or could change based on the various strategies women employ, whether it is forming a caucus or some other demonstration of their collective presence. Proposing “women’s issues” legislation may result in different consequences for women legislators than an attempt at organizing a women’s caucus or pressing for more women in leadership positions.

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<sup>2</sup> The Center for American Women and Politics reports that 94% of women of color serving in state legislatures nationwide are Democrats.

Democratic women may experience consequences as a result of politicizing gender that are different from those of a Republican woman. Because these consequences are not the same, the motivations to employ gender as a political tool or the intended goals of such maneuvers will also vary for women across various identity markers including race, class, sexual orientation, etc. (Dodson 2006). These differences explain some of the challenges of organizing around gender, while maintaining a party identity, which is a strong and traditional organizing mechanism of legislatures.

Reingold (2000) documents the experiences of women in the California and Arizona legislatures who reacted differently to institutional gender bias. Although in a more “hypermasculine culture,” women legislators in California had more resources to draw upon to act collectively to challenge their denigrated status within the legislature compared to women in Arizona. Women legislators in that state were more integrated into their institution and therefore were unwilling to identify as a group (Reingold 2000, 92). This example highlights both the reasons why women might organize around their gender and the obstacles to organizing a specific women’s group. Likewise, Gertzog (2004) details the stops and starts along the way to a women’s caucus at the Congressional level with reputation concerns being one cause holding up the creation of a women’s caucus. He notes that women seeking to advance their own careers were hesitant to throw in their lot with other women who were seen as too radical by male members.

In her analysis of feminism within institutions, Katzenstein (1998, 16) argues that protest within institutions is not monolithic and that different feminist groups may have different goals and strategies as a consequence of their respective group perspectives and

institutional norms. Obviously, not all women legislators are feminists and/or interested in protesting anything within legislatures. Likewise, women's caucuses may not be a site for protest within legislatures. In some cases, they may be motivated to challenge the status quo, while in others they may be safe places for women to socialize with other women with no intention of rocking the boat of established norms and rules within the institution. However, Katzenstein's point helps to explain why women legislators, with seemingly much in common as a result of their gender, choose to form women's caucuses in some legislatures, while others do not.

Although women may try to avoid drawing attention to themselves, women legislators feel an obligation to represent women (Hawkesworth et al. 2000; CAWP 2001; Barrett 1997; Dodson et al. 1995; Tamerius 1995). This is true regardless of party affiliation. Both men and women acknowledge that "women legislators have a major impact on the extent to which women's interests are represented in state legislatures" (CAWP 2001, 1). It is important then that we investigate the tactics women legislators use to achieve this representation. Caucuses are one mechanism by which women legislators represent women.

As I have argued, being positioned to take advantage of political opportunities within legislatures is complicated by gender. In many cases, women may want to be incorporated into the institution and not acknowledged for their uniqueness as women. Forming a women's caucus, and therefore drawing attention to their difference, must make sense at least for some women legislators as a way to gain status in the organization in order to demonstrate competence or to achieve legislative goals, in some contexts making it worth the risk. Much political science research has reported that women

officials are perceived as particularly competent to deal with women's issues, and therefore, forming a women's caucus draws attention to that competence (Paolino 1995; Sanbonmatsu 2002). In organizations in which women have been successfully integrated or believe their success is dependent upon conforming to legislative norms, a group differentiating women from men may be undesirable.

Legislator motivations have long been understood to pertain to electoral concerns and good public policy. Feno (1978) identifies re-election, power in Congress, and good public policy as the goals of members of Congress. Re-election allows for power and policy to follow. How does forming or participating in a caucus help a representative achieve any of these goals? Hammond (1998) describes congressional caucuses as alternative organizing mechanisms to committees and parties which prove important for legislation. Congressional caucuses boomed in the 1970s because committees and parties were inadequate for managing information and advocating for particular policies. Hammond (1998, xi) determines that congressional caucuses are important tools for voicing public concerns in Congress, not necessarily challenges to traditional power centers. Similarly, state legislative caucuses are alternative organizing mechanisms important to state legislative agendas. They provide a space for legislators to create policy priorities apart from those determined by committees and parties. Consequently, the relationships and skills created by caucus participation assist those members in pursuing those policies.

There are individual benefits to joining caucuses as well. Caucuses allow legislators to express certain identities, signifying themselves as experts in certain legislative areas and advocates for certain constituencies. They help members build

relationships and gain information useful for accomplishing their own non-caucus related goals. Caucuses provide opportunities to be a leader and to learn leadership skills. Identification as a future leader is also important, particularly for members who hope to gain influence and power within the chamber. Hammond (1998, 74-77) explains, “The institutionalization of caucuses provides a structure, outside of the formal system, that permits participation by junior members, offers accessible leadership positions, and enables members to develop expertise and become recognized informal leaders.” In this sense, creating a women’s caucus may increase the status of participating members. If women’s ability to form such groups is restricted due to the gendered nature of the legislature, women’s ability to legislate and represent women may also be constrained.

For the individual, Gertzog (1995, 229) identified five advantages of participation in the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues including: information exchange, sympathetic sounding boards, distribution of workload, staff integration, image enhancement within the district, and social support. Kanthak and Krause (2012) analyze the relationship between caucus presence and women’s proportion of leadership positions. Their findings suggest that caucuses are positively correlated with higher proportions of women in leadership depending on the proportion of women in the majority party. They suggest that “when the proportion of women is moderate (within the majority party), formal women’s caucuses are of beneficial value to female legislators” (155). Under different conditions however, women may suffer backlash from their male counterparts.

Research has also investigated the impact of women’s legislative caucuses for constituents at the national and state levels. Studies have considered women’s caucuses’

effects on legislative agendas and bill passage as well as personal consequences for the legislators. The results are inconclusive on caucuses' abilities to strengthen women's influence in legislatures. CAWP (2001, 2-3) reports: "Women who meet with other women in their legislatures—whether formally through a women's caucus - or informally on a bipartisan or partisan basis—are considerably more likely than other women legislators to have worked on legislation to benefit women." Osborn et al. (2002, 24) find that minority caucuses, both black and women's, "are effective as voting blocs...and thus are successful in holding a certain amount of power in the legislatures."<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Thomas (1991) finds that the presence of women's caucuses is linked with successful passage of women's issues bills in state legislatures. On the other hand, Osborn's (2012) analysis of vote cohesion among women legislators does not conclude that the presence of a women's caucus is predictive of a unified group of women's legislative votes, nor do Reingold and Schneider (2001) find evidence of caucuses affecting the outcome of women's legislation. Berkman and O'Connor (1993), for example, find that women legislators' impact on abortion policy may be found in legislation they block as individual committee members rather than pass as a collective women's group.

Women's presence in legislatures has been examined for its impact not only on women's representation at large, but also on the processes of the institution. How have women changed the legislature, if at all? The research suggests that context (like professionalization and proportions of women legislators) matters for women's ability to shape institutional norms (Rosenthal 1997; Reingold 1996). There is strong evidence to suggest that women affect the legislative agenda by bringing more women's issues to the

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<sup>3</sup> Clark (2010, 106) also finds that states with influential black caucuses are correlated with higher black voter turnout rates indicating that increased influence of an identity caucus can have benefits beyond policy outcomes for constituents .

table (CAWP 2001; Thomas 1991). Bratton (2002), however, suggests that party interacting with gender may be what is driving these phenomena with Democratic women responsible for bringing women's issues onto the agenda.

None of these impact studies, though, takes into account the women's reasons for organizing a caucus. If differing motivations result in different types of women's caucuses, this may explain why researchers find an impact on substantive legislative outcomes in some caucus states but not in others. Kanthak and Krause's (2012) research finds, for example, that women's caucuses serve many functions for legislators, not all policy focused. Their study finds that one benefit of women's caucuses in some state legislatures (depending on women's proportion within the majority party) is an increase in women's committee chairmanships (155). As will be seen in Chapter 3, women in state legislatures who organize caucuses may do so for various reasons, including drawing attention to women's historical contributions to politics and for social support with or without substantive legislative outcomes. Development of these groups, however, is not without challenge in many cases.

The Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues was founded in 1977 after several failed attempts earlier by interested members (Gertzog 2004). Because of the many challenges, some unique to women in office, a caucus did not form easily, counter to the argument presented by Hammond (1998, 52-53) who states, "Caucuses are easy to establish and can be maintained with little effort, ready to be reactivated if events and inclination so dictate." This contradictory evidence, Hammond's assertion of little cost in organizing and Gertzog's tracing of the challenges facing the CCWI, indicates that further research needs to be conducted to understand the conditions under which women

are able to organize within legislatures. This is particularly true for the states all of which have different political cultures, gender power balances, and institutional norms.

Where caucuses are formed and successful is important for understanding where collective action has been identified as a useful strategy for this representation. Similarly, identifying those contexts in which collective action has been unsuccessful or identified as detrimental to women's representation is also necessary to appreciate the quality of women's representation across the states. We cannot judge accurately the best conditions for women's representation without an accurate accounting of the tactics being implemented on behalf of women and the resulting substantive outcomes of those varied tactics. The question is, in which contexts is women's difference an asset, not a liability, and why do women choose to highlight it through collective action? Further, what explains why women's attempts to form a caucus succeed or fail?

If we are to understand how women represent women (or anyone else, for that matter) within legislatures, we must better understand the role women's caucuses play, why they take different forms across the states, and why some women do not organize around their gender identity at all. Identifying where and why women organize in legislatures can determine if such groups contribute to improved quality of life for women both inside and outside the institution.

### Roots of Collective Action

There is much evidence within the literature to suggest that women legislators have many things in common motivating the creation of a caucus. Generally, findings suggest that women share common issue interests, more moderate or liberal positions on existing policies, and legislate differently than their male counterparts (CAWP 2001;

Dodson 1991; Thomas 1991; Thomas and Welch 1990). For example, CAWP (2001, 8) reports that “within both parties, women are more likely than men to support more liberal or moderate positions on a variety of issues, including abortion, hate crimes, civil unions for gays and lesbians, and racial preferences in job hiring and school admissions.”

Studies regarding women’s legislative style also indicate that organizing caucuses may be an extension of their individual approaches to work. Women demonstrate more inclusive behaviors, spend more time on constituent service, collaborate with others more, and are perceived by other legislators as opening up the political process by bringing in historically underserved groups and making political processes more public (Rosenthal 1997; Epstein et al. 2005; CAWP 2001). It is no surprise then that we might expect to see women working together within institutions based on these commonalities. So once these commonalities are acknowledged and the desire for a caucus emerges, what opportunities, resources, and frames are most likely to result in the establishment of a women’s legislative caucus?

While women’s caucuses are not social movements, collective action theory can help to illustrate the conditions likely to produce an organization within an institution, like a caucus. Political opportunity, mobilizing structures, and frames make up the factors considered by social movement theorists to be explanatory of collective action (McAdam et al. 1996, 2-12). Sidney Tarrow (1998, 2) suggests that contentious politics “is triggered when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives for social actors who lack resources on their own.” This leads to social movements, “when backed by social networks and galvanized by culturally resonant, action oriented symbols” (Tarrow 1998, 2).

Political opportunity can be a change within an established institution which creates an opening for organization, a shift in power relations, or a change in thinking. Vulnerability in the status quo might also serve as a political opportunity (McAdam et al. 1996, 8). For social movements, mobilizing structures are “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (McAdam et al. 1996, 3). Women’s legislative caucuses may be considered an example of a social movement organization within the feminist movement although examination of that question is not a part of this project.<sup>4</sup>

Organizational structures are important for social movements because they provide membership as well as resources (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). The importance of resources is explained by Edwards and McCarthy (2004, 116) in this way: “When movement activists do attempt to create collective action (fielding protests, creating social movement organizations, and the like) through historical time and across geographical locations their successes are consistently related to the greater presence of available resources in their broader environments.”

Finally, Tarrow’s (1998) shared symbols, the shared understandings of movement participants, are what construct the frame of a social movement used to mobilize and retain members. In order to have collective action, individuals must be convinced there is a problem and that it can be solved. McAdam et al. (1996) explain, “At a minimum people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem” (McAdam et al. 1996 5). The shared symbols also challenge existing political narratives and ways of being and inform

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of feminism inside the state, see Banaszak (2010) and Katzenstein (1998). Banaszak (2010, 200) specifically calls for further study of intersections between social movements and the state which may include women’s caucuses.

perceptions of success and failures of the group and their opponents. These perceptions, along with opportunities and resources, determine whether the group maintains itself, grows, or dies.

Explaining why formal women's caucuses exist in some states while not in others may not be a function of opportunities, resources, and frames only. These factors' "effects are interactive" (McAdam et al. 1996 8) and, as Banaszak (1996) explains, interpretation of these three factors by actors may explain different results for the same phenomena. Caucuses may be unevenly distributed across the 50 states because women legislators have different perceptions of the political landscape of their legislature, their own gendered identity, and the political consequences of their gendered identity. While some women legislators may not wish to organize, others who do may have different political opportunities, resources and frames available to them, explaining the variation in the success and failure of women's caucuses across states.

Determining the conditions which make the formation of a women's legislative caucus more likely compels an attention to the context in which a caucus emerges and the resources available to the women within the institution, such as talent and social networks. Also relevant is the rhetoric they apply to their activities and the response from legislative leadership and male colleagues. Because of women's historical exclusion from politics and their subsequent emergence into political office, women have unique motivations to organize and unique challenges in doing so. Both Gertzog (2004) and Hammond (1998) identify traditional conditions necessary for group formation, including

structural opportunity, resources, and the available frames for collective action in describing the emergence of caucuses in Congress.<sup>5</sup>

### *Opportunities.*

Legislators, unlike mass publics, are confined by the norms and rules of the institution in which they act. What opportunities make organizing around a gendered identity more likely? Researchers have previously identified specifically gendered opportunity structures within legislatures which enhance women's power within the institution, including: percentage of women in the legislature and in leadership positions, women's presence on key committees, state history in relation to electing women to office, and legislative professionalism (Reingold and Schneider 2001; Tolbert and Steuernagel 2001).

An obvious political opportunity for a women's caucus is the increased number of women serving in state legislatures. Without potential members, there is little need or opportunity for an organization. Expanding on previous research by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Beckwith (2007) hypothesizes that in legislatures with fewer than 15% women, caucuses are less likely to emerge because of the pressure to conform to masculine norms. In legislatures with greater than 15% women, Beckwith hypothesizes the creation of more women's caucuses. Alternatively, in legislatures with large numbers of women, with percentages over 30%, legislators may not feel a need for an organization based on gender. Kanthak and Krause (2012, 135) posit a similar theory arguing that women's

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<sup>5</sup> As stated previously, not all women legislators feel a need for a caucus or a desire to create one in their legislature. The reasons for this could be many, including a lack of collective conscience (Sigel 1996), fear of male reprisals (Kanthak and Krause 2012), or perceived gender equity. Women may not desire their own caucus because of a belief that women have come so far toward equality and their difference is no longer relevant (Zernike 2008). I discuss these and others explanations described by my subjects in non-caucus states in my final chapter. Because my research is concerned with all cases of caucus attempts within the last five years, I am beginning my investigation from the stage at which a caucus is desired. I then consider the opportunities, resources, and frames which result in successful attempts.

caucuses may be most useful to women when their numbers are not too small (benefits of tokenism outweigh costs of organizing) or too large (benefits of organizing diminish with incorporation). Numbers are not enough they argue. They predict a coordination problem among women legislators who, despite having the numbers to affect change through coordinated efforts like a caucus, continue to collude with the male majority. They attribute this to ignorance of the potential benefits of working together. Once therefore a caucus is created and successful, women will be more likely to maintain it than to revert to coordinating with the majority males (166).<sup>6</sup> As previously stated, women of color may be more optimistic about the influence of a caucus and therefore their presence in larger proportions may provide another positive political opportunity for women's caucuses.

While the presence of gendered opportunity structures would be very important for the emergence of a women's caucus, political parties are the primary organizing mechanism of legislatures (Rosenthal 2009, 121). Their role in creating opportunities or obstacles for caucusing is vital to understanding the emergence of women's caucuses. As previously cited, Hammond (1998) explains that caucuses emerge when legislators feel new issues are not being addressed properly by the existing committee and party structure. Therefore, I expect that when women legislators perceive political parties or the committee system as unresponsive to the issues important to them, they are more likely to form a caucus to validate these issues and promote an alternative agenda.

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<sup>6</sup> Early success is in fact mentioned by women participants in New Jersey as important to legitimizing the effort to organize a caucus. The value of the benefits is also important in the Pennsylvania case, as some legislators do not see the purposes of the group as worth their efforts. This may prove to be a problem long term for Democratic legislators in both the New Jersey and Colorado cases who feel that policy outcomes are a vital purpose of a caucus, while their Republican colleagues more highly value other caucus benefits.

Issue convergence among women is complicated, however, and partisanship among women might be a detriment to caucus stability. As described by Hawkesworth et al. (2000, 9), “Despite near universal agreement concerning their responsibility to represent women, women legislators hold a variety of views about the nature of women’s needs and interests and the best means to represent women in the policy-making process.” As Osborn (2012, 17) explains, “Women legislators’ political party identities structure the policy alternatives they support and...institutional parties structure the legislative environment in which they pursue these policies.”

In this way, legislators are not different from women in the populace who do not have monolithic interests. Roberta Sigel (1996, 139) explains that while women may acknowledge common discrimination and gender inequity in society, that does not necessarily translate into a “sense of responsibility for and solidarity with the group.” She also takes note that a reluctance to demand collective restitution is “more in keeping with the traditional American ethos” (Sigel 1996, 126). This may be particularly true of Republican women whose political party ideology emphasizes individual responsibility and discourages collective identity (Freeman 1986). Carroll (2003) finds that the Republican women in statehouses today are more conservative than in 1988, and fewer identified as moderates, making bipartisan behavior like caucusing less likely.

In her most recent work, *How Women Represent Women*, Osborn (2012) argues that women’s political identity is complicated by both their gender and party identification, making unified legislative action unlikely. Dodson’s (2006, 64) study of the 103rd and 104th Congresses substantiates this finding: “Since women’s political currency was derived from helping their own party boost its relative standing with the

mass public and navigate the perils of the gender gap, partisan competition rather than cooperation would emerge – particularly when women felt they were being included rather than marginalized.” All these findings have important consequences for women’s ability to work together across party lines.

In light of these studies, I expect the presence of women in the legislature to be positive when their proportion is not so high that a caucus is unnecessary or so low that it is not feasible. I expect a Democratic majority in the legislature to provide a more favorable opportunity than a Republican majority. I expect that higher proportions of women of color within a legislature will also positively predict a women’s caucus. Finally, I expect the presence of other caucuses, particularly Black Caucuses, to provide legitimacy which would support women’s organizational efforts.

There are also factors I expect to negatively affect women’s organizing. Strong party polarization and party competition will obviously discourage bipartisan groups because women’s party loyalty in those environments with high rates of partisanship and party competition would conflict with their gender affiliation. As Osborn (2012, 149) found in her research on women legislators, “Women legislators conceptualize alternatives to many women’s policy problems through the lens of their party identity.” This leads to different prioritization of women’s issues, agendas, and roll call votes. Therefore, I expect that caucus attempts will be less likely to succeed when Republican women are a small minority within the party. This pressure to conform would be intensified for newly elected women of either party. Therefore, I expect legislatures with more freshman women legislators to be less likely to produce women’s caucuses.

Other opportunities for organizing may be presented by the size of the legislature. Kanthak and Krause (2012, 155) find that in larger chambers (state houses) women's caucuses are able to overcome any backlash unlike in State Senates where women's proportions are smaller. On the other hand, we could expect caucuses to develop in smaller state houses because women will know each other and have the opportunity to develop trust across party lines, which would obviously encourage rather than discourage caucus development. I predict that the familiarity of smaller legislatures will be associated with caucus presence and caucus attempts because women will have established relationships which would make a caucus more likely.

*Resources.*

Resource availability is vital for group formation and maintenance (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Professionalism in legislatures is associated with resources that might be important for the establishment of a women's caucus, such as staff and time. Hammond (1998) notes that rule changes within Congress which allocated more staff distributed equally among members contributed to the boom in caucus formation in the mid 1970s. This makes the level of professionalism relevant because of the available resources of time and staff which professionalism provides, making organizations more feasible. Further, Carroll and Taylor (1989) report that in more professional legislatures women are more likely to work on women's issue legislation. Reingold and Schneider (2001), however, illustrate the complicated relationship between levels of professionalism and gender in the legislature. Their review of the literature indicates that professionalism has negative and positive effects on women's experience of the legislature. They produce more masculine norms (Rosenthal 1998), but also a more

business-like environment where women may not be excluded by an old boys' network (Stanley and Blair 1991). Ultimately, I expect women's caucuses are less likely to exist in legislatures with lower levels of professionalism than in other states. Further, I expect to find that attempts to create women's caucuses will be more likely to succeed in states with larger staffs which can assist with the development of these groups.

Outsiders may also contribute to an environment which may illustrate the need for a women's organization within the legislature. Nownes and Neely (1996) argue that groups emerge when entrepreneurs' (insiders) and patrons' (outsiders) interests collide.<sup>7</sup> Much of the literature on caucusing has concentrated on congressional organizing. Several motivations have been identified which vary depending on the type of caucus created. National constituency caucuses, such as the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, are explained as responses to an external demand created by movements outside the legislature to which members of Congress are responding (Hammond 1998). The environment of the 1970s created by the women's movement marked gender as a politically relevant category. For this reason, we may see women's caucuses emerge when the encouragement of women's organizations (outsiders) is present. Women's groups may argue that a women's caucus will be more effective in dealing with the issues most salient to them rather than action taken by individual legislators and therefore be motivated to offer various kinds of support to an emerging caucus.

Negatively, term limits on the office may discourage caucus development. Women will not have the time or the seniority that would bring with it the necessary skills to develop such organizations.

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<sup>7</sup> Salisbury (1969) explains the vital role entrepreneurs play in establishing groups by creating benefits which they bestow on participants in exchange for their membership.

*Frames.*

Whether or not women create caucuses is in part determined by the perceived need and the legitimacy of caucusing itself. Women must first agree that they share needs and, second, agree that caucusing is an appropriate response to those needs. Belief that a problem exists and that it can be solved is a necessary component of collective action; as described by McAdam et al. (1996, 5), “Lacking either one or both of these perceptions, it is highly unlikely that people will mobilize even when afforded the opportunity to do so.” Banaszak (1996, 27) finds for example that frames can explain why movements succeed or fail, stating: “Beliefs and values may aid a movement...by predisposing it to take advantage of opportunities. On the other hand, these same factors may explain why a movement forgoes existing opportunities.”

Frames are used to demonstrate those shared needs and appropriate responses. Katzenstein (1998) argues that the “rights revolution” in the courts and legislatures, giving new legal recognition to claims based on race, gender, and other non-class identities, offered frames to women acting within the Catholic Church and the U.S. military. Which feminist frame most resonated with the women, liberal or radical, determined the range of activities they engaged in and set the boundaries for what they determined to be legitimate demands on a male-dominated institution. Whether or not women choose to formally caucus may be a function of their perceptions of appropriate legislative behavior. These perceptions are shaped by political parties, legislative leadership, and the behavior of colleagues (Aldrich and Battista 2002; Snyder and Groseclose 2000; Thompson et al. 1996; Wahlke et al. 1962).

The frames available to and implemented by organizations not only determine the reactions of opponents (Schreiber 2002), but also the strategies and tactics the caucus itself chooses in achieving its goals (Costain and Costain 1987). The frames caucus creators use to recruit participants will be the result of their perception of the needs of women, what will resonate with the participants, and what will cause the least amount of resistance from possible opponents. It is also possible that caucus creators may want to rock the boat and choose frames that are more sensational. A frame may also be a reaction to the environment. If women legislators feel they are being falsely perceived by their colleagues, they may frame their efforts in a way to combat that.

Women in different environments may create groups with different purposes, using different frames or justifications for caucusing. Justifications for organizing may be necessary to anticipate or react to counter-framing by opposition among male colleagues or women who disagree with caucusing as a strategy. As McAdam et al. (1996, 6) define framing as “efforts...that legitimate and motivate collective action,” counter-frames would be those arguments delegitimizing collective behavior by women. In some states, caucus creation may only be possible if framed as social networking, leaving policy formation by the wayside. In other states, women may not be motivated to participate in a group unless policymaking is a stated goal. Alternatively, the policy priorities of the group may have to be negotiated, leaving some issues off the table while highlighting others. Examining the frames employed by women forming caucuses will tell us, not only about the constraints of the institution in which they are organizing and the opposition the women face, but also about the potential strategies and goals pursued by the caucus.

In this dissertation, I will be examining which frames result in a successful caucusing attempt and which do not. First, I expect that caucuses will emerge in legislatures in which women share the belief that women are a politically relevant group with particular needs. This gender consciousness is a necessary component of any launch of a gender based group. I expect that caucuses based on claims of dissatisfaction with existing party leaders or norms will result in successful attempts. This has been the case in Hammond's (1998) research, and I expect to find it at the state level as well. As Dodson (2006) argues, women are less likely to work together when they are included in their party rather than marginalized. Therefore, I also expect that caucuses that are framed as pushing for more appointments for women to leadership positions in the legislature will be successful as well. Likewise, I expect frames which characterize the caucus as social only in nature will be more successful than policy-oriented caucuses because social caucuses will not put pressure on women to compromise their party positions. Finally, I expect caucuses that face opposition from male colleagues or legislative leadership will be less likely to get off the ground. Opposition could react to an attempt by characterizing the group as somehow inappropriate or unnecessary. Facing these counter-frames will be difficult for women attempting to create a women's caucus.

### Conclusion

In this project, I am exploring the gendering of legislatures by examining one type of behavior, caucusing. By exploring the motivations for, challenges to, and structural opportunities for women to organize around a specific part of their identity, their gender, I hope to identify those contexts in which women are able to strategically deploy their gendered identity for political gain. Scott (1986, 1067) argues that "we need to deal with

the individual subject as well as social organization and to articulate the nature of their interrelationships, for both are crucial to understanding how gender works, how change occurs.” Gertzog (2004) has documented the importance of gender as a motivating factor and an obstacle to the creation and maintenance of the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues at the national level. This study examines the role gender plays in women legislators’ decision to organize or not as women within state legislatures. Further, it will identify the structures of the institutions which foster or inhibit that organization. By studying state legislatures, I am able to conduct a comparative analysis of women’s organizing to identify how gender works similarly or differently across contexts.<sup>8</sup> I investigate whether the success of women’s mobilization of gender as a legislative tool varies as a result of institutional factors.

In the next chapter, I will present the state of women’s caucuses across the country. I will demonstrate the location and type of caucuses in each of the 50 states and the state level variables associated with their existence.

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<sup>8</sup> Chris Clark (2010) conducts a similar analysis, indicating the structural factors associated with influential black caucuses.

## Chapter 3

### For Women, There is No One Way or Place to Caucus

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the variety of women's caucuses and their geographical locations. Through a quantitative analysis, I will test variables for their correlation with the existence of women's caucuses. While this does not speak to my question about caucus origins, I hope to establish a relationship between expected variables and caucus existence. This chapter addresses my initial questions as to what is a women's caucus and where do we observe them. The quantitative analysis within this chapter foregrounds the consideration of caucus emergence in the second half of my dissertation.

Defining what constitutes a women's caucus is not easy. Various scholars and legislative organizations have offered various definitions and characteristics. In this chapter, I will first define the concept and explain how I will measure women's caucuses for the purposes of analysis. Following this will be a discussion of my data collection and methods for my 50 state analysis. I will describe the types of women's caucuses I discovered within my data and where these caucuses can be found throughout the country. Next, I will present a quantitative analysis of the 50 state dataset and discuss implications. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of this part of my analysis.

#### Defining the Concept

The most extensive work on caucuses concerns congressional caucuses. Hammond, Mulholland and Stevens, Jr. (1985, 583) define them as "voluntary

associations...which seek to have a role in the policy process. These groups have standard organizational attributes: a name, a membership list, leadership, and staffing arrangements." They are categorized into a typology by Hammond (1998) as party, personal-interest, national constituency, regional, state/district, and industry caucuses. Hammond (1998, 33) considers the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues (CCWI) to be a national constituency caucus, meaning that it represents a national group emphasizing a range of issues wherein "members share the characteristics of the groups they represent." She does note, however, that the CCWI has expanded to include male members that do not serve on the executive committee.

At the state level, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) differentiates between types of women's caucuses. It defines a formal caucus as one that meets weekly or monthly during session, hires staff, is policy oriented, and/or pays dues. Informal caucuses are defined as those which are primarily social in nature, meet less regularly than formal caucuses, and do not necessarily have a legislative agenda (Oliver 2005).

The major difference between these characterizations of women's caucuses is that while Hammond et al. require policy interest, the NCSL differentiates between those women's caucuses that seek to influence policy and those which are primarily social in nature. It is this attention to policy which presents the biggest problem in defining what constitutes a women's caucus. By requiring a policy agenda to define a caucus as Hammond et al. do, many organizations are excluded from consideration. By distinguishing between formal and informal caucuses based on both their organizational sophistication and policy agenda, the NCSL further muddies the waters. How should we

categorize organizations that have a name, membership list, leadership, and staff but no policy agenda?

It is clear from the data I have collected that women legislators do not think a legislative agenda is necessary in order for an organization to be considered a caucus. This explains the somewhat mixed results of previous research seeking to measure the influence these caucuses have on women's issue legislation in the states where they exist (Thomas 1991; Osborn 2012; Reingold and Schneider 2001). In some instances, a caucus has a non-profit status which prevents them from taking policy positions (Illinois); in other instances, partisanship dampens the women's ability to come to consensus on issues (Montana). In other examples, priority of the women may be a scholarship program (Indiana) or candidate recruitment (Wyoming). Clearly, there are many reasons women may come together within a legislature, and affecting policy through legislation is only one of them.

Women who set these alternative priorities may be intentionally or unintentionally affecting the policy process in an indirect way. For example, the Arkansas women's caucus holds an event every year to recognize the contributions of outstanding women in the state and is archiving the state's history of political women. Calling attention to women's erasure from history is a challenge to the status quo, albeit not a bill standing for passage. This focus on a gendered identity may change the way men and women behave in the legislature. Supporting women students and trying to bring women into the political process are actions which acknowledge the unique challenges facing women in education and elective office. By trying to ameliorate these problems, women legislators may be changing the make-up of future state legislatures and therefore impacting the

policy process in the long run. They are also signifying women's experience as different from other groups. As a result of these public displays, this perspective may find its way into debate on substantive bills. Women's caucuses that do not seek consensus on issues, but focus on relationships between women across party lines, may also be affecting the policy process by creating a more positive political environment. These effects, however, are not the measures usually employed by political scientists who study the impact of women's caucuses.

The traditional explanation for any type of caucus creation is the existing party and committee structures not adequately addressing the needs of legislators (Hammond 1998). Legislators who feel the current system is not properly responding form alternative groups to deal with the emerging issue. Women's organizations are calling out the elephant in the room – women's historical exclusion from the legislature which has a long term impact on policy. This is why organizations which do not seek consensus on policy in the short term should be considered a caucus. Therefore, I define a women's caucus as a bipartisan, institutionalized association of legislators who seek to improve women's lives.

### Concept Measurement

For my purposes, bipartisan requires that the group be open to members of any political party. Norms of legislative behavior suggest that party loyalty and conformity are what are rewarded within legislatures (Francis 1985; Hedlund 1984; Kanthak 2009). Women legislators who draw attention to their gender rather than their party by forming these groups are challenging the party system which traditionally governs the legislative process. I argue that organizations in which legislators prioritize gender over party are

alternative mechanisms challenging party control of legislative agendas and allegiances. In some rare cases, there may be legislators of only one party at some points in time. As long as the group is open to all, year-to-year membership may vary according to which women are in office at the time.

By institutionalized, I refer to a structure which enables the group to function and be recognized by other non-members as a group. While some organizations are very sophisticated with multiple leadership positions, formal by-laws, and regular meeting schedules, the minimum requirement for my criteria is an identifiable leader. A leader facilitates meetings and communicates information which makes even the most basic activities of a group possible.

Attempts to improve women's lives is understood broadly, including efforts on behalf of women constituents through legislation or more informal mechanisms, as well as efforts to improve the lives of women legislators themselves. In setting this as a criterion, I am requiring that at least some of the activities of the group be focused on addressing issues of gender. It is common for women to create and be the majority of members of other caucuses, like Kids' Caucuses, for example, and while their proclivity towards these issues should be examined, this would not qualify as a women's caucus because the primary issue of concern is not women.

A variety of activities are captured by my definition. Examples of legislation sought on behalf of women constituents might include women's health initiatives like funding for breast and cervical cancer screening (Hawaii). More informal examples include establishing a breast-feeding area in the capitol building accomplished by women in New York or women legislators appearing as a group in the front row of the gallery to

support victims of sexual violence who had experienced inappropriate questioning by male committee members during a formal hearing (Maryland). Some groups may hold legislative hearings, make bill endorsements, offer resolutions, or hold public events. Finally, efforts to improve the lives of women legislators include advocating for more gender equity in leadership positions and committee appointments as seen in Massachusetts. Other possible purposes may be mentoring (other legislators or women at large), candidate recruitment/training, granting scholarships, or socializing which boosts morale.

To be clear, within my definition, the absence of a caucus does not mean that women in the state have no organizational ties at all. In many states, women have important relationships, sometimes as roommates or lunch mates. These social networks are important and play a role in how women work together within legislatures. Caucuses, however, are groups with some formality of structure and purpose, although these structures may be varied and their purposes broadly defined. I also acknowledge that individual women may work to improve the lives of women and be successful. I am studying here the examples in which women choose to join together consistently to undertake these activities.

I do not include official recognition by the legislature as part of my criteria. States vary in whether or not formal filing for legislative organizations is necessary. Many legislatures have no process by which official recognition may be conferred. Caucuses may be recognizable by legislators without official recognition by the institution.

### Data Collection

Although NCSL analyzed women's caucuses in 2005, the existence of these groups is likely to change over time. Caucuses have been known to fade away in some states, as in Iowa, while new ones are cropping up, such as in Colorado and Texas. Additionally, I wanted to collect more information about these caucuses beyond the data collected previously, including founding date, caucus activities and priorities, and the effects of caucus participation on women legislators. I also wanted to collect data investigating why legislators did not organize around their gender identity in non-caucus states. It is for these reasons that I undertook an original data collection.

In the fall of 2009, I began collecting data on the existence of women's caucuses within the 50 state legislatures. The data presented within this chapter were collected through 139 interviews. I conducted 39 personal interviews including 34 at the NCSL's July 2010 Legislative Summit. I also conducted 100 telephone interviews. Interview times ranged from 10-30 minutes. Questions were open-ended and included those directed at determining the type (if any) of organizing among women, as well as the motivations and challenges to organizing within the legislature.

Because one of my foundational questions is why caucuses form, I originally contacted the longest serving Democratic and Republican women legislators of both houses in the 50 states to ask about the existence of a women's caucus. This resulted in an initial contact of four women per state - the longest serving Democratic woman in the upper chamber, the longest serving Republican woman in the upper chamber, and likewise in the lower chamber. The longest serving members had the highest likelihood of assisting me in determining the timing of the formation of the caucus if one existed.

They were also able to inform me about the evolution of the caucus over time. After contacting these original subjects three times, if fewer than two legislators from a state had agreed to participate, I widened my search to all women serving in that state. In the event that a caucus had a paid staffer, I also contacted that person for an interview. There are six of these interviews. In three instances, a legislator's personal staffer was interviewed. Of the legislator interviews, 90 served in the lower chamber of the legislature, 37 served in the upper chamber, and three served in the unicameral legislature of Nebraska.

Table 1 about here

I limited my data collection to currently serving members originally because they were easily identifiable. I hoped that they would be able to tell me about the status of a women's caucus in their state as well as the history. In some cases, this may mean that I am losing information about a caucus that may have existed in a state at one time but of which no current member was aware. Five interviews were conducted with former state legislators to whom I was referred by current members because of their particular knowledge of a state's caucus history.

The partisan breakdown of legislator interviews is 86 Democrats, three Democratic Farmer Labor members, 38 Republicans, and three non-partisans (serving in Nebraska). According to the Center for American Women and Politics, 64% of all women legislators are Democrats. This explains why my subject pool is also about 67% Democratic.

Table 2 about here

I interviewed between one and nine subjects from each state with an average of 3.02 interviews per state.<sup>9</sup>

### Typology

Women's caucuses are a type of identity caucus. The first account of these groups at the state level was reported by Carol Mueller (1984). Using data collected at the Tenth Anniversary Conference of Women State Legislators in 1982, hers is the first account exploring why women would act collectively in state legislatures around their gendered identity. She found that these early caucuses had mixed purposes, including not only a priority to address women's issues legislatively but also to improve women legislators' status within the institution. The main influences she discovered affecting the type of gender organizing in a state were fear of male colleague reactions, strength of partisanship, and existing divisions among women over issues like the ERA and abortion (158). As I will demonstrate, these same factors prove important today.

With the information gained from these interviews, I am able to put forth my own typology of women's organizing in the 50 states. As explained previously, my criteria for defining a group as a women's caucus are bipartisanship, leadership structure, and attempts to improve the lives of women. I categorize the caucus based on the purposes of the group as identified by the members.<sup>10</sup> I have categorized the states with women's caucuses into one of two groups, Informational/Social and Legislative.

Table 3 about here

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<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this section of the dissertation, I am only analyzing that data compiled from the 46 states which did not have a caucus attempt between 2006-2010. The data collected from those four states (NJ, CO, PA, and IA) will be discussed in later chapters. This average is a result then of dividing 139 interviews by 46 states. This includes both states with and without caucuses.

<sup>10</sup> I have argued that in order to properly assess the impact of these groups, it is vital to understand their purpose. It is for this reason that I base my typology on the women's intentions for the group.

The first type of women's caucus is the Informational/Social Caucus. In these groups, women of all parties are invited to get together intermittently during the session or outside of session to be social or discuss politics. The name of this type is drawn from its two major priorities. Women in these groups wish to build relationships with their fellow legislators. In some larger legislatures, women may not know women in the other chamber or other parties. This type of group offers them an opportunity to get to know each other which, as they report, assists them in pushing for their own individual legislation and helps them deal with the challenges they say are unique to women in the legislature. On some occasions they may talk about how they manage their families and their jobs. On occasion, they may ask about how a bill they have put forth has been received by the other party. This points to the second function of these groups – information sharing. This may take a more formal structure such as having speakers or lobbyists address the group. It may be more informal where the women tell each other about what they are working on and get advice. While these groups do not seek consensus or pressure members to vote together, they may have an indirect impact on policy.

Within this caucus type, leaders are generally more senior legislators who are chosen or self-selected because of a particular commitment to developing and maintaining a caucus. They often hold the position for longer periods of time and do not necessarily stand for election by caucus members. There may or may not be staff for this type of caucus. No issue positions are taken by the group.

An example of this type of organizing is the Colorado women's caucus. They have four leaders, two from each house and party, a paid staff person, and funds that are

administered by a local university. Only women are included, and they have several meetings throughout the session. Many of these are related to event planning regarding the recognition of women's contributions to the state. They are currently creating a website dedicated to the history of women in politics in Colorado. Because they are open to women of all parties, have an identifiable leadership, and undertake activities to support women, this state meets the criteria for a caucus, despite their mutual decision not to take formal policy positions.

Another example would be West Virginia. In this state, there is one leader, Delegate Bonnie Brown, who organizes monthly meetings where outside organizations speak to delegates about issues facing women in the state. Delegate Brown maintains her position as leader from year to year by default rather than by formal election. There is no staff or website. Again, this group does not take formal policy positions.

The second type of women's caucus is the Legislative Caucus. They are identified as legislative because these groups address specific legislation within a session. Like Informational/Social Caucuses, there may be elected leaders or those who traditionally take the lead to organize events. Within these caucuses, leadership structures are usually, but not always, more complicated with many women holding different offices within the caucus. In some states, there are two to four co-chairs or a chair and vice chairs often incorporating women from each party and chamber. These leaders are usually elected by the members at the beginning of new sessions. Again, similarly to Informational/Social Caucuses, there may or may not be staff. The complexity of leadership structure or the existence of staff is not what differentiates these groups from Informational/Social Caucuses. The difference is that these groups do take formal policy positions.

Women's legislative caucuses vary by their approach to affect legislative policy and whether or not they are gender exclusive. These categories may prove important in measuring the effectiveness of women's caucuses to influence legislative policy. Different strategies may prove more effective than others. It is for this reason that I further break down the category, Legislative Caucuses. Women's Legislative Caucuses may be categorized into two sub-groups: Agenda and Position Taking.

In what I call Agenda Caucuses, women get together during or outside of the session to agree upon a legislative agenda that is presented to legislative leadership or published more broadly. Hawaii is an example of a women's caucus with a legislative agenda. Their 2011 package consisted of 15 bills and five resolutions including a bill to eliminate the statute of limitations for civil suits brought by minors who were victims of sexual assault, a bill regarding the information available to victims of sexual assault in hospital emergency rooms, and a bill prohibiting the shackling of pregnant inmates (Jordan 2011). This is the type of women's caucus which most closely resembled the CCWI in Congress when it was at its strongest.

Position Taking Caucuses are those in which issue positions are taken by the group as they emerge, but there is no legislative agenda for the session. Florida is an example of a position-taking caucus state. The women legislators there may decide to formulate a position after an issue has arisen in the legislature. For instance, they may decide to add amendments to a piece of legislation already in progress, or they may decide mid-session to put forward their own bill. Often the legislation they try to influence is related to women's health. This is a common issue for most women's

organizations that choose to deal with policy.<sup>11</sup> A sub-group within this category is Gender Open Caucuses. These groups include women and men. The three Gender Open Caucuses identified through my research act as Position Taking Caucuses and do not have set agendas but prefer to respond to issues as they emerge. It is possible that at another point in time, a Gender Open Caucus could change their strategy for improving the lives of women and become a sub-group of the Agenda or Informational/Social Caucus groups.

There are three states with these caucuses that usually focus on women's health issues. Oregon has a Women's Health and Wellness Alliance, which includes both men and women legislators. Texas also has a Women's Health Caucus open to legislators of both genders but is in the process of creating a group that considers more issues than just women's health and attracts more Republican participation. Vermont's organization allows male participation, but their issue scope goes beyond women's health and has addressed families of the military and women in prisons, in addition to women's health concerns.

While men are included in these groups, they do not elect leadership, serve as leaders, or set the priorities of the group. While I have not interviewed any male participants of these groups, I am told men join to show their support for their women colleagues and the issues important to them and their constituents. Unlike in other places in the legislature, in these groups men tend to "hang back" according to one woman legislator. They do, however, pay dues to those groups which collect them.

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<sup>11</sup> Examples of women's health issues addressed by these groups include getting health tests common for women included within insurance plans, funding health centers for low income women and families, and awareness resolutions pertaining to specifically women's diseases.

While Informational/Social and Legislative Women's caucuses may differ in their approach to influencing policy, both commonly recognize outstanding women in their states. Most caucuses have an annual event honoring current female public servants or community activists or an event to acknowledge the contributions of historical women. In some instances, women's caucuses provide merit scholarships to women or girls. These events act as reminders of women's role in politics and the community. It reminds legislators and the public of their right to be there. They have been described by participants as "morale boosters." These activities may also lead to a more indirect impact on policy.

In addition to these events, Legislative Caucuses have a more direct policy impact. However, when Legislative Caucuses do act on specific legislation, in recent years it has been on the defense, not the offense. While in previous years these groups might have fought for pay equity (Rhode Island) or reform of sexual violence laws (Maryland), today's women are a line of defense against budget cuts that would disproportionately affect women and children. State budgets are in crisis, and women legislators feel responsible for protecting vulnerable populations. They do this by trying to reduce or block cuts to state welfare programs, child care and public health programs, for example.

States that do not meet the criteria of identifiable leadership and activities to improve the lives of women are considered to have no gender organization. Women in these states may get together informally throughout the session. In some cases, annual events may be organized by women lobbyists. For example, in Utah, the women legislators have a luncheon once a year. This effort is usually spearheaded by the

Democratic women, but all women legislators in both houses are invited. The women “felt it was important to get to know one another outside of the legislative or campaign sense” (Watkins 2011). In one year, a Republican male legislator who was disappointed to learn he was not allowed to attend graciously offered to pay despite his exclusion. There is no identifiable legislative leader who organizes this event or the women in this legislature more generally; therefore, it does not meet my criteria of a caucus.

### Caucus Location

Identifying where and the conditions under which women organize in legislatures is the first step in determining if such groups contribute to improved quality of life for women inside and outside the institution. Identifying the legislatures open and closed to women’s organizing can lead to a better understanding of how gender interacts with party organizations, types of legislative leadership structures, and political culture. Forming and participating in a women’s caucus and therefore drawing attention to their difference must make sense for some women legislators despite research that suggests women in masculine institutions are pressured not to draw attention to themselves (Kanter 1977).

I find that the U.S. is almost evenly divided with 23 states having some type of women’s caucus and 27 states having no women’s organization at all.

### Figure 1 about here

Figure 1 is a map of the U.S. indicating Informational/Social, Agenda, and no-caucus states. From this map we can see that caucuses extend across the entirety of the country existing in each region. By census region, the West has six states with caucuses and seven without. The South has the most caucuses with 9 throughout their states, seven without. The Midwest has the fewest caucuses in only four states and eight states without

them. Finally, the Northeast has four states with caucuses and five without them. The Western states were among the first to grant women's suffrage legislation in the country, and a majority of their state legislatures are highly ranked for the proportion of women in elective office (CAWP 2012). They are split almost evenly as to caucus distribution. It is possible that with such high proportions of women in office, caucuses are seen as unnecessary by some women legislators, while others take advantage of their numbers by organizing. The Southern states apart from Maryland, Delaware, and Florida rank low for proportions of women in office yet have the most women's caucuses. It could be their small numbers unifying them or a consequence of the history of these states being one-party. In such states, factions of any type may be common (McGlennon 1998). The Midwest has the fewest women's caucuses. Like the West, the Northeastern states are also evenly divided with five states having caucuses and four without them. Caucuses appear in states in this region with high, medium, and low proportions of women in office. The Northeastern states without caucuses have high, medium, and low proportions of women in office as well.

Twelve percent of states have an Informational/Social Caucus while 34% have a Legislative Caucus. Informational/Social Caucuses account for 26% of all women's caucuses while 74% of women's caucuses are some type of Legislative Caucus.

Table 4 about here

Position Taking Legislative Caucuses are the most common type (24% of states, 52% among legislative caucuses) and are concentrated in the South as can be seen in Figure 2, a map of the U.S. indicating by color where each type of caucus exists across the states. The second most common type is the Informational/Social Caucus (12% of

states, 26% of caucuses). Ten percent of states have Agenda Legislative Caucuses which account for 22% of women's caucuses.

Figure 2 about here

### Hypotheses

I have argued that there are two potential benefits emanating from the creation of a women's caucus. First, although the evidence is mixed, women's caucuses may improve the quality of representation for women constituents increasing the attention to women's issues and bill passage related to women's issues (CAWP 2001, Thomas 1991). Secondly, participation in a women's caucus may improve the quality of life for women legislators themselves including the development of leadership skills, information exchange, social support, and an increase of women's appointments to leadership positions (Hammond 1998, Gertzog 1995, Kanthak and Krause 2010). It is vital therefore that scholars determine the most favorable contexts in which these groups can be found. A quantitative analysis of state level variables and their association with women's caucuses can determine the institutional qualities that may favor women's organizing which may lead to improved representation for women and better working environments for women legislators.

As theory has indicated, women should be unlikely to differentiate themselves from their male counterparts because their success is predicated upon their fitting into the existing masculine culture (Kanter 1977). Likewise, differences among women ideologically would seem to make bipartisan women's caucuses unlikely (Dodson 2006, Osborn 2012). Women, however, have been creating these groups since 1972, despite the backlash against the women's movement and pressure to conform within the institution

and their own ideological differences. Banaszak (1996) points out that political opportunity theory recognizes constraints and opportunities produced by allies, enemies, institutional structures and political processes, which can mitigate or increase costs of organizing and therefore influence the possibility of group creation. The structural opportunities for caucus creation would consist of the legislative environment and larger political context in which they emerge. Legislators, unlike mass publics, are confined by the norms and rules of the institution in which they act. What opportunities are created within these rules and norms that make organizing around a gendered identity more likely? What institutional resources are associated with the existence of a women's caucus? Which frames are favorable to caucus existence?

### Opportunities

In defining what constitutes a political opportunity which contributes to the emergence of a social movement, McAdam et al. (1996) suggest that a change in at least one of four dimensions could be considered a political opportunity. These four dimensions are the openness or closure of the system itself, stability of elite alignments, the presence of allies, and the capacity for repression by the system (10). In applying these dimensions to state legislatures, I consider political opportunities to be the legislative norms of an institution, the demographics of the legislature, and finally, the ability of the leadership to exact control over member behavior. Therefore, I put forth the following hypotheses concerned with these legislative conditions.

#### *Proportion Women in the Legislature and Republican Party.*

The presence of women serving in state legislatures is one obvious political opportunity expected to be associated with the presence of a women's caucus. Expanding

on previous research by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Beckwith (2007) hypothesizes that in legislatures with fewer than 15% women, caucuses are less likely to emerge because of the pressure to conform to masculine norms. Without potential members, there is little need or opportunity for an organization. In legislatures with greater than 15% women, Beckwith hypothesizes the creation of more women's caucuses.<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, in legislatures with large numbers of women, with percentages over 30%, legislators may not feel a need for an organization based on gender. I predict:

H1: Caucuses are less likely to exist in states in which the proportion of women is very high or very low.

Similarly, women's proportions within their political party may also influence their ability to organize with women across the aisle. Pressure to conform would be particularly strong for women in the Republican Party because of their smaller numbers (Kanter 1977, Kanthak and Krause 2012). For this reason, I predict

H2: Caucuses are less likely to exist in states where Republican women are a smaller percentage of their party than in states where they comprise a larger proportion.

#### *Democratic Party Control.*

A political opportunity one might assume conducive to the establishment of a women's caucus is Democratic Party control. Sixty percent of women in state legislatures are Democrats, and the Democratic Party has framed itself as the party most responsive to "women's issues."<sup>13</sup> Also, research by Freeman (1986) indicates that the Republican

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<sup>12</sup> These hypotheses are based on expected behavior of men and women in organizations with disproportionate sex ratios. These behavioral expectations can be found in Kanter (1977).

<sup>13</sup> "Women in State Legislatures 2011." Center for American Women and Politics. April 2011 and "The Democratic Party." Democratic National Committee. 22 July 2010.  
<http://www.democrats.org/a/communities/women/>.

Party is less tolerant of the expression of competing political identities beyond party. As a result, the following emerges as a hypothesis:

H3: Women's caucuses are more likely to exist in legislatures with a Democratic majority.

It is possible for caucuses to exist in Republican controlled houses, but I am hypothesizing that it is more likely as the proportion of Democrats increases. A cursory look at the evidence reveals that caucuses did emerge in the Republican controlled South Carolina in 2004 and Wyoming in 2006. Similarly, some states with large Democratic majorities, like Connecticut and Delaware, do not have women's caucuses. Perhaps factors such as supportive leadership are more important in explaining where caucuses exist regardless of party. Secondly, variation in state party ideology may explain why caucuses might exist in legislatures under Democratic or Republican control. An initial test, however, is necessary to determine if Democratic majority is related to caucus status in states.

*Presence of other caucuses.*

The existence of other established caucuses provides legitimacy to this alternative organizing within a legislature and therefore is expected to be correlated with a women's caucus. Hammond (1998) cites that once one caucus is formed, others follow. Once it is deemed legitimate to organize outside of parties by the proliferation of these groups, it is more likely that groups based on other shared interests will emerge. Therefore, we would expect:

H4: Women's caucuses are more likely to exist in states where other caucuses exist.

Another way to look at the relationship between caucuses is to consider the connection between identity caucuses specifically. These are caucuses based on

characteristics such as race, gender, or sexual orientation, unlike issues caucuses such as a Sportsmen's Caucus or an Environmental Caucus. If other identity-based caucuses exist, one's identity is a legitimate political category. The Maryland Caucus of Women Legislators cites the creation of the Maryland Caucus of Black Legislators as inspiration for their group which was established in 1972 after the creation of the Black Caucus in 1970. It is appropriate to use black caucuses as a measure because of the link between the Civil Rights and women's movements (Evans 1980; Freeman 1973). Therefore, I predict: H5: Women's caucuses are more likely to exist in states where black caucuses exist.

*Diversity among Women Legislators*

Likewise, I would consider a larger proportion of women legislators of color to also be a positive political opportunity for women's caucuses. Their experience of bias within legislative institutions (Barrett 1997, Hawkesworth 2003, Smooth 2008) may be a motivator to create institutions which would address issues of inequality. They are also likely to be participants in Black or Latino caucuses, giving them the experience necessary to create a women's caucus. Finally, legislators of color are also more likely to be members of the Democratic Party and therefore no strangers to identity politics (Freeman 1986). Therefore, I predict:

H6: Women's caucuses will be more likely in states with a greater proportion of women legislators of color.

*Party competition.*

A legislative characteristic that may prove detrimental to caucus existence might be legislatures with small and often switching majorities. These environments would encourage strict party discipline, discouraging women from fragmenting their legislative efforts between party goals and sometimes competing goals providing little opportunity

for organizing around gender (Snyder & Groseclose 2000; Aldrich and Battista 2002).

This would suggest the following hypothesis:

H7: Women's caucuses will be less likely to exist in states with greater party competition.

*Size of the Legislature.*

The size of the legislature is another variable which may influence women's ability to caucus because of its ability to create or limit political opportunities for organizing. Francis (1985) finds, for instance, that in larger chambers power is more concentrated among party leaders, whereas in smaller chambers more power lies with party caucuses. In these smaller chambers, legislators are able to exert more control in committees and form "communities of interest." This would challenge party leader control. Similarly, Rosenthal (1981) finds that smaller chambers allow for more dispersion of power and friendlier relations. These findings suggest that women's caucus existence would be correlated with states with smaller house chambers. Therefore, I expect

H8: Women's caucuses are more likely in states with fewer total seats in the legislature.

Resources

Resources are vital for group formation (Zald 1992, Cress and Snow 1996). Legislators who hope to accomplish their organizational goals need particular assets to implement their chosen strategies. I will be considering several institutional variables which will affect women legislators' access to these particular kinds of resources. For example, professionalization of a legislature may provide women with more staff (human) and time to develop strategies for caucus success (cultural). I propose the

following hypotheses surrounding institutional structures which may provide legislators with specific resources making a caucus in a state more likely.

*Professionalism.*

One structural feature of legislatures that may prove to be relevant is professionalism. Hammond (1998) notes that rule changes within Congress which allocated more staff distributed equally among members contributed to the boom in caucus formation in the mid 1970s. This makes the level of professionalism relevant because of the available resources of time and staff which it provides, making organizations more feasible. Therefore,

H9: Women's caucuses are less likely to exist in legislatures with lower levels of professionalism than in other states.<sup>14</sup>

and

H10: Women's caucuses are more likely to exist in legislatures with larger staff sizes than in states with smaller staff sizes.

*Term limits.*

A potentially negative structural component deterring the existence of a women's caucus might be term limits, which would shorten the amount of time even motivated entrepreneurs would have to maintain a caucus. Turnover among women legislators might also affect membership enthusiasm. With only a limited amount of time in the legislature, focusing on gender might not be a priority for many legislators. Term limits would present challenges for organizing by limiting women's legislative experience and by shortening the amount of time in office. Personal relationships do not have as much

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<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the complicated role professionalism plays in the gendering of legislatures, see Reingold and Schneider (2001).

time to develop, and time to pursue legislators' priorities is limited. This would suggest the following hypothesis:

H11: Women's caucuses are less likely to exist in term limited states.

### Frames

In establishing a women's caucus, creators are required to recruit potential members and in some cases defend themselves against opposition. McAdam et al (1996, 6) refer to this as "strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action."

Specifically, in creating a caucus, legislators are creating what is referred to in social movement theory as a mobilizing structure which "activists must successfully frame...as useable and appropriate to the social change tasks to which they will be put. The targets of these framings are both internal – adherents and activists in the movement itself – as well as external, including bystanders, opponents, and authorities" (149). So in evaluating the frames that would affect the creation of a women's caucus, I will be considering the justifications legislators put forth legitimizing collective organizing.

### *Proportion Women in Leadership.*

If women are included at the highest levels of leadership within a legislature, women may not see a need to create a caucus as an alternative route to legislative power and influence. If women are excluded from these ranks, that isolation may be a motivating factor for legislators looking for a way to influence legislative agendas and outcomes. For these reasons, I expect:

H12: Women's caucuses will be less likely in states with a greater proportion of women in leadership positions.

## Methods

Having established these hypotheses, I will now explain the analysis I plan to employ to test the relationship between these variables and the existence of women's caucuses. My categorization and location of women's organizing captures a wide range of women's activities across the 50 states and provides an opportunity for more careful analysis of women's caucuses. Unfortunately, through the course of my interviews, it became clear that very rarely are legislators able to pin down an exact year of caucus formation. This is only really possible in the few states with documented histories included in newsletters or on websites usually maintained by staff (Maryland 1972, South Carolina 2004, Massachusetts 1975, Illinois 1979, Hawaii 1986, New York 1983, California 1985, and Louisiana 1986). Because no comprehensive, annual dataset exists about women's caucuses over time, I analyze the correlates of caucus existence in 2011. It is for this reason I am only able to analyze variable correlation with caucus existence as I cannot know the ratio of men to women, the percentage of Democrats in statehouses, etc. at the time a caucus was created. Despite this limitation, it is still important to test hypotheses of those variables likely to be associated with women's caucuses to demonstrate at least a snapshot of what the landscape in 2011 looks like. This can serve as the basis for future analysis which would include over time data or year specific analyses if the founding dates of all women's caucuses could be determined.

While it is useful to think about women's organizing by type when considering the goals and impacts of these groups, my analysis within this chapter will simply test for the factors correlated with the existence of a women's caucus. Again, this is because of the limited sample size when caucuses are separated by type in only one year.

First, I will examine bivariate relationships between my variables of interest and the existence of a women's caucus in a state. My dependent variable, Women's Caucus Presence, is coded with states with no gender organizations as 0 and states with any type of caucus (Informational/Social or Legislative) coded as 1.

The measures and coding for my independent variables are as follows. My political opportunity hypotheses are tested using several variables. The measure of Proportion Women in the legislature is a continuous variable with data from the Center for American Women and Politics ("Women in State Legislatures 2011"). The range is from 9.4% in South Carolina to 41% in Colorado. A second variable Proportion of Women Squared has been created by squaring this data into a new variable in order to test for a curvilinear relationship. The proportion women within the Republican Party hypothesis can be examined using CAWP's data on the number of Republican women in the states in 2011 and the NCSL data on the total number of Republicans per state. It is a continuous variable with a range from 6% in Alabama to 44% in Hawaii.

The measure of Democrat Party Control is a nominal variable with data from the National Conference of State Legislatures ("2011 State and Legislative Partisan Composition"). Democratically controlled state houses are coded as 1 with all others coded 0.<sup>15</sup> Because Nebraska is a non-partisan state, it is coded as missing for this variable as well as for party competition. I consider only state houses because the majority of women's caucus participants are house members and generally speaking most caucus entrepreneurs serve in the lower chamber.

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<sup>15</sup> In 2011, Oregon had 30 Democrats and 30 Republicans serving in the state house (NCSL). Therefore this state is coded as 0 along with all other states which are Republican controlled.

Continuing with political opportunity variables, the data for the existence of other caucuses is from my own research including my interviews with state legislators as well as internet research to determine the presence of caucuses other than women's. This measure is a dichotomous variable with states with no caucuses (apart from women's) coded as 0 and states with caucuses (apart from women's) coded as 1. The data used for the black caucus variable come from Clark's (2010) research on black caucuses in the U.S. This measure is a dichotomous variable with states with no black caucuses coded as 0 and states with black caucuses coded as 1. The proportion women legislators of color variable is a continuous variable with data from the Center for American Women and Politics. The range is from 80% in Hawaii to 0% in Maine.

The party competition variable is a continuous one using data from the National Conference of State Legislatures through which I code states by the difference in the number of seats held by the majority minus the number of seats held by the minority in the state house ("2011 State and Legislative Partisan Composition"). The total seats in the legislature variable is a continuous one using data from the National Conference of State Legislatures. The range is from a low of 49 in Nebraska to 424 in New Hampshire.

In evaluating which resources are likely to be associated with a women's caucus, I evaluate the relationship between caucus existence and two institutional variables. Professionalism is a continuous variable based on Squire's (2003) data in which state legislatures were given a score between 0 and 1. A score of 1 would be perfect resemblance to Congress in professionalism, whereas a 0 would be no resemblance to Congress. The range is from .027 in New Hampshire to .626 in California. The staff size

variable is a continuous one using data from the National Conference of State Legislatures. The range is from 86 in Vermont to 2,919 in Pennsylvania.

Finally, I predicted that a likely frame associated with caucus existence would be the argument that women have been kept out of leadership positions or that a caucus might help to increase their status. The independent variable Proportion Women in Leadership is a continuous variable with data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (“Women in Legislative Leadership 2011”). The range is from 0% in 18 states to 37.5% in two states.

To test the relationship between these variables and caucus existence, I ran a series of t-tests for the continuous variables and conducted a crosstab analysis for each of the nominal variables. For continuous variables, I report the F statistic, while for nominal variables I report the Pearson Chi-Square.

Two multivariate models were also tested. I conducted a logit analysis because my dependent variable is dichotomous, Women’s Caucus (coded yes-1, no-0). All coding for the independent variables is as I have described previously. Model 1 was a logit regression with the following independent variables included: Democratic Party control, party competition, professionalism, other caucuses and term limits. Model 2 substituted the black caucus variable for the other caucuses variable. Because of my small sample size, only five variables of interest can be examined reliably. I used these variables in my model because I believed them to be the strongest predictors of the presence of a women’s caucus. Party is the most important organizing structure in legislatures (Rosenthal 2009). Professionalism and term limits have been an important variable considered when evaluating women’s experience of legislative life (Sanbonmatsu 2002,

Rosenthal 1998, Carroll and Taylor 1989, Stanley and Blair 1991, Carroll and Jenkins 2001). Finally, I believe that the existence of other caucuses in a state is a strong indicator that a state is open to the existence of alternative organizations opening the door for a women's caucus. This would be particularly true of states with other identity caucuses, like black caucuses.

### Findings

The results demonstrate that caucus states do not have a mean significantly different from non-caucus states on any of my independent variables. Likewise, none of the crosstabs demonstrate a significant difference in the relationship between caucus or non-caucus states and any of my nominal independent variables. These results are displayed in Tables 5-7.

Tables 5-7 about here

The multivariate analysis also demonstrates no relationship between my variables and the existence of a women's caucus in a state as neither model was statistically significant. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8 about here

### Discussion

This analysis of women's caucuses and hypothesized correlates finds no significant relationships between the presence of women's caucuses and factors expected to be associated with them. Several explanations are possible. First, these analyses have been conducted using only data from 2011. My N size of 49 may be too small to demonstrate correlations. Over time data may more accurately illuminate relationships between these legislative characteristics and women's caucuses.

Secondly, these relationships may be more complicated than can be captured with this data. For example, in addition to her hypotheses about women's proportion in the legislature and the likelihood of caucuses, Beckwith (2007) also posits that women as a proportion of the legislature in conjunction with the newness of those women holding office is a better indicator of women substantively representing other women. Further, she hypothesizes that women newer to office will be less likely to organize with other women because of their heightened hesitance to conform. This would complicate a standard threshold hypothesis. Data which included information about when larger numbers of women were elected to legislatures would be more illustrative of this hypothesis.

Finally, these results may be accurately reflecting the presence of women's caucuses in a variety of legislatures. The relationship between state level variables and women's caucuses may be better understood through the case studies which consider the influence of these factors on caucus creation, not just caucus existence. Studying the phenomena from its beginning may identify the necessary resources and opportunities for caucus creation leading to future studies of the important factors in caucus maintenance.

### Limitations

My first task in this project was to identify where women's caucuses existed. I did this by contacting women legislators in the 50 states and asking them if there were a women's caucus in their state. This seemingly simple question prompted attention to the first challenge in conducting this study. How women defined a caucus for themselves determined how they answered my question, and women did not share definitions even within the same state. I began this dissertation with the position that previous definitions

of caucuses, like Hammond's and Oliver's, were flawed. They did not take into account all the variations of organizing occurring in the 50 states. I choose to address this problem of definition by defining the concept for my own purposes and then asking subjects a range of questions, broadly asking about the behaviors of women legislators, and then identifying states with and without caucuses applying my own definition.

By including these broader questions of activities in my interviews, I was able to identify a range of women's caucuses across the 50 states. Unfortunately, the small number of these caucus types prevents a statistical analysis explaining what state level variables may be associated with certain types of women's caucuses. This limitation is compounded by the fact that this analysis only includes data from one year, 2011. I only identify the caucuses and their type existing as they do in 2011. As I have previously stated, with similar data over a longer period of time, more sophisticated analysis would be possible to make connections between state level variables and caucus existence and type.

Like any interview data, my 50 state analysis is limited by the number of women I spoke to in a state and their perceptions. I spoke to 130 women representing only 7% of all women legislators in the U.S. My sample was 66% Democrat which roughly matches the proportion of women legislator party identification nationally, but less Republican participation may be shading my findings. This part of the analysis is also limited by what legislators were willing to tell me, and because some of my questions regarded bias in their political experience, women may have been reluctant to share information that would implicate their party, legislature, or state. Similarly, women may have been disinclined to acknowledge any victimization in their experience. If women are unlikely

to admit bias on the part of party leaders or male colleagues, the real barriers to women's organizing attempts may not be uncovered. The influence of opposition is important as the explanation for the lack of women's organizing may be wrongly attributed to institutional factors which may or may not be the strongest determinant of women's ability to create caucuses.

### Conclusion

Before considering the impact of women's caucuses on legislative policy, we should first understand the structures and purposes of women's organizing. Much research has put the cart before the horse in examining the effects of these groups by assuming a particular purpose. By calling themselves a caucus, many women's organizations have unknowingly adopted a label that assumes particular goals and activities in the legislative policy process.

The significant contribution of this research is the new measure established for women's caucuses and the current accounting of women's organizing across the 50 state legislatures. The results conclude that women's caucuses are found in every region of the country, in Republican and Democratically controlled legislatures. They are present in states with average proportions of women legislators as well as at the high and low poles of the scale. They are widespread and not easily predicted. Correlations are not found between women's caucuses and the proportion of women in the legislature or the Republican Party, the Democratic Control of state houses, term limits, and the presence of other caucuses, or professionalism level of the legislature. Legislatures with qualities we would expect to be connected to women's collective action are not. With my survey of the 50 states demonstrating that women's caucuses are ubiquitous with no clear state-

level correlates, I turn to my case studies to better understand the conditions associated with the creation of women's caucuses.

Table 1 – 2011 Occupational Breakdown of Interview Subjects

<b>Lower Chamber Legislator*</b>	<b>Upper Chamber Legislator**</b>	<b>Unicameral Legislator</b>	<b>Legislative Staff</b>	<b>Caucus Staff</b>	<b>Total</b>
90	37	3	3	6	139

\*This includes four former state representatives.

\*\* This includes one former state senator.

Table 2 – 2011 Partisan Breakdown of State Legislator Interview Subjects

<b>Democrat*</b>	<b>Republican**</b>	<b>Democratic Farmer Labor</b>	<b>Non-Partisan</b>	<b>Total</b>
86	38	3	3	130

\* This includes four former state representatives.

\*\* This includes one former state senator.

**Table 3 – Types of Women’s Caucuses within the 50 States**

<b>Caucus Type</b>	<b>Activities on Behalf of Women</b>
<b>No Gender Organization</b>	Individual, sporadic efforts may be made but are not organized by a leader.
<b>Informational/ Social</b>	Mentoring, candidate recruitment/training, granting scholarships, socializing, advocating for more gender equity in leadership positions and committee appointments, public events, informational meetings with lobbyists or women’s organizations organized by a leader(s) are participated in by a group of women.
<b>Legislative</b>	Legislative hearings, bill endorsements, resolutions, public events, mentoring, candidate recruitment/training, granting scholarships, socializing, advocating for more gender equity in leadership positions and committee appointments, informational meetings with lobbyists or women’s organizations organized by a leader(s) are participated in by a group of women.
<b>Agenda</b>	A group of women agree upon a legislative agenda that is presented to legislative leadership or published more broadly at the beginning of the session organized by a leader(s).
<b>Position Taking</b>	Issue positions are taken as issues emerge upon which they agree and seek to influence organized by a leader(s), but there is no legislative agenda for the session.  ➤ <b>Gender Open</b> Membership is open to both male and female legislators.

Figure 1 – Women's Caucuses in the 50 States

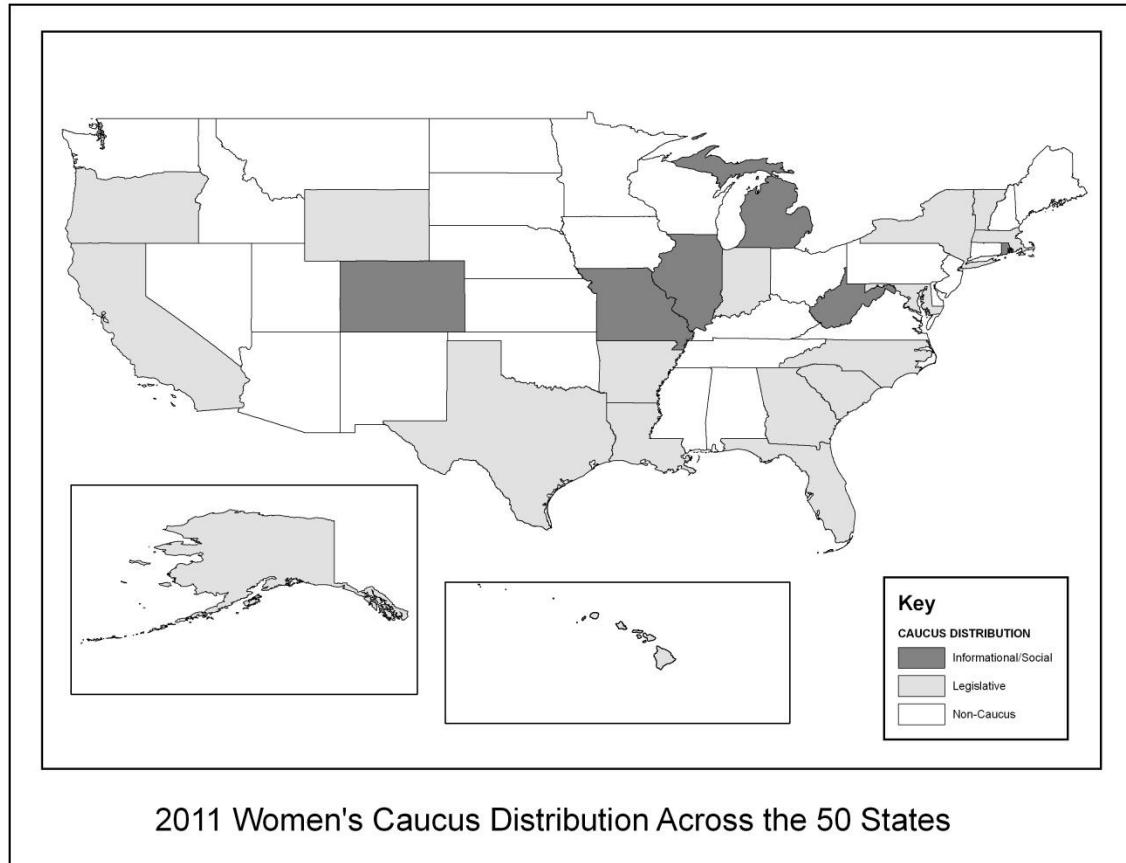


Table 4 – 2011 Women’s Caucus Type Distribution across the 50 States

No Caucus (27) 54%	Informational/Social (6) 12%	Legislative: Agenda (5) 10%	Legislative: Position Taking (12) 24%
Alabama	Colorado	California	Alaska
Arizona	Illinois	Hawaii	Arkansas
Connecticut	Michigan	Maryland	Florida
Delaware	Missouri	New York	Georgia
Iowa	Rhode Island	South Carolina	Indiana
Idaho	West Virginia		Louisiana
Kansas			Massachusetts
Kentucky			North Carolina
Maine			Wyoming
Minnesota			<b>Gender Open</b>
Mississippi			Oregon
Montana			Texas
Nebraska			Vermont
New Hampshire			
New Jersey			
New Mexico			
Nevada			
North Dakota			
Ohio			
Oklahoma			
Pennsylvania			
South Dakota			
Tennessee			
Utah			
Virginia			
Washington			
Wisconsin			

Figure 2 – Women’s Caucuses by Type in the 50 States

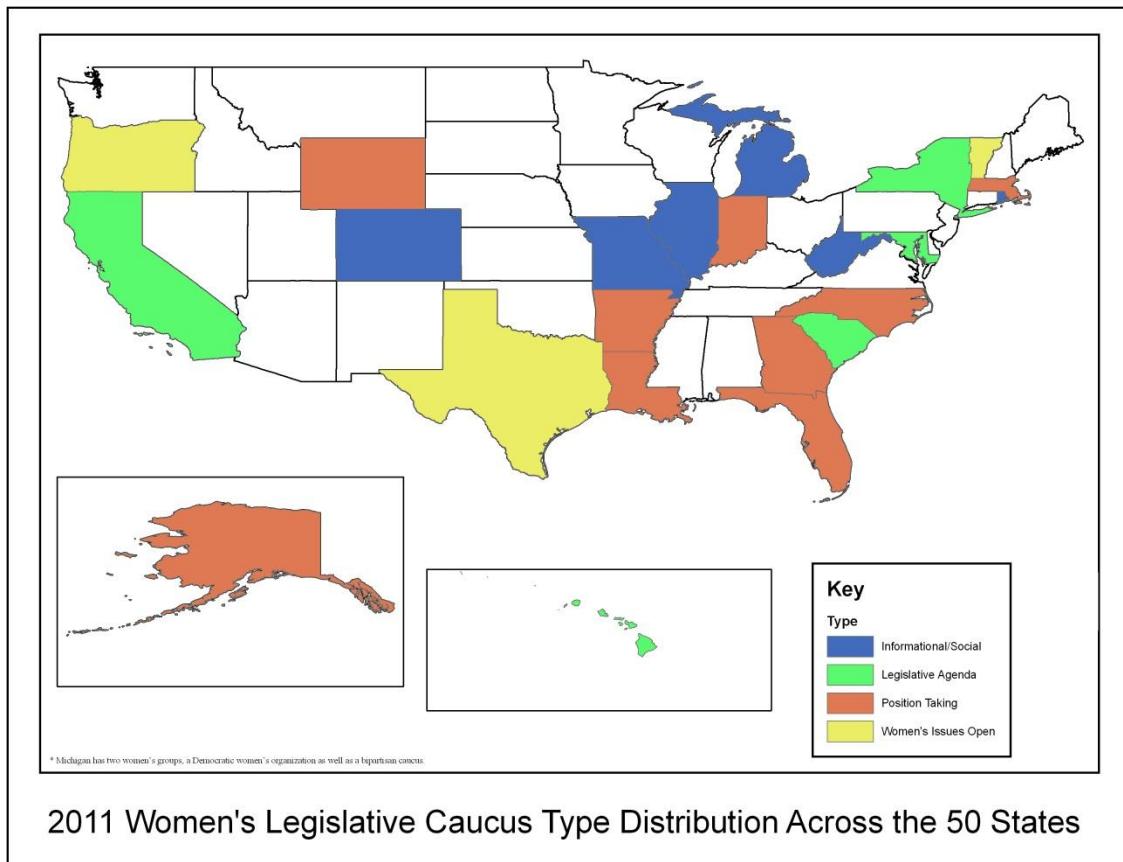


Table 5 – Political Opportunities

	Caucus States	Non-Caucus States		Caucus States	Non-Caucus States	
	Mean	Mean	F Statistic	%	%	Pearson Chi-Square
<b>Proportion Women</b>	24.39	22.96	.027	---	---	---
<b>Proportion Women Squared</b>	644.17	563.81	.495	---	---	---
<b>Proportion Republican Women*</b>	18.78	17.50	.032	---	---	---
<b>Democratic Control*</b>	---	---	---	55.6%	44.4%	1.720
<b>Presence of Other Caucuses</b>	---	---	---	50%	50%	2.362
<b>Presence of Black Caucuses</b>	---	---	---	51.5%	48.5%	1.188
<b>Proportion Women Legislators of Color**</b>	17.52	47.56	2.695	---	---	---
<b>Party Competition*</b>	31.96	67.59	2.729	---	---	---
<b>Chamber Size</b>	149.17	146.33	.170	---	---	---

Dependent Variable: Women's Caucus Y/N, coded 0=No and 1=Yes. N=50

\*N=49 (Nebraska drops out because it is a non-partisan legislature.)

\*\*N=49 (New Hampshire drops out because they do not record the racial demographics of their members.)

Table 6 - Resources

	Caucus States	Non-Caucus States		Caucus States	Non-Caucus States	
	Mean	Mean	F Statistic	%	%	Pearson Chi-Square
<b>Professionalism</b>	.04	.00	5.172	---	---	---
<b>Staff Size</b>	855.39	534.67	1.990	---	---	---
<b>Term Limits</b>	---	---	---	46.7%	53.3%	.004

Dependent Variable: Women's Caucus Y/N, coded 0=No and 1=Yes. N=50

Table 7 – Frames

	Caucus States	Non-Caucus States			
	Mean	Mean	F Statistic	%	Pearson Chi-Square
<b>Proportion Women Leaders</b>	18.30	10.93	.965	---	---

Dependent Variable: Women's Caucus Y/N, coded 0=No and 1=Yes. N=50

Table 8 – Multivariate Models

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
	Chi sq = 5.30 N= 49*	Chi sq = 4.94 N= 49*
<b>Democratic Control</b>	.690 (.607)	.761 (.606)
<b>Party Competition</b>	.004 (.010)	.005 (.010)
<b>Professionalization</b>	3.80 (3.16)	3.92 (3.33)
<b>Other Caucuses</b>	.826 (1.21)	
<b>Black Caucuses</b>		.277 (.708)
<b>Term Limits</b>	.300 (.718)	.320 (.718)

Dependent Variable: Women's Caucus Y/N, coded 0=No and 1=Yes.

\*Nebraska drops out because it is a non-partisan legislature.

## Chapter 4

### From the Cradle: An Introduction to the Case Studies

#### Introduction

Within this dissertation, I examine the origins of women's state legislative caucuses. Understanding that gender may operate differently across legislative environments, I hope to explain what opportunities, resources, and frames encourage and constrain women's attempts to organize gender specific groups within state legislatures. I have explained my theoretical framework within which I will pursue these broad questions. Demonstrating the importance of both gender dynamics and traditional legislative norms in explaining the phenomena of women's caucuses, I have used collective action theory to develop hypotheses explaining the development of these groups. Next, I took a national snapshot in 2011 of all existing women's caucuses. In this data collection, I determined the variety of women's caucuses and their geographical locations. Through a quantitative analysis, I discovered that there are no simple explanations for why women's caucuses exist where they do and in the form in which they do. It has become necessary to examine these phenomena from their origins.

In this chapter, I will explain why case studies are necessary to answer my research questions and explain my case selection and data collection. Next, I will revisit my hypotheses and lay out my specific expectations for the variables tested within my four case studies. Finally, I will do an initial descriptive analysis of the cases for certain variables of interest. Before I move to the specific case chapters, I will address the limitations of this part of my analysis. This chapter serves as an introduction to the four following chapters which examine the interview evidence from my cases.

My case studies test hypotheses about women's caucus creation, implementing personal interviews and analysis of media coverage when available. Case studies are the best way to determine the reasons why caucuses emerge in some environments and not in others because this investigation can take into account various contextual factors that contribute to or prohibit the development of a caucus. A case study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Johnson and Joslyn 1991, 121).

George and Bennett (2005, 17-18) define a case as "an instance of a class of events...the investigator chooses to study with the aim of developing theory (or 'generic knowledge') regarding the causes of similarities or differences among instances (cases) of that class of events." The class of events considered here are recent attempts at creating a women's caucus. My aim is to discover the opportunities, resources, and frames that lead to caucus creation. It is necessary to consider the context in which caucuses occur. Cases studies are particularly conducive to this type of investigation (George and Bennett 2005, 19). Secondly, case studies also allow for the discovery of new relevant variables. As George and Bennett (2005, 20) explain, "When a case study researcher asks a participant 'were you thinking X when you did Y,' and gets the answer, 'No, I was thinking Z,' then if a researcher had not thought of Z as a causally relevant variable, she may have a new variable demanding to be heard." Case studies then may identify important causal variables.

My hypotheses concerning caucus creation are centered on the interaction of gender with other institutional variables within a legislature. Case study is the ideal methodology to examine these interactions. George and Bennett (2005, 21) argue that

“within a single case, we can look at a large number of intervening variables and inductively observe any unexpected aspects of the operation of a particular causal mechanism or help identify what conditions present in a case activate the causal mechanism.” This can be accomplished implementing process tracing. Two primary advantages of process tracing – descriptive inference and exploring causal mechanisms within context – are a part of my project. Collier (2011, 824) notes the advantage of comparative case studies like mine which describe “a novel political and social phenomena” and “focuses on the unfolding of events...over time.” This focus on the unfolding allows for careful attention to the interaction of variables as a way to explain their causal significance.

### Case Selection

I chose to select as my case studies any attempt at creating a women’s legislative caucus within the years 2006-2010. For my purposes, an attempt at caucusing is defined as an instance in which a woman (either within the legislature or from outside) or group of women contacts women state legislators and asks them to participate in a bipartisan group. This contact may be made informally through conversation or more formally through an email or letter. It is this contact only, not attendance at any group meeting, which constitutes an attempt. By beginning with initial recruitment, I am able to establish those opportunities, resources, and frames associated with a successful caucus attempt, as well as those which prevent an attempt from getting off the ground. My cases therefore contain the universe of caucus attempts, including both successful and failed attempts. For my purposes, I define a successful attempt at caucusing as the establishment of a

group which continues to meet one year after the original founding. A failed attempt is any group which fails to meet for one year.<sup>16</sup>

Because the analysis I conducted in Chapter 3 was limited to only a one year snapshot of the institutional level variables associated with caucus existence, it is necessary for me to conduct case studies to determine the political opportunities, resources, and frames associated with successful caucus creation. My findings in Chapter 3 do not explain the conditions under which caucuses were created or the motivations of caucus creators and participants. Therefore, a case study analysis of recent attempts is necessary to address those questions.

Cases were identified through the 50 state telephone interviews described in the previous chapter. Participants in these states were asked if a caucus existed in their state. If a caucus existed, subjects were asked when the caucus was created. Those created within the five-year span were included. If participants reported no existing caucus, they were asked if they were aware of any attempts. Those attempts reported within the five-year time span were also included. The timing of these attempts is as follows: New Jersey (2009), Colorado (2009), Pennsylvania (2009), and Iowa (2007).

### Data Collection

The case studies draw on the following sources of evidence: interviews of legislators, governmental staff outside of the legislature, and staff and media accounts of women's legislative caucuses. Detailed drafts of interview schedules can be found in Appendix A of this document. I conducted the interviews myself, either in person or over

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<sup>16</sup> Because I need to know the status of the group one year from its establishment to determine it a success or failure, I closed my timeframe in 2010. A brief discussion of the 2011 women's caucus attempt that occurred in Texas will be included in the final chapter of this dissertation.

the phone. Interviews were recorded, when participants consented, and were transcribed for analysis. All interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

All women legislators serving at the time of my interview recruitment in all four states were contacted requesting an interview. All subjects who consented were interviewed. The following legislative leaders were also contacted in each state: Senate President, Senate Majority Leader, Senate Minority Leader, Speaker of the House, House Majority Leader, and House Minority Leader. In each case, the leaders in office during the women's caucus attempt were contacted as well as the leaders in office during my interview window for each state. This was to appreciate the leadership perspective during the attempt and the current perspective in regard to the established or failed women's caucus. In some instances, these leaders were the same in both time frames. In other cases, legislative leaders no longer holding their posts were recruited which is why the number of legislative leaders recruited varies in each case.<sup>17</sup> Again, all subjects who consented were interviewed. Participation rates in each state varied and a detailed description of interview subjects can be found in Table 9 at the end of this chapter.

Once subjects agreed to be interviewed, they were asked to sign a consent form which informed them of their rights to confidentiality. In the recruitment letter, subjects were told they would be able to set their own level of confidentiality. They would be able to speak off the record, be identified only by party or state, or could be quoted directly according to their preference. They were also able to consent to audio taping or not according to their preference.

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<sup>17</sup> Women legislators held some of these leadership positions, but none of these women accepted the invitation to participate in an interview. The reason cited was time which was a common explanation for why male leaders were unable to participate as well.

The first part of my interviews of women legislators and/or caucus staffers concerned their impressions of the legislature. Who do they identify as the most influential members? Party leaders, certain committee chairs? I then moved on to ask specific questions about the role of gender in the legislature. Are women's issues on the agenda? Do women legislators have a different experience within the institution than their male counterparts? The next set of questions specifically addressed the recent caucus attempt. With these questions, I tried to determine who the key players were, whether there was any opposition to the group and what logistics were required. I asked questions regarding the timing, the resources available, and what the legislators thought were the key factors associated with the attempt. Finally, I asked about the nature of the group and the legislator's predictions about the future of the group. My hopes for the interviews were to get a sense from each subject of how they saw the legislature generally, how they saw gender affecting their role within the institution specifically and, finally, the story of the caucus as they saw it.

A different set of questions were asked of legislative leaders. Here again the questions followed a basic pattern of general impressions of the influential players within the legislature, their impressions of how much gender impacts legislators' abilities to work within the legislature, and their impressions (if any) of the attempt by women to create a women's caucus. In the case that a woman was part of the legislative leadership and the women's caucus attempt, I had planned to ask questions regarding any conflict

that she may have felt as a consequence of both her positions. Unfortunately, no women were serving as legislative leaders during the time of a women's caucus attempt.<sup>18</sup>

Review of media accounts of the caucus at the time of its emergence allow me to examine the frames used by caucus members in justifying their organization to other legislators and the public. These accounts were collected by internet research or were shared with me by caucus members or staff. In the case of New Jersey, additional media accounts were used to explain legislative battles in which the caucus became involved. In the Colorado case, I reviewed press coverage of their initial meeting and subsequent events. No press coverage was available for the two failed cases.

For two cases, I was able to observe caucus events as an invited participant. In New Jersey, I attended a forum at the Center for American Women and Politics held on September 30, 2009, focusing on women legislators' contributions to the state. The need for a women's caucus and the story of its creation were discussed at this event. I was also present at a reception hosted by the women's caucus on April 29, 2010, which brought together women serving in the legislative and executive branches. Finally, I attended two legislative hearings on women's health at the state house. The first was held on June 7, 2010, by women of the caucus and included both Republican and Democratic members. The second held on May 11, 2011, had only Democratic legislators present. In the Colorado case, I was invited to attend a happy hour gathering of the women's caucus on March 22, 2011.

Interviews for New Jersey took place in the spring of 2010, some in person and some by telephone. I traveled to Colorado for personal interviews in March 2011. I

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<sup>18</sup> Representative Linda Upmeyer (R) of Iowa was serving in 2011 as House Majority Leader. This was the only interview I conducted with a woman serving in a leadership position. The attempt in Iowa took place in 2007 when she was not in a leadership position.

traveled to Pennsylvania for personal interviews in December 2011, although some interviews for this case also took place over the phone in the spring of 2011. All Iowa interviews were by telephone and took place during the spring and fall of 2011.

I also conducted follow-up interviews with the four co-chairs of the New Jersey Women's Legislative Caucus and their volunteer staffer, Kathy Crotty. These interviews were by telephone in the spring of 2012. A follow up interview was also conducted by telephone with the Colorado Women's Caucus staffer, Laura Hoeppner, in the spring of 2012. These interviews were necessary because of the time lapse between my initial interviews (2009-2010) and my analysis (2012). Questions focused on what activities the caucus had participated in since my last contact and what the immediate future plans for the group were.

Using this data, I will test hypotheses drawn from women and politics, state legislative, and collective action and social movement research. These hypotheses are based on my assumption that gender interacts with legislative norms and behaviors to affect legislators' decision making and behaviors. I examine collective action theories within an institutional setting to better understand how the expectations and constraints of the institution affect legislators' organizing behaviors.

### Hypotheses

As discussed in my second chapter, I will be examining the political opportunities, resources, and frames which encourage or inhibit the successful launching of a women's caucus within a state legislature. I consider hypotheses which may have a positive or negative effect on the development of a women's caucus. Some of these hypotheses mirror those in Chapter 3. Others are modified, added, or deleted because of

the change in the nature of the evidence to be evaluated. Some of these hypotheses will be evaluated in a preliminary way in the next section of this chapter, where I will consider all four cases comparatively. My main source of evidence, the interviews, will be analyzed in the following chapters.

### Opportunities.

Political opportunities are difficult to define. As McAdam et al. (1996, 3) explain concerning the emergence of social movements:

American scholars sought to explain the emergence of a particular social movement on the basis of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system. More recently, European scholars have sought to account for cross-national differences in the structure, extent, and success of comparable movements on the basis of differences in the political characteristics of the nation in which they are embedded.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will utilize the leverage offered by both of these approaches. I will consider both changes which may have occurred in a particular legislature to motivate a caucus attempt at a particular time by women legislators, as well as shifts in power dynamics among them and their colleagues. I also, however, have the opportunity to compare legislatures, looking for those differences in structures which may account for caucus attempt success or failure across legislatures.

In addition to building hypotheses based on traditional understandings of legislative behavior, I will also consider those specifically gendered opportunity structures which enhance women's power within the institution, including: percentage of women in the legislature and in leadership positions, state history in relation to electing women to office, and legislative professionalism (Reingold and Schneider 2001, Tolbert and Steuernagel 2001).

*Proportion Women in the Legislature and Republican Party.*

The most obvious hypothesis concerning the success and failure of a women's caucus attempt would be the proportion of women in a legislature. Beckwith (2007, 37) hypothesizes that in legislatures with fewer than 15% women, caucuses are less likely to emerge because of the pressure to conform. In legislatures with greater than 15% women, Beckwith hypothesizes the creation of more women's caucuses.<sup>19</sup> As I explained in Chapter 3, however, I expect a curvilinear relationship in which those legislatures with the smallest proportion of women and those with the largest proportion would be less likely to foster caucuses because of the lack of participants in the case of the former and a perceived lack of need in the case of the latter. Therefore, my first expectation is that caucus attempts are more likely to be successful in states with average levels of women's representation. In this sense, the positive political opportunity is present when a moderate proportion of women are present in a legislature.

Likewise, women's proportions within their political party may also influence their ability to organize with women across the aisle. When Republican women are a smaller percentage of their party, pressure to conform would be particularly strong (Kanter 1977, Kanthak and Krause 2012). For this reason, I predict that women's caucus attempts will be less likely to succeed in states where Republican women are a smaller percentage of their party than in states where they comprise a larger proportion.

Although I only have four cases, this hypothesis can be examined using CAWP's data on the proportion of Republican women in state legislatures and NCSL's data on the total number of Republicans in each state. I will also be looking in the cases for interview

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<sup>19</sup> These hypotheses are based on expected behavior of men and women in organizations with disproportionate sex ratios. These behavioral expectations can be found in Kanter (1977).

evidence of Republican women mentioning their status in their party as influencing their decision to support a women's caucus or not.

*Proportion of Freshman Women Legislators.*

Beckwith (2007) posits that change within institutions cannot be attributed to women simply as a result of their proportion of the legislature however. She adds that factoring in the relative newness of women holding office within the specific context is a better indicator of women substantively representing other women. Counter to my hypothesis that a surge of women into the legislature would ignite a women's caucus attempt, she argues that women newer to office will be less likely to organize with other women because they will feel increased pressure to conform to existing gender norms and behaviors. For this hypothesis, a larger proportion of new women to the legislature is considered a negative political opportunity because of the expected disinterest by these newly elected women who are motivated to conform rather than distinguish themselves by gender.

I will consider the proportion of women legislators who are freshmen in the session during which an attempt at a women's caucus occurred. I would expect a negative impact on women's ability to caucus to occur when the proportion of women legislators who are freshmen reached 30%. I will be looking for a correlation between these states and failed attempts. I will be considering data from CAWP on the number of freshman women serving in my four case states during the women's caucus attempt. In the interviews, I will listen for women discussing newly elected women and their inclination to participate or not in the caucus, with caucus organizers possibly attributing caucus

failure to a lack of enthusiasm among newer members. I will also look to interviews with newly elected women themselves to observe their interest in caucus creation.

#### *Democratic Party Control.*

Sixty percent of women in state legislatures are Democrats, and the Democratic Party has framed itself as the party most responsive to “women’s issues” (“Democratic Party”). Research by Freeman (1986) and Dodson (2006) indicates that the Republican Party is less tolerant of the expression of competing political identities beyond party. Further, as previously noted, Osborn (2003, 24) finds that “a strong Republican party lessens cohesion (among women within a state legislature) and a strong Democratic party strengthens women’s cohesion.” Therefore, I expect attempts in Democratically-controlled legislatures to be more likely to succeed than in states where Republicans hold the majority. I expect a Democratic majority to be a positive political opportunity which caucus organizers will take advantage of when timing their attempt.

I will test this hypothesis by observing if there is any correlation between where the attempts at caucuses have succeeded and Democratic control. My measure of proportion Democrat in state legislatures is data from the *Book of States*. I will also look to my interviews to determine if party control was something women considered when making an attempt.

#### *Party Competition.*

Strong party competition, where majorities are small and often changing, may inhibit a women’s caucus attempt. Party loyalty may be more prized in these environments, preventing women from fragmenting their legislative efforts between party goals and sometimes competing goals for women (Snyder & Groseclose 2000, Aldrich

and Battista 2002). Therefore, I expect women's caucus attempts to be less successful in legislatures with greater party competition. I will use data from NCSL to look for correlations between high competition legislatures and caucus failures. I will also analyze in the qualitative interview data any information women offer regarding the legislative environment and whether party competition contributed to increased pressure not to caucus or put demands on their time which prevented attempts from being successful.

#### *Party Polarization.*

Partisanship more generally may also influence women's caucus attempt success. As noted by several scholars, the political category "women" is diverse in ideology and issue priority (Osborn 2012, Hawkesworth et al. 2003, Huddy et al. 2008, Dodson 2006). As previously noted, Hawkesworth et al. (2001, 9) state, "Despite near universal agreement concerning their responsibility to represent women, women legislators hold a variety of views about the nature of women's needs and interests and the best means to represent women in the policy-making process." This would only be exacerbated by parties' cultural differences as noted by Freeman (1986). She argues that the Republican ethos of individualism discourages women in their ranks from identifying with broad political identities like gender or race. Carroll (2003) also notes that fewer Republican women identify as moderates in state houses today than in 1988. The presence of those moderates proved important for early women's caucuses that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. If Republican women place themselves further to the right on the ideological spectrum from Democratic women, bipartisan caucus attempts may be more difficult. As Osborn (2012) finds, "Though women clearly differ from men in their parties on a number of items, they are...closer to the men in their parties than to women

in the other party" (88). This difficulty would be expected based on Shor and McCarty (2011) who report that polarization in state legislatures is increasing while not uniform across states. Therefore, I expect polarization in legislatures to be negatively correlated with women's caucus attempts, in that caucus attempts will be less likely to succeed in legislatures with more polarization.

To test this hypothesis, I will use data from Shor and McCarty (2011) on state legislative polarization to see if caucus failure was more likely in more polarized legislatures. I will also look to the interview data for any information women offer regarding the legislative environment and whether partisanship among women legislators stymied their attempts at caucusing.

*Presence of Other Caucuses.*

There are other characteristics of legislatures which should be considered as political opportunities for women's caucuses. The presence of other types of caucuses beyond party caucuses would lend legitimacy to alternative organizations. Hammond (1998) cites that once one caucus is formed, others follow. This may be particularly true if other identity-based caucuses exist, thus making one's identity a legitimate political category. Maryland, for example, established its women's caucus in 1972 after the creation of the Black Caucus in 1970 and cited it as inspirational to their formation (Sorenson 2000). Therefore, I expect women's caucus attempts to be more likely to succeed in states where other caucuses exist, particularly black caucuses.

As evidenced by the Maryland case, another way to consider the influence of existing caucuses on women's attempts is to examine the connection between identity caucuses specifically. Identity caucuses include those based on characteristics such as

race, gender, or sexual orientation, unlike issues caucuses such as a Sportsmen's Caucus or an Environmental Caucus. It is appropriate to use black caucuses as a variable because of the link between the Civil Rights and women's movements (Evans 1979, Freeman 1973).

To test these hypotheses, I will analyze data from my own research including my interviews with state legislators, as well as internet research, to determine the presence of caucuses other than women's, and Clark's (2010) research on black caucuses in the U.S. I will look for a correlation between caucus success and the existence of other types of caucuses in a state. In my interview data, I will expect women to cite the presence of other caucuses as signaling to them an opportunity to create their own women's caucus.

#### *Racial Diversity of Women Legislators.*

In addition to the legitimizing of descriptive representation provided by black caucuses, I likewise would consider a larger proportion of women legislators of color to also be a positive political opportunity for women's caucuses. Their experience of bias within legislative institutions (Barrett 1997, Hawkesworth 2003, Smooth 2008) may be a motivator to create institutions which would address issues of inequality. They are also likely to be participants in Black or Latino caucuses giving them the experience necessary to create a women's caucus. Finally, legislators of color are also more likely to be members of the Democratic Party and therefore no strangers to identity politics (Freeman 1986). Therefore, I predict successful caucus attempts in legislatures which have larger proportions of women of color as members.

This hypothesis can be examined using CAWP's data on the proportion of women of color in state legislatures. I will also be looking in the cases for interview evidence of the women's racial identity positively or negatively affecting the attempt to caucus.

*Size of the Legislature.*

As explained in Chapter 3, the size of the legislature may influence women's ability to caucus because of its capacity to create political opportunities for organizing. Chamber size affects power concentration and collegiality (Francis 1985, Rosenthal 1981). Therefore, I expect women's caucus attempts to be more successful in states with fewer total seats. I will use NCSL data to look for correlations between caucus success and states with smaller legislatures. Further, I will look for evidence in the interview data for women's description of the size of legislature affecting their ability to form relationships important for caucus formation.

Resources.

Resources are important for the successful launch of an organized group (Zald 1992, Cress and Snow 1996). They are a cache of support for legislators as they attempt to achieve their political and personal goals. Legislative institutions provide their members with general resources like staff, office space, and material support. Women may take advantage of these broad benefits in their attempt to create a women's caucus. Likewise, there may be institutional features which might limit women's abilities to organize a caucus. Finally, women may receive resources from organizations outside of the legislature who have an interest in seeing women inside the legislature create a caucus. I present these specific hypotheses below.

*External Organizations.*

The first resource I expect to positively affect the outcome of a caucus attempt is the encouragement or support from women's groups outside the legislature. It was the political demands made by women's organizations outside of Congress in the 1970s which created the context for the development of the CCWI (Hammond 1998, Gertzog 2004). Members of Congress felt pressure to respond to the newly salient women's issues to which outside groups were calling attention. CAWP (2001) also reports a close relationship between women state legislators and these groups. Nownes and Neeley (1996) argue that groups emerge when entrepreneurs' (insiders) and patrons' (outsiders) interests coincide. For this reason, we may see a women's caucus emerge with the encouragement of women's organizations (outsiders) which feel that a women's caucus will be more effective in dealing with the issues most salient to them rather than action taken by individual legislators. Therefore, I hypothesize women's caucuses are likely to be successful when a group or individual outside of the legislature suggests and encourages the formation of a women's caucus within the legislature. Evidence of outside support for the caucus would include women outside the legislature asking legislators to create a caucus. Other examples of external support would be resource contributions toward the development of a caucus such as office space, staff, or monetary donations.

*Professionalism and Staff Size.*

Professionalism in legislatures is defined as "the capacity of both legislators and legislatures to generate and digest information in the policymaking process."<sup>20</sup> It is considered an important variable in legislative research because the ability of legislators

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<sup>20</sup> For my analysis, I will be using the Squire (2007, 211) measure of professionalization. He quantifies it using pay, length of session, and staff resources, assigning each state legislature a score in relation to the U.S. Congress.

to create appropriate public policy is influenced by the level of professionalism of the institution. This is because professionalism affects the types of legislators attracted to the position and the conditions under which certain candidates are successful. Likewise, it affects legislators once in office because of their access to particular resources like staff and session time. I expect the level of professionalism to affect women's ability to organize because of these additional resources associated with higher levels of professionalism.

Hammond (1998) attributed the 1970s boom in Congressional caucuses in part to rule changes which allocated more staff distributed equally among members. Additional staff allows for legislators to have more contact with constituents and be more responsive to their concerns (Squire and Moncrief 2010). This makes it more likely that women with more staff would be able to successfully launch a caucus, particularly if women's issues were a constituent priority.

More professional legislatures also have longer sessions. With more time spent legislating and at the state capital, women legislators are likely to have more opportunities to associate with one another and have the time and proximity required for caucus activities. Further, women in more professional legislatures are more likely to work on women's issue legislation, indicating that gender is a politically relevant category for them (Carroll and Taylor 1989).

Reingold and Schneider (2001) argue that the interaction between levels of professionalism and gender in the legislature are both positive and negative for women. They cite Rosenthal (1997) who finds that more professional legislatures produce more masculine norms, but they also note Stanley and Blair's (1991) report that

professionalism creates a more business-like environment in which women may not be excluded by an old boys' network. Ultimately, I expect women's caucuses are more likely to be successful in legislatures with higher levels of professionalization than in other states.

I will test this hypothesis with data from Squire's (2007) index and the NCSL's tracking of legislative staff sizes applying this information to the cases to observe any correlation between successful attempts and higher levels of professionalism and larger session staff sizes. Further, I will look in the interviews for evidence of women mentioning time, staffing, and formality of environment (how legislators interact) as positively affecting their attempt to caucus.

*Term Limits.*

Term limits are important to consider as a factor which would limit an important resource for women's caucuses – time. Term limits have been analyzed to determine their impact on legislators more generally as well as their specific impact on women. Generally, term limits contribute to greater turnover for legislators at large, leading to a disintegration of the power of standing committees (Squire and Moncrief 2010). For women specifically, Thompson and Moncrief (1993) suggest that, because term limits will increase the number of open seats in a legislature, this could help women who would be likely candidates for those seats. Carroll and Jenkins (2001), however, find that term limits do not on their own contribute to an increase in the number of women elected to legislatures without direct recruitment of women candidates by parties and other political organizations. Thompson and Moncrief (1993) also warn that term limits may have a negative effect on women's power within legislatures as senior women are rotated out.

As a consequence of this research, I expect term limits to negatively affect women's abilities to create women's caucuses. Term limits shorten legislators' time in office. This may negatively affect their prioritization of gender work in the legislatures. Women may want to accomplish their primary goals because of the shortened time in office, decreasing the number of women who might otherwise choose to participate in a caucus. Term limits would also affect the expertise levels of legislators. With less experience, women legislators may be lacking in the skills necessary to successfully launch and maintain a caucus. For these reasons, I expect successful women's caucus attempts are less likely in states with term limits.

While evidence of this hypothesis can be measured using NCSL data on states with term limits and applying that to the cases to observe any correlation between failed attempts and term limits, I will also be looking in the cases for women mentioning shortened terms and lack of knowledge about institutional norms and expectations as negatively affecting their attempt to caucus.

### Frames.

As discussed in Chapter 2, frames are the shared beliefs of participants in a movement. These shared beliefs hold organizations together, are used to recruit members, and sometimes are what oppositions try to refute when counteracting a movement. My frame hypotheses concern the shared beliefs of women legislators and the arguments caucus organizers use to recruit members to participate. Organizers must believe that a caucus is necessary to address a common need in order to initiate a caucus, and for an attempt to be successful, participants must share that belief. Further, organizers and

participants must agree on the nature of the organization sharing a commitment to the groups' strategies and priorities.

The first belief that must be shared among women legislators for a women's caucus attempt to be successful is that women are a relevant political category. I refer to this frame as gender consciousness. Next, there are other beliefs about women's condition in the legislature that I hypothesize are likely to be linked to successful caucus attempts. They are dissatisfaction with political party and the exclusion of women from leadership positions within the legislature. Finally, I also consider the arguments for a caucus that entrepreneurs might put forth to potential members as frames as well. Caucus entrepreneurs would be arguing why a caucus would be necessary by framing it as presenting certain benefits to these potential participants (Salisbury 1969). I hypothesize below that some caucus purposes would be more likely to result in successful caucus launches than others. Finally, I hypothesize that the existence of counter frames, opposition from party leaders or male colleagues, would be likely to hurt the chances of a successful caucus launch.

#### *Gender Consciousness.*

I hypothesize that gender consciousness, as a shared belief among women legislators, will be critical to both a caucus attempt and the success of that attempt. Components of group consciousness are identified in Sigel (1996, 127) as

Identification with the group, attachment to it, and commitment to action on its behalf. A vital fourth component of consciousness, but one not emphasized in the literature, involves assigning priority (or at least high priority) to membership in the disadvantaged group over memberships in other groups to which one belongs.

For Sigel, this priority is an important element because it explains why gender consciousness is so difficult to develop. She argues that women's membership in other

identity groups often inhibit their development of gender consciousness. This is an important observation in particular for women legislators for whom party identity is a particularly strong identity group. Institutional norms demand party loyalty above other identities which would complicate women's participation in a caucus, especially for Republican women. As Dodson (2006) states, "Lauding women's actions as surrogate representatives of women could intensify the potential costs Republican women face for it may cast their efforts on behalf of women as particularly contrary to institutional norms" (258). By signifying gender as important and initiating an organization centered on their gendered identity, women legislators would be overcoming an important hurdle in gender consciousness development. I therefore hypothesize that caucuses are more likely to be successful when women legislators (both organizers and participants) identify solidarity (common interests and challenges) with other women and acknowledge that collective action on behalf of their membership in that group is appropriate. This frame would justify the need for a women's caucus for organizers and potential participants.

Whether or not women are able to create and maintain a bipartisan caucus will be dependent upon their ability to work across party lines. The women within the legislature need to agree they have shared interests that cross traditional party lines and must acknowledge gender as a politically significant category. Without a shared belief in women's difference and political cause to act on that difference, why create a women's caucus? The frame of common interests as a result of gender is necessary for a women's caucus to emerge. Evidence of this frame would be women legislators admitting commonalities as a result of gender. Acknowledgement of "women's difference" either in

legislative style, issue priorities, or life experiences would be evidence for this hypothesis.

*Party Dissatisfaction.*

As stated in Hammond (1998), caucuses emerge when new issues important to members cannot be adequately addressed by the existing committee and party structure. The institution's inadequacies may be a result of interested members not serving on the relevant committees, party leadership ignoring the new issue, or the committee structure not being able to address an issue that crosses traditional legislative boundaries.

“Women’s issues” are complicated and often cross multiple boundaries. Therefore, I would expect that when women legislators perceive political parties or the committee system as unresponsive to the issues important to them, women are more likely to form a caucus to validate these issues as political and promote an alternative agenda. These attempts will be more likely to succeed because women’s obligation to their party identity would be strained by the perceived unresponsiveness. Women legislators who acknowledge this unresponsiveness have a sound argument for the necessity of a women’s caucus to respond to a legitimate need.

I will look in the case studies for evidence of party dissatisfaction in my interviews with women legislators. Evidence for this hypothesis would include an expressed desire among legislators to affect legislative agendas by including women’s issues, a dissatisfaction with the way these issues were being handled prior to caucus creation, or an acknowledgement of bias against women legislators or their priorities within the institution.

*Women in Leadership.*

If women are included at the highest levels of leadership within a legislature, women may not see a need to create a caucus as an alternative route to legislative power and influence. If women are excluded from these ranks, that isolation may be a motivating factor for legislators looking for a way to influence legislative agendas and outcomes. For these reasons, I expect that in legislatures with few women in positions of leadership, caucuses will be more likely to succeed. In this way, an exclusion from leadership is an argument women could successfully invoke when creating a caucus.

I will consider CAWP data on the proportion of women leaders in my cases in the next section of this chapter to determine any correlation between caucus success and low levels of women in leadership positions. I will also consider in my qualitative data if women mention an exclusion from power as a motivating factor in caucus creation or as a useful argument in recruiting women to participate in a caucus.

*Caucus Type.*

My next hypotheses concern the frames organizers would use to recruit women to participate in the caucus. Having seen the range of women's caucuses across the country, it is clear that not all legislators agree on what type of women's caucus to create, what strategies are appropriate to improve the lives of women legislators and women more broadly, or what type of membership is appropriate. In observing the range of caucuses across the country, I have identified two broad categories, Informational/Social or Legislative. I hypothesize that attempts to create an Informational/Social caucus are more likely to be successful than Legislative ones.

The purpose of the proposed caucus is an important frame to consider when hypothesizing what will result in successful caucus creation. I hypothesize that caucus attempts will be more likely to succeed when the purpose is identified as primarily social in nature in part because of the highly polarized context. As Shor and McCarty (2011) find, polarization in the aggregate at the state level has increased over the last 15 years. Those caucuses which deem legislative agendas as primary purposes for a women's caucus will be less likely to emerge and maintain themselves in this political climate of party polarization. This is particularly true considering Carroll's (2003) evidence of fewer moderates among Republican women legislators. Evidence of this hypothesis would be that those caucuses whose primary purpose is social networking among members will continue to meet at least one year following caucus formation. A lack of evidence for this hypothesis would be if caucuses whose primary purpose is legislative influence also continue to meet at least one year following caucus formation.

I will include data from my case studies on the type of caucus attempted in the next section of this chapter to determine any correlation between caucus success and the type of caucus attempted by legislators. I will also consider in my interview data in the following chapters whether women mention the purposes for the caucus as beneficial to the launch or damaging.

#### *Opposition from Party Leaders or Male Colleagues.*

Once women legislators decide to attempt a caucus, they may have to contend with competing narratives by opposition. Acknowledging a common identity (gender in this case) and successfully employing that discourse in competition with challenges to the validity of that claim will be vital to the formation and maintenance of women's

caucuses. It is possible that Republican women are challenged by their leaders to identify as individuals rather than as members of special interest groups (Freeman 1986, Dodson 2006). Most likely challenges to women forming their own group will come from party leaders (men or women) who are interested in women identifying first as party members, requiring loyalty to that caucus before others. I hypothesize then that when party leaders express opposition to the creation of a women's caucus, that attempt is less likely to succeed. Challenges by party leadership will be detrimental because they threaten women's political future and effectiveness.

It is also possible that opposition expressed by male colleagues more generally would be detrimental to caucus attempts. Evidence of this pressure would be conversations between women and party leaders in which they were instructed not to participate in bipartisan meetings with other women, memos written to the same effect, or more subtle conversations regarding party loyalty in which women legislators felt discouraged from acting in a bipartisan manner. This pressure would then cause women legislators to cease participation, and caucus organizers would report this as a detriment to caucus development. I will also examine interview data for evidence of more general male backlash and women's desire to conform to male expectations of behavior negatively affecting caucus attempts.

In the next section, I will compare the four caucus attempts to each other, looking for commonalities among variables on key indicators related to political opportunities, resources, and frames. First, I present a brief narrative for each case (a lengthier discussion will appear in the following chapters) and explain their status as either a successful or failed caucus attempt. A discussion will follow synthesizing my findings.

### Preliminary Analysis of Case Studies

The women of the New Jersey legislature founded their women's caucus in February of 2009. Women in both parties from both houses informally selected who would represent them as co-chairs of the caucus. Following the selection of leadership, the caucus met several times over the next year to identify the issues important to the group and how they would address them during the legislative session. Because of the consistency of meetings over the course of one year following the initiation of a caucus, this case is considered a success for my analysis.

Colorado women legislators founded their women's caucus in 2009 as well. Women in both parties from both houses informally selected who would represent them as co-chairs of the caucus. Following the selection of leadership, the caucus met several times over the next year to plan and execute a series of events, some recognizing women's history in the legislature and others purely social in nature for the legislators presently serving. Because of the consistency of meetings over the course of one year following the initiation of a caucus, this case is considered a success for my analysis.

The women of the Pennsylvania legislature attempted their women's caucus in 2009. A Democratic legislator and Republican legislator invited women of both parties in the House to join a bipartisan caucus. Women in both parties attended an initial meeting regarding energy policy. No subsequent meetings were attended by a bipartisan group. Because of the lack of consistency of meetings over the course of one year following the initiation of a caucus, this case is considered a failure for my analysis.

In my last case, Iowa, the Lieutenant Governor and staff from the Commission on the Status of Women attempted to create a women's caucus in 2007. All women

legislators were invited to a social gathering at the Governor's Mansion to discuss launching a bipartisan group. Democratic and Republican legislators attended. No subsequent meetings were ever held. Because of the lack of consistency of meetings over the course of one year following the initiation of a caucus, this case is considered a failure.

I have grouped my findings by type of hypothesis: political opportunities, resources, or frames. Because of the large number of political opportunity variables, I have two tables presenting these results, grouping those concerned with legislative demographics in Table 10.1 and those concerned with political party in Table 10.2.

Tables 10.1 and 10.2 about here

Table 10.1 displays the data concerning political opportunities related to the demographics of the legislature: percentage of women in the legislature, proportion women in the Republican Party, proportion of women legislators who are freshmen, whether or not the state had other caucuses established at the time of the attempt, whether or not the state had a black caucus established at the time of the attempt, the proportion of women of color, and the total number of seats in the legislature. Table 10.2 displays the data concerning political opportunities related to political party: party control of the legislature, party polarization, and party competition. The variables have been quantified as explained previously.

The first variable of interest, the proportion of women within the legislature, shows that in states with successful attempts, women held a higher proportion of seats than in states with failed attempts. Colorado and New Jersey had proportions of 37% and 30% respectively. The failed cases, Pennsylvania and Iowa, both had proportions under

30% at 15% and 23% respectively. I hypothesized that states with proportions in the middle of the spectrum would be the most likely to have successful attempts. Here, the data indicate that an attempt is more likely to succeed if the proportion of women is high. More discussion of this variable will be included within the chapters that follow to determine if women legislators felt that their numbers within the chamber mattered for the success of their attempt.

I also predicted that in states where Republican women make up a larger proportion of their party, women's caucus attempts were more likely to be successful. This is because the pressure to conform would be more when women were a smaller minority of the party. The results show that while the two successful cases, New Jersey and Colorado, show that Republican women comprise a larger proportion of Republicans, it is not by much and only in the lower house. Twenty eight percent of the Republican Party in New Jersey's State Assembly was women in 2009. Twenty-two percent of the Republican Party in Colorado's State House of Representatives was women in 2009. Pennsylvania's Republican women made up 16% of the party and in Iowa 20%. The difference is small here between the successful states and the failed cases, although perhaps over 20% is a sort of threshold at which Republican women are able to assert themselves through bipartisan caucusing.

I specifically expected women's caucus attempts to be unsuccessful when the freshman proportion of women legislators reaches 30%. As the results in Table 10.1 show, successful attempts took place in the two states in which freshman legislators held the largest proportions. In New Jersey and Colorado, new women legislators were 47%

and 51% of all women legislators respectively. Much smaller proportions of women state legislators in Pennsylvania (11%) and Iowa (24%) were freshman.

Although Beckwith (2007) suggested that the pressure on newly elected women to conform to masculine norms rather than differentiate themselves by gender would negatively affect a caucus attempt in these cases, those states with the largest proportions of freshman women legislators are the ones with successful women's caucus attempts. New Jersey (47%) and Colorado (51%) had the largest proportion of freshmen women serving while Iowa (24%) and Pennsylvania (11%) had the smallest. New blood seems to be a positive political opportunity for the creation of women's caucuses when considering this evidence.

I expected that attempts that took place in states which had other caucuses already established at the time would be more likely to succeed. I expected that if other caucuses were established, alternative organizations would be somewhat normalized. All attempts occurred in states where other caucuses previously existed, demonstrating no correlation between attempt success or failure and the previous existence of other caucuses. Black caucuses existed in New Jersey and Pennsylvania at the time of the women's caucus attempt, but not in Colorado or Iowa. Therefore, I observe no relationship between the existence of a black caucus in a state to the success of a women's caucus attempt. I will consider in the following chapters whether the existence of other caucuses affected women's attempts according to their own interpretations of events.

Another demographic political opportunity I considered was the racial diversity among women legislators. I predicted that states with larger proportions of women legislators of color would be more likely to have successful attempts. Table 10.1

indicates that there is no relationship between the proportion of women legislators who are of color and a caucus attempt. New Jersey with the largest proportion of women of color (39%) and Colorado with the lowest proportion of women of color (8%) were both successful in creating women's caucuses. Pennsylvania at 16% women of color and Iowa at 9% were both unsuccessful in their attempts.

Finally, among demographic variables considered to be political opportunities for women's caucuses, I hypothesized that smaller legislatures would likely be related to women's caucus attempt success. The evidence presented here shows support for this hypothesis. New Jersey (120) and Colorado (100) had the least number of seats among my four cases, and Iowa (150) and Pennsylvania (253) had the largest.

When considering the political opportunities political parties present or limit, I tested Democratic Party control, party polarization, and party competition for relationships with women's caucus attempt successes or failures. The data presented in Table 10.2 indicate that all attempts occurred in states with Democratic control of both houses of the legislature. The only exception is in Pennsylvania. In 2009, during the caucus attempt in this state, Republicans held the majority in the Senate by 10 seats. It is interesting to note that the attempt did not include women senators. They were not the entrepreneurs of the caucus attempt in Pennsylvania, nor were they invited to participate in the attempt made in the House. This is very unusual for a caucus attempt, as all the others here, and those for which we have a historical account, typically involve women in both houses. This is especially the case, when women legislators hold so few seats because caucus organizers are usually looking for as many participants as possible. Regardless, I do not find a relationship between Democratic Control and women's caucus

attempt success because both successful and failed cases had Democratically-controlled houses. All four states also had Democratic governors at the time of the caucus attempt.

Considering state legislative polarization, I use the measure by Shor and McCarty (2010). Each state has a score on a scale of -2 to 2 indicating how far apart Democrats and Republicans are ideologically in a particular state. This data is a compilation from the last 15 years so while it is not specific to the attempt year; it does give an indication of where parties in each state are ideologically. This score for each case is noted in Table 10.2. I expected polarization to negatively impact women's ability to organize a caucus. Both the successful attempts, Colorado (1.8) and New Jersey (.8), are the furthest away from each other on the scale, while the two failed attempts, Pennsylvania (1.0) and Iowa (1.4), rank between them on the Shor and McCarty scale. There appears to be no correlation between party polarization and the success or failure of a caucus attempt, at least by these measures.

Another attempt to understand political party influence on the success or failure of a caucus attempt is to consider party competition within these legislatures. I measure this by the proportion of seats held by Democrats in each of the state houses during the year of the caucus attempt and expected that in states with high competition, caucus attempts would be less likely to succeed. These percentages can be found in Table 10.2. Both of the successful cases have the widest margins in state houses while both the failed cases have the smallest margins. Pennsylvania is very competitive with a Democratic majority of only 2.5% and Iowa shows a difference of 8%. While my expectation for this variable was confirmed, a further discussion of party influence will be included in the qualitative

chapters which follow to determine how much of a role each of these party variables played in women's attempts.

Table 11 presents the data concerning the resource variables that can be quantified.<sup>21</sup> These include: professionalism (Squire 2007), staff size, and whether or not the state had term limits at the time of the caucus attempt. The variables have been quantified as explained previously. The first resource, professionalism, was hypothesized to have a positive effect on a women's caucus attempt. Professionalism was expected to confer tangible resources which would help a caucus establish itself successfully. Considering the four cases and their national rankings, it appears that there is no relationship between this variable and the success or failure of an attempt. The successful cases, New Jersey (11<sup>th</sup>) and Colorado (15<sup>th</sup>) are ranked between the two failed cases, Pennsylvania (6<sup>th</sup>) and Iowa (22<sup>nd</sup>). Perhaps professionalism has a curvilinear relationship to caucus attempt outcome. More can be learned about this variable in the following chapters.

#### Table 11 about here

I also considered professionalism of the legislature to positively affect women's caucus attempts because of the additional staff which would be available to organize and support such efforts. Table 11 displays the staff sizes for each of the state legislatures. This variable seems to have no relationship to whether a women's caucus attempt was successful or not. Pennsylvania and New Jersey have the largest staffs and are split as a failed and successful case. Iowa and Colorado have the smallest staffs and are split as a failed and successful case.

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<sup>21</sup> Not all resource and framing variables can be measured quantitatively. Those which can only be evaluated using interview data are not included here but in the following chapters.

Term limits were expected to be negatively correlated with caucus attempts because with limited time in office, women legislators would have less expertise and less time to focus on the creation of a caucus. None of the cases, except Colorado, had term limits in effect at the time of caucus attempt. Clearly, it did not negatively affect the women in the Colorado legislature as they are still successfully participating in the caucus they created in 2009 and could not have negatively affected those women in Pennsylvania and Iowa where attempts failed.

Finally, Table 12 includes the data concerning frames which could be measured quantitatively. The first concerned the percentage of legislative leadership positions held by women. All of the cases had women's caucus attempts during a period in which women held 25% of leadership positions except Pennsylvania. At the time of their attempt, women held no leadership positions at all in the legislature. Because both successful attempts had the same percentage of women in leadership as Iowa, a failed case, it appears there is no obvious correlation here between the proportion of women leaders and whether or not a women's caucus attempt was successful. Of course, this frame can be further investigated in the interview data to determine if it was a consideration among any of the women within these cases.

#### Table 12 about here

Secondly, I find that the type of caucus proposed does not seem to affect whether or not the attempt is successful. Although I had predicted that Informational/Social Caucuses would be more likely to succeed, New Jersey women's caucus creators advocated for a Legislative Agenda type caucus and were successful in launching one that ended up being Position Taking. Colorado successfully launched an

Informational/Social Caucus, while Pennsylvania was not able to create a Legislative Agenda Caucus. The women in Iowa did not predetermine what type of caucus they would try to create. The original organizers left it up to the women they were recruiting to determine how the caucus would take shape. This attempt failed, but it is unclear if that is a result of leaving the purposes undefined. I will discuss this in further detail in Chapter 8.

The hypotheses that find support in this data analysis are party competition, the proportion women in the Republican Party, and the size of the legislature. I expected party competition to result in failed attempts. As tested here, there is a correlation between higher party competition and the two failed attempts. Also, all attempts within my five-year time span were made in state houses under Democratic control, and all states with attempts had Democratic governors. This indicates that Democratic Party control may influence where attempts to create women's caucuses are made but does not appear to influence their success or failure. There is also some support for my hypothesis that states in which women make up a smaller proportion of the Republican Party will be less likely to have successful attempts. The results show that while in the two successful cases Republican women comprise a larger proportion of the party, it is not by much and only in the lower house. Perhaps, however, these findings suggest that 20% of the Republican Party is a sort of threshold at which women are able to assert themselves through bipartisan caucusing.

There is also a correlation between the successful attempts and smaller legislatures with Colorado and New Jersey having smaller chambers than Pennsylvania and Iowa. There are no clear correlations between my expectations and the findings for

the following variables: polarization, Democratic Party control, professionalism, staff size, term limits, percentage of women holding leadership positions within the legislature, proportion of women of color, type of caucus attempted, or other caucuses or black caucus presence.

Unexpectedly, in the successful cases, New Jersey and Colorado, the proportion of women within the legislature is high. This is counter to my own expectation which predicted a curvilinear relationship between a caucus attempt and the proportion of legislative seats held by women. Similarly, I had expected states with a higher proportion of freshman women legislators would be correlated with failed cases but found that states with large proportions of newly elected women were the same states to successfully launch a women's caucus.

### Limitations

This analysis has limitations unique to case studies. As had been said by George and Bennet (2005, 25) [emphasis theirs], “[C]ase studies remain much stronger at assessing *whether* and *how* a variable mattered to the outcome than at assessing how much it mattered.” In my case, I estimate from the testimony of my subjects which variables appeared most important to the outcome. This could be flawed for many reasons including that my subjects are politicians. There may be political reasons for emphasizing the importance or irrelevance of particular factors. As I mentioned within the case chapters, it is difficult to appreciate how influential male opposition to caucusing is, as one would expect women to downplay any pressure they have received from others. Also, relationships among women may have been reported in a more positive light than

actually exists because of the nature of legislatures, in which members are expected to work together to develop solutions to problems.

In addition to these, there are also limitations associated with any design that includes voluntary participation. Within each state, I asked to interview all the women legislators currently serving and any subjects that were identified as organizers or staffers of the caucus that may have not been legislators themselves. I also requested interviews with legislative leaders serving during the year of the attempt. Among legislators, I have less participation by Republican women, again which may shade my findings. I also did not have strong or even participation among legislative leaders. In New Jersey, I was able to interview a former House Speaker and a sitting Senate Minority Leader, offering insight from both Democratic and Republican leaders as well as a balanced male perspective. In Colorado, however, I only interviewed two Democratic male leaders who were serving during the caucus emergence. No Republicans or women leaders opted to participate in my interviews. In Pennsylvania, only one male Democratic leader was available for interview, and he served in the Senate where women were not recruited to participate in the caucus attempt. I learned this only after my interview. In Iowa, no legislative leadership participated in my interviews.

I do not know if my low participation rate among leaders is connected to whether a caucus attempt was successful or not. Obviously, there are challenges in studying a failed case. In Pennsylvania and Iowa, interviews were more difficult to conduct. Women were not as clear about dates or explanations for why what happened in their states happened. Also, frustrating in my case studies was that women from different parties had suspicions about each other that could not be confirmed. Namely, women of different

parties, most usually Democrats, suspected the opposite party leaders of discouraging the formation of a caucus. This was never confirmed by women from the opposite party. It is impossible for me to know if these claims are correct or if, in fact, women in opposite parties just assume the worst about opposition party leadership, even when it isn't warranted. Because this is a fairly important variable—party leader opposition—this is a severe limitation of the study. This lack of participation, however, may imply that opposition really does exist among party leaders and they are disinclined to participate in a study featuring women's caucuses. Likewise, some Republican women legislators in the 50 state analysis were perturbed by being asked questions about gender at all. This could indicate that their political ideology makes them less inclined to participate in a study which makes women's gendered identity primary.

Finally, I am only considering attempts during the years between 2006 and 2010. I am unable to make broad generalizations about attempts that may occur outside of the particular conditions affecting these cases. For example, as I have discussed, these attempts occurred during a period of increasing party polarization. I consider only four cases, a relatively small number, which may not exhaust the possible variables affecting women's ability to caucus.

Despite these limitations, my project still makes important strides in understanding how women negotiate gendered legislative environments. I am able to explain how gender works in different contexts and the conditions more or less favorable to women's abilities to organize gendered groups in state legislatures. In particular, I believe that the evidence of caucus entrepreneurs' motivation to create a women's caucus are particularly reliable. Because the purpose of women's caucuses will play such an

important role in the evaluation of their impact, my reporting here of women's purposes in organizing is an important contribution. Likewise, legislators throughout the case study chapters discuss how their role outside the legislature in their own families complicates their role within the legislature. This demonstrates the gendered nature of the legislature and corroborates many other studies of women legislators.

### Conclusion

With the goal of appreciating which opportunities, resources, and frames encourage or constrain women's attempts to organize women's caucuses, this chapter has laid out my expectations based on traditional legislative research and scholarly work concerning the impact gender has on the legislative environment. Within this chapter, I presented my own hypotheses and the measures and methods I use to test the validity of those hypotheses. Finally, I presented a preliminary analysis of the factors that may be associated with caucus success or failure.

I found preliminary support for three of my hypotheses. As expected, states with higher party competition and larger legislative chambers were those where caucus attempts failed. I expected this would be the case because states with higher party competition may deter women from forming bipartisan groups because of strong party discipline required by party leaders in such environments. I also expected larger chambers to be less likely to see successful attempts because of the difficulty in forming personal relationships among women legislators as opposed to smaller chambers where legislators are better able to get to know one another. Likewise, states, in which women make up larger proportion of the Republican Party, have successful attempts. There were no clear connections between any of my other variables and attempt success or failure.

This may indicate a lack of correlation or that these factors need to be explained in context by the actors initiating a caucus attempt.

Counter to my hypothesis predicting a curvilinear relationship between the proportion of women in legislature and the success of a women's caucus attempt, both successful attempts took place in states with high proportions of women in office. Although the 50 state data indicated no correlation between the proportion of women in office and caucus existence, this variable may be important for the launching of such a group. Both successful attempts also occurred in states where Republican women were a larger proportion of their party in the lower house, although there is not a large difference between the proportion in Colorado and the proportion in Iowa where the caucus attempt failed. I also found that states with a larger proportion of freshman women legislators also had women's caucus attempts that were successful. Finally, all attempts took place in Democratically-controlled states.<sup>22</sup> Again, although there is not a correlation between party control and the existence of women's caucuses or the success of a caucus attempt, it may help to explain women's decision to make an attempt. This will be discussed further in the following chapters.

These initial relationships, however interesting, are not completely satisfying because of the small number of cases and the lack of context for these variables. In the next chapters, I will examine each case in more detail.

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<sup>22</sup> The Pennsylvania Senate was controlled by Republicans during the women's attempt in this state; however, Senators were not included or involved in the launch. As discussed in a following chapter, party control of this chamber is not indicated by caucus entrepreneurs as important as a deterrent to caucus formation or as an explanation for why female Senators were not recruited to participate in the attempted caucus.

Table 9. Interview Subject Demographics

<b>State</b>	<b># of Interview Subjects</b>	<b>Party Proportion</b>	<b># of Staff</b>	<b># of Legislative Leaders</b>
New Jersey	12	6 Republican 5 Democrats	1	6 (2 male, 4 female)
Colorado	13	2 Republicans 10 Democrats	1	2 (male)
Pennsylvania	10	5 Republicans 5 Democrats	0	1 (male)
Iowa	7	1 Republican 5 Democrats	1	1 (female)

### State Data

To evaluate my hypotheses, the following data describes the variable values for each case study state. The data included for each state below is the information for the year of the attempt as indicated in Column One. Column Two indicates whether the attempt was successful or not. The tables are separated by type of indicator: political opportunity (legislative demographic or political party), resource, or frame. For ease of comprehension, the political opportunity variables are displayed in two tables. The first groups political opportunities which are concerned with the demographic makeup of the legislature including any organizations. The second table groups political opportunities that concern political party. Further analysis of these variables follows in detail in the following chapters.

Table 10.1 Political Opportunities – Legislative Demographic Influence

<b>State</b>	<b>Attempt Outcome</b>	<b>% Women in Legislature</b>	<b>Proportion Women in the Republican Party</b>	<b>% Freshman of All Women Legislators</b>	<b>Other Caucuses</b>	<b>Black Caucuses</b>	<b>% Women Legislators of Color</b>	<b>Total Legislative Seats</b>
New Jersey (2009)	Success	30% (36/120)	H: 9/32 (28%) S: 2/17 (12%)	47%	Y	Y	39% (14/36)	120
Colorado (2009)	Success	37% (37/100)	H: 6/27 (22%) S: 1/14 (7%)	51%	Y	N	8% (3/37)	100
Pennsylvania (2009)	Failure	14.6% (37/253)	H: 16/99 (16%) S: 6/29 (21%)	11%	Y	Y	19% (7/37)	253
Iowa (2007)	Failure	22.7% (34/150)	H: 9/45 (20%) S: 3/20 (15%)	24%	Y	N	9% (3/34)	150

Sources: CAWP, NCSL, Clark (2010), and my own research.

Table 10.2 Political Opportunities – Political Party Influence

<b>State</b>	<b>Attempt Outcome</b>	<b>Party Control</b>	<b>Polarization</b>	<b>Party Competition*</b> <b>[House Margin]</b>
New Jersey (2009)	Success	H: D S: D	0.8	H: 60% [20%] S: 58%
Colorado (2009)	Success	H: D S: D	1.8	H: 59% [16.9%] S: 60%
Pennsylvania (2009)	Failure	H: D S: R	1.0	H: 51% [2%] S: 42%
Iowa (2007)	Failure	H: D S: D	1.4	H: 54% [8.0%] S: 60%

Source: Shor and McCarty (2010), NCSL, *Book of the States*, and my own research.

\*Party Competition is the share of seats held by Democrats.

Table 11 Resources

<b>State</b>	<b>Attempt Outcome</b>	<b>Professionalism (National Ranking)</b>	<b>Staff Size (Permanent/Session)</b>	<b>Term Limits</b>
New Jersey (2009)	Success	13	940/988	N
Colorado (2009)	Success	15	230/345	Y
Pennsylvania (2009)	Failure	6	2918/2919	N
Iowa (2007)	Failure	22	191/370*	N

Sources: Squire 2007, NCSL, and my own research.

\*The staff size data for Iowa is from 2003. This data was included to demonstrate the known staff sizes for the caucus attempt year although this may underestimate staff size. Information on staff size was not available for 2007.

Table 12 Frames

<b>State</b>	<b>Attempt Outcome</b>	<b>% Women Leaders in Legislature</b>	<b>Type of Caucus Attempted</b>
New Jersey (2009)	Success	25% (2/8)	Legislative Agenda*
Colorado (2009)	Success	25% (2/8)	Informational/Social
Pennsylvania (2009)	Failure	0% (0/6)	Legislative Agenda
Iowa (2007)	Failure	25% (2/8)	Undefined

Source: Center for American Women and Politics and my own research.

\*New Jersey's women's caucus actually manifested as a Position Taking caucus, but it was framed at the time of creation by founders as one which would have a legislative agenda.

## Chapter 5: The New Jersey Women's Legislative Caucus

This chapter is an in-depth look at the attempt to create a women's caucus in the New Jersey state legislature in 2009. I will begin by presenting a brief background of the state's political conditions and the status of women within the state legislature. I will then describe the specific data collection for this case, following with a narrative describing the caucus attempt which took place in February of 2009. Finally, I will analyze the evidence from interviews, participant observation, and press coverage to test the hypotheses I laid out in the previous chapter. I will end this chapter by discussing the implications of this case.

### State Background

New Jersey is a Mid-Atlantic state with a total 2010 population of 8,791,894 people. The state was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> nationally for the size of the population but is the most densely populated state in the union (Wu 2011, 1). An important population factor for New Jersey is its suburbanization since World War II, which has significantly impacted where people live, transportation, the location of economic centers, municipal government, and land use (Connors and Dunham 1993).

New Jersey's economy like much of the nation in recent history has transformed from manufacturing- to service-oriented. The plurality of New Jerseyans are employed in educational services, health care, and social assistance (23.4%), professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (12.3%), or retail trade (10%) (American Community Survey 2006-2010). The median family income in New Jersey is the third highest in the nation and was \$65,173 compared to \$51,914 nationally in 2010 (U.S. Census 2008-2010). New Jersey also has a lower poverty rate

than the national average at 9.1% (U.S. Census 2012). New Jersey's rates of high school graduation (30%) and bachelor degree attainment (22%) are higher than national averages (U.S. Census 2006-2010).

Elazar (1984) characterizes New Jersey as a state with an individualistic political culture. This culture is noted for the "centrality of private concerns" and "places a premium on limiting community intervention" (115). He describes states like New Jersey as places where "politics is a business like any other" but where relationships are primary (116). These relationships are largely expressed through political party ties. Political corruption is expected and "their willingness to expand the functions of government is based on an extension of the quid pro quo favor system...with new services the reward they give the public for placing them in office" (116). In a more recent analysis of political culture, Lieske (2010) characterizes New Jersey as a majority global state political culture and the most individualistic among all states within that subculture group. A global culture is characterized as "a diverse polyglot of ethnic groups that are concentrated in the largest and most urbanized metropolitan areas" (541-2), and these regions "afford their residents the highest mean levels of education and income" (544). It is also partially a Germanic subculture because many of its residents have ties to Germanic ancestry and religions. This type of subculture is characterized by "relatively large numbers of working females and relatively low levels of income inequality" (542).

New Jersey's location between New York City and Philadelphia has influenced its economics and politics. Connors and Dunham (1993, 19) call it an inferiority complex, especially politically (19). Media coverage of New Jersey and its politics are unique in that they are covered largely by out of state media outlets and rarely at that. Because of

New Jersey's unique status as the most densely populated state in the nation, this has made land use a high political priority. Finally, Connors and Dunham (1993) also note the importance of suburbanization potentially shifting political power from large urban centers to the suburbs.

Historically, New Jersey has had a powerful executive branch with a less powerful legislature (Salmore and Salmore 2008). Salmore and Salmore note, however, that legislators themselves have become more experienced and interested in policy. Legislative leadership has over time increased independent campaign resources, giving them political independence from the power of the governor (Salmore and Salmore 2008, 186). Salmore and Salmore (2008) credit increasing professionalization and the staff that came with it as giving legislators the policy information they needed to challenge powerful governors (186). As the New Jersey legislature increased in institutionalization in the 1980s and 1990s and legislators increased their knowledge and time in office, political consequences were apparent. Political corruption flourished, as explained by Salmore and Salmore (2008): “The majorities of moderates in both parties struck deals to pass important legislation that would redound to everyone’s electoral benefit. Lawmakers implicitly agreed to turn a blind eye to practices that served their careers, such as dual office holding and ‘Christmas tree’ budgetary items for their districts” (187). Eventually, this corruption became unacceptable to the public, and many legislators left office as a result of investigations into their activities. Another important factor was a change in the Republican Party which mirrors the national party as well. Salmore and Salmore explain, “Some of the most senior members faced senior primary challenges from those in the

emergent right wing of their own party...they preferred ideological purity and sharp elbows to negotiation" (Salmore and Salmore 187).

The party history of New Jersey is important for its impact on women in politics in the state. As Connors and Dunham (1993) note, parties are responsible for candidate recruitment, organization of the legislature, and setting the political agenda. The influence of the two party system is characterized by Connors and Dunham (1993, 91-92) in this way: "New Jersey has traditionally been a strong two-party state... [They] have long been the bone and sinew of our political system, active and competitive in their drives for voter allegiance and government power. "The power of these parties is concentrated at the county level (99). Both Carroll and Dittmar (2012) and McCormick and McCormick (1994) note that women were excluded or ignored by powerful county committee chairs who largely determined the candidates and leadership positions for the legislature.

Carroll and Dittmar (2012, 2) describe New Jersey's record on electing women as "mediocre at best." In their analysis of why a surge occurred in New Jersey between 2004 and 2011, they indicate that women's preparedness to take advantage of unique political opportunities explains why this time period saw a doubling of the number of women in the state legislature. They also document a male-dominated political history accounting for New Jersey's low numbers until this recent surge. This history includes a strong county party system created by electoral rules favoring county organization of politics (Carroll and Dittmar 2012). Party leaders as gatekeepers did little to recruit women to run for office, and any women elected to the legislature were self-starters (McCormick and McCormick 1994). The surge after 2004 is attributed to the work of women's

organizations drawing attention to the lack of women's representation, training and recruiting women to run, an unusual amount of open seats, and the work of critical actors directly advocating for more women candidates (Carroll and Dittmar 2012). The effect of this surge (which moved New Jersey from 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for proportion of women in the legislature to 12<sup>th</sup>) on the creation of the women's caucus in New Jersey is discussed below.

In 2009, when the women's caucus was created, both houses of the New Jersey legislature were controlled by the Democratic Party, and a Democratic governor was in office. A Republican governor was elected in November 2009 and had an impact on the caucus as will be presented in the next chapter. The Assembly partisan ratio was 48 Democrats to 32 Republicans, and the Senate was 23 Democrats to 17 Republicans (NCSL 2009). New Jersey ranked 11th out of the 50 states according to Squire's (2007) professionalization scale which is calculated by member pay, ratio of staff to legislators, and total days in session.

New Jersey ranked 12th in the country according to gender proportions with women making up 30% of the legislature. Eight women were serving in the state senate and 28 in the state assembly (Women in State Legislatures 2009). There were 19 Democratic women serving in the Assembly and six serving in the Senate. There were nine Republican women serving in the Assembly and two serving in the Senate. The state ranked 24<sup>th</sup> in the nation as to the proportion of women serving in legislative leadership positions with 25% held by women (2/8 positions). Senator Shirley Turner (D) was Senate President Pro Tempore, and Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman (D) was

serving as House Majority Leader. New Jersey ranked 20<sup>th</sup> in the nation at 22% for their proportion of women serving as committee chairs (8/36 chairmanships).

### Data Collection

The following analysis is the result of personal and telephone semi-structured interviews with New Jersey legislators and staff between February and August 2010 as well as press coverage. All 36 women legislators serving in 2009 were sent recruitment emails requesting their participation in the study. Of the legislators contacted, I interviewed 9 (25%). These 9 included all four co-chairs of the caucus and five participants. Four of the women interviewed were Democrats and five were Republican.

I also interviewed the volunteer staffer for the women's caucus. Six legislative leaders were contacted to participate. I interviewed one male Republican leader who was serving both in 2009 at the time of the women's caucus attempt and in 2010 at the time of his interview. The second legislative leader interview was with a male Democratic leader who was no longer in office during the time of his interview. These two interviews represent 33% of those contacted to participate. One woman and five men were in legislative leadership in 2009.

From November 2011 to January 2012, I conducted follow-up interviews with the co-chairs and the volunteer staffer, allowing me to incorporate current information about the status of the caucus. The demographic details on my interview subjects can be found in Table 13.

Table 13 about here

### Caucus Narrative

The Women's Legislative Caucus of New Jersey was officially created on February 26, 2009, when it formally selected its leadership. The four co-chairs of the caucus selected were: Senator Diane Allen (R), Senator Loretta Weinberg (D), Assemblywoman Amy Handlin (R), and Assemblywoman Grace Spencer (D). Previous to this formal establishment, women in both houses had met informally to get to know one another and discuss the possibility of a more formal association. The Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University hosted some of these informal meetings at the request of the women legislators.

There was some precedent for organizing among women in New Jersey prior to this new influx of women into the legislature. In the early 1990s, the women serving, including then Assemblywoman Weinberg (D) and Senator Allen (R), had what they describe as an informal caucus. This consisted of social networking and collaboration and consultation on bills sponsored by women across party lines and in both houses of the legislature. None of the women discussed consensus on legislation as a part of this initial organization. It was more an opportunity for women across party lines to run things past one another before going public to the legislature at large.

The caucus leadership was chosen informally by the members themselves. It was decided by consensus that there should be women from each house and each party included. The party caucuses in both houses then decided which woman would represent them as co-chair. On the Republican side in the Senate, the obvious choice was Senator Allen (R) because of her seniority. The only other Republican woman, Senator Jennifer Beck (R), felt it was the appropriate choice. In the Assembly, Assemblywoman Handlin

(R) expressed an early interest in the position and was not opposed by her colleagues, who informally selected her for the position. For the Democrats, Senator Weinberg (D) again was the obvious choice as she was an early organizer of the group. She was informally selected by her caucus as well. Assemblywoman Grace Spencer (D) was similarly informally selected by her caucus in the Assembly. Her youth was noted as an asset by members, and she is the only woman of color represented in the leadership.

A forum at the Center for American Women and Politics was held to honor retiring legislative staffer Kathy Crotty on September 30, 2009. The substance of the forum focused on women legislators' contributions to the state. The need for a women's caucus and the story of its creation were discussed at this event. The first official event hosted by the women's caucus was a reception on April 29, 2010, which brought together women serving in the legislative and executive branches. Finally, a legislative hearing on women's health at the state house was held on June 7, 2010 by women of the caucus. At this meeting, experts on health care in the state of New Jersey testified as to how all citizens, but women specifically, could be better served by legislative initiatives to reform the current health care system.

The first legislative priority for the New Jersey Women's Legislative Caucus was the Party Democracy Act, which was signed into law on October 2, 2009. This bill was ethics reform legislation that on its surface was not a traditional "women's issue." The bill

requires adoption of constitutions and by-laws by county political party committees; requires certain information concerning committee members to be filed with county clerk; eliminates fixed terms for committee members and chairs. (New Jersey State Legislature, Party Democracy Act)

Many women including Kathy Crotty and Assemblywoman Handlin (R) noted that early successes would be important for the women moving forward. It would determine the level of enthusiasm of current participants and help to recruit less active members to more involved roles. The early consensus on the Party Democracy Act legislation was an instigator for the leaders:

Well, I think when Loretta and I got together to do the Party Democracy Act, it showed that women could get together across the aisle, and we had people, women from both houses, and I would say that probably, is what gave us the energy to think that this might be the time. (Allen 2010)

The women legislators did not initiate this legislation but rallied around it early in the legislative process. It was an issue they all agreed was important because of their experience in political parties across the state. Many women legislators felt that their participation in elective office was discouraged by party leaders and this exclusion united women on both sides of the aisle in supporting legislation which would make the process of nomination more transparent. This bill passage was successful. More about the caucus' experience with this legislation and problems with party organizations follow in the next section.

All of the women noted that education and health care were likely issues to be addressed by the caucus, and the enthusiasm created by the success of the Party Democracy Act continued in a bipartisan hearing held on June 7, 2010, concerning access to medical care for New Jersey women. Sixteen women from both parties and both houses heard testimony for more than three hours from physicians, medical school administrators, and midwives about the availability of quality health care for women.

Following the Party Democracy Act, the next piece of legislation which drew the attention of the caucus was the funding of family planning clinics which service low

income citizens by providing primary medical care. This was a natural next step for the women's caucus because of their collective interest in women's health care. The first test of the unity of the caucus would be the Family Planning Grant bill sponsored by Senators Loretta Weinberg (D) and Joseph Vitale (D), Assemblywomen Linda Stender (D), Celeste Riley (D), Valerie Huttle (D), Linda Greenstein (D) and Pamela Lampitt (D) as well as Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D). The bill would appropriate funds to family planning centers for preventative health care for citizens in the community.

In total, 18 women sponsored or co-sponsored the bill. All were Democrats. In the initial vote for passage in the Senate, the two Republican senators, Allen and Beck, voted yes for the bill. In a later round of voting, Senator Allen rescinded her support of the bill. Democratic women legislators attribute this lack of support to pressure from the newly elected Republican governor which the Republican legislators deny.

Following the failure of S-2139, no further bipartisan meetings or hearings were held. Democratic women legislators expressed disappointment that the women were not able to vote together in support of a bill they felt was an obvious policy position for the caucus. In contrast, Senator Allen (R) denied that her withdrawal of support for this bill reflected in any way an abdication of her support of women's health. She saw this as a fiscal responsibility issue and argued had the money been available in the budget she would have had no problem supporting it.

In follow-up interviews, some Democratic and Republican women are hopeful that this disagreement will not prevent the group from working together in the next legislative session. A more detailed discussion of the future of the caucus can be found in the epilogue of this chapter.

## Analysis

I will now examine the hypotheses laid out in the last chapter using information from my interviews with legislators and staff, press coverage of the caucus and women legislators more generally, and my participant observation of caucus meetings and hearings.

## Opportunities

### *Proportion Women in the Legislature and Republican Party.*

The first political opportunity I expected to positively affect women legislators' ability to caucus is the presence of women in the legislature. I expected that a moderate proportion of women would likely result in an organizing success because there would be enough women to participate but not so many that a caucus may be deemed unnecessary. Previous to the attempt to create a women's caucus in 2009, women in the New Jersey legislature had participated in informal groups. Attempts at making this arrangement more formal occurred, but lack of numbers was cited as one reason for failure. This was particularly true in the Senate where there were only recently enough women on both sides of the aisle to make a caucus reasonable according to interviewees.

Twenty eight percent of the Republican Party in New Jersey's State Assembly was women in 2009. Of the four cases, this is the largest proportion of Republican women. I predicted that Republican women who comprise a smaller percentage of the total Republican Party in a state may feel more pressure to conform to legislative norms and less likely to join a bipartisan group. In this case, a larger proportion of Republican women is correlated with a successful caucus attempt. Women in the interviews did not mention their numbers within the Republican Party as a factor in their decision to

participate in the caucus or not, but a further discussion of Republican women's pressure to side with party over gender follows in the epilogue of this chapter.

*Proportion of Freshman Women Legislators.*

New Jersey saw a surge in women elected to the legislature between 2004 and 2010. In 2007, in particular, a large number of women were elected to the legislature, dramatically increasing the number from 26 to 35. This change took them from 27th in the nation to 14th. All interviewees cited this increase as the reason for the emergence of a women's caucus at this particular time in history. Two women remember Senator Shirley Turner's (D) role in reviving an attempt to create a women's caucus:

This time when we finally got together, I believe it was Shirley who took the initiative... to again say, "Let's try it again." And we all said, "Yeah, let's try it again." And then we came together, and it was a large group of women that came together, whereas other times, the large group wasn't there because women weren't elected in force, but this seemed to be a more activist group. Perhaps many new members, younger members... (Allen 2010)

This quote points to the importance of not only a threshold of women, but women who are willing to challenge the status quo. It appears, in this case, that the combination of senior women leaders and new women not afraid to mark themselves according to gender allowed for the possibility of a caucus to emerge.

*Democratic Party Control.*

I predicted that Democratic control of the legislature would positively affect the launch of a women's caucus. In this case, the women interviewed did not indicate that party control of the legislature was a factor in their decision to organize in February 2009. More credit was attributed to the surge of women elected to office at the time influencing the women to formalize informal ties that had existed off and on for years among women

in the legislature. As Carroll and Dittmar (2012) note, however, a majority of women elected at this time were Democratic.

Following the founding of the caucus, New Jersey elected a Republican governor which changed party control of the executive branch. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Democratic women legislators do acknowledge his election having an effect on the relationship between themselves and their Republican women counterparts. Credit is not given to the sitting Democratic governor in 2009, however, for influencing the founding of the caucus either positively or negatively.

#### *Party Competition.*

I predicted that party competition would negatively impact an attempt at creating a women's caucus. I hypothesized that high party competition within a legislature would correlate with strong party discipline and hurt women's ability to work together across party lines. Women legislators in New Jersey did not discuss party competition specifically. Nor did they express party discipline as an initial challenge to their launch. This was supported in the previous chapter where it was explained that New Jersey does not have strong party competition in the state house. Later in this section, I will examine the role party discipline plays in the maintenance of a caucus. During the vote on the Family Planning Grant bill, Democratic women felt Republican women were pressured by their party to vote against the funding for women's health clinics. Republican women deny this charge. At least initially, party competition did not negatively affect the caucus launch as I had predicted.

*Party Polarization.*

I predicted that party polarization within a legislature would negatively affect the launch of a women's caucus by preventing women from trusting each other and finding common interests. In this case, a natural bond between women was given as the explanation for why a bipartisan caucus emerged. When asked why not within party organizing, several women noted that because of life experiences, women have interests in common which can be dealt with across party lines. They felt that women understood these issues better and that, with a consensus among women across party lines, more attention would be paid to the issues and that their collective voice would carry more weight than any individual efforts. As Assemblywoman Joan Voss (D) explains,

There was a strong sentiment that women have a reason to coalesce even across party and that they do so differently than men. And because there are so few, both Republicans and Democrats have to work together, I mean, if we're going to get anything accomplished. And, women work well together. And this is something--and I try to explain this to men all the time because they perceive that that--when we sit down and we discuss something, we listen to everybody, okay? And, so, "What do you think?" "Well, what do you think?" Now, I can tell you that when I go into a meeting, I know exactly where I want to go; however, I will listen to everybody and sometimes I'll find something that, "Oh, I didn't think of that" and I will change, not change my mind, but add to it or whatever. Men go in there and think that to discuss things is weakness, okay, and not knowing where you want to go and stuff like that. And I think it's because as mothers, for the most part, if you have a lot of children, you have to listen to everybody. (Voss 2010)

Crotty also noted that women legislate differently,

I think they (women) still recognize that they have more in common with each other...They (men) like to fight. I think the difference is, I think women are much more result oriented. They want an outcome rather than winning. I think that is one of the things that they would talk to you about. Going back to their life experiences, raising a family that is what you have to do...you have children who have differences, you have a spouse that has differences, that is one of the things you do. You facilitate consensus in your family. It comes natural to them and they don't have time to fool around with process. (Crotty 2010)

During the time of the initial founding of the caucus, most of the women agreed that generally speaking women are more bipartisan than men. It was this friendliness across party lines which enabled the caucus to emerge. Later in this section, I will examine the role partisanship plays in the maintenance of a caucus. The decision for the caucus to be policy-oriented opened the door for partisan conflict once the caucus was off the ground, although it appears partisanship in the legislature at large did not negatively affect the caucus launch as I had predicted.

*Presence of Other Caucuses.*

I predicted that the existence of other caucuses within a legislature, particularly a black caucus, would positively affect a caucus launch by normalizing alternative organizing outside of party structures. The women interviewed for this case did not indicate that the existence of other caucuses, identity or otherwise, was a factor in their decision to organize. They did not indicate that their launch was modeled on any other caucus attempts, though they admitted what they had done was in no way trailblazing. There was a culture of caucusing within the legislature with many of the women belonging to other identity and issues caucuses within the legislature. Senator Beck (R) noted that the longstanding Black and Hispanic Caucuses and some fledgling ideological caucuses, such as the Sportsman's Caucus, had set a precedent for organizing. It can be said that while the women's caucus emerged in a caucus-friendly environment, it was not an influential factor in the minds of the women.

*Racial Diversity of Women Legislators.*

Of all four case studies, New Jersey in 2009 had the largest proportion of women legislators of color. Fourteen women of color made up 39% of all women legislators in

New Jersey (CAWP). One of these women, Representative Spencer (D), serves as one of the four board members. Her inclusion was important to Senator Weinberg (D) who wanted the board to reflect the diversity of women legislators in the state (Weinberg 2010). No mention was made of diversity influencing the women's ability to caucus positively or negatively in any of my interviews. Women legislators of color were no more likely to participate in the caucus than white legislators, nor were they more enthusiastic in their support of the launch than their white counterparts. Two women legislators of color were a part of my interview sample. They were asked if their participation in the women's caucus would cause any conflict with their participation in any other identity caucuses, and they reported that they did not anticipate any such conflict. They, in fact, reported that they anticipated a consensus between the two groups on many issues.

*Size of the Legislature.*

The size of the legislature was another factor which could present the opportunity for women to caucus. Specifically, smaller legislatures are expected to breed familiarity. This familiarity may result in trust across party lines and may lead to conversations in which women legislators recognize their common interests. This was found to be the case in New Jersey. The women interviewed mentioned friendship across party lines as a consequence of proximity. The ladies' room in the Capitol came up in several interviews as a place where women spoke informally and got to know each other. Many stated that, because they are a minority in the legislature, a bond was inevitable. Senator Beck (R) cited a natural bond between women several times throughout the interview:

Well there is sort of a natural camaraderie there, I think there is a natural, because we are, while New Jersey does have a fair number of women and ranked

nationally, fairly high, in the top tier, there still aren't that many of us...I think that there is a natural camaraderie, maybe being a minority we sort of naturally have a camaraderie...I think it is important that women come together and share what is I believe a natural bond and that we do address policy issues a little bit differently. (Beck 2010)

This quote not only speaks to the familiarity between legislators, but also supports the moderate proportion of women hypothesis discussed previously. Assemblywoman Handlin (R) also notes that similar interests led to friendships and sometimes legislation:

I guess, at all kinds of events of all different sorts, we, some of us at least, would kind of just strike up conversations with each other in an informal way. And sometimes we tried to do legislation together that we had particular interests in and things like that. So one thing led to another...These are the people that I tend to socialize with and spend more time around on an informal basis...(sic) tend to be the other women. (Handlin 2010)

This ability to get to know one another was challenged by gender norms, however, because of women legislators' disproportionate responsibility for family obligations. One woman legislator explained that it was difficult to socialize and get to know her colleagues because of her role in the family:

I have three small children, okay, so literally it takes me 2 hours to drive down, 2 hours to drive back to Trenton. I don't have the ability in my life to hang out and just go have a drink or go to dinner or you know what I'm saying? That is just not my, that's not my life. But for some of the men who are at different points in their lives--and I'm not criticizing them, I'm just telling you a reality--that they have the ability to have this network of "Oh, let's go out and smoke a cigar" or "Let's go out and"--and I know this sounds sort of weird, but it's a different, they have it different. (Assemblywoman Alison Littell McHose 2010)

Because of gender roles outside the legislature influencing legislators' experience within the institution, it may be difficult for women legislators to build the relationships necessary for a bipartisan caucus. Opportunities during session for socializing may be few and far between. Historically, members at the state or federal level may have spent more time in session at the Capitol and less time at home; this was one barrier for women who wanted families and political careers. Today, the balance between serving both the

legislature and the family pose particular challenges for women, especially those wanting to do something beyond their own district concerns. Participating in a women's caucus is an extra pull on a legislator's time and focus. It may be one considered less important than their obligations to their family. On the other hand, this imbalance of responsibility is also something that draws women together as a common bond.

### Resources

#### *External Organizations.*

I predicted that women's organizations outside the legislature would be another resource for women legislators in making an attempt to caucus. New Jersey had the assistance of a few outside groups when they were starting out. The Center for American Women and Politics at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University hosted some of the informal meetings during which women discussed the idea of a caucus and potential formalization. It was important as noted by the volunteer staffer of the caucus for there to be a neutral site for coming together where women of both parties felt comfortable. The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs also hosted an initial meeting for the women. When pressed, however, the interviewees all stated that the impetus for organizing was internal to the women legislators themselves, not driven by outside influences. I would credit this as a positive factor but not a necessary one for caucus creation.

#### *Professionalism and Staff Size.*

The level of professionalization was predicted to positively affect the women's caucus attempt by providing women legislators with staff and time. In the New Jersey case, the importance of the availability of a newly retired Senate staffer was oft repeated.

Kathy Crotty, who served as Executive Director of the Senate Majority Office for 23 years, volunteers her time to staff the Women's Legislative Caucus. Her experience and respected reputation on both sides of the aisle made her an ideal organizer:

I think the fact that we were able to get someone, Kathy Crotty...the timing of that, the fact that she had retired, her interest in women's issues, she is a giant in itself, her personality her ability to get things done, her wealth of knowledge in terms of how the legislature works because she worked for so many years in such an important position allowed for the ongoing coordination and communication of the women's caucus. The resources were available and the timing, it was a good marriage for all of us. (Assemblywoman Nellie Pou 2010)

Crotty worked closely with the caucus co-chairs to plan and organize events. She was responsible for finding meeting locations, dates and times that worked for all the members, and for promoting the caucus to a broader public, like other legislative and executive officials. Because she was doing this work, co-chairs did not have to take time away from their other legislative responsibilities. She also would keep the co-chairs motivated and on task. She was, however, a retired legislative staffer and not paid by the legislature for this work. Despite New Jersey having the second largest legislative staff of the four cases and while staff was important for the launch of this caucus, it was volunteer staff that is cited by members as making the difference.

*Term Limits.*

The New Jersey State Legislature does not have term limits and, therefore, they were not a factor negatively influencing women's ability to organize a caucus in this case as I had predicted would be the case in term limited states. Women did not mention any pressures of time in office as a concern in organizing or in affecting their decision to participate. It should be noted, however, that the co-creators of the caucus, Senator Weinberg (D) and Senator Allen (R), were very senior members among the women.

Senator Weinberg was first elected to the State Assembly in 1992 and the State Senate in 2006. Senator Allen (R) was first elected to the State Assembly in 1996 and moved to the State Senate in 1998. Their experience very likely influenced their success. As stated previously, when this experience met with the exuberance of the newly elected women, a political opportunity was recognized and seized. It would be reasonable to expect then that term limits in other states may be hurting women's ability to organize by limiting women legislators' experience in office.

### Frames

#### *Gender Consciousness.*

Gender consciousness was a frame expected to be employed in states with successful caucus attempts. Recognition among women legislators of common interests was expected to be associated with a successful attempt to create a women's caucus because I predicted it would be a useful argument for why a women's caucus would be necessary. In the case of New Jersey, women legislators often cited a "natural bond" between women, common interests and experiences which linked them to one another despite party labels.

As previously discussed, the difficulty for women legislators with families in balancing their time and attention is potentially a common bond among them. Shared life experience was cited as something that set them apart from male colleagues and brought them together as a caucus. For example, all of the women believe that men and women bring something different to the legislature. While the legislators did not like categorizing issues as "women's issues," they did note that women do not have the same reputation for corruption as their male counterparts and that it is important that women be represented

in the body. Staffer Kathy Crotty noted that different life experience brings different perspectives on policy:

I think in part it has something to do with the issues they may be insensitive to...which are a function of the fact that women have a unique life experience. The 48 hour rule is a good example of that...None of these people have ever been in a hospital and delivered a baby and so they are not very well equipped to answer whether you are supposed to kick someone out after they have the baby...the same thing with the mastectomies and all that. They may have had wives who have, but that is still not the same. (Crotty 2010)

Again, this is reflected in Senator Beck's (R) comment that, "I think it is important that women come together and share what is I believe a natural bond and that we do address policy issues a little bit differently." It appears that without this recognition of common experiences and interests, a caucus would not have emerged.

#### *Party Dissatisfaction.*

I predicted that women would be motivated to caucus if they were dissatisfied with party structures and their responses to policy issues as had previously been demonstrated at the federal level. I also predicted that the use of this dissatisfaction as a frame for the caucus would be correlated with successful attempts. As discussed in the previous state background section, political parties in New Jersey do not have a strong record of nurturing and promoting women in politics in the state. With power concentrated at the county party chair level, many women reported negative experiences with their own political parties. It is no surprise then that a bill demanding more transparency for political party committees would motivate women legislators to act. Again, the Party Democracy Act, which was signed into law on October 2, 2009, was ethics reform legislation that

requires adoption of constitutions and by-laws by county political party committees; requires certain information concerning committee members to be

filed with county clerk; eliminates fixed terms for committee members and chairs (New Jersey State Legislature, Party Democracy Act).

While not on its face a women's issue bill, it puts the intersection of gender and party at the forefront for this group and their self-identification. The newly formed caucus was the focus of an event honoring a longtime New Jersey legislative staffer and now caucus volunteer, Kathy Crotty. At the event, many of the founding members of the caucus were present. When asked about the legislation, which was strongly opposed by local parties and cited as a much needed transparency in government measure, Senator Weinberg (D), Co-Chair of the Women's Legislative Caucus, said, "I thought my experiences were unique to me, but then I brought it up at a women's legislative meeting, and we all had a war story to tell, on both sides of the aisle."

Senator Weinberg (D) had been an Assemblywoman in District 37 in Bergen County, New Jersey from 1992-2005. The sitting state senator in her district died, and she filled the vacancy. In New Jersey, candidates are elected to the ballot by party committees. In some cases there is a party convention, sometimes only the executive committee decides and in other cases the chair alone determines who the candidates will be. When it was time to run for the seat, Senator Weinberg (D) pursued her party's nomination despite the Democratic Party Chair's preference for another candidate and alleged wrongdoings in altering the committee to suit his position by removing members and adding others at any time throughout the process as he pleased. She challenged that opposition and ultimately went to court to validate her nomination to the ballot. She won that battle and the senate seat. Kathy Crotty explained how this experience led to the women's support of the Party Democracy Act legislation:

That drove her (Senator Weinberg) to recognize that without the county committee list being published she didn't really know or understand what the rules and the by-laws of the convention were and how it is conducted, who can vote and how is it a secret ballot, machine vote, voice vote? She didn't really know that. And in fairness, everyone should really know that and so this was one of the issues, but she did talk to a lot of the women, Senator Diane Allen (R) who had conflicts with her county party leadership as well as other women, who had very similar experiences where they had been disadvantaged in terms of the way the political apparatus operated. She got all of them to co-sponsor it and the changes were not dramatic, but these are the kinds of things that entrench political interests, they were very threatened. (Crotty 2010)

Longtime legislator, Senator Allen (R) acknowledged how important legislation is to maintaining equal access to public office:

I think gender is a part of that issue (Party Democracy Act). But I think it does go beyond that. And, for those counties where, women just really--the only reason that, that women are co-chairs or have county committee seats is because the law says there has to be a woman and a man. And, in my party, they...they tried to change that and say, "Well, let's not say that there has to be a woman and a man." And, I just fought that like crazy because as soon as you say that you don't have to do that, women are gone. (Allen 2010)

Not all legislators, however, saw this as a gender issue. Assemblywoman Handlin (R) described it as an "everybody issue." Assemblywoman Mary Pat Angelini (R) described it similarly. When asked why the Party Democracy Act legislation, not a typical "women's issue," was the first issue item for the caucus, Kathy Crotty responded,

I think from the discussions we had very early on, they are very sensitive to the idea that they probably need to stay away from some of the socially sensitive issues because there are diverse viewpoints and if the discussions break down over issues like abortion, they are going to get nowhere. So they would really forfeit an opportunity to work on the Democracy Act or this access to physicians issue. (Crotty 2010)

When asked if the Party Democracy Act legislation could be considered a "women's issue," Senator Beck (R) said,

I do think it is a women's issue because by and large women aren't heading up the political organizations that are nominating candidates. That is not to say that we don't have chairmen that are supportive or even advocates for women. That is not the case, because I wouldn't be here. But that because they are largely run by men, and in this case, these two elected officials (Senator Weinberg and Senator

Allen) faced significant challenges from those organizational structures, I don't know if it was so much that they were women, but there was a coalescing of all of us around this issue, because what this is basic fairness, this isn't about judgment calls of whether you are the best candidate or not. It was just that if you are going to have a process that process can't change at the whims of one individual. And because it was two women elected officials that faced those challenges with their political organizations, I think that is what drew women together. (Beck 2010)

Although the issue was brought to the attention of the legislature by an outside interest

group, when pressed to say if that legislation would have come about without the

women's efforts, Senator Beck (R) responded,

Do I think that there could have been a man would have felt so slighted, or that the process was so inappropriate, I mean I don't know, that is a good question. I don't know, there could be a little bit, I mean it is completely speculative, so we will never have a firm answer to this question. But is it that there is a certain camaraderie where even though there is a recognition that maybe the process wasn't as transparent or fair as you would have hoped that you are better off not raising the issue because of...I mean that is not out of the question, indeed if you think about it, we have a legislature that, the legislature and the political process has been in place for a long time and this is the first time that this was raised, vetted, voted on and I think women deserve some credit here for having taken on the issue and being willing to say, look guys, this is a process that needs to be transparent to everybody. (Beck 2010)

Most women admitted that New Jersey does not have a particularly women-friendly

history. Until fairly recently, New Jersey has ranked low on scales among states by

number of women in public office. Legislators, who reported that they themselves had

not faced opposition from party leaders when running for public office, all cited examples

of sitting women legislators who had faced such opposition,. Fewer told their own stories

or were hesitant to describe experiences as negative. Some accounts were about

experiences as legislators being excluded from decision making, such as,

There was a situation where, I was not privy to some information, and I kind of felt like if I were a man, that I would not have been treated the same way. It was almost like, this is again this is totally my assessment, but it was almost as if they didn't want to tell me because they thought that my response would be emotional. You know what I'm saying? (McHose 2010)

New Jersey had very few women in the legislature when I first got down there. I think there were only 16 in both houses out of 120. And so you kind of get patted on the head and tolerated. Having been a teacher for over forty years, I have a very big mouth and so I don't get patted on the head very long. (Voss 2010)

When asked if women experience the legislature differently because of gender, Senator Allen (R) recounted this experience she observed with another woman legislator and the former Senate Majority Leader Richard Codey (D):

Oh, my gosh. She stood up to say something, and he just went after her, and it was so inappropriate. And I remember it's happened a couple of times where people have treated her inappropriately. She's a young, good-looking woman, and that's--it's tough. It's harder to do. I've just been around long enough to have given as good as I've gotten perhaps. And, so that's no longer an issue, but I will tell you that if you have had a male member with--I'll use this gingerly--with less intelligence and a female member with less intelligence, the male member would probably skate through, and the female would be picked on and shown up and...There are different standards. (Allen 2010)

Others stories were specific to their candidacy and lack of party support. While Assemblywoman Angelini (R) did not feel she had been discriminated against as a woman by her party in any specific way, she did cite apathy when she first stepped out into the political arena, which was only overcome by participation in a Republican women's organization dedicated to mobilizing potential women candidates:

I was a member of the Christie Todd Whitman Excellence in Public Service Series (an organization designed to encourage women candidates) and as I was going through that, I wrote a letter with my resume and sent it to our party chair person, the Republican chair in Monmouth County. His name was Bill Dowd at the time...He never even responded to me. I didn't even know, I didn't know about county committees, I mean I learned that through the Whitman series. There are a lot of people who don't understand, who don't know how to get involved. I think transparency is always a good thing. I think with him it was not intentional about me personally, just that he did things one way. I heard rumors for years that he sat in the living room of a very prominent Republican in that county and they decided who was going to run for what and that was it. That was the way it was done and has always been done. A little sunshine on that process would have disinfected a lot of stuff that was going on there. (Angelini 2010)

I mean, there were just many years of finding it very difficult to make any headway against a very, very entrenched group of people who didn't want any

change and didn't want any new ideas, and a lot of them ended up going to jail, so... (Handlin 2010)

Every county has a Republican and Democrat chairman, and they're the ones that really call the shots, okay. (Voss 2010)

Some legislators cited this bias as an explanation for the caucus:

I think it was solely just there were enough of us who wanted to at least try it. I mean, none of us knew and we still don't know what kind of results it will actually produce. But again, there were enough of us who were frustrated with business as usual. (Handlin 2010)

I mean, women represent 50% of the voters in the state of New Jersey. And I think that we are an important voting bloc and we should be heard. There are some, as I alluded to before, that get frustrated that the party chairmen, who are often involved with selecting candidates to run at different levels, are primarily all men. I'm proud on the Republican side that my home county of Sussex has a female chair right now, so, but I think she's the only one in the whole Republican Party statewide. So we definitely, as I said, just wanted--it's one more way that we can express our strength, and I think it's important. (McHose 2010)

Bias in the party system appears to be the impetus for the first major piece of legislation the caucus has taken on as a group, as well as a frame used to unite the women in their cause. While the bill itself was initiated by an outside interest, it spoke to the women's shared life experience as excluded from the traditional path to power reserved for men. This shared experience brought the women together on their first issue as a group. Women in New Jersey have fought their way into the legislature sometimes in opposition to traditional party leadership. They feel they have been through something similar as a consequence of their gender and therefore, once inside the institution, their common experience produced a common belief that women deserved respect from their political parties. A bipartisan caucus then is not surprising under conditions in which women felt slighted or discriminated against by political parties.

*Women in Leadership.*

I predicted that states with low levels of women in leadership positions may be more likely to have successful caucus attempts because it would be a frame women could utilize in organizing. If women felt excluded from leadership, a bipartisan group that could advocate for women's selection for leadership posts might be a compelling argument to organize. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, 25% of leadership posts in New Jersey are held by women. This is true of 3 of the 4 cases, both successful and unsuccessful in their attempts to organize a caucus. In the interviews, when asked if the traditional organizing mechanisms of the legislature (parties and committees) were accommodating to women, Senator Jennifer Beck (R) stated that the women's caucus was a way to ensure that qualified women got a fair deal in leadership decisions. She told this story:

One of the issues we have is, again, a lot of new people coming in, some that have been there for a while, but the chairs of those committees in some cases have been there for quite a while and that seniority is hard to displace. Those chairs don't change that often unless there is a retirement. I think we saw that with Wayne Bryant. When he left the legislature, there was a debate over who would become the next budget chair. It was a foregone conclusion in my mind that it was Senator Barbra Buono (D), but it wasn't in everybody's mind. There was a little bit of push back on that and the argument of fairness was made and won, but until you see more turnover at the chair level, that seniority, I mean we have some chairs but not as many as we would like...regardless of party in my estimation that had Barbara Buono been denied there would have been a hue and cry not just from Democratic women but from all women saying that "Look she was the vice chair, she served her time, she is capable, she is intelligent, she is able to guide this committee." And I would argue that while I opposed the budget last time, the process was a much more orderly one than it had been in years past. (Beck 2010)

Senator Beck (R) characterized the women's caucus as a potential watchdog for discrimination: "Had it been needed in the case of Barbara (Buono), which it wasn't needed, but we obviously would have all supported her, I guess I can't speak for everybody, but I certainly would have supported her."

While this does not appear to be the primary reason for women's organizing, at least one legislator had it in mind when the organizing began. The status of women in leadership was not discussed at the strategy meeting I attended, but women legislators' historical exclusion was a theme at the forum celebrating Kathy Crotty. While increasing the number of women in leadership positions may not have been an explicit goal of the group when they were organizing, it was a frame that was present and concerning for some of the women.

*Caucus Type.*

I predicted that women's caucuses which chose to set public policy as a priority were less likely to be successful than attempts to create a women's caucus which did not have policy formation as a purpose for the group. I predicted that policy differences among women would stifle the launch of a bipartisan group. In New Jersey, policy was definitely a priority for the caucus. They were committed to influencing the policy agenda from the beginning. As Assemblywoman McHose (R) argues,

Many of us felt that we might have an opportunity to work on issues as a whole, as I said, from both parties and we thought that this would be an effective way to do it and to have an official caucus rather than an informal caucus, which we had had in the past. We decided to really make it a legitimate organization--not legitimate, like formal, and organize it--so that people would recognize us, we would like to be looked at as a force to be reckoned with, that we felt strongly that there were many issues--I mean...I really felt strongly that we could have our voices heard as a group collectively and show that we had bipartisan support of issues. And there were some that felt that because leadership tended to be heavily male-dominated that they thought that this would be a good way for us to make our, again, our presence known and to show that we had support for particular bills and that we could go forward. (McHose 2010)

The women agreed that they did not want the caucus to be constrained by a preoccupation with traditional "women's issues." While it is a women's organization, all had hopes that this caucus would be a mechanism by which women could have an impact

more broadly within the legislature. At the one organizational meeting I attended, there was discussion of legislation which had already passed that many of the women had problems with and wanted to impact in future actions. For example, they talked about ways to improve divorce laws in the state so that women would not suffer as much financial strain when a marriage ended. They discussed sharing of information regarding the bill and planned to discuss further action by the group once all had a chance to look over the new information.

What type of legislation the caucus would prioritize would emerge from the shared interests and values of the women. Women legislators, especially Republican women, did not want the emphasis of the caucus to narrow their impact to traditional “women’s issues.” Senator Beck (R) put it this way:

Diane Allen and Loretta Weinberg felt that it was sensible for us to come together and find common ground and become advocates for certain policy issues and that we should not be limited simply to women’s and children’s issues. We obviously have a lot to say about fiscal issues, and the challenges of the budget and ethics etc. so that we could find other policy topics, not that we are not involved in women’s [issues], those are natural and we are all involved in them but there are other topics too to draw on...I think it is interesting that our first topic that we addressed was not an issue of health care for children or domestic violence, etc. but that our first issue was an issue of ethics. (Beck 2010)

Party differences did emerge however on the next policy issue faced by the caucus. The Family Planning Grant bill co-sponsored by Caucus Co-Chair and Senator Weinberg (D):

Makes FY 2011 supplemental appropriation of \$7,453,000 for Women's Health and Family Planning Services, reduces FY 2011 appropriation for State Employees' Prescription Drug Program by \$7,453,000, and requires filing of application for expansion of Medicaid coverage for Family Planning services. The bill was amended in committee to incorporate the following provision: "But the bill strictly prohibits the use of the \$7,453,000 for abortion procedures." (New Jersey State Legislature, Family Planning Grant)

As previously indicated, 18 women sponsored or co-sponsored the bill, but all were Democrats. Initially, the two Republican senators, Diane Allen and Jennifer Beck, voted yes for the bill. In a later round of voting, Senator Allen (R) rescinded her support of the bill, stating on her website:

Initially, we supported S-2139, which rededicates \$7.5 million from the State Employees' Prescription Drug Program toward further women's health initiatives. However, upon further review by the State Treasurer, it is now clear that this transfer would place the state prescription fund into a \$5.6 million deficit and risk access to needed medicines for women and children. Therefore, if Senator President Sweeney (D) calls for a veto override of S-2139, we will vote to support maintaining a balanced budget and ensure there is continued access to prescription medicines for families. ("Senate Republican Response to S-2139")

In the Assembly, six Republican women voted no on the bill. Three abstained. While Assemblywoman Nellie Pou (D) was recorded as "not voting," she had this to say about the split among the women:

I would say though that while it is important that we have that (a women's caucus), it really needs to have the ability to work and advocate on women's issues. We cannot pick and choose and separate what those issues are even (sic)that we come together as women even though it affects us all, women in general...For example the whole women's health issue, the fact that this was a cause or an issue that was really affecting all women in the state of NJ. It was important to see that both the Democrats and Republican women and members of the women's legislative caucus stood behind this issue. I find it very difficult to believe that not one Republican woman would not be in support of this. I am sure that is not the case. So we have to really assess are we really, really going to be there on issues that affect women or are we going to pick issues along party lines from a philosophical view. (Pou 2010)

Since this vote, the Women's Legislative Caucus of New Jersey has not held a bipartisan meeting. Senator Weinberg (D) described the impact of this controversy on the caucus in this way:

We had a kind of big setback and a little disappointment which I have sort of not yet worked through in my own head as well as dealing with some of the women in the caucus... I was very disappointed that not one woman, some of them abstained...so I have not talked to some of my counterparts on the other side of the aisle because first of all, I was too hot under the collar. If you couldn't stand up on this then what is the object of us even having a women's caucus. (Weinberg 2010)

As discussed in the literature, how the actions of the caucus are framed will contribute to the ability of leaders to mobilize members. Before the first specifically “women’s issue” bill even came up, Republican Assemblywoman Handlin (R) noted the importance of consensus and framing and the long term success of the caucus when asked, “Do you think that the women’s caucus will focus specifically on women’s issues bills or do you expect them to expand beyond?” Her response: “I think it depends how successful we are with this health care stuff.”

Although New Jersey is a successful case in that they met for one year after an initial attempt by women legislators, whether or not it will successfully maintain itself remains to be seen in the next session. It appears as though while women were initially energized to address issues of public policy where there was common ground, there ultimately was not consensus on an issue for which the Democratic legislators at least felt there should be a united front. In this case, policy didn’t affect the success of the attempt to create a women’s caucus and even aided in the attempt by uniting the women around the successful Party Democracy Act; however, it may hurt the long term maintenance of the group.

I predicted in the previous chapter that caucuses that set socializing as the top priority for organizing a caucus were more likely to succeed than those who set public policy as their primary function. From the start, the New Jersey Women’s Legislative

Caucus was framed as a policy-oriented caucus. Women were already socially connected to each other through informal caucuses in the House and senior women legislators who took the initiative to mentor newer members. The legislators then did not see this as the primary function of the caucus. Although it remains to be seen if this choice will determine the success or failure of the caucus, nurturing a social network for women legislators was not a frame utilized in the New Jersey attempt to create a women's caucus.

*Opposition from Party Leaders or Male Colleagues.*

None of the women legislators expressed any concern about backlash for organizing a caucus. I had predicted that had legislative leadership or male colleagues opposed the creation of a caucus that it would be less likely to succeed. In New Jersey, the women indicated that they had not experienced any negative response from either party leadership or male colleagues. In fact, in interviews with two male legislative leaders, they expressed no concern about the creation of the caucus at all. Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean, Jr. (R) expressed his support for the caucus by saying,

For me, it is not about party, it's about solutions, and if you can have a women's caucus that comes together and says these are the things we have seen in our experience, just like you have other areas of commonality, people coming together, I think it only strengthens the process. People don't go into a caucus and shed their philosophy. (Kean 2010)

He saw the caucus not as a risk to political party control but rather a place where legislators with divergent opinions could come together to work out their differences and find commonality in a way that is not always available in a legislature with little time for legislators to build relationships. Former Speaker of the Assembly Joseph Roberts (D)

recognized the pressure that would be on the women's caucus but did not single out party as an obstacle either. He saw it this way:

I think the women's caucus, like any sort of sub-caucus in the legislature, is obviously going to have some commonality of interests, in this case around their gender, but they are also going to have political pressures at home and geographical distinctions that will perhaps be issues from time to time and also ideological differences that really make it challenging for them to achieve uniform positions on controversial issues. (Roberts 2010)

For themselves, Democratic women do attribute the divide over the Family Planning Grant to pressure on Republican women from the male governor and other Republican colleagues. Senator Weinberg (D) felt that Republican Governor Chris Christie pressured Republican women to withdraw their support for the bill. Her frustration is evident:

I mean this is so clear...so I have not talked that through and I haven't taken the second step on where we are on some issues that we have to follow up with after our first year. Just because I needed a little time before I do that. And my initial reaction was why would I even spend my time and energy on the bipartisan aspect of it if the governor can scare these people out of supporting something like this... (Weinberg 2010)

When it was suggested that the women's caucus came together under a Democratic governor and that the election of Republican Governor Chris Christie put Republican women in a unique position, Senator Weinberg (D) had this to say:

My initial reaction was why would I even spend my time and energy on the bipartisan aspect of it if the governor can scare these people out of supporting something like this... What is he going to do? If we are all together what is he going to do? Throw us all out? I mean, what is the worst thing? Well, what is the governor going to do? Throw the women out of the Republican caucus? I know if the tables were turned my governor would never, first of all he never, first of all he would have even had the nerve to try it and secondly, he wouldn't have gotten away with it. That was unfortunate, and I am not saying we are not going to be able to work through it, but I really sort of needed a little break from it. (Weinberg 2010)

When asked why Republican women didn't support the bill, Assemblywoman Pou (D) agreed with Senator Weinberg's (D) assessment saying, "I think they relented to the pressure of a very conservative right wing group of people." This was in contrast to her assessment of the early success of the Party Democracy Act. Here, she explains that the women stood up for the Party Democracy Act despite male opposition:

It wasn't a philosophical issue. It was, truly was a gender issue. It wasn't a party label of some sort. It was important for women on both sides to make sure that they had the ability to not be discriminated, not be removed, be given the ability to participate in a very transparent way...Trust me...if the guys could have prevented it, they would have, but it would have become a media nightmare for them...(Pou 2010)

For their part, Republican women legislators did not report any pressure from anyone influencing their decision on the Family Planning Grant bill. Senator Allen (R) blames Democratic men for the lack of health care funds for women making it into the budget. She argued that they put the discretionary funds available to other projects like the Battleship New Jersey. Once Democratic women found money to put it back in, the State Treasurer disagreed with the availability of those funds. Senator Allen (R) then removed her support from the bill saying that while she wanted to support women's health care if the money was there, the money just wasn't there (Allen 2011). She does not oppose Planned Parenthood, abortion, or women's health. Two clinics were closed in her own district, and "this continues to be a concern" for her. Her position is that the newly found funds were brought up so late in the process by Democrats that a budget was passed and the money for the family planning centers was not included. "It appeared to me that it was done for political reasons in this way" (Allen 2011). Certification of the available funds for the legislature to spend comes from the Treasurer, and she argues it is unconstitutional to pass the budget with excess funds. "It has been a political football"

(Allen 2011). She stated that the governor has never talked to her about how to vote on any issue, and she has made it clear to him that she supports women's health. She did advocate for funding for women's health in a conversation she held with the Governor, and he kept money in the budget to pay providers of women's health care at current levels; however, the money for family planning centers specifically was cut. Senator Allen (R) says this "was his call, not mine" (Allen 2011).

Again, as with the public policy frame, it appears that male opposition did not negatively affect the launch of the caucus as I had predicted. With the evidence here, it is difficult to determine if pressure was applied in the case of the Family Planning Grant. Democratic women say yes, Republican women say no. Either way, trust between the two sides was hurt by this episode, and its lasting effect on the caucus remains to be seen. Like the public policy frame, opposition from leadership or male colleagues may not have been a factor in caucus launch in this case, but important for caucus maintenance. More information about the future of the women's caucus follows in the epilogue for this chapter.

#### *Additional Factors.*

In addition to the above hypotheses, women legislators also attributed the success of the caucus to individual leaders. Several women were identified as leaders of the movement to formally organize in 2009. Although there were a few outliers, most interviewees noted Senator Loretta Weinberg (D) as a torchbearer. Senator Weinberg (D) has been identified by women on both sides of the aisle as an influential member of the legislature and she was selected by Governor Jon Corzine (D) as the Lieutenant

Gubernatorial candidate in 2009. One Republican Assemblywoman acknowledged Senator Weinberg's (D) role in welcoming her to the legislature:

I can remember on my first day or second day after I was sworn in that Loretta Weinberg approached me and welcomed me to the assembly and she said, "We would like to get you involved--we have this, little women's caucus unofficial and we would like to have you." And I said, "Oh, great." So, no hesitation on my part for it. (McHose 2010)

When asked if the caucus would have been formed were it not for Senator Weinberg's (D) initiative, Ms. Crotty, caucus volunteer staffer, said,

Maybe. Less likely...These things are so much a function of those who assume the leadership positions. So if Loretta maintains her position and her interest, which I am sure she would if she stays, then I think it would remain viable. And if the other women recognize that this is a way to advance their own agenda and have influence then they will too. If they are smart. (Crotty 2010)

Because Senator Weinberg (D) was mentioned as a real catalyst for the caucus, her frustration concerning the Family Planning Grant bill is that much more important. She herself admits to being too frustrated to take back up the caucus in June following the vote. As the driver of the caucus, it is no surprise then that they have not met as a group since. With such an influential legislator taking ownership of the caucus and being a leader for the women within her own party, for her to step back from the caucus could be fatal. Senator Weinberg's (D) entrepreneurship was important for the New Jersey Women's Legislative Caucus to get off the ground, but her lack of enthusiasm could be just as influential in the maintenance of the group.

Finally, it also appears as though the existence of previous informal caucuses in the House were important to the attempt at a formal caucus made here in 2009. Senior women in particular had built relationships with one another across party lines that laid the foundation of trust between them. Through these informal ties, women legislators had

shared their stories of party bias and family obligations establishing common ground among them. These women then seized the opportunity created by the 2007 election, which saw a surge of women come into office, to establish a formal caucus.

### Discussion

The data from the New Jersey case demonstrates that there is more support for some hypotheses than for others. The previous informal relationship among women in both houses did serve as a starting point which just needed momentum to regenerate. The influx of women in the 2007 election provided that catalyst. Women recognized that, because of their moderate numbers, to have an impact, they would have to band together. Entrepreneurs (the more senior women legislators) seized this political opportunity by appealing to commonalities among women, including bias in the political structure and relying on a well-respected volunteer to bring participants together and manage the day-to-day organizing of group events. Their initiative was well received by newly elected women who were cognizant of women's difference from male legislators.

The frames that were employed in this case— gender consciousness, dissatisfaction with political parties, and policy as a priority— were successful in motivating women to participate in the caucus. Recognition of women as a unique group appears to be present here, although all subjects are hesitant to caricature women as interested in particular subjects and want the caucus to have an impact beyond women's traditional role as concerned with reproductive health and children's issues, despite these being discussed as potential priorities for the caucus. There is a clear history of women being at least ignored and in some cases directly opposed by the traditional party system despite the women individually being reluctant to admit to discrimination. Women in this legislature are

certainly dissatisfied with the existing political structures and the difficulties women face in being elected to office. They do not cite as much dissatisfaction once they are in office. They all agreed that leadership set the agenda for the legislature and that altering that agenda was a function of which political party was in power. Having a women's caucus was cited as offering more weight to women's voices in the legislature more than as an agenda-altering mechanism. Women in the legislature had already been bringing attention, as individuals, to issues important to them, and this was seen as another way, among many, to accomplish those goals.

Women in this case were motivated to participate in a caucus which would deal with policy issues. Women on both sides of the aisle agreed this would be a policy-oriented caucus and looked forward to addressing many issues of common concern. The question still remains whether the caucus will be able to maintain this purpose over the long term. Issues affecting women outside of the legislature, such as the Family Planning Grant bill, show that while partisan pressure was not present at the initial founding of the caucus, they have arisen, presenting a tough choice for Republican women in particular. Despite the seemingly oppositional nature of their first piece of legislation challenging traditional party operations, all the women reported that the Party Democracy Act was so common sense that it could not be publically opposed. While the political infrastructure was not happy with the change, it was politically fatal to oppose transparency in the process. The Family Planning Grant bill, which received negative attention from the Republican governor, proved to be divisive. We will have to wait to see if continued challenges to the status quo over time and across new issues will be as successful as the

Party Democracy Act and if the caucus chooses to maintain this oppositional position or if partisanship tears the fragile alliance apart.

In evaluating which frames were employed in this case and which resonated with the participants, I find that not all available frames were relevant to the New Jersey case. While policing the number of women in leadership positions was mentioned in the interviews as a potential positive to come out of the caucus, it was not a primary frame for the caucus launch. Using the caucus as a social network was also not a frame employed by the women in New Jersey.

In regard to McAdam et. al.'s (1996) suggestion that structural opportunity plays a role in the emergence of movements, Kathy Crotty noted that among the legislative leadership in general there has been a desire to cut down the harsh partisanship that has been present since the 1990s in the legislature. She suggested that the leadership may have been looking for something like a bipartisan caucus as another way to achieve their own goal. As far as confronting counter frames by party leadership or male opposition, this was not a factor in the launching of the caucus. Women do not report any backlash, nor do male leaders admit to opposing the caucus. Backlash from party leaders in this case appears to be an issue for caucus maintenance, however, as there is a perception among Democratic women that Republican leaders in the state oppose the policy priorities and positions they would like to see the caucus put forward.

Issues of partisanship, party control, and party competition (resulting in increased party discipline) were not problematic for the founding of this caucus. Because of the recurring theme of corruption in New Jersey government, the women legislators interviewed here expressed the general opinion that women are sometimes more ethical if

only because of a historical lack of power or a different style of legislating. This was compounded by the opinion that women are more bipartisan. Because women were reported to be more goal-oriented, it was perceived that bipartisanship also came easier to them than to men.

Like the decision to be a policy-oriented caucus, these factors appear more relevant to the question of caucus maintenance once it has been established. Term limits also do not appear to have negatively impacted this caucus launch, but the presence of experienced women legislators was important. Senior women legislators had the experience of informal caucuses, had relationships across party lines, and therefore were able to take advantage of the political opportunity created by the surge of women elected in 2007. It will be important to consider this in the examination of cases in states where such limits are in place.

There is no evidence of outside pressure for the women to organize in this case, although outside support does emerge as an available resource with non-partisan organizations hosting events where the women were able to plan the launch. Similarly, while the existence of other caucuses in New Jersey normalized the practice, including a black caucus, the women themselves did not see these as influential factors in the case. Nor did they acknowledge the great racial diversity among women legislators as a positive or negative influence on their ability to organize.

The availability of staff was mentioned as a key factor explaining why the caucus emerged when it did. With the availability of the recently retired Kathy Crotty to volunteer her time, a lot of the costs of organizing were mitigated. She was not, however, compensated by the legislature and so, while staff was an important resource in this case,

professionalization as the source of this resource is not. Similarly, the size of the legislature did contribute to the women's ability to get to know one another. The small number of legislators made incidents of meeting at events or even in restrooms conducive to getting to know one another. The time necessary to really bond, however, was limited because of women legislators' familial obligations, something they recognized as a negative gender expectation uniquely facing them.

### Conclusion

In New Jersey, women reinvigorated an on-again, off-again social network after a game-changing election ushered in women to fill spots often vacated by men under indictment.<sup>23</sup> These women, encouraged by respected leadership, took on the issue of ethics by supporting a bill which will open doors for future women candidates so they may avoid the male bias faced by these legislators. Party differences, however, continues to challenge the organization even on traditional "women's issues," such as women's health. The motivation to form a women's caucus, shared issue priority as a consequence of similar life experience, is challenged by one of the most fundamental identities of a legislator, political party. How the women of the New Jersey State legislature choose to balance both their gender and party identity will determine the success or failure of the Women's Legislative Caucus. Despite negative experiences as party members, the women legislators here are still constrained by that identity in their advocacy on behalf of women.

In contradiction to Beckwith's (2007) hypothesis that new women would be adverse to a caucus, the election of a surge of new women legislators was cited by

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<sup>23</sup> Between 2007 and 2009, five Assemblywomen and two women Senators took office by election or appointment, filling seats previously held by men who were under indictment for political corruption or criminal charges (Carroll and Dittmar 2012).

interview subjects here as a reason for the development of an organization. It was this surge in numbers coupled with primed senior legislators that resulted in the creation of a caucus in New Jersey in 2009. Unfortunately, partisanship and the decision to take political positions on issues have stalled the group. In this case, the primary leader in both the creation and devolution of the group was Senator Weinberg (D). She spearheaded meetings and hearings in the beginning, and it is her disappointment which has stalled any further action beyond June 2010. While Republican women maintain there has not been external political pressure from the Governor, internal divisions between Republicans and Democrats on funding for women's health centers, like Planned Parenthood, has prevented the group from meeting within the last year.

The most important factor in this case appears to be the political opportunity of the 2007 election of a surge of women legislators met by senior women poised to formalize existing social ties with the help of an available and capable volunteer staffer. These entrepreneurs unified women around two frames in particular – gender consciousness (that women shared life experiences that distinguished them from their male colleagues) and public policy as a priority. Despite party differences, women believed there was common ground which could serve as a foundation for a caucus that would bring issues to the larger legislative agenda. Other factors which did not have as much influence on the founding of the caucus appear to be affecting the caucus' ability to maintain itself over time. In particular, party differences and the perception by Democratic women that Republican women have been pressured by the Republican governor have taken a toll on the initial momentum of the caucus.

In the next chapter, I will consider the Colorado Women's Legislative Caucus which was also formed in 2009. It is the second successful case in my analysis. By comparing New Jersey and Colorado, I will be able to see which factors are common to both and therefore influential in determining the success of a caucus launch.

### Epilogue

The Women's Legislative Caucus has not met since their June 2010 hearing on women's health disparities. No co-chairs have called for meetings nor have they communicated with each other specifically about the caucus. Whether or not the caucus will continue to exist is a question answered differently by each interview subject. Assemblywoman Spencer seemed hopeful that new topics will be taken up by the caucus in the next session, including funding for domestic violence centers, reproductive issues, funding of family health care centers, and human trafficking. She said, "Next year we will probably get started back up again because there are some issues that will be coming up that we will have to tackle together" (Spencer 2011). She suggested that I contact her office in January to learn of the next caucus meeting, although she admits that with the new governor, "the dynamics changed" (Spencer 2011). Assemblywoman Pou (D) expresses her regret:

We wanted to serve as a strong force on women's issues...But my disappointment is that when we are tested and given the opportunity to do that, we do good in one but then once it becomes a party label issue, we retreat, that should not be the case on both sides. It just so happened that this happened to the Republican women. I hope that we never come upon an issue that the Democratic women will be in a position to pull the same reaction that just happened (on the Family Planning Grant bill). (Pou 2010)

Senator Allen (R) was more vague but hopeful, stating that she believed women would get past the setback presented by the Family Planning Grant bill and find common ground upon which to work together:

I think that a lot of politics got involved unfortunately...made it a little difficult to bring everybody together. My sense is that in the coming year as we move into new areas and perhaps have the luxury of a year without political pressure, although it being a Presidential year – who knows? It is never easy. My hope is, and I can't speak for everybody, but most of the women who were involved or who I have spoken to all want to see this kind of thing work. (Allen 2011)

Allen's prognosis for the future of this issue's effect on the caucus is that "I am not happy with the way politics gets involved in important issues, but sometimes it does, but now hopefully the other side will just drop it and let's actually find some money and move forward" (Allen 2011).

Assemblywoman Handlin (R) attributed the lack of communication and meetings to partisanship which she too felt could be overcome, but she was not aware of any plans to meet or work together in the immediate future. Finally, Senator Weinberg (D) was the least optimistic stating that it was doubtful that women legislators would have a productive working relationship until a new governor was elected. She continues to work across partisan lines with individual women, but does not feel collective action can be successful in the current political climate. For instance, she and Senator Beck (R) put forward S-2665 (2010-2011) which called for the repeal of several New Jersey state laws which included sexist language. The governor signed this bill into law August 19, 2011.

Finally, Crotty, volunteer staffer, is the only one to admit that the effort at a women's caucus is unlikely:

The efforts to have a bipartisan women's caucus pretty much fell apart in June of 2010 when the women on the Republican side refused to support the health funding for the family planning program. There was a sort of pause in the activity.

There was a discussion to try to get it going again, but there were subsequent attempts to restore the money, and again it was done on a completely partisan basis. I think folks just concluded, at least Senator Weinberg (D) concluded, that if they wouldn't stand up for that issue then what was the point. (Crotty 2011)

Crotty implied that without Senator Weinberg (D) to instigate a meeting, the caucus is unlikely to continue. This seems to hold considering that in a year's time, no other co-chair called a meeting or organized an event. Time will tell if other co-chairs take the lead and whether or not Senator Weinberg (D) will participate.

Whether or not the women will continue to see collective action as an effective way to accomplish their goals will be a function of the cost and benefit analysis made by participants. If women continue to disagree on issues, they may decide to avoid policy and focus the caucus on mentoring and support for members instead. They may decide to caucus only within their political parties. It is too early to tell in this case whether, now that it is established, the caucus can maintain itself.

Table 13 – New Jersey Interview Subject Demographics

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Legislative Leaders</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>
6 Republicans	2	2 male	12
5 Democrats		10 female	
1 non-partisan staffer			

## Chapter 6: The Colorado Women's Legislative Caucus

In the last chapter, I analyzed the successful case of the New Jersey Women's Legislative Caucus. The most important variables in this case appear to be the political opportunities of a surge of newly elected women legislators, motivated senior legislators, and the available resource of volunteer staff. Women in New Jersey shared a belief that women are a political category in need of collective action and a motivation to work for public policy to improve the lives of women. The frames employed here, gender consciousness and public policy as a purpose for the group, were positive influences on the development of this women's caucus.

This chapter is an in-depth look at the attempt to create a women's caucus in the Colorado State Legislature in 2009, the same year as the New Jersey attempt. As in the last chapter, I will begin by presenting a brief background of the state's political conditions and the status of women within the state legislature. I will then describe the specific data collection for this case following with a narrative describing the women's caucus attempt. Finally, I will analyze the evidence from interviews, participant observation, and press coverage to test the hypotheses I laid out in Chapter 4. I will end this chapter by discussing the implications of this case and the connections between the two successful attempts to create a women's caucus (New Jersey and Colorado).

### State Background

Colorado is a western mountain state with a total 2010 population of 5,029,196 people. The state was ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> nationally for the size of the population (U.S. Census 2011). An important population factor for Colorado is its non-native population. Of state

residents in 2007, 58% were non-natives attracted to the state for its natural resources and the accompanying economic opportunities including tourism, the oil and gas industry, and most recently technology. These waves of immigration have affected their politics with the state looking more purple than clearly blue or red during election season (National Journal Almanac 2011).

Colorado's economy in recent history has seen a clash between the energy and recreation industries. Disagreements about energy and environmental policy have been central to political differences in the state. The plurality of Coloradans are employed in educational services, health care, and social assistance (19%) (U.S. Census 2006-2010). Colorado was 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation with a median family income of \$59,669 compared to \$51,914 nationally (U.S. Census 2008-2010). Colorado also has a 12.2% poverty rate, lower than the national average at 13.8% (U.S. Census 2012). Colorado's rates of high school graduation (89.3%) and bachelor degree attainment (36%) are higher than national averages (U.S. Census 2012). Colorado's top non-farm employers are government (18%), retail (15%), professional and business services (15%), education and health services (12%), and leisure and hospitality (12%) (Harris 2011).

Elazar (1984) characterizes Colorado as a state with a moralistic dominant political culture. This culture is noted for the "commonwealth conception" and "its search for the good society" (117). He describes states like Colorado as places where "the general public and the politicians conceive of politics as a public activity centered on some notion of the public good" (117). In this culture, it is appropriate for government to intrude upon private affairs if necessary for the "well-being of the community" (117). In a more recent analysis of political culture, Lieske (2010) characterizes Colorado as a

majority rural political culture. He describes this culture as “found in pastoral academic settings, less populated states west of the Mississippi, emerging centers of high-tech industry, and, of late, seaside coastal communities that are being populated by affluent baby boomers approaching or in early retirement” (542).

Colorado’s recent political history “has experienced a great deal of anti-tax fervor” (Daum et al. 2011, 3), making it difficult for the state to raise funds for services like education. Additionally, Colorado has high local and sales taxes as a result of their decentralized tax structure (Daum et al. 2011). This is a consequence in part of their political landscape which is notable for strong direct democracy with frequent use of the citizen initiative, which limits the power of elected officials in favor of individual citizens (Daum et al. 2011, 89). An example of this is Amendment 41 adopted in 2006 which greatly restricts public officials’ conduct in an effort to bolster public confidence in government and reduce any perceived special favors for those holding public office. This seemingly benign initiative had significant consequences for legislators and played an important role in the development of the women’s caucus in Colorado.

This history of direct democracy in the state has contributed to a balance of power throughout Colorado government. As Cronin and Loevy (1993, 27) explain, “No one individual, leader, party, interest group, or lobbyist rules in Colorado. On the contrary, the state’s public policy agenda is shaped by a multiplicity of competing interests.” As stated previously, the waves of newcomers to the state have balanced political power between Republicans and Democrats with a history of divided government between the governor and the legislature (Cronin and Loevy 1993, 29). Cronin and Loevy (1993, 29)

continue, “In a state that has distinctive regional barriers and competing political cultures, it is accurate to say leadership in Colorado is dispersed and decentralized.”

Rosenthal (1998, 138) describes Colorado as a place where “women are setting the standards of leadership” and attributes this to their proportion in the legislature and a general political culture in Colorado supportive of what she calls integrative leadership. Colorado in recent history has been among the top states for women’s proportions in the legislature (Rosenthal 1998, CAWP). Ehrenhalt (1992, 203-205) characterizes the Republican women of Colorado as moderate, quietly feminist, and pro-choice.<sup>24</sup> Women in the Democratic Party have been more successful in attaining leadership positions than women in the Republican Party, but Rosenthal does report episodes of gender bias in leadership races for women of both parties.

In 2009, when the caucus was created, both houses of the Colorado legislature were controlled by the Democratic Party, and a Democratic governor was in office. The Assembly partisan ratio was 38 Democrats to 27 Republicans, and the Senate was 21 Democrats to 14 Republicans (NCSL 2009). Colorado ranked 15<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states according to Squire’s (2007) professionalism scale which is calculated by member pay, ratio of staff to legislators, and total days in session.

In 2009, Colorado ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the country according to gender proportions with women making up 37% of the legislature. Twelve women were serving in the state senate and 25 in the state assembly (“Women in State Legislatures” 2009). There were 19 Democratic women serving in the Assembly and 11 serving in the Senate as well as six Republican women serving in the Assembly and one serving in the Senate. The state

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<sup>24</sup> This has changed somewhat with several women in the legislature self-identifying as Tea Party members or perceived that way by their colleagues according to my own interviews in 2010.

ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation as to the proportion of women serving in legislative leadership positions with 25% held by women (2/8 positions). Senator Betty Boyd (D) was Senate President Pro Tempore, and Representative Kathleen Curry (D) was serving as Speaker Pro Tempore. Colorado ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation with women holding 50% of committee chairmanships (10/20 chairmanships).

### Data Collection

The following analysis is the result of personal and telephone interviews and press coverage. All 37 women legislators serving in 2009 were sent recruitment emails requesting their participation in the study. Of the legislators contacted, I interviewed 11 (30%). Among these 11 was the founder of the caucus who was no longer in the legislature at the time of her interview. These 11 also included two of the four board members of the caucus, seven participants, and one state senator who identified as a non-participant. Nine of the women interviewed were Democrats, and two were Republican.

I also interviewed the paid staffer and two male members of legislative leadership serving during 2009. Eight legislative leaders who held their positions in 2009 were also contacted to participate. This included one woman legislator who was not able to participate in the study. The two interviews, both male Democratic former House leaders, I conducted represent 25% of those contacted. The demographic details on my interview subjects can be found in Table 14.

Table 14 about here

I conducted personal and telephone, semi-structured interviews in March 2011 with these subjects. In November 2011, I conducted a follow-up interview with the paid staffer, allowing me to incorporate current information about the status of the caucus.

### Caucus Narrative

In December 2009, Representative Karen Middleton (D) had secured an \$8,500 grant from the Women's Foundation to assist with historical research on women in the legislature in addition to support for a staff and events for a women's caucus she intended to create. She discussed her plan informally with her own mentor, Senator Suzanne Williams (D) and Speaker of the House Terrance Carroll (D). The Colorado Women's Legislative Caucus's first official event was held on February 17, 2009, when it held an informal happy hour for all women legislators. Like New Jersey, there had been informal women's caucuses in the past but not recently. Sanbonmatsu (2008) cites that an attempt to create a formal women's caucus in the 1980s was disrupted by the Speaker who was concerned about party loyalty (100). The last memory legislators or staff had of any organization by women was an event in 1995 honoring the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women serving in the Colorado legislature, where women legislators gathered information on former women serving in the legislature and held an event during which women wore 19<sup>th</sup> century costumes.

Concern, however, over the grant secured by Representative Middleton (D) caused other women legislators to "raise a red flag" about the strict ethics laws in the state. Specifically, they were concerned that any financial support from an outside group may violate Amendment 41. As a result, the Caucus remained informal until the Independent Ethics Commission of Colorado could issue an advisory opinion. Despite this delay in formalization, the women's caucus still participated in a range of activities, wanting to move the organization forward despite the ethics inquiry. A breakfast meeting was held during the beginning of the 2010 session where Katie Ziegler, coordinator of the

Women's Network of the National Conference of State Legislators, presented the group with best practices from women's caucuses across the country.

At this meeting, the women legislators decided among themselves to take policy off the table. They determined three goals for the caucus which were to 1) connect women legislators, 2) draw from history, and 3) build camaraderie by listening to and sharing life experiences with each other. The four board members of the caucus initially were Representative Middleton (D), the founder of the caucus, Senator Suzanne Williams (D), Representative Marsha Looper (R), and Senator Nancy Spence (R). Representative Middleton (D) approached the other three women informally, asking them to serve as contacts for the group until it could be formalized and elections could select the official leaders. These four board members came up with a preliminary plan for the caucus.

The activities prioritized by the leadership focused on the agreed upon theme for the caucus which was primarily social in nature, relying upon a shared interest in women's contributions to the state's political history. In March 2010, the women legislators celebrated Women's History Month by speaking each morning of session in the public comments. Every day a different woman legislator would speak on the floor honoring a woman who had served previously in the legislature. The women featured were selected from the 115 years since the first woman was elected to the state legislature. The following month, women legislators held an event at the Governor's Residence in which all women who had previously served were invited to attend and share their stories. This was a very popular event with current women officeholders speaking fondly of an opportunity to hear from other women who had faced similar experiences.

In August 2010, Representative Middleton (D) secured permission from the Commission to partner with a 501(c)3, the Metropolitan State College of Denver, to have the grant from the Foundation managed and dispensed by the college. This alleviated any concern the legislators had about participating in a caucus with outside financial support. Once the advisory opinion was issued, the original four board members stayed on in leadership positions. Representative Middleton (D) left office at the end of her term in 2010 to work for an organization which recruits and supports women candidates for public office. She was replaced on the board by Representative Jeanne Labuda (D).

### Analysis

I will now examine the hypotheses laid out in the last chapter using information from my interviews with legislators and staff, press coverage of the caucus and women legislators more generally, and my participant observation of caucus meetings and hearings.

### Opportunities

#### *Proportion Women in the Legislature and Republican Party.*

The first political opportunity I expected to positively affect women legislators' ability to caucus is the presence of women in the legislature. I expected that a moderate proportion of women would likely result in an organizing success because there would be enough women to participate but not so many that a caucus may be deemed unnecessary. In 2009, Colorado's State Legislature was 37% women. This ranked them 3<sup>rd</sup> in the country. This would place them on the high end of the spectrum where perhaps women would feel that a women's caucus was unnecessary.

In fact, many women legislators acknowledged that it was wanting to take advantage of their numbers that mattered: “What I saw was with that number of women overall [was] that I didn’t think there was a sense of collaborating as women as nearly as strong as it could have been, which was part of my motivation for forming the caucus” (Middleton 2011). It was for Representative Middleton (D) (like Beckwith 2007) more than women’s proportion that mattered. She wanted to mobilize those numbers for influence which triggered the creation of a caucus. This was recognized by the male legislative leadership as well:

I think when they looked around and saw how many women were there, they thought there is strength in these numbers, and many of them were chairing committees and many of them were in leadership positions or on the track to be in leadership positions. There were a whole lot of talented women who came in at that time and I think they thought “we can do a whole lot of things to better the quality of life for women in this state.” I think when you look around the room and think “Oh my god, look how many of us are here, we need to start working together on things. I think it was just the sheer number in the positions that they were in that brought them together. (Groff 2011)

Counter to my expectation that a large proportion of women may signal that women have enough influence as individuals and therefore a caucus is unnecessary, in this case, Representative Middleton (D) saw that despite a large proportion of women, there was a need to organize those women in order to have the level of influence she believed women should have within the institution.

Twenty two percent of the Republican Party in Colorado’s State House of Representatives was women in 2009. Of the four cases, this is the second largest proportion of Republican women. I predicted that Republican women who comprise a smaller percentage of the total Republican Party in a state may feel more pressure to conform to legislative norms and less likely to join a bipartisan group. In this case, a

larger proportion of Republican women is correlated with a successful caucus attempt. Women in the interviews did not mention their numbers with the Republican Party as a factor in their decision to participate in the caucus or not, but as will be seen in my discussion of frames below, strategic decisions on the part of caucus organizers tried to mitigate anticipated Republican Party leader objections.

*Proportion of Freshmen Women Legislators.*

In the case of Colorado, interview subjects did not specifically mention that newly elected women were particularly resistant to the idea of a caucus. Representative Middleton (D) was relatively new to the legislature when she began organizing, having only been elected in 2006. So her own enthusiasm was a factor as an entrepreneur. Upon election to the legislature, she was dissatisfied with the status quo which she interpreted as women's lack of influence despite their numbers. In this case, the influence of freshmen women legislators appears to be concentrated in this one legislator. The influence of term limits and the frequent turnover of legislators in Colorado are discussed below.

*Democratic Party Control.*

I predicted that Democratic control of the legislature would positively affect the launch of a women's caucus. I expect that, because of the Democratic Party's organization which lends itself to identity groups within the larger party, they will be more open to public displays of these identities as organized groups within institutions (Freeman 1986). One Democratic legislator voiced this explicitly, saying, "I still think that the Democratic Party, in my community and nationally, it's just a little more diverse.

It allows for those diverse ideas and opinions and I'm not sure that the Republican Party does" (Giron 2011).

Democrats controlled both houses of the legislature in 2009 when the caucus was first launched. One Democratic legislator indicated that Republican women may have received some pressure not to consort with the other party, but that it was the consequence of who was in the majority. She said, "When we were in the majority, I think there was much more pressure against them getting involved with us in anything. Now that they're in the majority, in the House anyway, I'm sensing that they're not as worried about that" (Ryden 2011). No Republican women reported any such pressure to disassociate with Democrats.

The caucus founder, Representative Middleton (D), did not indicate that a Democratic majority was at all considered in her decision to create a caucus. She did discuss her decision with the Speaker of the House, but not to seek permission, simply to let him know. She did admit they had a good relationship, but there was no indication that a Republican majority would have changed her strategy as she was not seeking any support from the legislature for the caucus. In Colorado, there is no history of institutional support for any type of caucus outside of party caucuses.

### *Party Competition*

I predicted that party competition would negatively impact an attempt at creating a women's caucus. I hypothesized that high party competition within a legislature would correlate with strong party discipline and hurt women's ability to work together across party lines. The margin of majority in the Colorado House of Representatives in 2009

was 16.9% - a large majority. This was not mentioned by any of the subjects as a factor positively or negatively affecting their attempt to organize.

*Party Polarization.*

I predicted that partisanship within a legislature would negatively affect the launch of a women's caucus by preventing women from trusting each other and finding common interests. Different party affiliations among women would indicate different opinions on a range of political issues limiting common ground. Also, high levels of party competition may strain relationships across the aisle as women compete as partisans for election. The perception of partisanship in Colorado was colored by whether or not a legislator was a member of the majority party or not. Colorado's legislature has certain rules which in some ways work against partisanship. For instance, every bill that is introduced has to be heard in committee. Likewise, anyone who appears to testify must be heard by the committee. This opens up the process and limits control by partisan committee chairs. It is still possible, however, for bills to die in committee despite these transparency measures. Representative Su Ryden (D) put it this way:

I think there's been a polarizing of philosophy over time, but I also, my own theory is that the Republicans had held power for so long, like forty years prior to 2004, so ever since the mid-sixties. I don't think they ever thought they would lose it. And so I think they were more magnanimous. They were more statesmanlike because they knew they could always do that and yet they didn't always have to. And they weren't always worried about the next election because they were always gonna be in power. So they were much nicer, I think, with that belief in their heads. And I think, this reversal that happened in 2004, I mean, it just shook their world... We, the Dems, were in the majority when I started two years [ago] and now we're in the minority. And of course I think when you're in the minority, you really notice it a lot more. I mean, I think we thought we were being very generous and collaborative and maybe we weren't as much as we thought we were, but there certainly is a sense of kind of we're gonna get you. And it's sort of like you carry a bill that, for any reason we don't like, we're...forget about it. (Ryden 2011)

When current women legislators held events at which former women legislators attended, there was a marked difference in experiences. Former members noted the increase in partisanship than the environment in which they served. As Representative Ryden (D) explained, “When we had the union of the former representatives and senators, several of them were just appalled at the behavior today and the partisan stuff that’s going on, and they, I wouldn’t be surprised if she (Middleton (D)) didn’t speak to some of them before she started it and have them say, ‘Yes, you guys need to really get together and get over this bickering’ cause they were pretty upset when they spoke that night about how people are acting” (Ryden 2011).

When asked if this partisanship would prove to be a problem for a women’s caucus, Former Democratic House Majority Leader Paul Weissmann asserted quite emphatically, “Yeah. Party trumps sex” (Weissmann 2011). When pressed however, he noted that historically Republican women were particularly successful policy-wise when they worked across the aisle:

The most effective legislators [between ‘92-‘96] were women, Republicans. And they were in the majority. They played issue by issue, they didn’t play partisan. You could tell. You had the chair of judiciary, a woman from Denver, Dottie Wham, you had chair of health and human services, Sally Hopper, you had vice chair of the budget committee, Claire Trailer. They were a key to anything you wanted to get done. This handful of women Republicans were key. You couldn’t do anything without them. (Weissmann 2011)

For the women legislators’ part, their decision to keep the caucus as a social network and avoid policy consensus enabled them to recruit Republican women who were reticent to participate. More will be said about this in the public policy hypothesis section below. Additionally, not all legislators saw party as the dividing line. Senator Ellen Roberts (R), for example, said (and Representative Ryden (D) agreed that),

“There’s definitely partisan politics, but I think in Colorado, particularly in my area, we will - on the western slope - we will band together more based on regional common interests and not necessarily partisan, but it’s kind of up to each individual legislator because there are some who work that way and then there’s others whose comfort zone is kind of only in their party caucus” (Roberts 2011). Also, it was common for women to admit that most bills were not partisan and therefore did not face opposition or challenge any established norms. It was only on controversial issues that partisanship became an issue. Other legislators noted that it wasn’t Republican women who were reluctant to join but rather Tea Party Republican women, indicating that ideology more than party in isolation was influencing the caucus’ ability to recruit women from both parties.

Overall, despite partisanship being acknowledged by members, overwhelmingly the atmosphere was described as collegial:

I would say that the two parties definitely have their philosophical differences, but that, I think there’s certainly a level of collegiality here in Colorado that maybe some other states maybe don’t have... I think we’ve had some leaders in the past that have set the tone for that. The past two Speakers of the House have definitely been that way. I don’t know that much about the Senate, but the past two Speakers and the current Speaker, I mean, there’s a real effort to create an atmosphere of civility. (Murray 2011)

Despite an increase in partisanship observed by former and current members, the legislative environment is still largely perceived as a collegial one in which the issue determines the level of resistance by party line voters and committee chairmen. Institutional rules and a tone set by leadership have contributed to this collegial atmosphere where issue rather than party identity regulates all behavior and choices of association. Regardless, women legislators are not ready to have policy discussions as a part of the caucus. More about this decision will follow in the public policy section and

its effect on the ability of women legislators in Colorado to successfully launch a women's caucus.

*Presence of Other Caucuses.*

I predicted that the existence of other caucuses within a legislature, particularly a black caucus, would positively affect a caucus launch by normalizing alternative organizing outside of party structures. Caucuses outside of party caucuses are not prolific in Colorado. Some caucuses were mentioned such as pro-choice, labor, sportsman, small business, and a newly emerging green caucus, but none were identified as influential or having very formal leadership structures or meeting schedules. In fact, the Green Caucus was emerging during my interview phase, and the leaders of that group had contacted members of the women's caucus for advice about how to get started. There was no Black or Hispanic Caucus in Colorado in 2009.

Non-party caucuses were perceived by legislative leadership as non-essential, non-threatening, and not influential. This was in part due to their informal structure as well as their reluctance or inability to command uniform votes from their members. When asked why groups would emerge, one legislative leader hypothesized that it gave groups with shared interests legitimacy to organize information meetings and bring players to the table for discussion. One woman legislator, in discussing her participation in these groups, explained that building relationships through these groups was the first step to creating and working to pass legislation.

Because non-party caucuses were not seen as particularly influential in this legislature, they were not referenced as particularly important in the creation of a women's caucus. Representative Middleton (D) did not look to other groups for modeling

or validation. Positively, other caucuses did not act in competition with the women's caucus for time or loyalty.

*Racial Diversity of Women Legislators.*

There are very few legislators of color in the Colorado legislature. The three women of color in the Colorado legislature in 2009 made up only 8% of all women legislators, the smallest percentage in any of my four cases (CAWP). One Hispanic woman legislator I interviewed mentioned an interest in participating in a caucus based on race identity, but that small numbers were an obstacle to creating such a group. For her part, she was very enthusiastic about the possibility of influencing public policy on women's issues but was not hopeful that would be possible through the women's caucus created in Colorado because of its social networking focus and aversion to public policy position taking.

*Size of the Legislature.*

The size of the legislature was another resource predicted to assist women in organizing. Specifically, smaller legislatures are expected to breed familiarity. This familiarity may result in trust across party lines and may lead to conversations in which women legislators recognize their common interests. No subjects mentioned the size of the legislature as positively or negatively affecting the decision to organize a caucus. Although many women mentioned the need to get to know each other as a motivation to participate in the caucus, the size of the legislature was not the challenge associated with this motivation. This will be discussed further in the additional factors section specifically addressing Amendment 41 which limits socializing among legislators by limiting lobbying influence.

## Resources

### *External Organizations*

I predicted that women's organizations outside the legislature would be another resource for women legislators in making an attempt to create a women's caucus. In the case of Colorado, the initiative for the women's caucus was internal. There was not external pressure from women's groups to create a women's caucus. Instead, a sitting representative was motivated to form a group and sought out support to fund this caucus from external organizations.

The Women's Foundation and the Metropolitan State College of Denver were integral to the success of the caucus in this case particularly because of the ethics inquiry. Without an external organization to manage the funding, it is unlikely the caucus would have gone forward, as I discussed in the caucus narrative section above. The ethics laws affecting Colorado legislators' abilities to raise and spend funds for any purpose, even legitimate political purposes, are closely regulated by Amendment 41 (Colorado State Legislature 2006). Many women legislators expressed concern about the funding for the group and would not have felt comfortable moving forward without the decision from the Commission and the management by the Metropolitan State College of Denver.

### *Professionalism and Staff Size.*

The level of professionalism was predicted to positively affect the women's caucus attempt by providing women legislators with staff and time. The Colorado professionalism level as measured in Chapter 4 (according to Squire 2007) ranked them 15<sup>th</sup> in the nation, making them a highly professional legislature. One concern was

whether or not legislators would have the time to advance the purpose of the caucus beyond a social networking function. Representative Beth McCann (D) stated,

I personally would like to see it be more substantive, but whether anybody or even myself has the time to even do that is another question. We just, we don't have staff, and it's just ridiculous. So you really, like, every night I go home and I do an hour and a half or so or two hours of e-mail. It's just ridiculous. And, you can't keep up with all that, and then you've got your bills, and then you've got trying to, I mean stacks of materials to read. Yeah, everything is very labor-intensive for the legislator. We just...it's frustrating. (McCann 2011)

More professional legislatures also may provide more staff which could take on some of the labor involved in managing a caucus. As was seen in Chapter 4, Colorado has fewer staffers than either New Jersey or Pennsylvania. In 2009, they had 230 permanent staffers and only 345 total staffers during session. This was even fewer than Iowa who had fewer permanent staffers at 191, but more during the session at 370 (NCSL). Volunteer caucus staffer, Laura Hoeppner explains,

You know our state government budget is so tight. Staffing is so low on anything. People who would normally have an interest in this and would be doing it on the side in their lunch hours like clerks or secretaries don't have the bandwidth for it, I don't think and the state is not going to come up with funding for this in my lifetime. This is just beyond the scope of what Coloradans think the government should be doing. (Hoeppner 2011)

Here, she is pointing out the importance of the outside funding which makes her position possible. Because Representative Middleton (D) was motivated to and able to secure outside funding, this caucus launch was possible. Without the funding provided by the Women's Foundation, the caucus may not have been successful because institutional support is not available. These funds were used to finance the initial social activities and the staffer whose time and work was critical to the launch. As was previously noted, the amount of time and work necessary to launch a new group was beyond what the part-time legislative staffers would have been able to accomplish.

*Term Limits.*

Colorado's legislature is the only one of my four case studies which has term limits. I had predicted that term limited states would be less likely to have successful attempts to create a women's caucus because of the pressures of time in office affecting their decision to organize or participate in a caucus. Likewise as became apparent in the New Jersey case, experience as a result of a long tenure in the legislature may be important for the launching of a caucus. No subjects mentioned term limits as positively or negatively affecting the decision to caucus, although Representative Middleton (D) did note that term limits hurt legislators' ability to get to know one another. A caucus, in her view, was a way to resolve that challenge. In this case, Representative Middleton (D), the initiator of the caucus, began organizing the women's caucus almost immediately having assumed office in 2008. She did, however, in recruiting early board members, tap those with longer tenures. Senator Williams (D) had served eight years in the House before serving in the Senate. Representative Looper (R) had served since 2006, and Senator Spence (R) had served in the State House of Representatives since 1999.

Another legislator cited term limits as a positive for women more generally in Colorado as it limited "white male control" of the legislature and allowed for greater incorporation of women legislators more broadly:

We also have term limits, so you don't have this buildup of power that stays with some old white guy, that's been there forever. We just don't, we just can't have that because no one can stay more than eight years, so it's very different, I think, that an institution where people have been there a long time and they've built up their coalitions and you're trying to break into that. It's just much easier here to get your bills passed, to get to become in leadership because you don't have much time and nobody has much time and you have to do it, so I think that has a huge impact. (McCann 2011)

Term limits were cited as a concern for caucus maintenance, however, and I discuss this further in the epilogue of this chapter.

### Frames

#### *Gender Consciousness.*

Gender consciousness was a frame expected to be employed in states with successful caucus attempts. Recognition among women legislators of common interests was expected to be associated with a successful attempt to create a women's caucus because I predicted it would be a useful argument for why a women's caucus would be necessary. Women legislators in Colorado did acknowledge that women bring a different perspective to the legislature. For example, Representative Ryden (D) said,

I think we have a lot of similar issues or experiences, like having children, families, work issues, overcoming discrimination and I think, I guess, older women probably feel like they had a lot more issues than a lot of younger women do, and most women – it's mostly a generational thing because women that are closer to my age, we share a lot of things in common, college experiences, etc. because I don't think most of us were that politically active, even in our earlier days. But as the women get younger, their issues, I think, are different and, but they still get along because they have similar experiences that they can, that they have in common, even if they're in different parties. (Ryden 2011)

She went on to describe an example of a time in committee when the women from both sides of the aisle “stood together against the men” on an issue involving alcohol and children. She cited their experience as mothers as motivating the consensus. She noted, however, that it was never discussed or strategized, it just happened organically as a result of their life experience.

One legislator specifically mentioned budgeting as an area where women make a difference as a consequence of their role in the family. Representative Labuda (D) said, “I do think if there were more women, we would be more demanding of where everything is

spent because I think as women most of us have been the ones who've handled the family budget and I think that makes a difference" (Labuda 2011).

A difference of style was attributed to women legislators as a consequence of gender. Representative Millie Hamner (D) said, "I believe that the traits that are typically assigned to women - being collaborative and wanting to [make] friends - I think those kinds of skills can work better for bipartisanship and collaborative solutions than polarized argumentative points of view" (Hamner 2011). Representative Deb Gardner (D) added,

I think it's possible for women to connect on a different level, I think, and not every woman all the time, I mean, we all have our other things, too, that are part of our lives, but I think there is some opportunity there for women to make that connection and then be able to have the conversation about a difficult issue in a way that is maybe more open to solutions and more open to a real honest dialogue about it just because that's kind of where women tend to come from in our life experiences. (Gardner 2011)

Some legislators explained women's difference by comparing their behaviors to male legislators. Representative Carole Murray (R) put it this way:

My mom was a stay-at-home mom and she always railed, she said, "What we need is more women in government to clean house and to do the right thing and to do the work." Instead of just puffing their chests out and acting like they're big shots. And that's really true. I really think that for the most part women tend to get into the details of government maybe more than men do. They understand how to bring in stakeholders to the table, when you have a bill, you bring in various stakeholders and try to get them to work through the issues and I, just in a general way, men are not as good at that, I think. (Murray 2011)

Representative Angela Giron (D) agreed, saying,

I mean women process a lot more. I am a processor. Not all women do, but I think the women in the group are all processors. So to be able to talk a lot more on things instead of just tossing them out instead of just move on. All the males are just "let's move on", they don't like long meetings, they tire of the process and just want to make a decision. We will make a decision, but let's just talk about it so we don't have to come back to that same decision. I think it is that comfort level of just automatically feeling - maybe that's me individually because I mostly

worked with women I have felt the benefits of working with women - of hard work of doing whatever and being more collaborative. I have always worked in a team. I have never worked just on a project. Women do that to a greater degree. (Giron 2011)

She tempered this, however, by adding, “Because a person is a particular gender, a female, doesn’t mean they know or understand women’s issues. To me that doesn’t mean anything at all” (Giron 2011).

Representative McCann (D) identified the struggle for women seeking to represent women more broadly while adhering to their party identity as well. She said, “Traditionally, the leaders in the women movement are Democratic because it’s just sort of the way it is. But that said, there are certainly Republican women who feel strongly about women’s issues, so it’s probably a combination. We probably both have various reasons for doing it...I think it just depends on the individual, what their experience has been” (McCann 2011).

When asked if women bring a difference to the institution, even a legislator who expressed opposition to the caucus, feeling it was unnecessary and inappropriate, agreed that women make a difference. Senator Roberts (R) said,

I’m sure, and I - it could be a sweeping generalization, but I think by and large we are here for solution making and that’s why we’d look forward to a day where we were more of the decision makers, not to the exclusion of the males, but I think we bring different skill sets to the table in terms of discussing issues, negotiating what’s a win, those are all and again, I think it goes back to sort of innate differences but also environmental, that as we, if you raise children, you find yourself sort of repeatedly saying, “Well, you can’t get everything you want” and so that again compromising isn’t a dirty word. It means that we all can maybe try and get along a little better. (Roberts 2011)

Male legislative leadership acknowledged this gender difference as well:

You have a good percentage of the legislature who are women, and I believe that does affect public policy. On the margins there are some different perspectives. Either in the way men and women are raised or perceptions of them or priorities

that they each come to the table with. That affects the outcome. I think the outcome is affected because there are a lot of women in the legislature. (Weissmann 2011)

While women and men legislators in Colorado acknowledged women's different styles and contributions to the legislature, this was not necessarily connected to caucus creation. A shared interest in women's historical contribution to politics in the state has become the focus of the group and a non-controversial theme which has attracted even reluctant legislators to the caucus. As I will discuss later, public policy from a gendered perspective is not something participants are willing to incorporate at this time and while women's different historical experience with politics is a shared interest contributing to the success of the caucus, it has not resulted in shared policy positions or priorities.

#### *Party Dissatisfaction.*

I predicted that women would be motivated to caucus if they were dissatisfied with party structures and their responses to policy issues as had previously been demonstrated at the federal level. I also predicted that the use of this dissatisfaction as a frame for the caucus would be correlated with successful attempts to create a women's caucus.

Subjects disagreed about whether or not women experienced discrimination by party leaders. Some had not experienced it themselves but observed it happening to others. For example, Representative Hamner (D) observed gender differences in behavior between legislators and non-legislative co-workers. She said, "I do believe that there are times when other women in the organization maybe aren't being treated as respectfully as they could be, or there are some gender stereotypes, maybe in the clerk positions, maybe

in the lobbyist positions. The way a legislator might act with a female lobbyist - there are probably some interesting dynamics going on there" (Hamner 2011).

Some had not seen it at all among legislators saying, "I will tell you I feel like an equal here. I don't feel that I am being treated differently because I am a woman" (Hamner 2011), while others admitted to feeling left out of the real decision making despite women holding leadership positions. For example, Representative Ryden (D) said,

Yes, there's still the tree house syndrome going on. You know, where they get up in the tree and pull up the ladder behind them and try to hide...But in public I have not felt any real discrimination or harassment. I do think there could be some issues with some of our younger legislators being exposed to some of that kind of behavior, maybe not . . . I don't know . . . maybe some of the guys aren't really intentionally doing it, but having been around awhile, we kind of, there's that sort of radar there that you're kind of like, "Eh, wait a minute, fella, you're getting a little too cozy" and I think they are intimidating some of our legislators a little bit in that way. (Ryden 2011)

When asked why men would be behaving in this way she explained,

I just think it's a different style. I think it's these guys really have a hard time, if they've not been around women – and you can tell the guys that have worked with women or have had strong women in their families or have grown up with women or and even the younger people, but not always the younger people, it just still sort of depends on how they were raised and what the whole community culture was...but I think that there are some guys that just never have had that much contact with women in a professional setting. It's always been their wife, their kids, and not really in business, so they really don't know what to do, and I think sometimes they do the wrong thing just because they're not really sure or then they sort of get kind of defensive because, "Well, you're expecting me to do this, I'm not going to", you know? (Ryden 2011)

A former Democratic male legislative leader recognized possible bias against women in the legislature, but also saw their ability to overcome it, saying,

I don't think they are treated any differently. Again, that is a question probably answered better by them than it is me. I don't think so. I used to watch pretty carefully how the Republicans treated Nancy Spence (R). She was the only woman in the Republican caucus. At times it seemed they were being kind of as a whole disrespectful, or not including her in conversations. But when we were

passing progressive education legislation, she was the one I'd go to to round up and keep in line all of the Republican caucus because we needed every single one of their votes. When they wanted to offer amendments that I thought would damage the bill she would shut that down, so they respected her on the one hand. And she would say things on occasion, "I'm going to have to get the boys in line" so it might be easier to ask them, but it seemed at times they kind of dismissed her, but when we needed something done on the floor and we weren't going to have bipartisan way I could go to her and she could make it up. (Groff 2011)

Representative Hamner (D) explained that in certain circumstances she uses her gender to her advantage, saying, "I have found that capitalizing on the typical relationship between a man and a woman can work for legislators. I try to use my charm when needed" (Hamner 2011). Representative Giron (D) added, "There are sort of different standards in that way for guys, and it's the same thing in every work environment. 'Oh you're not smiling today,' I don't think they'd say that to a man. But the freedom, I tend to be a hugger, but a man?" (Giron 2011).

Democratic legislators reported feeling free to vote their conscience and not feeling that leadership was heavy handed in demanding party loyalty or exacting any kind of revenge. As far as recruitment of women in the Democratic Party to run for office, a former legislative leader explained that while gender-based decisions are not common, women's difference did distinguish them as good potential candidates:<sup>25</sup>

We didn't go out to recruit women specifically, but so often when we went out and recruited candidates, women rose to the top, because they were not only qualified but bring a certain perspective, and once you explain that to a man he goes "Oh, yeah, well I can see that happening," but it's not our default shot. And when you see the impacts that women are having, it's just bringing a reality check to the legislature and to policy, the conversation and process that goes on in the state. (Groff 2011)

Despite this, one legislator did identify problems in the party caucus, saying,

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<sup>25</sup> Republican legislative leaders were contacted, but schedule conflicts did not permit interviews.

Oh, there are always issues, I mean, in terms of like the way we're treated on the floor or the way we're treated in committee, I think that's all very much equal, and people talking to me about their bills and trying to get bills passed and working on my vote, but within the caucus, it's pretty much the old boys stuff still. I mean, you look at our leadership - we have women, older women in most of the positions except the top. And so we have a young man, and then his chief of staff is a man and I can see that they're grooming - there are a couple of young men that they're grooming, you can kind of tell; they include them in things, and we don't necessarily get included. So, it's still there. (McCann 2011)

When asked if a women's caucus could help address this problem, Representative McCann (D) said,

That's a good question. You know, we haven't, we haven't talked about it at a caucus, and I think that the caucus, most of what we do is social, and it's good because then we do get to meet the Republican women on a more informal basis, but there hasn't been much talk about uniting as women...I think, if we had more opportunity to actually talk about those issues, it would be, it would be possible. But this year we haven't. Last year Representative Middleton (D) was head and she was more into that part of it, and so we had some little bit of discussion, but you know I haven't really talked to the Republican women about how they feel about their leadership and we just haven't had that opportunity. It would be interesting to do. (McCann 2011)

Some legislators admitted that outside the institution women still experience bias. Representative Murray (R) said,

I think especially people from the outside, it's the usual thing that minorities experience is that somebody may look past a woman and think that the man is in charge of the room. And I've been to cocktail hours and those kinds of things, where I walk in and I start to take somebody's hand and they're looking past me to the man that's behind me and taking his hand. So, I mean, that stuff happens. (Murray 2011)

When pressed if this occurs among legislators, she added, 'No. I mean, occasionally, there's an Alpha male in the group, but that is not typical. It's, in fact, I think it's

probably pretty awkward for them because they are maybe not accustomed to having women as equals, so they tend to behave themselves" (Murray 2011).

As in New Jersey, women legislators felt that younger women were more susceptible to gender bias. One legislator stated that her age, over 50, insulated her from any type of questionable interactions. This is an example of how intersectionality complicates how gender affects institutional norms and behaviors. Some women may have different experiences of gender bias as a result of another identity such as age or race. A women's caucus offers these women an opportunity to discover and discuss this with other women who may have strategies for dealing with these challenges. Alternatively, these other identities may make relating to other women more difficult if race or age become divisive for women.

As far as dissatisfaction with parties motivating the creation of the women's caucus, there is no evidence supporting that hypothesis. Some women do feel bias in the institution or within their party but did not explicitly connect that to the need for a caucus. Nor did any participants beyond one feel that a caucus would potentially affect women's status in the parties or institution at large. Addressing bias in the institution was not one of the three purposes originally agreed upon by the initial participants (as discussed in the caucus narrative section above).

### *Women in Leadership.*

I predicted that state's with low levels of women in leadership positions may be more likely to have successful caucus attempts because it would be a frame women could utilize in organizing. If women felt excluded from leadership, a bipartisan group that could advocate for women's selection for leadership posts might be a compelling

argument to organize. In Colorado, subject responses were mixed. Some legislators cited the history of women in leadership positions indicating that there was not a dearth of women with positions within parties and the legislative leadership. Most agreed that they felt able to move up within the party leadership despite their gender. Representative Murray (R), for example, said, “I would say that my experience has been that Colorado is very open to women taking leadership roles. You know, I used to be the head of the Chamber of Commerce, and there were just as many women in leadership roles and men looking to women to lead as the men, so I’ve always felt like this is a great state for women to excel” (Murray 2011). She did add, however, “I would say that overall, it’s very good. I would say there are pockets of traditionalism in the [Republican] Party, and I think that’s more of an age thing” (Murray 2011).

Other women pointed out that having a position and having influence are not the same thing. Some expressed disappointment that in some cases women were only placeholders or symbolic rather than real power players in the process.

For example, Senator Ellen Roberts (R) noted,

We’ve never had a woman governor, we don’t have, we’ve never had a woman senator, U.S. senator, we have only had a couple of women in Congress, we’ve had maybe one woman speaker. We’re at, while we may seem, we have a lot of numbers, the place where I would consider us to be more of a role model is less about the numbers than about the places where they’re located... It’s not good when we only can name on a couple of fingers... You can have a lot of women in positions, but tone and the spirit of policymaking isn’t necessarily determined by the number of women in the slot; it’s kind of what they do with it. (Roberts 2011)

Representative McCann (D) agreed, saying,

Our Assistant Minority Leader is a woman, who I think is well-regarded, but I don’t think she has a lot of power. Now, we do have one woman who is our Whip, Claire Levy, who I think is...has asserted herself and been able to get herself in a position of power, so it’s not totally that way, and I do think we have some very strong women... Majority Leader Amy Stephens is a very powerful woman. I

think she actually may be more effective in her party than the women are in our party in a way. (McCann 2011)

Representative Giron (D) also said, “What I do find in our caucus and in the legislature, when I look at who are the real movers and shakers, whether they have the title or not, are all men” (Giron 2011).

Representative Ryden (D) spoke directly to the relationship between a women’s caucus and women in leadership, saying,

Right now I just don’t see that they’re feeling a compelling need [to require consensus on issues in the women’s caucus]....Having so many women, we’ve got in our leadership in the Democrats, we’ve got our Minority Leader is a guy and everybody else on leadership is female. And on the other side, their Majority Leader is female, Speaker’s male, they’re mostly men with one. (Ryden 2011)

Here, she is indicating that having so many women in leadership eliminates the need for the women’s caucus to have policy as a priority. It doesn’t eliminate the need for a social caucus, but does affect the purpose of the caucus from this legislator’s perspective. She continued,

I feel like I’m included whenever I want to be...We don’t have any men that are just lording it over us or acting like they’re more important or, I mean, I can’t think of a guy in our caucus that’s that way...it’s usually a pretty congenial – if we disagree, it’s on policy or something like that – I just don’t see a lot of gender issues going on there. (Ryden 2011)

An issue that came up for both Democratic and Republican women legislators was an obvious lack of women in leadership positions in the Senate despite Democratic women being in the majority. Women on both sides of the aisle in the House were disappointed that Democratic women were not holding leadership positions. For example, Senator Roberts (R) observed, “It’s interesting here because the Senate, even though there’s so many Democratic women senators, the leadership is male and – other than the

speaker pro tempore – and certainly seems to be handled in that way, too, kind of dominated” (Roberts 2011). Democratic Representative Labuda agreed, noting,

I look at the state senate where a majority of the Democrats are women and yet they elected a man as President of the Senate and a man as majority leader and they could have, they have got some very strong, good women over there - why did they pick those two men instead of women? I don't understand that. Because somehow I can assure you that when men were in the majority, they never voted for women for anything. (Labuda 2011)

From the male perspective, Weissmann, former legislative leader, noted that women are not just party figureheads but very incorporated into the power structure. He said,

They are absolutely at the table and they have been for years in Colorado. You look at the committee chairs and there are a good number of women. Vice chairs same way. You look at the Democratic Caucus in the house, our leadership positions are one guy and the rest women. Quite frankly the only reason it's one guy is because in the minority race there are only two guys that ran. If we'd still been a majority, who knows what it would have been. If it had been a guy against a woman for speaker, that could have gone either way. They have been there for a long time. (Weissmann 2011)

Former Democratic Senate President Peter Groff discussed his commitment to diversity among leadership, explaining that balance was important to him. He also admitted that, while no one cleared the women's caucus with him, he was committed to incorporating women into the leadership structure without that pressure. He said,

When I was president I went out of my way to make sure Betty Boyd was president pro-tempore. First, I had an Hispanic and then wanted to make sure a woman was part of that. When they talked to the majority leader about committee chairs, I said “We need to make sure we have some balance here in terms of chairmen and vice chairmen.” In the vice chair piece looking at who then would become chair, or who we kind of wanted in that leadership pipeline. But they didn't come to me and say “Hey, we're going to create this women's caucus, we're going to do x,y, and z.” It was just very evident on our side of the isle that the women were going to be part of the process. (Groff 2011)

He added later, “Just the sheer number and the clear talent of women have made it easier for them to be part of the leadership in Colorado” (Groff 2011). Representative Giron (D), however, indicated that the decision to have Betty Boyd as Senate Pro Tempore was the result of attention brought to the lack of women in leadership. She shared that, “It was two years ago when I think the women had some kind of meeting and they said there are issues, so Betty Boyd became senate pro tempore and I don’t think that means anything. So they have a seat at the table?” She was not satisfied that women arguing for the position and attaining it actually impacted the decision making power of the party. She also noted the men in leadership and their family situations with small children. She questioned women’s ability to hold the same position with the same circumstances, saying, “How many were able to be effective and get into leadership if they had little ones?” (Giron 2011).

While perspectives were mixed about whether women were fully incorporated into the leadership structures or not, no subjects indicated that the creation of a caucus was to address that problem explicitly. Representative Middleton (D) did not indicate this was on her mind, the initial participants did not identify this as a priority for the caucus, and no subsequent caucus activities have at all addressed women’s influence within the institution.

#### *Caucus Type.*

I predicted that women’s caucuses which chose to set public policy as a priority were less likely to be successful than attempts to create a women’s caucus which did not have policy formation as a purpose for the group. I predicted that policy differences among women would stifle the launch of a bipartisan group. In Colorado, it was

determined early on by the entrepreneur and confirmed by participants that this caucus would not deal with policy. While Representative Middleton (D) had hoped once initial bonds were created among the women that policy may become a part of the caucus' mission, she acknowledged that initially it would hurt her ability to convince women to participate. Representative Labuda (D) explained the decision in this way:

One thing we agreed on early on is that we probably would not take any stances on issues, everybody would be free to vote the way she wanted to because when we first started, there was a women's issue of some sort that was coming up, but one of the women legislators did not feel comfortable with it, and so we decided right then and there we might discuss different bills that are coming up, but we would never take a vote to say whether we would support or not because you know how that goes - even if all 41% of us were there and one person says, "No, I don't like it," that person automatically is labeled not a true woman or something like that. And so we want to avoid that, so we don't take issues on, we don't support any bills or oppose any bills. (Labuda 2011)

Democratic Representative Murray (R) explained,

I think there was some talk of trying to create some kind of a common political agenda, and we really struggled with that as Republicans because they didn't really get our philosophy, so all of the topics they would bring up, we'd look at one another and go, "We can't go there"...I don't know that we're gonna do any kind of a political agenda or not. I think probably Republican women are probably pretty uncomfortable with that. (Murray 2011)

She continued, "I'd prefer the networking and not do anything official. I just don't feel like it's appropriate" (Murray 2011).

More than one subject explained that the issue of domestic violence was put forth initially as one on which women could possibly agree. It was quickly abandoned when a Republican legislator joked that a solution to domestic violence was to support her legislation on gun rights. Another controversial point that had to be quickly dispensed with was vaccinations for children. It was clear from the start that Democratic and Republican legislators were unlikely to find common ground policy-wise. One

Republican legislator explained why a social networking focus was more appropriate for the group, saying,

I think it's best to stay away from policy because we don't understand where the other side is and that's the nature of belonging to a different party, there is an innate difference between us. And there's no way that you can force that. Now you can have personal relationships with people and on some issues that are not part of that ideological core, you can bring them in, but I can tell you that there are a lot of people, whether it's men or women, if their name's on a bill and it's a Democrat and I'm a Republican and they're a Democrat, it's like, "Oh, that person's name's on that bill, that's a no." You don't want that to ever happen to you as a legislator because that reduces your effectiveness, so anything that you can do to increase those positive relationships is good for you, for your political survival in terms of passing a few bills occasionally. Not to mention, like I say, just the joy of sharing time with sharp women. (Murray 2011)

The caucus staffer explained,

While I definitely have political interests but for issues and gender, this is not that space. This is a space for people to come to have conversations. I think there is inherent value in that. Building relationships, seeing each other, not in black and white terms, good versus evil. I think too often when we separate these people and don't let them have those conversations that's what ends up happening. Men used to do it on the golf course and in the bar. Women are now doing it in a formal structure called women's caucuses. We tend to be that way; we form clubs. Women who are in leadership have been in the school PTO, have worked on the church committees, we've done that kind of stuff, so it's very familiar to us, so it's very natural to me to have this kind of environment. So to have a legislative agenda, I'd rather see that coming from outside from actual advocates. (Hoeppner 2011)

The decision to prioritize the social networking function of the caucus was frustrating for some Democratic women who felt if a caucus was not going to deal with issues, what is the point?

For example, one Democratic legislator put it this way, "We are still in that kind of relationship-building stage, if you will, coalition-building stage, and that... but if we don't come around to doing something kind of substantive, then it probably wouldn't be something I'd continue to participate in just because, we have enough of just getting

together; there are other opportunities for that" (Gardner 2011). Representative Hamner (D) also added, "I would like it to be more in terms of, what are some of the issues that can improve quality of life? What are the issues facing women in Colorado? And then what are some bills that we might be able to sponsor or things that we might be able to promote?" (Hamner 2011).

One Democratic representative had this expectation for the future of the caucus: "I would at a minimum expect that we are in a more organized or agenda format talking about issues that are relevant to women and how do we stack up in Colorado with women in general across this country and other countries. I think women and children don't fare very well" (Giron 2011). Representative Gardner (D) shared this expectation, saying,

My hope would be that if either we initiate attention to some issue or if there were an issue that came from the outside, that we could come together as a group and talk about it and figure out if we wanted to kind of operate as a group in terms of, support or not support, and the ideal I think would be if as a group we identified an issue because the women's caucus is bipartisan and what a great opportunity to, even just the social piece is a way to form relationships with people across the aisle in a way that you maybe wouldn't normally, and so that part's good because then when you do have bills that are not necessarily around women's issues you have a relationship with women across the aisle, so that's a good thing. Because that is hugely, that whole relationship thing is obviously hugely important in a lot of things, so I think that would be, I can see the opportunity that we could come together as a caucus if there was a particular issue that we could agree upon. (Gardner 2011)

Representative Ryden (D) agreed identifying her goal for the newly formed caucus to ultimately include policy, saying,

I think it would be to identify some really serious issues that we can agree on, some real meaningful issues beyond just socializing and getting to know each other... My hope would be to get to know more of those other women better and try to break down barriers and try not to have a knee jerk reaction. And for the caucus, I think we're very proud of the fact that we have the highest percentage of women in the legislature of any state, and I think we sense that we could do something with those numbers if we chose to. (Ryden 2011)

She hypothesized the kind of conditions that would have to be present for that to occur, saying,

I think we had a lot of building to do before we could get to that point where [we] could all buy in on something. So, I think at some point we probably could and again, it depends on what's going on around us. If suddenly there's a whole lot of discrimination cases that come up or there's a real big issue that comes out into the media, I think we could probably get women on board to do a women's caucus kind of bill. (Ryden 2011)

She identified choice and other health care issues as policy issues that would definitely need to be avoided. Other legislators agreed with this assessment of "hot button" issues. The caucus staffer concisely explains the impasse, saying, "When you are a democratic liberal woman you have this perspective that everyone is going to be on board with you for something, and when you are a conservative woman you have this perspective that 'of course this makes sense, this is perfectly reasonable' but then when you sit in the room together, even the obvious isn't going to get that kind of support" (Hoeppner 2011).

Representative McCann (D) pointed out the limitations of an only social caucus saying, "It's not seen as powerful. It's really not. It's more social" (McCann 2011). One former Democratic male leader indicated that, from his point of view, an agenda would be important for the caucus if it were to be successful. Groff (D) explained,

I think there are so many other meetings and things that elected officials have to do during the session, so if there is a reason not to go to a meeting or to a gathering, you don't go. So I think they have to give reason and give action to the caucus. I think if they do that then we'll be able to hang together. If not, they may meet once or twice early in the session when things are going slow but not later on. So they really have to give it some action and give it a reason to meet. (Groff 2011)

In contradiction, however, former Democratic leader Weissmann said, "I just don't believe it's productive for the institution. I think that people have more power and ability if they are a legislator and they work with other legislators. I don't know you have any

more power and authority if you team up" (Weissmann 2011). This is in contradiction to an earlier statement he made indicating that the reason non-party caucuses were not influential was due to their lack of vote cohesion on issues. When asked about male reaction to the caucus, the women's caucus staffer reported,

I think that focusing on the histories last year was a big part of the reason that we didn't end up with a lot of negative energy. I think that the people saw that it was pretty non-threatening and that's okay. I think that if it became threatening, we'd have a problem. (Hoepner 2011)

Here she is indicating that the focus on women's history rather than policy is a protection for the caucus, isolating it from opposition from party leadership or male colleagues.

The one subject who identified as a non-participant explained her ambivalence in this way:

I feel like sometimes women's issues get stuck in the past...I feel like sometimes what are the women's issues of the 70s or the 80s are pretty much, we're just repeating the same refrain. And we have made progress in certain areas, but we kind of get stuck in the same "Oh, these are women's issues" and of course, I mean, I have two kids who are now grown, but I've taken care of a dying parent, I would want us to be able to acknowledge that women do typically have a little bit different role in the family than the man does. And I welcomed that and I...but sometimes it seems like we have limited ourselves to just those kinds of issues or say pay equity. And while pay equity is important, there are other factors that as time has gone on...sometimes I think we undermine our own power because we don't advance to some other issues. And, we now have women, a lot of women engineers, women astronauts, women in business, and we should, I think, have our issues match current day and reality. And I don't know that I have an agenda that I would put out there. I just would like to suggest that we have to break out of a mold that we created for ourselves. (Roberts 2011)

It was this perception of feminism more broadly that turned her off from the idea of a caucus in general despite the caucus only being social in nature. It is clear from the evidence gathered from these subjects that, while an agenda would be important for gaining influence within the institution and satisfying some Democratic legislators' expectations of a women's caucus, it would have been detrimental to the attempt to create

a women's caucus in this state. Republican women were reticent in the first place and were much more inclined to participate once the decision to stay away from policy was made. Although there is hope among some Democrats that relationship building will lead to policy achievement, for now the focus of the caucus remains celebrating women more generally as historical heroes looked to with admiration and in the present as potential friends within the legislature.

I predicted in the previous chapter that caucuses that set socializing as the top priority for organizing a caucus were more likely to succeed than those who set public policy as their primary function. From the start, the Colorado Women's Legislative Caucus was framed as a caucus whose purpose was to build relationships between women and recognize publically the role of women in politics throughout the state. Representative Labuda (D) explained the motivation for creating a caucus was to develop relationships among women, saying,

It was basically we need to get together, just to talk women's talk and have fun, get to know one another because you always work together even if you have disagreements about things, you always work together better if you know personal things about people on the other side of the aisle. And I'd learned a lot about my fellow legislators because of things like the women's caucus. Anytime I can get together with just a few of them and we talk, we have more in common than we don't. (Labuda 2011)

Founder Representative Middleton (D) recognized that initially the sole purpose of the caucus had to be social if public policy were ever to be on the table. She said,

Without actually knowing each other and having a personal connection it's harder to get people to collaborate around issues and it's harder to really work with them as much as you would like to be able to convince them that they should be supporting this...I think in particular there were issues that are specifically around women and girls that could have been handled, we could have moved the needle a lot more broadly, and I think we didn't, so I wanted to figure out how to fix that and I thought one way was actually to start the caucus, but you couldn't go in and

form a caucus and say, “We’re gonna form a caucus to fix these things.” We’re gonna form a caucus to actually recognize that being a woman in the legislature is, in fact, distinct, meaningful, and was, in fact, rare for a lot of years. (Middleton 2011)

As I have discussed previously, this decision to avoid public policy and instead focus on social networking and celebrating women’s history was vital for the successful recruitment of Republican participants and to ward off opposition from party leaders or male colleagues. Now, I will present evidence from my interview subjects on their feelings about the social nature of the caucus.

Representative Labuda (D) explained the social benefits of caucusing in this way, “I talk with men a different way than I talk with women. It’s, we’re - that may be genetic in us, it may be the way we were raised, but women talk a different way than men do, and that’s just a fact. I feel more comfortable around women than I do around a bunch of men, just a fact” (Labuda 2011).

Many legislators pointed out the need for a social caucus because of a recent restriction on lobbying called Amendment 41 which was widely perceived as limiting legislators’ ability to get to know one another. Representative Ryden (D) explained it in this way:

It’s not that there aren’t a lot of events now, but they’re all just very, like, brief little one-hour cocktail parties and things like that. And usually with a focus of whatever that group that’s sponsoring it wants to talk to you about. So they talk to you, and we don’t talk to each other that much, so I understand that there was a lot more talking together back in the old days and that has pretty much gone away. (Ryden 2011)

She connected this institutional change to an increase in partisanship saying, “I think that may also have led to this more partisan atmosphere. When people aren’t talking to each other, they can conjure up all kinds of fear and loathing about the other people when they

don't talk directly to them" (Ryden 2011). Other legislators agreed that getting to know other legislators in social settings was beneficial to the legislative process, indicating that having a personal relationship can facilitate teamwork. Representative McCann (D) said, "I don't have a chance to develop too much of a relationship with Republican women, so I think they're more inclined to support my bills...I'm more comfortable going and talking to them or they're more comfortable talking to me, and so I think that is helpful, just building the relationships" (McCann 2011).

Representative Murray (R) agreed, saying,

When we're on the floor, people that you don't necessarily share time with in committee or have any reason to be around because maybe you're in a different party, you just get to know them as a person rather than just a seat on the floor who votes against everything you believe in...The more that you can relate to people as people, they'll at least be open to you talking to them and that's all you can ask – is that they don't have to agree with you, but at least they will be open to you, and I've just found if you treat people with respect, occasionally they may vote for one of your bills that they're not really crazy about, but they say, "Well, Carole's a good gal, I'll vote for her bill on this one." (Murray 2011)

Several legislators on both sides of the aisle referred to Amendment 41, a citizen initiative adopted in 2006, which reads,

The people of the state of Colorado hereby find and declare that the conduct of public officers, members of the general assembly, local government officials, and government employees must hold the respect and confidence of the people; They shall carry out their duties for the benefit of the people of the state; they shall, therefore, avoid conduct that is in violation of their public trust or that creates a justifiable impression among members of the public that such trust is being violated; any effort to realize personal financial gain through public office other than compensation provided by law is a violation of that trust; and to ensure propriety and to preserve public confidence, they must have the benefit of specific standards to guide their conduct, and of a penalty mechanism to enforce those standards. The people of the state of Colorado also find and declare that there are certain costs associated with holding public office and that to ensure the integrity of the office, such costs of a reasonable and necessary nature should be borne by the state or local government. (Amendment 41 2006)

This initiative, however, was cited by John A. Straayer in “Direct Democracy’s Disaster” as having a series of unintended consequences which hurt the legislative process:

Its consequences to date include issuance of official opinions to the effect that scholarships for children of public employees and performance awards for employees are probably illegal; the resignation of more than a half-dozen legislators; questions as to whether the newly elected governor may legally recruit legislators for positions in his cabinet; and the curtailment of Capitol breakfasts, which had been enjoyed by legislators, staffers and student interns for decades. (Straayer 2007, 30)

Representative Labuda (D) explained that a women’s caucus would ameliorate the effects of this, saying,

You can talk about would you please support my bill because the only time we have to do that now is trying to get it done when we’re on the floor of the House when other business is going on, which is not good because then we aren’t paying attention to what’s going on, as we’re supposed to be. It’s the opportunity that we have to discuss bills that we’re carrying and ask for support. If you’re not supporting it, what can I, is there any way I can get your support? Is there something that can be changed? Let me know. That’s the kind of negotiating I think that used to go on all the time in the past at the regular receptions that all the lobbyists held in the evening. And from what I understand from the folks who work under pre-Amendment 41 days and after Amendment 41 days, the comment was, we’re not, we’re much more partisan, just as a matter of course because we don’t talk as much. (Labuda 2011)

The founder of the caucus Representative Middleton (D) agreed, saying,

These campaign finance laws have removed the ability to be social, cocktail receptions and luncheons and all the ways you build relationships in normal society and, in fact, any other area you do business has been regulated out of the legislative structure...that really cut into the ability to build relationships...My sense is that a lot of the work of being a statesman or statesperson involves knowing people and asking them to do things based on a personal relationship, and you don’t have that in the way that legislatures are being operated right now without some additional support and that’s what the caucus was really set up to try to support. (Middleton 2011)

Representative Murray (R) also corroborates, saying,

I just think it's a wonderful opportunity to get together, we have a pretty restrictive law about dinners that we can accept and receptions that we can go to and so forth, so there are not a lot of opportunities for us to just hang out, get to know one another. And so that provides a good opportunity for that. (Murray 2011)

While legislators acknowledge the importance of socializing with each other, ultimately, at least Democratic legislators still have their eyes on the goal of facilitating policy achievement. It is unclear how long they will be satisfied solely with collegiality. This is more a question of caucus maintenance; however, as it is clear in this case a policy-focused caucus would not have taken off.

*Opposition from Party Leaders or Male Colleagues.*

I had predicted that, had legislative leadership or male colleagues opposed the creation of a caucus, it would be less likely to succeed. One Democratic legislator indicated that Republican women may have received some pressure not to consort with the other party but that it was the consequence of who was in the majority. She said, “When we were in the majority, I think there was much more pressure against them getting involved with us in anything. Now that they’re in the majority, in the House anyway, I’m sensing that they’re not as worried about that” (Ryden 2011).

The founder Representative Middleton (D) said,

We had a few Republican women who were sort of tough to engage, and so we - there's only one woman in the Senate who's a Republican or was at the time, but there a handful of women in the House and some of them actually sort of shied away from it because they didn't want to be labeled by their Republican colleagues, so it sounded like they were getting a bit more pressure about whether they were engaged or not, and that was something we'd heard from some of the women historically. Then, when Republicans were in charge, women, there were a lot of women Republicans, they were really counseled against doing it, anything like that, which was sort of interesting they told that story. So we had a few women who always said they would come or said they would think about it, but

then they never managed to get there. So, I think a few of them were sort of felt nervous about being associated with or whatever. (Middleton (D) 2011)  
 When asked about male reaction to the caucus, the staffer reported,

The guys at the beginning said silly things like “here comes the women’s caucus” and when we announce events they’ll say things like “and the men’s caucus will be meeting at such-and-such bar” and that’s fine. I think that focusing on the histories last year was a big part of the reason that we didn’t end up with a lot of negative energy. I think that the people saw that it was pretty non-threatening and that’s okay. I think that if it became threatening, we’d have a problem. (Hoeppner 2011)

Here, she is indicating that the focus on women’s history rather than policy is a protection for the caucus, isolating it from opposition from party leadership or male colleagues. By limiting their own purposes, the women’s caucus has encouraged bipartisan participation but limited their own potential for influence and risked not being taken seriously by their male colleagues. Representative McCann (D) said, “I don’t think it’s seen as a threat or as real powerful, so what do they care, you know? Women want to get together and have a drink that kind of thing” (McCann 2011).

Although in this case there was no reported overt opposition by party leadership against Republican women themselves or any pressure on Democratic women not to organize or participate in a caucus, one of the former male leaders of the legislature had this to say about non-party caucuses:

I’m not a big fan of caucuses, never have been. Never within the party structure do I like them all split out, never within the legislature do I like the ones that have split out. You know I don’t mind people that spend time and focus on issues and do all that kind of stuff. I don’t know that you need to formally form a caucus to do that. I don’t know if you need to give yourself a fake legitimacy that it does to do that. Quite frankly I think it brings more splinters than it does coalitions. I don’t know if it’s the healthiest way to go about it. I’ve never been a big fan of caucuses. I’ve never been a member of any caucuses except the party caucus, which you are in whether you want it or not. (Weissmann 2011)

He went on to say,

This is going to sound very sexist and I don't mean it this way but I don't know how to say it any other way. There are some women, leadership or not, who have a chip, just like there are some men who have a chip but it comes off differently. They think that some people don't perceive that they should be in that position. Everything they do will come from that "I'm going to prove that I belong in this position." That sounds terrible, and I realize that when you play it, it will sound terrible. (Weissmann (D) 2011)

When asked if there is an old boys' network that these women are coming up against, he said, "I think it's just in their minds" (Weissmann (D) 2011).

When asked about reluctance among women legislators to caucus, the staffer reported that,

I think there is a lot of conflict. This is just my speculation. Not overt conflict but I think there is a lot of struggle with "why would we do this, what is our goal, who is going to do this, why are they driving it, what is there goal," and there are a lot of people who aren't comfortable with the idea of separating themselves as women; creating a special interest type of thing. And I get that. I think that even though it's important to some people it's not important to everybody. And some people are even resistant. (Hoeppner 2011)

The self-identified non-participant explained it in this way:

I will tell you that I have my own philosophical challenges, and part of it is what we just talked about - it seems like the efforts that have been made here for the women's caucus are stuck in the older paradigm. And I don't, I haven't really thought about trying to challenge it because I'm challenged enough in my four committees I'm in, but I guess I would make time to go if it was really striking the right chords for me, but it's not. And so, that's part of it. I do think one of our challenges, too, is - and I helped found the chapter of the Women's Bar Association down in Durango, so I mean, I have now and I work with a women's resource center, I've been on the board of Victim Advocates, so I've been involved in a lot of women's organizations, but I do wonder when do we - because if the men had the women's groups that we have, that would be totally unacceptable - and so I'm struggling personally with when do we as women start recognizing and somehow dealing with that - why is it okay for us to do this exclusive arrangement, but if you wanted, we would be totally up in arms about the men doing the same. Until we get to that place, I feel like we put ourselves in a less powerful position. And I know the world's not right, yet, but I just do feel like if we seem to be always pointing to our weaknesses or perceived weaknesses, then again it's hard for us to get true equity in decision making or earning potential or whatever, so I would, I don't know how that translates and I don't know which women's groups might be ready and willing to take that on because

again it's easy to stay in the paradigm of the past, but I don't know how long we can stay there. And so it's not that appealing to me. (Roberts 2011)

Representative Hamner (D) disagreed, saying, "I think there are times when it is okay to separate us by our differences, for the camaraderie that comes with that, the collegiality that comes with that opportunity, I think that women are more comfortable talking about our feelings when we are in groups of women, so we could actually get down to some issues that could help us emotionally."

Analyzing whether or not women experienced any pressure from party leaders or male colleagues not to participate in a women's caucus is complicated in this case by two factors. On the one hand, Democratic women perceive pressure on Republican women that Republican legislators themselves do not admit receiving. This was also present in the New Jersey case. Whether this indicates that Republican women are reluctant to report pressure or Democratic women are eager to perceive it among Republicans is not clear. What is clear from this evidence, however, is that the decision about how to structure the caucus as a social network had both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, it meant women could avoid any real opposition from colleagues. On the other, it also meant the men and party leaders did not take it very seriously.

#### *Additional Factors*

In addition to the above hypotheses, women legislators in Colorado also mentioned three other factors that contributed to the successful launch of their caucus. First, an important resource was the political skills of the organizers. The roles of Representative Middleton (D) and other early supporters/participants of the group were cited as important to the successful outcome. Representative Middleton (D) was perceived by other legislators as a good facilitator and organizer. This is similar to the

perception of Senator Weinberg in the New Jersey case. Additionally, the implementation of Amendment 41 affecting lobbying and socializing among legislators was also mentioned often as an environmental factor which contributed to women's need for a caucus. This political opportunity facilitated the creation of a caucus because other mechanisms of socializing had been limited. A caucus was identified as an amelioration of that problem. Finally, the political culture of Colorado and the west more generally as open to women's political participation was also cited as a factor which made caucusing easier than perhaps it would have been in another political culture. This political condition made the frames utilized by caucus creators more palatable to potential caucus participants and discouraged any potential opposition.

Participants mentioned the important role played by Representative Middleton (D) and Senator Spence (R) in launching the group. Entrepreneurs and their political interests are vital to the process of group formation as they must match the political environment of the time in order for a group to form (Salisbury 1969; Nownes and Neely 1996).

Representative Ryden (D) stated, "Karen Middleton was really a great organizer...she just really has a great ability to envision something and then carry it out and get people on board to make it happen. She worked really hard to get some sponsoring organizations and to get our by-laws and all of that set up. She did all of that work, so we just basically walked in and had a good time" (Ryden 2011). When asked if the group would have launched successfully without her, Representative Ryden (D) said, "Not at that time and that place, I don't think. I think it really took someone with a vision and a real desire to make it happen, and she was it." Caucus Staffer Hoeppner added, "I

think she wanted to build a relationship with people. She's really big on relationships. She doesn't just sit back; she's a real leader. She maintains friendships all across the country. She's a great networker. I think she sees the value in that. She saw that we needed to nurture that and be conscience of it, not just let things happen" (Hoeppner 2011).

Representative Labuda (D) also noted the importance of the original board member, Senator Spence (R). She noted,

Senator Nancy Spence (R) was a prime pusher of this. If, and it's because she told me she was sick and tired, she was the only Republican woman in the senate for so long, she had caucuses of one. She said those men just don't understand, so she was a prime pusher of this. I don't know, when she gets termed out - and I think she might be termed out this next year, I'm not sure, but pretty soon - I don't know who's gonna take her place as a strong proponent of this because she sees the need for women to take a lead, and I'm, I was disappointed not to see some of the other senators there, the female senators. (Labuda 2011)

While the legislators are pointing to the initial importance of these entrepreneurs, Representative Middleton (D) and Senator Spence (R) both recognized the risks of the caucus being personality driven. Representative Middleton (D) put in place a structure so that once she left office the group would continue as discussed in the caucus narrative section of this chapter including her own replacement on the board and a long-term staff position which would not be affected by term limits. Secondly, Senator Spence (R) and the other original board members took steps to expand the board to ensure the maintenance of the group beyond their own term limits as discussed in the epilogue of this chapter.

#### Amendment 41

This citizen initiative which dramatically impacted legislative norms of socializing was cited by several legislators as creating a need for a social organization for

women. The new group was viewed as an opportunity for legislators to get to know each other, limiting partisanship and contributing to a future where women across the aisle might support each other and their legislation. Framing the caucus as a social networking opportunity enabled entrepreneurs to recruit reticent participants, and Amendment 41 created this need.

### Western Political Culture

An additional factor mentioned by a few women legislators was the particular political culture in Colorado as a western state. Many cited Colorado's political history as one friendly to women's political participation and open to women's influence. Representative Murray (R) stated, "You know we were one of the early, early states to allow women to vote...so I think that has to do with just being in the west" (Murray 2011). This feeling that the electorate was open to women's participation and the acceptance of gender as a valid political identity made women legislators feel comfortable creating a women's group.

### Discussion

The data from the Colorado case demonstrates that there is more support for some hypotheses than for others. In the case of Colorado, a motivated entrepreneur was frustrated that despite women's large numbers in the legislature, their influence was limited. Representative Middleton (D) seized this political opportunity by appealing to commonalities among women, including a shared interest in women's political history and obtaining external financial support for a caucus that would collect and maintain women's political history. Despite initial reticence, Representative Middleton (D) and the other board members she initially recruited were able to convince legislators that this

women's caucus would not address policy and would not be a controversial association.

The frame employed in this case, the caucus as a social network was successful in motivating women to participate in the caucus. There was hope among Democratic women legislators that networking could lead to a legislative impact down the road.

Gender consciousness, while present among women legislators in Colorado, was not cognitively connected to caucus creation. Neither was dissatisfaction with political parties or any arguments for an increase in women in leadership positions despite some women feeling left out of the decision making process and others' perceptions of women's leadership roles as largely symbolic.

Party differences affected this women's caucus attempt in part because women did not want to participate in a caucus that would advocate for any particular policy positions, and Republican women in particular had to be reassured that the caucus would not be political in nature. Democratic legislators suspected pressure from party leaders on Republican women not to participate in any bipartisan ventures, but there is no evidence of that from my data apart from their suspicions and hearsay. Likewise, male colleagues did not express any substantive opposition to the creation of a caucus, but this is credited to the lack of substantive influence perceived by party leaders and men alike because of the strategically chosen frame of the caucus. While opposition did not negatively affect the launch of the caucus, it did influence what type of caucus emerged, indicating that even women's caucus creation is not entirely in the hands of the women themselves. It is shaped by legislative norms and male colleague expectations.

Party control and party competition (resulting in increased party discipline) were not problematic for the founding of this caucus. Likewise, the presence of other caucuses

or the smaller size of the legislature in Colorado did not positively affect this launch. Nor was diversity among women legislators a positive influence as their numbers were so small in 2009. These factors were not deemed important by interview subjects. Term limits were marginally relevant. Colorado is term limited, and these were cited as hurting women's ability to get to know each other, but were also cited as positively affecting women's ability to exert influence in the legislature because of reduced male power.

While there is no evidence of outside pressure for the women to organize, in this case outside support was vital to the launch of this caucus. Non-partisan caucuses in the Colorado State Legislature do not receive any kind of support. Staffers are only part-time and were cited as unable to dedicate the necessary time to launching a caucus. Colorado has the fewest staffers during the session of all four cases. In this case, it was very important to the women's ability to succeed that external funds were secured and managed to support the activities and staff of the newly founded caucus. Although, because of institutional restrictions, this relationship had to be evaluated by the Ethics Commission, it was imperative not only for the caucus to have the resources it needed but the public sanction that would enable legislators to participate.

Additional factors in the creation of the Colorado legislature I had not expected were the role of organizational skills of the caucus founder, the impact of Amendment 41, and the western political culture with its long tradition of openness to women as political participants.

Like New Jersey, Colorado had a motivated entrepreneur and staff available to organize the logistics of a caucus launch. The staff was volunteer in New Jersey and funded by the Women's Foundation in Colorado, but their work was vital to the success

of both launches. Similarly, these entrepreneurs seized a political opportunity when in New Jersey a large influx of women were elected and when Colorado's proportion of women was reaching the highest in the nation. Entrepreneurs seized this opportunity differently however. In New Jersey, relationships among women across the aisle had been long established at least among the caucus leadership, and therefore they were able to agree to set policy as a priority. In Colorado, relationships themselves were the top priority because of a legislative environment in which legislators did not know each other well.

Political party in both states proved important. In the case of Colorado, in order to have bipartisan participation and get a caucus off the ground, the women agreed to leave policy off the table entirely. In New Jersey, initial policy advancement was successful and an important unifying frame used to launch the caucus. Party differences, however, challenged caucus maintenance over the long haul.

External organizations were useful to both caucuses as they were initiated. In the case of New Jersey, non-partisan institutions were able to offer meeting space. In Colorado, they offered financial support and legitimacy as well as information. In both states, Democrats controlled the legislature when the caucuses emerged, but women in neither case indicate that it was a factor for them. Similarly, the existence of other caucuses within the legislatures and party competitiveness does not seem to have been important to their success as they perceive it, nor was racial diversity among the women legislators. Term limits in the Colorado case seem to have intensified the need for a venue to build relationships among legislators and complicated the maintenance of the caucus as will be discussed in the epilogue of this chapter. In New Jersey, while there are

no term limits, their effects are seen in the importance of the role of senior women legislators. Had those women been termed out, they may not have had the experience and relationships established which enabled them to launch a women's caucus.

While women in New Jersey and Colorado both acknowledged women's difference and women's unique approaches to political life, it manifested itself differently in the two cases. In Colorado, gender consciousness was not employed prominently as a frame for the caucus explicitly. Instead, entrepreneurs focused on recognizing women's historical exclusion from political acknowledgement as an objective to be accomplished by women legislators. In New Jersey, recent wounds inflicted by the party systems of both Democrats and Republicans were referenced to encourage women to band together to achieve common goals including party reform.

Democratic women in both states were suspicious of male Republicans pressuring Republican women either to not participate in the women's caucus or to undermine its effectiveness. Republican women in both states did not acknowledge this pressure. Interestingly, women in both states also stated that age as an accompanying identity factor affected how much bias or ill treatment women in both parties received from their male counterparts.

### Conclusion

In Colorado, a motivated entrepreneur sought to take advantage of the large number of women in office by instigating a women's caucus. With her eye on the long game, she and her fellow early adopters compromised their own expectations for policy impact by establishing a social network caucus which would have bipartisan participation. These women, supported by the Women's Foundation, prioritized women's

history and relationship building instead. How long this will satisfy Democratic participants remains to be seen. While branding the women's caucus as social in nature enabled it to get off the ground, it is clear to both participants and their colleagues in the legislature that this decision has limited their ability to contribute substantively to the legislative agenda or to women's representation more broadly. This decision, to avoid policy advancement, is the most important factor in this case as Republican women would likely not have participated otherwise. Secondly, the external support from the Women's Foundation was vital to the logistical launch of the caucus, enabling a staffer outside the legislative structure to organize events and accomplish the historical research goals of the caucus.

When comparing the New Jersey and Colorado cases, certain variables were irrelevant for both: party control, party competitiveness, the presence of other caucuses, and the size of the legislature. Women's proportion in the legislature was a political opportunity seized by entrepreneurs in both cases. Also, both states had the largest Republican women proportions of all four cases. Likewise, caucus founders in both cases cited the existence of staff and external resources as important, although they came by them by different means. The major difference in these two cases is the frames employed. In New Jersey, caucus creators exploited women's shared discrimination by party organizations and rallied them around common policy priorities to recruit participants. In Colorado, caucus creators had to establish a social networking purpose in order to secure bipartisan participation. Neither case was seen by party leaders or male colleagues as a threat to traditional legislative norms or organization.

In New Jersey, the women legislators are challenged in maintaining the caucus by the decision to address public policy. While there was initial consensus, new issues have come between the women. In Colorado, Democratic legislators would prefer that the women's caucus evolve to be policy-oriented. If that process takes too long, it is not clear how long they will be satisfied with Women's History Month celebrations.

In the next chapter, I will consider the two attempts to create a women's caucus that occurred in Pennsylvania and Iowa. These two caucus attempts were not successful in that they did not meet consistently over the course of a year. By comparing these two states to each other, I will be able to see which factors are common to both and therefore detrimental to a caucus launch and what separates these attempts to create a women's caucus from the successes in New Jersey and Colorado.

### Epilogue

In April 2011, the Colorado Women's Legislative Caucus launched a website (<http://coloradowomenscaucus.org/>). The site offers the historical research that the staff of the caucus has done and shares the press coverage of the present-day caucus. In May 2011, the sitting board members and paid staffer decided to expand the board from four to eight members. Sitting members were concerned about term limited board members and wanted to establish security for the transition. Without formal by-laws, it was determined that each sitting board member would approach a woman from their caucus to serve. A priority for this recruitment was diversity both ethnically and geographically. The current eight members are: Representative Labuda (D), Representative Cindy Acree (R), Senator Spence (R), Senator Williams (D), Representative Kathleen Conti (R), Senator Giron (D), Senator Jean White (R), and Representative Angela Williams (D).

At an October 2011 meeting, these eight legislators set the agenda for the upcoming year. The priorities were to establish with the College of Denver that they would continue to serve as the 501(c)3 and arbiter of funds for the caucus; an emphasis on social networking between women legislators including a Welcome Back Lunch in January 2012, featuring a talk by Senator Spence (R) regarding her off-session trip to Turkey to visit women in Parliament there; presenting the possibility of member dues to fund lunch meetings, hosting the annual reunion event in March with First Lady of Colorado Helen Thorpe as speaker, highlighting her recent book on women and immigration; a book signing event with former State Senator Pat Pascoe who recently published a book featuring Helen Ring Robinson, the first woman state senator in Colorado; expanding the current Senate program, Girls with Goals, to the House as well so that fourth grade girls can shadow women legislators in both houses; publishing the historical research on women in the legislature in booklet form; and continuing to facilitate Colorado College women students' shadowing of women legislators as they had in 2010.

There have been some behind-the-scenes rumblings by some of the board members who are frustrated with how leadership positions in both parties are selected. After two incidents of men being selected for leadership vacancies with no significant consideration of women legislators, some board members would like to see the caucus take up the issue. This is an area to watch for action by the caucus in the future, although nothing formal has been discussed at this point.

Staffer Laura Hoeppner attributes the success of the caucus to the institutionalization of staff and structure. Founder Representative Middleton (D) was

careful to have a replacement when she left office so there would not be a vacancy on the board. Recently, Hoeppner and the board expanded the board of directors to ensure stability during the transition of term limits. Hoeppner added that the annual reunion event and back to session gatherings are common now and in place. This in conjunction with the two-year survival of the group are what Hoeppner attributes for the increased participation by women legislators from both sides of the aisle, but particularly among Republican women who are more determined to approach those in their party who are resistant.

Table 14 – Colorado Interview Subject Demographics

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Legislative Leaders</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>
2 Republicans	2	2 male	13
10 Democrats		11 female	
1 non-partisan staffer			

## Chapter 7: The Pennsylvania Attempt

This chapter is an in-depth look at a failed attempt to create a women's caucus in the Pennsylvania State Legislature in 2009. As in the previous chapters, I will begin by presenting a brief background of the state's political conditions and the status of women within government. I will then describe the specific data collection for this case following with a narrative describing the caucus attempt. Finally, I will analyze the evidence from interviews to test the hypotheses I laid out in Chapter 4. I will end this chapter by discussing the implications of this case.

### State Background

Pennsylvania is a Mid-Atlantic state which in 2010 had a total population of 12,702,379 people. The state was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> nationally for the size of the population (U.S Census 2011). Much of the population of Pennsylvania (31%) lives in two major urban areas, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The rural population is 27% of the total population or 12.7 million residents.

Pennsylvania's economy in recent history has been hit hard by the decline in manufacturing seen across the nation due to global economic shifts. "Large-scale disruption and decline in some areas and an overall dramatic restructuring have marked the state's economic situation in the last several decades" (Kennedy 1999, 16). This is particularly true for the iron and steel industries which have traditionally defined the economic culture of the state. Today, the plurality of Pennsylvanians (25%) is employed in educational services and health care and social assistance with manufacturing coming in second at 13% (U.S. Census 2006-2010). Pennsylvania was ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in the nation

for family income with a median of \$49,826 compared to \$51,914 nationally (U.S. Census 2012). Pennsylvania also has an 8.5% poverty rate, lower than the national average at 13.8% (U.S. Census 2012). Pennsylvania's rate of high school graduation (87.4%) is higher than the national average, while bachelor degree attainment (26%) is just under the national average (28%) (U.S. Census 2012).

Elazar (1984) characterizes Pennsylvania, like New Jersey, as a state with an individualistic dominant political culture. This culture is noted for the "centrality of private concerns" and "places a premium on limiting community intervention" (115). He describes states like New Jersey and Pennsylvania as places where "politics is a business like any other" but where relationships are primary (116). These relationships are largely expressed through political party ties. Political corruption is expected and "their willingness to expand the functions of government is based on an extension of the quid pro quo favor system...with new services the reward they give the public for placing them in office" (116). In a more recent analysis of political culture, Lieske (2010) characterizes Pennsylvania as a majority Germanic political culture. He describes this culture as predominantly racially homogeneous, "the geographic extensions of German and Dutch settlers who migrated to America in large numbers between 1614 and 1880" (544). He observes that Germanic subcultures are "distinctive for the higher level of racial inequality in the awarding of high school degrees and the lower proportion of women who are elected to serve in state legislatures" (546).

Pennsylvania is noted for intense party competition and frequent shifts in party control at all levels of government (Kennedy 1999, 6). In the legislature, the margins of victory are historically very close: "Since 1979, the majority party has controlled the

House by an average of 3.8 seats and the Senate by an average of 3.3. seats" (Kennedy 1999, 6). The state political geography is described as a "T" with Republicans controlling 43 of the state's 67 counties from the Maryland border to the New York border and branching off to both east and west borders (Kennedy 1999, 8). Democratic strongholds are in the urban centers of the state, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia (Kennedy 1999, 8). The deciding votes in Pennsylvania's party battles are those in seven counties which share the characteristics associated with the rustbelt (Kennedy 1999, 10).

Kennedy (1999) describes the Pennsylvania legislature as one that has undergone significant change over the last three decades. In transitioning from a part-time to a full-time legislature, professionalism has significantly affected legislative norms and behaviors. He notes that this institutional change, however, has not dramatically changed the characteristics of the individuals who compete for and win seats in the legislature. Educational, gender, and racial statistics have remained similar over the last 30 years. His own analysis explains this static nature of candidates and officeholders by the control party organizations have over candidate recruitment. Like New Jersey, party leaders control the paths to political office in detriment to women's political participation.

Eight women, all Republican, were first elected to the Pennsylvania State Legislature in 1922. In 1923, Representative Alice M. Bentley was the first woman to serve as Speaker Pro Tempore. The first Democratic woman would not be elected until 1932 (Chatham 2012). As described by Kennedy (1999), Pennsylvania has a poor record of women in public office and this is demonstrated by their national rankings. Since the Center for American Women and Politics began recording the number of women holding seats in state legislatures in 1975, Pennsylvania has not been ranked higher than 42<sup>nd</sup> in

the nation. In 2009, during the first attempt at a women's caucus in the state, women held 14.6% of the seats in the legislature, and Pennsylvania was ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation. In 2010, at the time of a repeat attempt, women held 15.4%, ranking them 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation. In 2012, Pennsylvania ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> in the country with 17% of legislative seats being held by women (CAWP 2012).

In 2009, when the women's caucus in Pennsylvania was attempted, the houses of the legislature were split with the Republicans controlling the Senate and Democrats controlling the House, and a Democratic governor was in office. The House partisan ratio was 104 Democrats to 99 Republicans, and the Senate was 21 Democrats to 29 Republicans (*Book of the States* 2009). Pennsylvania ranked 6<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states according to Squire's (2007) professionalism scale which is calculated by member pay, ratio of staff to legislators, and total days in session.

In 2009, 10 women were serving in the state senate and 27 in the state house (CAWP 2009). There were 11 Democratic women serving in the House and four serving in the Senate as well as 16 Republican women serving in the House and six serving in the Senate. The state ranked 24<sup>th</sup> in the nation along with 20 other states as to the proportion of women serving in legislative leadership positions with 0% held by women (0/6 positions). By committee chairs, Pennsylvania ranked 45th in the nation with women holding 14.6% of chairmanships (7/48 chairmanships) (CAWP 2009).

#### Data Collection

The following analysis is the result of personal and telephone interviews. All 37 women legislators serving in 2009 were sent recruitment emails requesting their participation in the study. Of the legislators contacted, I interviewed nine (24%). Among

these nine was one of the two original co-chairs of the caucus, Representative Vanessa Lowery Brown (D). Five of the women legislators interviewed were Republican while four were Democrats.

Nine legislative leaders who held their positions in 2009, during the women's caucus attempt, and in 2011 when I conducted my interviews were also contacted to participate. I interviewed one male Democratic member of legislative leadership serving in 2011. No leaders who held their position in 2009 agreed to be interviewed. This one interview represents 11% of the legislative leaders contacted. No women held leadership positions in 2009 or 2011. All interviews took place between April 2011 and December 2011. The demographic details on my interview subjects can be found in Table 15.

[Table 15 about here](#)

#### Caucus Attempt Narrative

Representative Brown (D) was elected in 2008 and one of her first priorities was to create a bipartisan women's caucus. Like Representative Middleton in Colorado, she was a new legislator who was dissatisfied with the lack of a cohesive voice among women. She explained her motivation for the caucus very similarly to Middleton, saying,

I'm listening to legislation as being proposed and to me, I see a lot of it affects women, children, families and I didn't see a real strong voice that was arguing those bills on the floor, even though there are women in the House. And I looked at the number of women that are in the House, and we're in the minority, so I thought that we needed a venue that we could strengthen our voice, review legislation, and then try to come up with certain women to be leaders on the issues. (Brown 2011)

To address this inadequacy, she filed a formal request with her Democratic leadership, secured a Republican co-chair, recruited participants, and an initial meeting was held in the beginning of 2009, regarding energy conservation. Representative Karen Boback (R)

agreed to serve as co-chair and helped Representative Brown (D) organize the caucus by recruiting Republican women legislators to participate and co-hosting this first informational meeting regarding energy. She was relatively new to the legislature, as well having been elected in 2006. Democratic legislators reported that because of pressure from Republican leadership, Republican women were discouraged from participating following that meeting, and there were no more bipartisan meetings during that session.

In the 2010 session, Representative Brown (D) put a formal request in again to the Democratic leadership, with the same Republican co-chair and attempted to organize the women on a bipartisan level but was only able to organize a sub-set of Democratic women to have an informal party caucus which met for informal breakfasts and dinners until the summer of 2010. She was able in the spring of 2010 to have bipartisan participation in a fundraiser for Haitian women following the earthquake, but no additional meetings were held or attended by women from both parties. Because neither attempt to create a women's caucus resulted in legislators from both parties meeting more than once over a period of one year, these attempts do not meet my criteria for a successful caucus creation. Although Representatives Brown (D) and Boback (R) did make attempts to create a women's caucus in two different legislative sessions, I am analyzing this case as one attempt because the characteristics of the observed variables remain the same over the full two-year timetable.

### Analysis

I will now examine the hypotheses laid out in Chapter 4 using information from my interviews with legislators.

## Opportunities

### *Proportion Women in the Legislature and Republican Party.*

The first political opportunity I expected to positively affect women legislators' ability to caucus is the presence of women in the legislature. I expected that a moderate proportion of women would likely result in an organizing success because there would be enough women to participate but not so many that a caucus may be deemed unnecessary. Pennsylvania, as I have explained previously, has been historically on the low end as to the proportion of women in the legislature, never being ranked nationally over 42<sup>nd</sup>. Legislators acknowledged this as a challenge to organizing. Representative Sheryl Delozier (R) said, "The numbers are so minuscule percentage wise, which is pathetic" (Delozier 2011). Representative Mauree Gingrich (R) added, "You probably have looked at the numbers of female representation in the House and Senate here in Pennsylvania, and we're on the low side" (Gingrich 2011).

While this was certainly not the deciding factor according to these legislators or my other interview subjects, it was cited as a challenge to organizing. My original hypothesis was that states in the moderate range would be most successful in their attempts to create a women's caucus. My evidence shows that Colorado, a high proportion state, was successful while Pennsylvania, with a low proportion was not. Therefore, I cannot conclude that a moderate proportion of women is necessary for caucus organizing success.

Sixteen percent of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania's House of Representatives was women in 2009. Of the four cases, this is the smallest proportion of Republican women and the closest to what Kanter (1977) calls a skewed sex ratio in

which the Republican women would be “tokens” (966). I predicted that Republican women who comprise a smaller percentage of the total Republican Party in a state may feel more pressure to conform to legislative norms and less likely to join a bipartisan group. In this case, a smaller proportion of Republican women is correlated with a failed caucus attempt. Women in the interviews did not mention their numbers with the Republican Party as a factor in their decision to participate in the caucus or not, but a further discussion of Republican women’s pressure to side with party over gender follows in the frame section on opposition from party leaders and male colleagues. Because of their smaller numbers, Republican women may have been more susceptible to party leader pressure than their counterparts in New Jersey and Colorado.

*Proportion of Freshmen Women Legislators.*

Freshman women legislators were important in Pennsylvania as they were in New Jersey and Colorado. While in New Jersey it was senior women taking advantage of an influx of new women, in Colorado a newly elected legislator was motivated by her initial disappointment of how little women voiced their political power. The same was true in Pennsylvania. A newly elected Representative Brown (D) was disappointed to learn that inside the institution women were not vocalizing as much as she would have expected. This motivated her to attempt a women’s caucus by enlisting another relatively new legislator, Representative Boback (R), elected in 2006, to organize women for change.

*Democratic Party Control.*

I predicted that Democratic control of the legislature would positively affect the launch of a women’s caucus. During the time of the 2009 attempt to create a women’s caucus, Democrats controlled the House. This Democratic majority was not mentioned

by Representative Brown (D) or any other subjects as a factor that helped or hurt the women's caucus attempt. Representative Gingrich (R), however, did indicate that, from her perspective as a Republican, an attempt to create a women's caucus might have been more successful if a within-party caucus were created while Republicans were in the majority with invitations then expanded out to Democrats once an intraparty caucus among Republican women was established. This was not the strategy, however, adopted by Representative Brown (D) or Representative Boback (R).

*Party Competition.*

I predicted that party competition would negatively impact an attempt at creating a women's caucus. I hypothesized that high party competition within a legislature would correlate with strong party discipline and hurt women's ability to work together across party lines. As noted previously, there is strong party competition in Pennsylvania. While Democratic Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa (D) indicated that his party did not keep a tight leash on members and allowed them to vote their conscience on bills, women still cited leadership expectations of strong party loyalty despite a collegial atmosphere and occasional social interactions with women from different parties.

Several legislators indicated that a recent Republican takeover had led to a rift between members with Democrats feeling as though Republicans were acting more partisan than they had during their majority and Republicans feeling as though they were acting like any majority party by moving forward their agenda using the mechanisms any majority would have. While party competition was not mentioned specifically by subjects as to its effect on caucus organizing, I think the intense party competition in this state

discouraged women from developing strong ties across the aisle or considering policy consensus as an appropriate role for a women's caucus.

*Party Polarization.*

I predicted that partisanship within a legislature would negatively affect the launch of a women's caucus by preventing women from trusting each other and finding common interests. As described in the state background section of this chapter, Pennsylvania is noted for close competition and frequent turnover of control which would contribute to partisanship. Caucus entrepreneur, Representative Brown (D) stated explicitly, "It wasn't an easy task [organizing] because, you know, you have Democrats and Republicans, whose leadership discourages from working together, so...I could hardly get any Republican women to come because I was a Democrat" (Brown 2011). Senator Jane Earll (R) attested to strong partisanship saying, "I would say that there is definitely a partisan flavor to the debate. I mean, I think the legislature is a reflection of the society that we oversee, and I think that it mirrors the polarization of what's going on in the world, in the United States" (Earll 2011).

Despite this, women did indicate that bipartisan work was being done by women on certain issues. "It's fair to say that it's congenial, even though it's partisan. I think that there's still a level of civility that rules the day the vast majority of the time," said Earll (R). She continued, "I'm more independent probably than the norm and more bipartisan, not particularly dogmatic or not driven by ideology, so you know, my orientation depends completely on the issue" (Earll 2011). Representative Louise Williams Bishop (D) put it this way, "I think that women who feel very strong about the issues, their issues are stronger than party. It's not often that you do run across that, but when they feel

strongly about something, they don't care what party you belong to, they will work you for it and try to get you on board" (Bishop 2011). As an example, Representative Delozier (R) said,

When I've worked with some of the folks on domestic violence issues, it's been bipartisan and it's worked out real well. I mean, obviously, we have a common goal.... so having it be a Republican or a Democrat issue wasn't the issue, you know, it was how can we get this fixed? So, and I think that's the way it needs to be. You know, there are certainly going to be partisan issues, we have enough of them so that when there is an issue that can be bipartisan and, you know, that we're all working together to try to get the answer that we need, I think we need to tout them as much as we need to tout the partisan ways. (Delozier 2011)

Senator Christine Tartaglione (D) said, "It's gotten a lot better. There is a lot of open dialogue and communication between the women on both sides of the aisle, which I am happy to see. And we're working together on issues. We're really trying to find issues that we can join together on" (Tartaglione 2011).

Most women indicated that individual action was the preferred way to work in a bipartisan manner. They often mentioned that going directly to someone on the other side who had an interest in the subject or was on the relevant committee was a good strategy as opposed to a more formal group where there was a fear of having to compromise their principles or agree to some sort of consensus across party lines. There was particular hesitation among more senior Democratic women to trust Republican women.

Representative Brown (D) said,

I also had a challenge with the fact that I was a new freshman and I didn't know the history of the House and the history of the women. And I came in very excited, enthusiastic with lots of passion, and I didn't think about going back to the history. And that formerly, in the past they have tried to have a woman's caucus, but it was so partisan that it was never successful. (Brown 2011)

It appears that in Pennsylvania there are real ideological divides between Democratic and Republican women that would keep them from participating in a policy-

oriented caucus. While this doesn't prevent them from acting individually in a bipartisan manner, historical distrust prevents even a social caucus from gaining the support necessary from participants across the aisles.

*Presence of Other Caucuses.*

I predicted that the existence of other caucuses within a legislature, particularly a black caucus, would positively affect a caucus launch by normalizing alternative organizing outside of party structures. In Pennsylvania, there are a number of identity and issue caucuses including: Job Creation Caucus, Fire Caucus, Black Caucus, Early Childhood Learning Caucus, Italian-American Caucus, and an Autism Caucus, among others. Representative RoseMarie Swanger (R) described these caucuses as fleeting and emerging only when a salient issue came onto the agenda: “[They meet] very, very infrequently, and just get together if, say, a certain piece of legislation comes forward that that caucus would be interested in, they might hold a meeting and bring in a speaker to talk about it” (Swanger 2011). Other legislators indicated that these caucuses were not very powerful and did not compete with party caucuses, saying, “You know, they’re not able to do anything really meaningful” (Gingrich 2011) and “Some of them do some work, some of them don’t do anything, some of them, when the issues are important at that point in time, there’s a conversation here in Harrisburg about subject matter that within that caucus, then that activity kicks up” (Costa 2011).

Senate Minority Leader Costa (D) explained that in the case of the Autism Caucus, they were able to raise awareness of the issue and direct funding which actually had an impact on autism numbers in the state. He attributed this victory, however, to the Speaker of the House getting involved and making sure the money was included in the

budget. While the caucus may have played a role in drawing attention, it was clear for substantive action to be accomplished, legislative leadership had to intervene. Here, he is indicating how a caucus might be successful in accomplishing policy initiatives – drawing attention to an issue and bringing powerful players to the table to achieve the objective.

In evaluating this hypothesis, I can conclude that the presence of other caucuses did encourage Representative Brown (D) in her attempt to create a women's caucus. It was a letter sent by her party leadership which listed the existing caucuses and encouraged the development of others that triggered her action. She noticed that on the list were a number of important caucuses but did not see a women's caucus. This and the explicit approval of her party leadership spurred her to action.

*Racial Diversity of Women Legislators.*

Pennsylvania has the second most diverse group of women legislators of my four cases. In 2009, 19% of the women legislators were women of color (CAWP). One of the co-founders of the caucus, Representative Brown (D) is African American. Once elected to office, she saw the diversity of legislative caucuses in Pennsylvania, including a black caucus, and was disappointed that there was no organization for women. Her enthusiasm and initiative was what sparked the attempt to caucus in this state. She did not, however, mention that her racial identity or experience was a part of her decision to organize women legislators. Many of the caucus detractors in this state were African American women legislators and so despite my hypothesis, women of color were no more likely to support a women's caucus than their white counterparts.

*Size of Legislature.*

The size of the legislature was predicted to assist women in organizing by fostering political opportunities. Specifically, smaller legislatures are expected to breed familiarity. This familiarity may result in trust across party lines and may lead to conversations in which women legislators recognize their common interests. Despite Pennsylvania having the largest chamber of all four states with 253 seats, no subjects mentioned the size of the legislature as a challenge in organizing or a motivating factor for caucus creation. Nor did they cite chamber size as the explanation for a lack of relationships among women legislators.

Resources*External Organizations.*

I predicted that women's organizations outside the legislature would be another resource for women legislators in making an attempt to caucus. In this case, no external organizations were contacted for support, nor did any express to legislators a need for the establishment of a caucus. One legislator indicated that women's organizations often bring legislation to her as a member of the Health and Human Services Committee, but they did not express an interest in the establishment of a women's caucus. Again, this is a distinguishing feature of this case. Although the founder, Representative Brown (D), did not indicate this as a challenge, it is absent here whereas it was present in the two successful attempts to create women's caucuses.

*Professionalism and Staff Size.*

The level of professionalism was predicted to positively affect the women's caucus attempt by providing women legislators with staff and time. Many legislators in

Pennsylvania noted that because they were a full-time legislature, always in session, that there simply wasn't time for their participation in a women's caucus. Representative Kate Harper (R) said she "didn't need another commitment." Representative Babette Josephs (D) added, "We're a full time legislature – there is no time, we're always in session, always on emergency mode" (Josephs 2011). She indicated, however, that under the right circumstances she might find the time, saying, "I will participate if it doesn't take too much time or ask me to compromise any positions...wouldn't put a lot of time into head scarves" (Josephs 2011).

Here, she is referring to one of the charitable activities of the caucus when a speaker presented information to women legislators about the conditions in Haiti following the earthquake. Legislators were asked to contribute head scarves for Haitian women who were unable to afford them after the disaster and were sacrificing other important needs for their families in order to obtain them. Representative Josephs (D) indicates in her quote that she would be willing to participate only if the caucus dealt with issues she felt were substantive. This mirrors the frustration of many Democratic legislators in Colorado and New Jersey who feel frustrated by the watering down of purpose necessary to get bipartisan participation in a women's caucus.

There are other conditions, however, that also challenge women's participation. Representative Delozier (R), indicating her role in the family as a complicating factor, said,

I prefer to be home with my kids if I don't have something in the district. So if something in the district isn't calling me, I tend to go home, but sometimes having that social outlet and being able to have a conversation that's not related to a bill or related to something that's going to committee, maybe you can learn something about those that you're working with, which is kind of getting to know people better. (Delozier 2011)

This representative is acknowledging the positive that could come out of her participation but has to balance that against her other role as a mother. It is interesting that she juxtaposes her participation in a women's caucus against her obligations as a district representative rather than seeing one as an extension of the other.

In Pennsylvania, as in Colorado and New Jersey, there is no legislative support for caucuses despite having the largest staff size (2,919) of any of the four cases examined in this project.<sup>26</sup> As Senate Minority Leader Costa (D) described it,

I think they're on their own. There's no, to my knowledge, there's no allocation that I know of that give to a particular caucus. It's just getting together and meeting and having a conversation. And to the extent that it's a meeting where [they] may want to serve coffee and snacks, they take it out of, members take it out of their own individual account, whoever serves as chairperson of that particular caucus. The staffing work that is done is typically the existing staff that exists for a particular member, who sort of takes the lead on a particular caucus, so for example on the economic development and jobs caucus, I think we have – it's a joint caucus between Senator Mensch and Senator Boscola – their staffs work together to, you know, establish an agenda, what they're gonna talk about, what are the important issues and so forth. (Costa 2011)

In the New Jersey and Colorado cases, both caucuses secured a staffer (either volunteer or from outside funds) who was completely dedicated to the organization of the women's caucus. It did not depend on the spare time a legislative staffer could dedicate to this one interest of her legislator. In the case of Pennsylvania, it appears that a lack of time on the part of the legislators themselves prevented more widespread participation. This was compounded by competing priorities. A large number of legislative staffers were not able to ameliorate these problems. Representative Brown (D) did not complain that the lack of a dedicated staffer was a challenge to the caucus, but the lack of a dedicated staffer is a factor distinguishing it from the two successful cases.

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<sup>26</sup> Legislatures allow for caucuses to utilize meeting space but do not contribute financially to staff or events for the caucuses.

*Term Limits.*

The Pennsylvania State Legislature is not term limited, and therefore this was not a factor negatively influencing women's ability to organize a caucus in this case as I had predicted. Women did not mention any pressures of time in office as a concern in organizing or in affecting their decision to participate. In this case, however, there were generational differences which hurt the prospects of this caucus. As I will discuss later, a long-serving Republican woman legislator was cited as opposing any kind of gender organizing for many years. Her continued presence and influence in the legislature discouraged any attempts to create a women's caucus during her tenure. Similarly, senior Democratic women were offended by the political naiveté of Representative Brown (D), and their lack of participation also hurt the chances of this caucus' successful launch. Term limits, in this case, it appears may have removed some of the opposition facing this caucus launch. Both the Republican and Democratic opposition to this attempt will be discussed in more detail below.

Frames*Gender Consciousness.*

Gender consciousness was a frame expected to be employed in states with successful women's caucus attempts. Recognition among women legislators of common interests was expected to be associated with a successful attempt to create a women's caucus because I predicted it would be a useful argument for why a women's caucus would be necessary. In this case, women's perceived collective identity was complicated. While they recognized women's difference, many did not see collective organizing as appropriate legislative behavior.

Representative Gingrich (R) characterized women's different contribution in this way:

Well, there have been times that I feel an issue, a critical issue could be better, let me just put it this way, better understood possibly by the female mentality and experience in life. A lot of times the health care issues or the aging issues or issues that a lot of our gentlemen colleagues don't find sexy enough to step up to the plate and get this done... I've gotten a lot of support from, really, from the gentleman as well because they come to me for issues like that because they know my industry background and they know what I've been able to get done in the legislature, so they're not difficult for me to work for... However, if I need a level of understanding on issues that I don't think necessarily the guys come by naturally, then I will pull the women together informally, almost like it's an informal whip count... but, yeah, we haven't done anything about formally creating a female caucus and, again, a lot of – there's party differences, there are personality style differences, there's the demographic, geographic differences, where even the women just can't agree on what's best for their constituency. So you have a lot of stumbling blocks, I will tell you that. I've organized dinners, more social times together... we're not making any decisions, of course – an informal discussion on some of the policy issues before us. And generally they go really well, but then there are times when somebody will say, "Well, who's going?" You know, "If she's going, I'm not going." You know, that kind of thing. And that's not pettiness, that's just extreme policy, different perspectives on things. (Gingrich 2011)

Senator Earll (R) agreed, saying,

Women aren't monolithic either. I mean, I have colleagues who I get along with personally, female colleagues who are more to my liking than others. I mean, I don't necessarily like relate to them or have things in common with them by virtue of gender as much as issue orientation or philosophical orientation and I think that's probably true for most of us women in the Senate. And I think you probably hang out with people or gather with people who are more to your personal liking based on those factors, not gender. (Earll 2011)

Representative Delozier (R) put it this way:

There's many women that have throughout their children's however old their child is, has always worked. Yes, is an elected official's position and job, tougher and longer hours and even though people think we're part-time?... Are they weird times? Are they Saturday morning at 9 o'clock and Sunday afternoons at 2 and dinners on Saturday nights? Yes, so my kids are used to me getting dressed in a suit at five o'clock on a Saturday night. So, it's different, yes, but I think that because more women are getting involved and I think that they're doing it successfully, you're seeing Michelle Bachmann at the national level and you're

seeing Hillary Clinton and you're seeing, and I may or may not agree with their particular policies, but I think it's a good example to show that women can do what it is that men have always done. (Delozier 2011)

Here, she is indicating the challenges she faces as a mom and a legislator; however, she admires women's ability to "do what men have always done" without acknowledging it is wives who have made that possible for men. She went on to talk about her initial campaign. She was questioned by voters and party leaders about her children despite the other male candidates' similar positions. She said,

There were seven of us running...it was me and six men, and one of the men had just had an infant, they just had a baby. And another one of the men had four children, two of which were younger than my children. My children at the time were young, but they were – what were they when I ran, five and seven, I guess – no, seven and nine . . . seven and nine. So they were young, but you know, it was something we had worked out family wise and it was not something we weren't willing to adjust to, but they were asking me the question, but not asking my two opponents who had children younger than me which is just one of those perceptions. (Delozier 2011)

She explained that she was prepared for those questions and felt she just had to "bite her tongue" to move on.

Senate Minority Leader Costa (D), as a male legislator, likewise acknowledged women's difference yet disregarded the double standard faced by women, saying,

I think there are different life experiences... I would suggest that, no, they're members first and then their respective genders second. That doesn't preclude them or give them an upper hand or put them in a different place, but their life experiences that they bring to the job and bring to the legislature are different than men have to deal with. And I think that's something that I think is their role in families is typically different than a man's role, and I think that's one of the things, biggest things that I think they bring, and it has impacted members, I can think of a couple of members from Allegheny County, one in particular, who left the legislature after, I think, two or four years because she wanted to go back home and have her family. Another member from Allegheny County just, Representative Wagner, has now a second child, I believe, ran for county office in part to be back at home, raising a family, as opposed to coming back and forth here. So for those reasons primarily, the role that a woman plays in their own

family, I think, is different than typically what men do and as a result has an impact on the ability they believe to do the job.... but it doesn't give them, they're not at a disadvantage because of their gender or at an advantage. (Costa 2011)

Other legislators explicitly explained that gender separation was against their political ideology, saying, "That's not why I got into the legislature, it's not how I want to deal with things, it's not a Republican argument, it's not a good strategy" (Harper (R) 2011). Senator Tartaglione (D) specifically noted a lack of gender consciousness by saying, "The problem is women normally don't like women. I don't know what it is." She indicated that individually she tried to combat that by taking other women legislators under her wing and mentoring them.

Representative Delozier (R) explained,

I don't think that there is an interest, and the reason I say that is because we are one body and, yes, there are caucuses, I know there's a black caucus, as you mentioned, which certainly is, you know, a racial version of dividing but I honestly think that in many ways because a lot of the barriers have come down for women over the years that by making a caucus just for women, they're almost putting them back up again...I also think that my personal opinion is that by putting up more divisiveness that you are saying that there is a difference, per se ...I think that's the opposite of what we're trying to do. (Delozier 2011)

Senator Earll (R) agreed, saying, "I've just personally have never been of a mindset to participate in that type of thing. I mean, I don't – it's always been my personal philosophy that you don't make yourself equal by segregating yourself...and I don't believe that issues relevant to women are relevant to women by virtue of our gender" (Earll 2011).

While the women legislators in Pennsylvania do acknowledge that women bring a different life experience to the legislature, face unique challenges as a result of the gender roles outside of the legislature, and may have specific policy interests, they do not have a strong gender consciousness lending itself to a belief in collective action. In this case, I

would attribute the failure of this caucus launch in part to a lack of belief on the legislators' part that gendered organizing is an appropriate form of legislative behavior or a solution to the challenges presented by their gender.

*Party Dissatisfaction.*

I predicted that women would be motivated to caucus if they were dissatisfied with party structures and their responses to policy issues. This had been true of identity caucuses at the federal level (Hammond 1998). I also predicted that this dissatisfaction might be used as a frame justifying the need for a women's caucus. Therefore, party dissatisfaction would be correlated with successful attempts to create a women's caucus. Women did report instances of discrimination based on their gender within the legislature or their party specifically.

Senator Tartaglione (D) told this story: "When I first got there, I wore a pants suit on the Senate floor and I was told I should have worn a skirt...Well, what are you gonna do? Throw me off the floor? I'm elected....I was a trailblazer" (Tartaglione 2011).

Representative Gingrich (R) was told by a senior woman in her party not to bring a purse into the legislature. She warned that it would draw attention to her difference.

Representative Gingrich (R) joked, "Do you know what? I don't carry a purse. I laughed heartily when she said that to me so many years ago, and I'll be darned, I do not carry a purse. I make sure that anything I need in the day is in my binder" (Gingrich 2011).

When asked if there was an old boys' network in Pennsylvania, she admitted,

Oh, yeah. And that probably will never change...I'm not gonna say that's okay with me, but I truly can deal with it. It hasn't held me back at all...I've always worked with men and I've always been in positions, decision-making positions as a department head or whatever. And I've never really had a problem building a coalition or getting consensus to happen...it doesn't mean I'm not seen as a woman – they know that, but I think mature women coming into positions like

mine - and most of us are, most of us don't do this until our children are at least, a little bit older...I don't have a real problem with the men being good ole boys style because most of them are all about the same age. The old guys, yes. That's enduring. The guys who are up there, that have been there for thirty years, they'll pat you on the back and do all that stupid stuff that drives women nuts, but the younger guys don't. They've worked with women professionally, and I see them definitely looking at us as intellectual, capable equals. Do they have cigar-smoking caucuses? By far. Do they all play golf together and never think of inviting you? By far. Are many of the leadership decisions made outside of the chamber of and in more social settings that are all guys? Absolutely. And I don't see any sign of that changing at all. (Gingrich 2011)

This quote demonstrates the multifaceted challenges faced by women in the legislative environment. As in other cases, Representative Gingrich (R) acknowledges that age is a mitigating factor in gender discrimination. Likewise, she notes that younger men react differently to women in the workplace than older men. She acknowledges the challenge posed by women's role in the family. Ultimately, however, she explains away any consequences of these issues. She has dealt with it as an individual and, despite there being an informal male caucus that still maintains control; she doesn't see organized women's action as a solution to the problem. Representative Delozier (R) also blamed the lack of women in politics on individuals, saying,

I don't think that's [gender] a barrier anymore. It's a barrier by the individual feeling that they can do it more than I think the acceptance by voters of it being a woman....I think the candidates themselves have to get past the fact that they are gonna have to fundraise and they are going to have to go ask for money, and I think that that's very difficult. And I also think that the difference is – and I've said this before to others – is the fact that women wait to be asked to do something. (Delozier 2011)

Some legislators pointed to specific problems with male dominance within political parties. Representative Delozier (R) pointed out discrimination in committee assignments, saying:

I think just about every Republican woman was on the Human Services Committee. And that's not necessarily something we choose. Like that was not one of my choices, but that's where they assigned a number of us. And we kind of laughed about it and said, "My goodness, here are all the women in the legislature." (Delozier 2011)

Representative Bishop (D) added,

The number of men on all the committees and in all the leadership roles are so overpowering, they basically can make the decisions, but there are times when they really do need women's support, and there are some leaders who are concerned about women's support and so they do have an opportunity to make some input... Is it as often as we would like? No, it isn't, but they do involve us. (Bishop 2011)

Other legislators did not report any dissatisfaction with the party or their influence within it. Representative Swanger (R) said, "I feel very strongly that we're part of the decision-making process, and I don't, I've never seen the women treated any differently than the men as far as being able to run bills, getting support, getting assistance from the legislators that have been there in office longer. I was very pleased at the demeanor of the men toward the women" (Swanger 2011). Senator Earll (R) agreed saying, "I can't point to an example of where I've been discriminated against in my caucus because of my gender."

While some women legislators in Pennsylvania do acknowledge that women face unique challenges as a result of their gender within the legislature, they did not identify a women's caucus as an effective solution to this problem. Likewise, this dissatisfaction with political party's attention to issues or with respect to women more broadly was not unanimous among women legislators. Again, in this case, I would attribute the failure of this caucus launch in part to a lack of belief on the legislators' part that gendered organizing is an appropriate form of legislative behavior or a solution to the challenges presented by their gender.

*Women in Leadership.*

I predicted that states with low levels of women in leadership positions may be more likely to have successful women's caucus attempts because it would be a frame women could utilize in organizing. If women felt excluded from leadership, a bipartisan group that could advocate for women's selection for leadership posts might be a compelling argument to organize. This was not a frame utilized by the caucus founder in recruiting women to participate, although women did acknowledge a problem with the lack of women in leadership positions.

Representative Swanger (R) and Senator Earll (R) both pointed to a lack of women in leadership positions, saying, "I think that needs to be worked on because I think it is harder for a woman in the state legislature to move up into leadership" (Swanger 2011). Senator Earll (R) attributed the lack of women in leadership in part to their different style, saying,

I think there's opportunity. It really hasn't happened to any great extent, but there's opportunity....But I think women just play differently than men, and that's why women don't necessarily rise to leadership...I think that we're more interested – and this is just a broad generalization – but I think it's been my experience that women are more action-oriented in terms of wanting to get results as opposed to being driven by the need to accumulate power or personal ambition. I don't think women are motivated by those factors as much as men and I think that probably has more to do with the end result of women not being in leadership. (Earll 2011)

Here, again, women's disadvantage is explained as a result of their different style rather than institutional structures or male bias. The responsibility for the lack of women in leadership is not due to a problem with men or the institution – it is attributable to a difference in women. Not a neutral difference, but one cloaked in compliment - women want to accomplish things, they are not motivated by ambition, etc. The positive

attributes women bring as legislators are the same ones preventing them from having positions of power. Representative Delozier (R) said,

We have our chairperson of our caucus is a woman. We joke that the quota, that there's only one woman allowed in leadership because there's one Democrat woman in leadership and then Sandy Majors, our caucus chair. But last go around for leadership of this session, a number of other women ran, so I thought that was encouraging because that just means that maybe next go around or something like that, maybe we'll have more than Sandy. I mean, there's only five leadership positions. It's not like there's two dozen or something like that. So proportionately, I guess, we're well represented. (Delozier 2011)

In fact, this quote indicates that women are ambitious, in that at least in the most recent leadership elections, women ran and yet were not selected. Representative Delozier (R) also indicates a proportional representation of women in the leadership. In a state at the bottom of the list in terms of female proportions in the legislature, it seems discouraging that this would be an appropriate measuring stick instead of say 50/50 allocation of leadership positions between men and women. From the party leadership perspective, Senate Minority Leader Costa (D) said, "It's not a closed shop and I think women play a significant role in our caucus" (Costa 2011). This is despite women holding no leadership positions in the Pennsylvania State Legislature.

Like gender consciousness and dissatisfaction with party, women's lack of leadership positions was not a successfully utilized frame in the launching of this caucus. The focus of this women's caucus attempt was the impact women could make collectively on policy; these other frames did not appear in the discussion. As the data indicate, women are divided on women's difference and whether or not women are experiencing bias as result of their gender. Likewise, they are divided on the appropriate explanation and response when bias is perceived. It would be difficult for any organizer to mobilize women under these conditions. Had the organizers focused on the variety of

possible justifications for a caucus, would more participation have followed? It is not clear.

*Caucus Type.*

I predicted that women's caucuses which chose to set public policy as a priority were less likely to be successful than attempts which did not have policy formation as a purpose for the group. I predicted that policy differences among women would stifle the launch of a bipartisan group. In Pennsylvania, Representative Brown (D) and her Republican counterpart, Representative Boback (R) wanted to create a caucus that was policies-based so as to impact women's issues. Representative Brown (D) felt that these issues were not receiving the attention and consensus by women that were appropriate. She said,

I wanted women to have a voice in the House. I wanted the women of the Commonwealth to be able to speak up for themselves because so often, when we get to abortion rights, we get to welfare reform, anything to do with health care, with families, it's the men – they're up there and they're arguing back and forth for hours, for days, and I just saw that women were invisible and voiceless and why are men governing our bodies, governing how we raise our children, governing where we go for health care, governing how we educate our children? And I know I serve a district that's predominantly female head of household. There's very few men who run the house – it's the women. And so to me, I have more than a responsibility to anyone else in this House to make sure that women are represented, and this was a vehicle that I used to do that. (Brown 2011)

She faced challenges because, as has been observed previously, women legislators in Pennsylvania do not see a need for collective policy action and prefer to handle issues on a case by case basis relating as individuals. As Representative Harper (R) said, "We hold very different views, couldn't agree on issues. We can agree on some things, without a group, we do that" (Harper 2011). In this case, as has been noted, a policy-based caucus was unlikely to be successful because of partisan differences and a lack of

consensus that women have unique policy issues that should be addressed collectively. As one legislator put it, “It’s funny how women can find their way into being very effective without this ‘I am woman, hear me roar!’ thing, you know? Caucus or no caucus” (Gingrich 2011). These differences were exacerbated by a lack of trust between women across and within party lines.

I predicted in the previous chapter that caucuses that set socializing as the top priority for organizing a caucus were more likely to succeed than those who set public policy as their primary function. From the start, the Pennsylvania Women’s Legislative Caucus was framed as a caucus whose purpose was to affect public policy. When this did not work in a bipartisan manner, in 2010, Representative Brown (D) attempted to create such a policy caucus with other Democratic legislators, but again saw limited success because of a division between more senior women legislators and more recently elected women. Many women legislators acknowledged that socializing occurred in a bipartisan or intraparty fashion on occasion but not with any regularity. Senior women in the Republican Party, for example, might host a dinner or breakfast where policy was not the main focus. There was generally not a lot of enthusiasm for these events, and participation dwindled. A limited amount of time, coupled with a lack of interest, meant women did not come together to socialize in a way that would build the relationships necessary for a more formal organization to emerge.

#### *Opposition from Party Leaders or Male Colleagues.*

I had predicted that, had legislative leadership or male colleagues opposed the creation of a caucus, it would be less likely to succeed. In evaluating this hypothesis, I can conclude that the Democratic leadership in the House did not discourage

Representative Brown (D) in her attempt to create a women's caucus. As was explained earlier, it was a letter sent by her party leadership which listed the existing caucuses and encouraged the development of others that triggered her action. The explicit approval of her party leadership spurred her to action.

As a legislative leader, Senate Minority Leader Costa (D) did not object to the idea of alternative mechanisms for organizing outside of party caucuses. He said,

We encourage folks to participate in the caucuses because it does a number of things. Obviously, it makes them further [sic], a deeper awareness of the issues related to that. I think that's always important. So, I think knowledge about these areas within the caucus are important... I think there's a value, the value that these caucus conversations have outweigh, I think, the impact it would have on leadership's ability to convince members to do something or, I guess to control members. (Costa 2011)

Only having interviewed one Democratic leader in the Senate, where the women's caucus attempt did not take place, I cannot make any definitive conclusions about Republican leadership opposition to the attempt made in Pennsylvania. This one Democratic leader seems to see the value in caucuses and participates in many himself. However, as in New Jersey and Colorado, Democratic women, in this case, suspect that Republican women are the object of pressure from their party leaders not to participate in bipartisan activity. As in those cases, no Republican women themselves report such pressure. Representative Brown (D) said, "I appreciated being able to be in a room with the women on the opposite side to hear their side of the story, but then it was discouraged by leadership again that that wasn't approved by them, it wasn't sanctioned by, especially from the Republican side, and some of the women chose not to come back" (Brown (D) 2011). Again, this was not confirmed by Republican legislators.

Representative Gingrich (R) did acknowledge, while there may be some benefits to a formal caucus, it could raise the ire of men within the party. She said,

There are advantages and disadvantages; I like the communication part, opportunity part of it, so that you can talk about policy... I do not know that a formal caucus is the way to do that because that scares men beyond belief. If they see two or three women talking, they go, "What are you talking about? What are you doing? What are you trying to accomplish?" (Gingrich 2011)

A Republican legislator also told of another attempt at women's caucus creation outside of my time frame. She said, "There was a newer legislator that came in sometime after I did and she was very assertive about putting together a female caucus and, boy, she was knocked down a few pegs by the caucus chairman. He said no, we wouldn't be doing that. So that's part of the reason why maybe Pennsylvania doesn't have one" (Gingrich 2011). Although there is no evidence of Republican leaders opposing the attempt to create a women's caucus made in 2009, this story indicates a historical objection to gender organizing.

This was true of not only men in the party. Women also spoke of a long serving Republican woman legislator who was very influential in the party and among women in the legislature more broadly. She was philosophically opposed to any sort of gender organization, and this was explained as a reason for the historical lack of a women's caucus in the state. Representative Gingrich (R) explains,

She was definitely not interested in doing it and was an obstacle to doing it...I think she had fought so long and hard as a woman several generations before me and the rest of us that she just had a different attitude about it – I want to be treated like a woman, I don't want to be anything exclusive because I'm a female...I want to be one of the decision-makers at the table and gender was irrelevant, so you know, she was not interested in doing so and it definitely was an obstacle. (Gingrich 2011)

Other legislators argued that party leaders would not object because they would not be threatened. Senator Earll (R) commented, “I can say unequivocally there wouldn’t be pressure from the leadership. They wouldn’t care… The current day leaders wouldn’t do anything to…they don’t feel threatened by that” (Earll 2011). Senate Minority Leader Costa (D) even indicated that he would be interested in participating in a women’s caucus as a way to become better informed on those issues.

In the case of Pennsylvania, it appears as though there is at least historical evidence of Republican opposition to a women’s caucus, although evidence in the 2009 women’s caucus attempt is not corroborated by Republican women legislators. There is evidence of Democratic Party leadership encouragement of the establishment of extra-party caucuses, and they did not oppose this attempt in any way.

#### *Additional Factors*

In addition to the above hypotheses, legislators I interviewed offered an additional explanation for why a women’s caucus was not present in Pennsylvania or why the attempt to create a women’s caucus by Representatives Brown (D) and Boback (R) was unsuccessful. As has been mentioned before, senior Democratic legislators did not like how Representative Brown (D) went about creating the caucus. Unlike Representative Middleton (D) in Colorado, Representative Brown (D) did not consult with senior women in her caucus. These more senior women resented Brown (D) naming herself co-chair of the caucus and proceeding without their input. This resentment was evident under the surface as Representative Bishop (D) explains that less experienced legislators may have time for such things but that she did not, nor did she have need of a caucus to accomplish her goals:

Let me just say this to you, there are so many of us moving in many different directions. As chairwoman of Children and Youth, it takes up most of my time and it makes it extremely difficult for me to be an active member in the women's caucus. Some of the other women are doing the same thing. Maybe for some of the newer women, who have not been here that long, because you have to be here ten terms before you can become a chair, so you will find that the women's caucus was usually made up of the women who were here but didn't serve in leadership and they did not have a chair, so that gave them the opportunity to advance some of their issues. I've been here twenty-two years, so long past the time when I've really had time to associate and to move women issues because I use the committee to move women and children issues rather than a caucus to do it. (Bishop 2011)

Representative Brown (D) herself admitted,

The only problem we had is I had to learn we had to respect the leadership. And there are women who have been here a long time, who've tried to form this caucus, and it was expressed to me – and I won't name who they are – that they would have appreciated if they had been the chair before I had a chance to be the chair, which coming from their perspective, I can appreciate it, but coming from young and progressive and ready to go, I didn't appreciate it. (Brown 2011)

This lack of consultation in her own party set Representative Brown (D) up to fail in many ways. On the one hand, she did not have the benefit of information about previous attempts to create a women's caucus and what pitfalls to avoid. Had she known, for example, that partisanship had been a problem in the past, she and Representative Boback (R) may have used a different frame to motivate participation. Representative Brown (D) may have tried to shore up Democratic support first and then reach across the aisle. Likewise, by not deferring to the more senior women in her party, she alienated women whose influence may have helped her recruitment of participants on both sides of the aisle. This political naiveté was a key factor in the failure of this attempt to create a women's caucus as Representative Brown (D) herself identifies it as "the only problem."

## Discussion

Analyzing the data from the Pennsylvania case indicates several factors that combined to frustrate the attempt to caucus made by Representatives Brown (D) and Boback (R). In comparing this case to the two successful launches, we can observe the factors present in those cases which are not present here and those which, while present, did not create a favorable enough environment for a successful launch. Likewise, we can see which variables were detrimental in this case, which did not negatively affect the attempts to caucus in Colorado and New Jersey.

Like the Colorado case, in Pennsylvania, a newly elected representative was motivated to create a caucus because of her disappointment with the status quo of women's influence in the body. She was inspired by the existence of other caucuses, including the black caucus, to create an organization for women legislators. Unlike in Colorado, however, Representative Brown (D) did not vet the idea of a caucus with more senior members of her own party. This mistake cost her in many ways, including valuable information which could have altered her and Representative Boback's (R) strategy, as well as needed validity in the recruitment of participants. Unlike in New Jersey, where the attempt to create a women's caucus was by senior women taking advantage of an influx of new women, this case appears to have suffered from a lack of political experience on the part of at least one of the founders.

Party posed a big challenge in this case from the beginning. Unlike in New Jersey where women legislators had longstanding relationships with each other across the aisle, there seemed to be little social interaction among women and a history of mistrust. Tight party competition, frequently shifting party majorities, and ideological differences among

women all contributed to an environment unlikely to result in a successful launch of a caucus. Even among women who expressed dissatisfaction with their status within their party and with a lack of women in leadership, collectively identifying with other women was not viewed as an appropriate response. This state also had the smallest women's proportion of the Republican Party of all four cases indicating increased pressure on them to affiliate with their party rather than gender. I would characterize the subjects interviewed here as having very low gender consciousness in regard to acknowledging women's difference and the benefits of acting collectively.

Institutional factors in Pennsylvania, including professionalism and term limits, had interesting effects in this case. As a full-time legislature, most women admitted that time was an issue discouraging their participation in a caucus. Likewise, there was no staff or financial resources available for the launch either from the legislature itself or external organizations. While Pennsylvania is not term limited, this institutional factor may have had a positive influence on an attempt to create a women's caucus in this state by eliminating the members who had served for a long time and opposed caucus formation.

Finally, the frame utilized by Representatives Brown (D) and Boback (R) in creating this caucus was public policy. Without the benefit of history or the experience of their more senior colleagues, Representatives Brown (D) and Boback (R) did not anticipate how partisanship and a lack of gender consciousness on the part of their potential participants would negatively affect the launch. In this case, framing the caucus as a social networking opportunity may have been a starting place, but with the lack of gender consciousness and limited time, it is unlikely that even this frame would have

been successful. While it is unclear here how much opposition there would be from the Republican leadership at the present time, it is clear a historical opposition did exist in this state. The lingering effects of this opposition may have negatively impacted even the launch of a social caucus.

### Conclusion

In Pennsylvania, a newly elected representative naively attempted to organize women's voices to impact public policy. With the explicit encouragement of party leadership but without consultation of more senior women in her own party, Representative Brown (D) and her Republican counterpart Representative Boback were facing an uphill battle. In an unfriendly environment without previously established friendships across the aisle, women legislators in Pennsylvania were not motivated to participate in an organization they did not acknowledge as important to them or their constituents. When this initial attempt to create a women's caucus failed due to opposition from women within the Democratic Party and possible sabotage by Republican leadership, Representative Brown (D) scaled back her attempt and tried an intraparty caucus. This, too, was unsuccessful in that she had already alienated senior party women and only had participation by newly elected women. These women discussed policy issues, but no substantive actions were taken by the group.

In the next chapter, I will consider the attempt to create a women's caucus that failed in Iowa in 2007. By comparing Pennsylvania and Iowa, I will be able to see which factors are common to both and, therefore, detrimental to a caucus launch and what separates these attempts to caucus from the successes in New Jersey and Colorado.

Table 15 – Pennsylvania Interview Subject Demographics

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Legislative Leaders</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>
5 Republicans	1	1 male	10
5 Democrats		9 female	

### Chapter 8: The Iowa Attempt

This chapter is an in-depth look at a failed attempt to create a women's caucus in the Iowa State Legislature in 2007. As in the previous chapters, I will begin by presenting a brief background of the state's political conditions and the status of women within government. I will then describe the specific data collection for this case following with a narrative describing the women's caucus attempt. Finally, I will analyze the evidence from interviews to test the hypotheses I laid out in Chapter 4. I will end this chapter by discussing the implications of this case and the connections between the two unsuccessful attempts at creating a women's caucus (Pennsylvania and Iowa).

#### State Background

Iowa is a Mid-western state with a total 2010 population of 3,046,355 people. The state was ranked 30<sup>th</sup> nationally for the size of the population (U.S. Census 2011). Iowa's economy, while "known throughout the world as America's heartland, the source of an abundant supply of top-quality agricultural and manufactured goods," in recent history has seen fewer farms and an increase in the service sector and manufacturing (Iowa State Legislature 2008, 404). The plurality of Iowans is employed in manufacturing (19.1%) with government (16.5%) as the second largest employing industry (Iowa State Legislature 2008, 404).

Iowa was 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation with a median family income of \$50,504 compared to \$51,914 nationally (U.S. Census 2012). Iowa also has an 11.6% poverty rate, lower than the national average at 13.8% (U.S. Census 2012). Iowa's rate of high school graduation (90.6%) is higher than the national average, while its bachelor degree attainment (24.9%) is lower than the national averages (U.S. Census 2012).

Elazar (1984) characterizes Iowa as a state with a moralistic dominant political culture with a strong individualist strain. Moralist culture is noted for the “commonwealth conception” and “its search for the good society” while individualist culture is noted for the “centrality of private concerns” and “places a premium on limiting community intervention” (115). He describes these states as places where “politics is a business like any other” but where relationships are primary (115-117). States with more than one culture are the result of migration in which new residents bring their respective cultures with them, and the intensifying or dampening of these cultures over time complicates political culture (122-123). In a more recent analysis of political culture, Lieske (2010) characterizes Iowa (similar to Pennsylvania) as a Germanic rurban political culture.

Much of what is known about Iowa’s politics is centered on its primacy as the first caucus state in presidential elections. In *Why Iowa? How Caucuses and Sequential Elections Improve the Presidential Nominating Process*, the authors contend that Iowa has a large influence on nomination outcomes because of the media attention focused on these events (Redlawsk et al. 2011). Less attention is granted its internal state and local politics. A Gallup poll showed that in 2009 the state was a midrange Democratic state with 48.3% of adults (not registered voters) identifying as Democratic or leaning Democratic compared with 36.4% who identified as Republican or leaning Republican (Gallup Politics 2010). This demonstrated a move to the right in the state from 2008 in which the Democratic advantage was 18 points as opposed to only 12 points in 2009 (Gallup Politics 2010). In 2007, when the women’s caucus was attempted, both houses of the Iowa legislature were controlled by the Democratic Party, and a Democratic governor

was in office. The Assembly partisan ratio was 54 Democrats to 45 Republicans, and the Senate was 30 Democrats to 20 Republicans (NCSL 2007). Iowa ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> out of the 50 states according to Squire's (2007) professionalism scale which is calculated by member pay, ratio of staff to legislators, and total days in session.

Schenken (1995) describes the Iowa legislature as a place where

the majority floor leader holds a great deal of power...although some minority leaders have demonstrated great agility at frustrating the majority party's goals...The amount of power and influence exerted by these leaders depends upon many factors including the relative strength of each party in the chamber, the political strength of the leader, and the amount of loyalty and discipline the leader has developed. (Schenken 1995, xiii)

This dissertation approaches the development of women's caucuses as a challenge to party leadership power and control and suggests that strong party leaders are something women would have to contend with in the development of an alternative organization to party. In fact, in the two successful women's caucus attempts examined in this project, party leaders had no such objections and the caucuses proceeded. In Pennsylvania, there is evidence of historical objection by Republican Party leaders, both formal and informal, but no direct evidence of their interference in the 2009 failed attempt to create a women's caucus. Iowa is a unique case because of two previously existing women's caucuses in the state.

The Iowa's Women's Caucus was featured in the documentary film, *Not One of the Boys*, produced by the Center for American Women and Politics in 1984 and which documents the experiences of Iowa women legislators. The film highlights the social and political nature of the caucus and ultimately its decline as partisanship and lack of participation take their toll on the group. This chapter will analyze a women's caucus attempt by former legislator and Lieutenant Governor Patty Judge (D), who was a

participant in this caucus, to reinstate it in 2007 following her election to executive office.<sup>27</sup>

No woman has served as governor of Iowa nor has a woman represented Iowa in Congress. Schenken (1995, 163) cites a public opinion poll indicating “something of a glass ceiling” for Iowa women politicians. In 2007, Iowa ranked 25<sup>th</sup> in the country according to gender proportions with women making up 22.7% of the legislature. Twelve women were serving in the state senate and 25 in the state assembly (CAWP 2007). There were 19 Democratic women serving in the Assembly and three serving in the Senate, as well as nine Republican women serving in the Assembly and three serving in the Senate. The state ranked 24<sup>th</sup> in the nation as to the proportion of women serving in legislative leadership positions with 25% held by women (2/8 positions). Senator Polly Bukta (D) was Speaker Pro Tempore.<sup>28</sup> Iowa ranked 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation with women holding 17.6% of committee chairmanships (6/34 chairmanships) (CAWP Leadership 2007).

#### Data Collection

The following analysis is the result of telephone interviews. All 34 women legislators serving in 2007 were contacted for an interview. Five were interviewed (15%). Four of the legislators were Democrats and one was a Republican. One was Senator at the time of the interview and four were serving in the State House. Interviews were also conducted with Rachel Scott, the Administrator of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2007, as well as former Democratic Lieutenant Governor Patty Judge. Seven

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<sup>27</sup> Iowa had another women’s caucus founded in 2001 similar to the type that exists in South Carolina today. It was an organization of women legislators, staff, lobbyists, business and community leaders concerned with the election of women to public office (Sanbonmatsu 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Patty Judge was serving as Lieutenant Governor in 2007, but in Iowa, at that time, this was not a position in the state legislature.

members of the legislative leadership in 2007 and in 2011 were also contacted for interviews. Representative Linda Upmeyer (R) was House Majority Leader in 2011 and was the only leader I interviewed in Iowa. This is the only state in which there was no participation by male legislators. All interviews took place between January 2011 and March 2012. This is a very limited data collection, but it is difficult to study the phenomena of a failure. I say more about the limits of this study in the concluding chapter.

### Caucus Narrative

As I have said, Iowa is a state in which a women's caucus had previously existed but had died out. New Jersey and Colorado were also states in which much less formal caucuses preceded the attempts to create a women's caucus examined within this project. I have categorized those cases as successes, whereas this Iowa women's caucus attempt in 2007 was a failure. My criteria for a successful attempt to create a women's caucus are one in which women from both parties meet together consistently for one year. The women legislators of Iowa had one bipartisan event and no further activity.

In 2007, former State Representative Patty Judge was elected Lieutenant Governor of Iowa. Shortly after, she was contacted by then Representative Swati Dandekar (D) who was interested in creating a caucus much like the one Judge had participated in during her legislative tenure in the 1990s.

We did have a women's caucus at that time...it was kind of a loosely-affiliated thing, and we did not really take positions, hard positions on particular pieces of legislation. At that point in time, we talked about things where we could find some common ground...we did a lot of socializing and created some pretty good friendships that have endured the times through, friends on both sides of the aisle. So it was, that was a good experience. (Judge 2011)

Senator Dandekar (D) remembers the initiative coming from Judge, saying,

I think it was her idea, it was her idea that she would do that and she's an extremely bright person, so it was her idea that, "Let's focus on issues that are important to us women and let's work on it." I think that was her idea and I think that it came from her. (Dandekar 2011)<sup>29</sup>

Judge then contacted Rachel Scott, Administrator at the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, and asked her to support the organization. Scott then organized a reception for all the women legislators at the Governor's Mansion, hosted by First Lady Mariclare Culver and Lieutenant Governor Judge.

She (Judge) said, "When I was in the legislature, we had a women's caucus and that's when this caucus did all kinds of great stuff and really worked together in unexpected ways and kind of got around some of the men," and she told me stories about there's – I don't know if they have this in every state – but there's this area called the Well that's right up in front of the Speaker or the Majority Leader's seat in the chamber, and when people wanted to speak privately, they would go up to this Well – even during Senate debate and that's where people would be called who were arguing with each other and that sort of thing – so she talked about sometimes women in different parties would be called up to the Well or they would go up to the Well and talk and they weren't on microphones and it would make the men very nervous...so she asked if I would take that on as a role, and it was something that I was very happy to do. (Scott 2011)

The event was attended by both Democratic and Republican legislators in March 2008. The function was primarily social in nature, but the women did have a conversation around a large table to discuss the possibility of creating a caucus. Scott informed the women that some legislators had suggested a social network style caucus while others were more interested in a policy-based group. Judge and Scott report that positive conversation followed and women in general got to know each other better at the event. No subsequent events were held. One year later, Scott attempted to organize another

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<sup>29</sup> It is possible that Senator Dandekar does not want to be credited with instigating a women's caucus attempt which failed. Likewise, it is possible that she or Lieutenant Governor Judge are remembering inaccurately what occurred.

reception but could not generate any interest in such a function from the women legislators themselves.

### Analysis

I will now examine the hypotheses laid out in Chapter 4, using information from my interviews with legislators, executive branch officials, and staff.

### Opportunities

#### *Proportion Women in the Legislature and Republican Party.*

The first political opportunity I expected to positively affect women legislators' ability to caucus is the presence of women in the legislature. I expected that a moderate proportion of women would likely result in an organizing success because there would be enough women to participate but not so many that a caucus may be deemed unnecessary. Iowa in 2007 was in the middle of the pack as far as the proportion of women is concerned, but it does not appear to have been a major influence in this case. The organizers did not cite women's share of seats in the legislature as a factor in their calculation to create a caucus.

Representative Deborah Berry (D) mentioned that at the same time a women's caucus was being discussed, African American legislators were also considering caucusing. She cited their low numbers as a reason not to continue (in addition to leadership objection which I will discuss later in this chapter). Representative Berry (D) saw the women's numbers as favoring the development of a women's caucus, however, saying, "Where women in the Iowa Legislature...I thought we had about thirty plus total, but I think this last election it went, the numbers went down a bit – but we'd have a better

chance of forming as a group" (Berry 2011). Unfortunately, that did not turn out to be the case.

Twenty percent of the Republican Party in Iowa's State House of Representatives was women in 2007. Of the four cases, this is the third largest proportion of Republican women. I predicted that Republican women who comprise a smaller percentage of the total Republican Party in a state may feel more pressure to conform to legislative norms and less likely to join a bipartisan group. In this case, the proportion of Republican women is almost the same as in Colorado which had a successful caucus attempt, but slightly above Kanter's (1977) line of 15% for a skewed sex ratio. Women in the interviews did not mention their numbers with the Republican Party as a factor in their decision to participate in the caucus or not, but there may be something to the possibility of breaching the 20% mark within the Republican Party freeing women to act in a more bipartisan way.

*Proportion of Freshmen Women Legislators.*

Many of the women who attended the event at the Governor's Mansion were newly elected legislators, especially on the Republican side. More senior Republicans were less likely to attend. Contrary to this greater enthusiasm among newly elected women, a Democratic legislator explained that a new influx of legislators (of all stripes, not just women) would discourage caucus formation. She said of the 2011 session, "It was just a pretty interesting legislative session with all the new people and different sectors of folks coming into the legislature, so we've just been not focused on that" (Berry 2011).

*Democratic Party Control.*

I predicted that Democratic control of the legislature would positively affect the launch of a women's caucus. In this case, no subjects mentioned the Democratic control of the legislature or the governorship as something they consciously considered. Scott called the single party control a "non-issue" for the women's caucus attempt. It was, however, the election of Democrat Patty Judge to the Office of Lieutenant Governor which triggered this attempt to create a women's caucus. Had she not been elected, had her experience not inspired Senator Dandekar (D), and had she not responded by offering the aid of the Commission on the Status of Women, a women's caucus attempt would likely not have occurred.

*Party Competition.*

I predicted that party competition would negatively impact an attempt at creating a women's caucus. I hypothesized that high party competition within a legislature would correlate with strong party discipline and hurt women's ability to work together across party lines. While party competition specifically was not something that was mentioned in the interviews, party majority was something that was considered very influential in the behavior of legislators. Who controlled the legislative agenda was cited as affecting the budgeting process as Representative Upmeyer (R) mentioned. Party discipline too was very important as will be discussed later in this chapter.

*Party Polarization*

I predicted that partisanship within a legislature would negatively affect the launch of a women's caucus by preventing women from trusting each other and finding common interests. In describing the environment of the Iowa legislature, Representative Berry (D) said,

Politics are so partisan right now. It's kind of tragic, and I think that it's that way because of national politics and feeling the effects of that division. So, yeah, I don't know if I can even say that I could see a women's caucus getting off the ground. I know you'd have women on both sides pretty interested in, again, the issues and, in the end those are the things that bind us... I'm thinking that maybe I'm the one to approach the majority party women and the minority women, party women, and say, "Hey, you know, we've got a lot of issues coming up before us again. We need to, bound together as women." But as I said, I just feel it's just so partisan anymore, politics these days, the climate of it all. (Berry 2011)

During the actual attempt to create a women's caucus in 2007, it was difficult to even recruit women who had previously been active in the women's caucus of the 1990s. Scott explains,

There was a woman ...she was a Republican, and I remember and she had been in that kind of initial women's caucus with Patty Judge, and she's somebody that Patty Judge really had a lot of respect for, so I went out of my way to invite her to be a part of the caucus, and she was famous for not mincing words and she just said, "I'm too tired for this." (Scott 2011)

She went on to explain the distrust between Republican and Democratic women in this way:

There's an organization called 50-50 in 2020 in particular that's made up of these kind of mostly elder statesmen from both parties who, they're all about "let's have a high-level campaign training school," and one of the things that I have seen is the Republican women are very interested in this because they haven't had an infrastructure within their party to support that. The Democratic women are extremely suspicious of it because they have to a lesser degree, I mean, not to the degree that they would want, but they have had some of that infrastructure within their party and so kind of the higher, like if you're talking about, like, "Oh, run for the School Board" or whatever, people are all fine and good, but, "let's lock arms" and "this is a great thing for women," but the higher you get up into policy issues and strategy and all of that kind of stuff, then the less interested people are in working together. (Scott 2011)

Representative Phyllis Thede (D) disagreed, saying,

We currently do work across the aisle, when it comes to issues that really do matter to all of us, so I think there's a strong effort to do that. And, there are groups that are out there, currently out there now that work together trying to initiate women to become more active in politics anywhere from helping out with

campaigns to actually running for a particular seat of some sort, whether it be city or State, and so there's a lot of work to be done out there. And, I think there's some effort among different groups to enlist women to get involved. (Thede 2011)

Senator Dandekar also reported a collegial atmosphere during her tenure, saying,

It was very, very congenial when I walked in, whenever that was, about nine years ago. The Republicans were in Majority, and I had mentors on both sides of the aisle and I became, I think, I learned how to get things done from a point of view of how important it was to keep the focus and I still do, I still think our focus should be the students and the citizens of Iowa and get things done, what is right for Iowa... Today it may be partisan. (Dandekar 2011)

In explaining the failure of the caucus, Scott reported the feelings of the legislators she had approached about next steps: "At the end of the day, I had women legislators tell me, 'I wanna spend – my social time is precious, I'd rather spend it with my family or people who have like interests rather than spend it trying to build a relationship with somebody that I don't know has my best interests at heart'" (Scott 2011). Representative Berry (D) agreed with Scott's assessment, saying, "I don't think it got off the ground much though, we really don't get together women of both parties, it's, unfortunately, it seems to be more just party. Party members just kind of stick together" (Berry 2011). Like Pennsylvania, there seems to be a lot of baggage for more senior legislators in Iowa. Scott explains,

We had a bunch of Republican freshmen who were just nice women who wanted to see what this was all about. I mean, we didn't have any of the, kind of the older Republican women did not come. We did have some of the older Democratic women, but they tended to have, I think, a more cynical view of what can happen. I don't think anybody was around from old women's caucus days or at least those weren't the ones who showed up. (Scott 2011)

Representative Upmeyer (R) described partisanship contextually, explaining that on budget issues, Iowa legislators are prone to partisanship, especially with newly elected majorities. She did concede, however, that, "I think when it comes to just good public

policy, I think pretty regularly I want to work together to achieve good public policy” (Upmeyer 2011). She did not clarify how public policy and budgeting could be distinguished or why they would be distinct.

It appears, in this case, that while individual legislators may be interested in working together across the aisle on issues when agreement could be reached, a collective effort was unlikely to succeed in this case. More senior legislators on both sides were suspicious of each other and, despite success in the past; they were not interested in devoting time to an organization that included both Democratic and Republican legislators. These attitudes proved fatal for the Iowa attempt at a women’s caucus.

*Presence of Other Caucuses.*

I predicted that the existence of other caucuses within a legislature, particularly a black caucus, would positively affect a caucus launch by normalizing alternative organizing outside of party structures. Iowa is not a state of legislative caucuses. The two party caucuses are the only caucuses in existence save a newly created bipartisan Rural Caucus in 2010. There were no other caucuses at the time of the women’s attempt, no precedent for alternative organization. Based on these interviews, it appears that party leadership discouraged the development of these groups as will be discussed later.

*Racial Diversity of Women Legislators.*

In 2007, three women legislators of color made up 9% of all women legislators in Iowa. Representative Dandekar (D), the legislator to whom Lieutenant Governor Judge (D) gives credit for instigating the women’s caucus attempt in this state, is Indian American. Representative Dandekar (D) does not take credit for the idea to create a women’s caucus although she did report believing it to be a good idea. She did not

mention her personal ethnic identity as relevant to her support of the launch. Nor did any other women legislators mention race as a positive or negative factor affecting the attempt to create a women's caucus in this state.

*Size of the Legislature.*

The size of the legislature was predicted to assist women in organizing by providing political opportunities. Specifically, smaller legislatures are expected to breed familiarity. This familiarity may result in trust across party lines and may lead to conversations in which women legislators recognize their common interests. No subjects mentioned the size of the legislature as warranting the creation of a group, although a few mentioned willingness for an opportunity to get to know one another better. This was more a function of partisanship, however, than the size of the legislature.

Resources

*External Organizations.*

I predicted that women's organizations outside the legislature would be another resource for women legislators in making an attempt to caucus. In the case of Iowa, the Commission on the Status of Women, an executive agency in the state, was asked to play a supportive role for the women's caucus. The Administrator of this Commission, Rachel Scott, was tasked with organizing the event, inviting and recruiting legislators to attend, and ultimately gave up once legislators made it clear they were uninterested in pursuing an organization. This group was asked to play this role by the Lieutenant Governor, and former legislator, Patty Judge. While Lieutenant Governor Judge (D) remembers being asked to instigate the group by Senator Dandekar (D), the Senator recalls it as Judge's initiative. Representative Berry (D) also perceived it in this way, saying, "We had the Lt.

Governor kind of spearheading it, so it didn't necessarily come out of the legislature, you see what I mean?" (Berry 2011). For her part, Judge made a conscious effort to leave the decision-making up to the legislators the night of the reception. She said of her role,

It was bait to get them to come because many of them were new legislators and had never been inside the Governor's Mansion, they had never had an opportunity to socialize with me or with the First Lady, and so it was kind of a "come and see us and have a glass of wine" and so forth. And a good number of them did come, but for whatever reason, and again I was not upstairs on that floor and was not part of any discussions that they had beyond that night. It just did not gel beyond that night. (Judge 2011)

Again, this evidence is not clear. Did the initiative come from the legislators themselves (Senator Dandekar (D)) or from the executive branch? All the organizing was done by the executive branch, and none of the legislators, in their comments about the caucus, take any ownership of its launch. There was at least the perception that it had come from outside the legislature. This seems to have been a negative factor on the chances of success in this case.

#### *Professionalism and Staff Size.*

The level of professionalism was predicted to positively affect the women's caucus attempt by providing women legislators with staff and time. Time was definitely a challenge. In one sense, it was not clear that with limited time a women's caucus was a priority. "People just told me individually, 'Eh, I don't know. I'd just rather spend my time in other ways,' said Scott (2011). Likewise, the additional responsibilities of women in the home limited the time they wanted to spend. Scott added,

It was also an issue because many of the women in the legislature are from the Des Moines and Ames area, both within driving distance to go home each night and they have, a lot of them have families. And I heard directly from women "I'm not gonna go to that, I want to be, I want to get home with my family". . . So, scheduling was definitely a challenge. (Scott 2011)

Representative Janet Petersen (D) is one of those legislators. She said,

I think the women get along pretty well actually. There's always room for more opportunity to get to know people outside the legislature, and I'm, once again, probably not the best person in the world to ask because I don't hit a lot of the reception circuits after work because I go home to my family since I live in Des Moines and I have three young kids. I go home and cook dinner. So, I'm not one that does a lot of the social circuit after we leave the chamber. When we're at the state house, I feel like I get along well with the majority of the women up here, even if we completely disagree on issues. (Petersen 2011)

Senator Dandekar (D) also attributed the problem to time issues, saying,

I think it was a great idea and I really think it's a time commitment, even though we are legislators, we are moms, we are grandmothers, and we are wives, we have so many other hats to work with and, but in Iowa it's a part-time legislature, so people have on top of all the family commitments you have you also have your work commitments, and the majority of the women work outside the home, so it was, to me, when I look at it, I really think it had a lot to do with, it was a great idea but the reason it didn't go anywhere [was] because of the time commitment. (Dandekar 2011)

Representative Upmeyer (R) was a legislator who had conflicting feelings about a caucus. On one hand, she thought it was worthwhile, but time was an issue. On the other hand, she noted it was unnecessary because women are already working on important issues and didn't need a caucus. She said,

I think it was primarily a function of everybody was really busy and it was just really hard to find a time when we could get together and do that, so I don't think it was so much an unwillingness to do that, but more just a function of time. The other thing I would note is that for the most part, I don't know that most of the women currently serving – and I certainly can't speak for everyone –but of the women that I know relatively well ultimately don't feel a particular need for a solely women's group in that on both sides of the aisle, no matter who is in the majority, women frequently are committee chairs, women frequently are doing heavy lifting for hard bills. I'm not sure that they don't, that they feel like they need a special caucus to make their issues stand out. (Upmeyer 2011)

Time was even an issue for women who felt a women's caucus was worthwhile. Representative Thede (D) said, "I do think it's necessary. I think the problem is always

finding the time to get something like that together, but, no, it's definitely necessary. I think the more women we have involved in politics, the better it is. There's so many women's issues and so, I think women are best represented by women. And so, it would absolutely be beneficial if that could be done in Iowa" (Thede 2011).

Representative Berry (D) indicated that time had to be prioritized for policy, saying, "I don't recall it getting off the ground much for whatever reason. I think it was more or less, it was just a busy, a hectic time in the legislature at the time. So everyone was just pretty much busy with policy and issues and things like that" (Berry 2011). This legislator is making a delineation between the caucus and policy and issues. If a caucus is not doing policy, Democratic women have a hard time justifying participating. This dovetails with Republican Representative Upmeyer (R) who made a distinction between budgeting and public policy. It seems as though there is a disconnect between organizing as women and official legislative business.

It is difficult to judge from this evidence if time, as a consequence of the level of legislative professionalism, was really an issue for this women's caucus attempt. There is the evidence supporting the challenge women face balancing legislating with their familial commitments. There is further evidence, however, that women in Iowa were not sure that a women's caucus was a worthwhile expenditure of their time, even while at the Capitol. They do not perceive organizing as women would increase their ability to fulfill their legislative duties. This hurt participation in the fledgling caucus.

Time was not the only professionalism issue mentioned. Administrator Rachel Scott of the Commission on the Status of Women, charged by Lieutenant Governor Judge with offering support to the women's caucus, connected the level of professionalism of

the Iowa legislature with restricting the number of women who could even participate in the legislature, saying,

I think the institutional factors impact – they're a part of why there are so few women in the legislature to begin with. There are not many women, especially under fifty-five, who can up and leave their household and come to Des Moines and be there during the week and then have their time not their own...The salary is low for a legislator. I mean, you have benefits, but I think it's something like in the ballpark of \$25,000 a year, so, most women can't afford a job like that. (Scott 2011)

Iowa has the fewest permanent staffers of all four of my case studies with 191 positions. Although legislative staff may have been few, Administrator Scott made herself available to the legislators through her role at the Commission on the Status of Women. Although she could have offered the same support that was available in the New Jersey and Colorado cases, this resource was not utilized by women legislators in Iowa.

#### *Term Limits.*

I had predicted that term limited states would be less likely to have successful attempts to create a women's' caucus because of the pressures of time in office affecting their decision to organize or participate in a caucus. Iowa is a state without term limits. Like Pennsylvania, more senior legislators were reluctant to participate or see a caucus as a worthwhile endeavor. In this sense, term limits may have termed out women with more cynical views; however, there is no evidence in this case that newly elected women had the inclination to instigate a caucus or were very aware of the previous successful caucus and its legacy.

## Frames

### *Gender Consciousness.*

Gender consciousness was a frame expected to be employed in states with successful women's caucus attempts. Recognition among women legislators of common interests was expected to be associated with a successful attempt to create a women's caucus because I predicted it would be a useful argument for why a women's caucus would be necessary.

Representative Berry (D) definitely acknowledged women's difference and connected that frame to the justification for a women's caucus. She said, "Obviously women bring a whole new, different perspective and I mean that would be common ground for both Democratic and Republican women. We could probably get a lot done as a caucus, as it relates to children's issues, family issues, and even women's issues. I think it would be much easier to work as a unified force" (Berry 2011). Representative Thede (D) indicated that women had more experience with certain issues, like elder care because of gender expectations, saying, "We are caregivers from the time, I think, basically, we are born until the time that we die. We take care of our families and our friends and people that we know" (Thede 2011). She continued by explaining that it was her personal experience with another political issue – health care – that necessitated her run for office:

I was frustrated because health care was an issue for me and for a lot of women, and we were just struggling with what we needed for health care. And, we needed, at the time, we were not getting sonograms paid for or we weren't getting, just all those tests that women need to have – and so we really were advocating to get that done. That was something that I really wanted to get done. So, I got frustrated. I couldn't do it at the local level, and I had been helping out with many other campaigns locally – city councils, alderman, I worked with

presidential candidates, congressional candidates, so I thought, "You know what? After all those years of helping those folks, I don't see why I could not make a difference." I had things I wanted to get worked on, and so that's why I decided to run. (Thede 2011)

For her part, Scott was reluctant to say gender consciousness was very strong in the Iowa legislature - at least not enough to support a caucus. She told this story:

I think that there was potential to feel commonality, but I don't believe that they had enough interaction to know if there was... There was a woman who was in the Iowa House and then she retired and then she's now back in the Senate. And, she was a Republican, and a younger Democrat told me that when she was elected that this woman came up to her and said something like, she's kind of talking, gesturing to this male environment around and said something to the effect of, "If you're having any trouble, let me know. I castrate hogs at home." There's a little bit of that camaraderie on one level, but I don't think it goes very deep, and I think it's gotten far worse. (Scott 2011)

She acknowledged that women legislators, again because of their role in the family, face different challenges than male legislators. While this should bind women together, in her depiction, it is just a condition that prevents women from having time to support each other. This was demonstrated in Senator Dandekar's (D) previous statement:

I think it (the women's caucus) was a great idea and I really think it's a time commitment, even though we are legislators, we are moms, we are grandmothers, and we are wives, we have so many other hats to work with and, but in Iowa it's a part-time legislature, so people have on top of all the family commitments you have you also have your work commitments, and the majority of the women work outside the home, so it was, to me, when I look at it, I really think it had a lot to do with, it was a great idea but the reason it didn't go anywhere [was] because of the time commitment. (Dandekar 2011)

So while legislators in Iowa may feel as though women are different and have important perspectives on political policy, acting collectively is a challenge both practically and politically. As we have seen, women's familial obligations limit the free time they would have to socialize, get to know one another and caucus, while at the same time they

disagree on matters of public policy and the best way to represent women despite their shared challenges.

*Party Dissatisfaction.*

I predicted that women would be motivated to caucus if they were dissatisfied with party structures and their responses to policy issues as had previously been demonstrated at the federal level. I also predicted that the use of this dissatisfaction as a frame for the caucus would be correlated with successful attempts to create a women's caucus. In Iowa, women legislators did not express dissatisfaction with their party or party leadership. They did not feel bias or report any discrimination as far as party decision making was concerned. Administrator Scott, however, indicated that she had heard frustration from women about a lack of attention to their agenda items, saying,

I have heard some frustration in terms of bills that had bipartisan support that were for women's issues that women from both parties were working together on that just didn't get moved onto the calendar. And, nobody really knows why. Just some disappointment in what the priorities are versus are not. (Scott 2011)

In addition to this agenda control, Administrator Scott did mention that the culture of socializing was something that women did not feel comfortable with in Iowa. She said, "The social life of legislators, there's not a lot of it that is not revolved around alcohol, and a lot of these women don't want to put themselves in that situation" (Scott 2011). It was mentioned that some events put on by lobbyists involve alcohol and that women are reluctant to participate in a social situation with both men and women and alcohol.

Former Lieutenant Governor Judge also mentioned that a lot of socializing was done by men on the basketball court. She explained that women's isolation from this type of thing instigated the caucus formation of the 1990s:

They play basketball. There's been a running basketball game every – I've been up here twenty years and I know they were playing basketball when I came, and they're still playing basketball on Tuesday nights. Those kinds of things are never available to women, and, at the time that we formed a women's caucus in the nineties, the President of the Senate, Mary Kramer, who's a Republican, and I and a few of the other people in the Senate decided that we would have a good time doing this and get, to know each other a little bit out of the confines of the Senate. (Judge 2011)

Although legislators themselves did not complain of any problems with the party, there appears to be a discomfort with the lobbying environment and social events as described by outsiders. Party dissatisfaction was not a frame specifically employed by caucus entrepreneurs. Likewise, women legislators did not mention any personal dissatisfaction with their party organizations in individual interviews.

#### *Women in Leadership.*

I predicted that states with low levels of women in leadership positions may be more likely to have successful women's caucus attempts because it would be a frame women could utilize in organizing. If women felt excluded from leadership, a bipartisan group that could advocate for women's selection for leadership posts might be a compelling argument to organize. Representative Upmeyer (R) commented that it was not party leadership that explained the few women in leadership positions but rather women's socialization and subsequent behavior. She said,

Women that step forward, if you're willing to step forward and you're willing to do the work, I think you get equal recognition. I would argue I've had lots of opportunities, my chair of the House Human Services Committee, I've been an assistant leader, I'm now Majority Leader, and, it's because I stepped forward and said, "I'm willing to do this. I'm willing to work hard." And my colleagues observed that, and I think they gave me the same consideration they would a man. If women don't get as many opportunities, I think it's often because they've been sort of encultured to wait to be asked or to be invited...If you wait to be asked or invited in many, many areas, you'll never get the opportunity. (Upmeyer 2011)

So while there are few women in leadership in Iowa, only one respondent commented on the phenomena and despite indicating that it was a structural issue – women’s socialization limiting their opportunities – this was not a frame that was used by organizers or one that resonated with potential participants.

*Caucus Type.*

I predicted that women’s caucuses which chose to set public policy as a priority were less likely to be successful than attempts to create women’s caucuses which did not have policy formation as a purpose for the group. I predicted that policy differences among women would stifle the launch of a bipartisan group. In Iowa, the reception event was an opportunity for legislators to come together and discuss their interest in creating a group and decide on the purpose of the caucus. Senator Dandekar (D) remembers Judge wanting the caucus to be focused on women’s policy, but Administrator Scott put it to the group that some women preferred a social caucus for building relationships, while other legislators had indicated an interest in addressing policy. There was no decision made that night, and no subsequent discussion led to the abandonment of the attempt.

Despite the failure, there was some support for the need for a caucus. Representative Berry (D) said, “I think we could probably get a lot more done as women, and if we had our own agenda and if we had a set of priorities, I think that it would be beneficial to women, the women of Iowa, if we did form a women’s caucus” (Berry 2011). Representative Thede (D) agreed, saying, “There’s lots of issues surrounding women, and I think this would be a good way to get those done is to have more women involved” (Thede 2011).

While Representatives Berry (D) and Thede (D) recognized the potential influence a women's caucus could have on issues, particularly those pertaining to women, Representative Petersen (D) acknowledged the challenge partisanship would present for such a caucus, saying,

There's a pretty strong political divide on issues that I, as a woman, am interested in working on, so trying to find issues that women on both sides of the aisle want to rally behind has not been real easy...I don't know if I'd necessarily call it partisanship, but yeah, completely philosophically different opinions on women's issues, anything from childcare to reproductive health. (Petersen 2011)

She continued,

I don't think a women's caucus would necessarily benefit us here in the state. I mean the issues that I want to work on behalf of women, I try to build consensus among the people I need to get the votes I need. And having other women who aren't necessarily going to be with you on what you want to do to advance women's issues isn't necessarily helpful (Petersen 2011).

While she wanted consensus and support from other women, she did not have faith that collective organizing would necessarily lead to that end. Republican legislator Representative Upmeyer agreed, saying,

The other thing I would note is that for the most part, I don't know that most of the women currently serving – and I certainly can't speak for everyone – but of the women that I know relatively well ultimately don't feel a particular need for a solely women's group in that on both sides of the aisle, no matter who is in the majority, women frequently are committee chairs, women frequently are doing heavy lifting for hard bills. I'm not sure that they don't, that they feel like they need a special caucus to make their issues stand out. (Upmeyer 2011)

In addition to party problems, Republican Representative Upmeyer indicated that women's issues were not the sole domain of women and that she would understand male opposition to a women's caucus, saying, "I was thinking about the question on push back, that might be the only push back is sometimes perhaps the arrogance to assume that the

issues belong to women because I think men care very much about many of those issues” (Upmeyer 2011).

In this state legislature, organizers of the women’s caucus left open the decision of what type the legislators would pursue. Having a policy-oriented caucus was one option on the table, but ultimately there were not enough legislators interested in pursuing an organization for this or any other purpose to make this women’s caucus attempt successful.

I predicted in the previous chapter that caucuses that set socializing as the top priority for organizing a caucus were more likely to succeed than those who set public policy as their primary function. Relationship building was a motivator for the women’s caucus attempt in Iowa in 2007. Lieutenant Governor Judge described the conversation with Senator Dandekar (D), in which she was asked to sponsor a women’s caucus, in this way: “She thought that it would be something that would be beneficial to them at that time because they didn’t seem to know each other as well as they should, and everything was so very partisan and divided. And, she asked if I could help her a little bit” (Judge 2011). As previously stated, the organizers of the women’s caucus in Iowa left open the decision of what type of caucus the legislators should create. They were presented with the option to create a caucus strictly to socialize and develop relationships. In other states, women legislators, particularly Democrats, have been frustrated by the lack of substantive legislative accomplishments by social caucuses. This feeling was expressed by one of the organizers herself, Scott. Despite telling the story of how social interaction can ameliorate partisanship and benefit the whole legislature, ultimately she sees little value, saying,

One of the commissioners on the Commission on the Status of Women was a former House Republican, and she talked about when the women's caucus would do a retreat and she found out that...she's going to be rooming with Minnette Doderer, who was this complete powerhouse...she was the first powerful woman in the legislature in Iowa, who worked on things like comparable worth and domestic violence and, I mean, people shook in their boots around this woman, and so when this Republican House member found out that she was rooming with her, she was terrified, but she said she found out that they had a lot of common ground and all that kind of thing, and...I would be so shocked if anything like that could happen again. I hope that it can because I think people, even men from both parties who were around when the women's caucus were around had really a lot of respect for what they were able to accomplish. I don't think that there's no value in a social caucus, but I think it's a pretty small value. (Scott 2011)  
 Representative Petersen (D) as quoted earlier doesn't spend after hours at the

legislature and indicated that a social caucus would be a good idea despite her own decision to spend her extra time at home. She said, "There's always room for more opportunity to get to know people outside the legislature" (Petersen 2011). Judge pointed out that there are more social opportunities for male legislators. She reported:

I think there is very little social opportunity for women in the afterhours of the legislature, unless, particularly for the women who do not live in Des Moines, beyond the perfunctory cocktail parties... But beyond that, there isn't a lot of chance to interact with each other. The guys have always had more. They've played cards for years. They play basketball. There's been a running basketball game every – I've been up here twenty years and I know they were playing basketball when I came, and they're still playing basketball on Tuesday nights. Those kinds of things are never available to women. (Judge 2011)

As in Colorado, Judge cited stricter lobbying rules as contributing to the lack of opportunity, saying, "We have some pretty strict campaign finance and gift laws in Iowa, which is fine, except that there just isn't a lot of opportunity to socialize with each other" (Judge 2011).

Like the other frames, a social networking opportunity was not successful in motivating participants. Despite few opportunities for women legislators to get to know each other, it appears they have other priorities both personally and politically. Although

organizers identified relationship building opportunities as sorely needed within the legislature, this frame apparently did not motivate participants.

*Opposition from Party Leaders or Male Colleagues.*

I had predicted that, had legislative leadership or male colleagues opposed the creation of a caucus, it would be less likely to succeed. Iowa is another case in which direct evidence of party leader opposition is absent. Like the other three cases, there is hearsay evidence of leadership opposition. For instance, Scott reported that when she attempted to schedule a second reception of legislators, she learned of the Democratic Party's opposition. She said,

We tried kind of pulling together another event later that year and then asking around about an event for next year and people had started to kind of dig in a little more. By the second year, I was told that the leadership of the Democrats said, "We don't want you being in any caucuses of any kind." Potentially they didn't want anything –I don't know that they had anything against women necessarily, though some might argue with that, but I think that they didn't want anything that was going to shake up their control of their own caucus or have any kind of rogue voting - that sort of thing. (Scott 2011)

The legislators themselves, however, did not express any concern that party leadership had opposed the attempt to create a women's caucus or would challenge any future attempts. Representative Upmeyer (R) reported no perceived opposition from the Republican side, saying, "No, I don't think there would be...No, I never heard any push back on it at all" (Upmeyer 2011). On the Democratic side, Representative Thede said, "Honestly, I think they would be okay with it. I think they would see us as an organized group and it would be beneficial to them...I have never heard a man say anything negative or, really, positive either, but I think the support would be out there" (Thede 2011). Representative Berry (D) agreed, saying, "I don't expect that... I don't think there

would be backlash" (Berry 2011). This contradicts, however, a story she told about investigating the possibility of an African American caucus. She said,

When Democrats, when we were in the majority, we wanted to make sure that it was okay with our leadership – I mean, there's a process for all of those things and for all of that, I mean, you want to make sure that you could get things done as a caucus, too. I mean, it wouldn't make sense to do – I'm African American, and we had talked about an African American caucus at one time, but that one particular year, that was not, we were, we were told that there wouldn't be any - that our leadership wasn't interested in caucuses, other caucuses because we had too much on the agenda. It would be a little too much to have to deal with. (Berry 2011)

This indicates Democratic Party leadership opposition to the development of any alternative caucusing. This lends support to the hearsay alluded to by Scott when she was told Democrats were discouraged from caucuses with other women.

The evidence here indicating Democratic opposition to alternative organizing supports the description by Schenken (1995) of Iowa as a place where the majority party holds onto power through party discipline. This obviously hurt Scott's ability to recruit at least Democratic participants, the legislators most likely to be motivated to participate in a women's caucus. There is also a suspicion on Judge's part that Republicans were discouraged as well. Not substantiated by any evidence from Republican legislators, Judge said, "I believe, because they were instructed on the other side of the aisle, the Republican side of the aisle, not to mingle, it never went beyond that point. Again, it was not my role to make it go on because I was not a legislator at that point in time" (Judge 2011).

#### *Additional Factors.*

In Iowa, as in Colorado, Lieutenant Governor Judge (D) did mention that stricter lobbying laws had limited the time legislators had to socialize. This was a political

opportunity, a perceived problem that a social caucus could have addressed, that was not, however, successfully seized by organizers. The women legislators themselves did not want to spend their time together, but rather with their families or working on policy with likeminded individuals.

### Discussion

The data from the Iowa case demonstrates that there is more support for some hypotheses than for others. Despite a history of women's caucuses in the state, an experienced former legislator lending her support and the support of the executive agency, the Commission for the Status of Women, the legislators of Iowa did not successfully launch a women's caucus. The women's caucus attempt was perceived largely to come from the outside and, while the purpose of the caucus was left open for discussion, legislators did not take advantage of the external support offered them. Although there was more openness and interest from newly elected women, more senior legislators were more cynical, and possible discouragement from party leaders on both sides cooled any initial enthusiasm. This may have been particularly salient for Republican women who make up a smaller proportion of the party than in New Jersey or Colorado. The racial diversity among women legislators did not appear to be a factor in this case, but opposition to a black caucus in the state may have been a signal to legislators in the state that alternative organizing of any kind was frowned upon by Democratic Party leaders. Women legislators also did not report any dissatisfaction with their party, any exclusion from leadership opportunities, and therefore did not have any motivation to right any wrongs despite outsiders identifying problems unique to women.

Women could admit that women make a difference in the legislature but it was not a frame that was highlighted by organizers or an identity felt passionately by the legislators themselves. Likewise, women felt that individual action on behalf of women's issues was more likely to achieve results. This is in part because party differences and ideological differences pushed women's policy goals and votes apart. Neither social networking nor a policy agenda were tempting enough to encourage participation.

Issues of partisanship, party control, and party competition (resulting in increased party discipline) were problematic for the founding of this caucus. Term limits do not appear to have negatively impacted this caucus launch, but the presence of experienced women legislators was significant in that their suspicions toward women outside their party limited their participation. This case also lacks the precedent of other caucuses. Unlike the other three cases where other caucuses existed in the legislature, at the time of the women's attempt in 2007, no caucuses outside of party caucuses existed. This is likely due to party leadership opposition. As in other states, the time necessary to participate in any extracurricular legislative activities was limited because of women legislators' familial obligations, something they recognized as a negative gender expectation uniquely facing them.

### Conclusion

In Iowa, women were unable to reinvigorate a once successful women's caucus. Women legislators did not see a need for a women's caucus to accomplish their legislative or personal goals. They admitted that there was a lack of opportunity to get to know one another and that they had unique experiences to share as women, but collective action was not an outgrowth of this. As in Colorado, lobbying legislation was blamed for

damaging relationships among legislators, but that was not enough to garner participation. As in Pennsylvania, there is evidence, although somewhat unsubstantiated, that party leaders on both sides of the aisle opposed the bipartisan effort. Regardless, senior women legislators in the Democratic and Republican Party were reluctant independent of this possible pressure. In contradiction to Beckwith's (2007) hypothesis that new women would be adverse to a caucus, the new women legislators of both parties were the majority of the ones present at the only event the organizers were able to host.

Judge's disappointment about the outcome is clear. Recognizing the limitations of her position as an outsider, she laments the difference a women's caucus could have made. When asked about the potential of a future attempt, she said,

I'm not hopeful. I wish I could tell you something different. I don't think under the present leadership, Republican Leadership in the House and actually the Senate has a new Republican Leader, so I really don't know how that's working out yet, but I know that they're not being encouraged to do that and until that dynamic changes I don't think they will... When you can put the partisan part of it down for a little bit and talk to each other as mothers and grandmothers and working women and so forth, the common threads that we have. I think there's a real benefit in that and I'm sorry that they didn't feel like they could do that or that they could establish enough trust to do that. I don't understand why – like I said, I was really on, just kind of on the edge, on the outside of that, so I don't really have a very good sense of why that kind of decision was made. (Judge 2011)

In the final chapter, I will review my findings at the national level and those emanating from my four case studies. I will reaffirm the importance of examining women's organizing within state institutions and suggest the impact my findings have on the field of political science broadly and the implications for women and politics specifically. Finally, I will examine the limitations of this study and suggest future steps for further study of women's caucuses in state legislatures.

Table 16 – Iowa Interview Subject Demographics

<b>Party Affiliation</b>	<b>Legislative Leaders</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>
1 Republicans	1	0 male	7
5 Democrats		7 female	
1 non-partisan staffer			

## Chapter 9: Explaining Women's Caucuses

### Introduction

The 2012 presidential campaign was plagued by the question of whether or not the Republican Party is waging a “War on Women.” Several high profile incidents including a Congressional hearing on religious freedom and birth control without any female participation, state legislative cuts to Planned Parenthood proposed by Republican lawmakers across the states, and individual Republican candidates’ own statements about women’s health have all instigated the debate. For their part, Republican and Democratic women do not agree on which party best represents women. As Osborn (2012, 7) has argued, “[T]he pursuit of women’s policy in the states is an inherently partisan endeavor.” It is this political climate in which women throughout state legislatures are deciding how best to represent their constituents and women more specifically. In some cases, they do this as individuals, but in others they join with other women to accomplish both personal and legislative goals.

In the preceding chapters, I have sought to explain the existence of women’s caucuses throughout the United States, which I have defined as bipartisan organizations. I was initially intrigued by these phenomena because I was interested to learn how and why women legislators did or did not work together to represent women in state legislatures, when political party has always been the traditional organizing mechanism within these institutions. My first task was to identify where these legislative organizations existed across the 50 states. I discovered that women’s caucuses have emerged in different forms across the country but that their existence did not correlate with any expectations like how many women are in the legislature or the party controlling

it. This made it necessary to look at women's caucuses from their beginnings which I did in four case studies.

In this concluding chapter, I will review the findings from my previous chapters and present information regarding the very first women's caucuses to identify any common themes between why these organizations were created and the case studies I have presented here. I will address my final two research questions which ask why women create a variety of women's caucuses and why women in some states do not create women's caucuses at all. Finally, I will offer my thoughts about the future of women's organizing and discuss how my conclusions relate to what we know about gender and politics from the literature. I will close with what I believe to be the next steps regarding the study of women's caucuses.

Within this dissertation, I posed four key questions regarding the existence and establishment of women's caucuses in the United States: 1) What is a women's caucus and under what conditions do we observe them? 2) What conditions contribute to a successful attempt at caucus creation? 3) Why do they take different forms across the country? and 4) Why do women in some states choose not to act collectively as women within legislatures? I will now review the conclusions I came to regarding the first two of these questions.

### Review of Findings

#### *50 States*

My data establishes that in 2011 there were 23 women's caucuses across the country and 27 states in which women did not have any type of gender organization within the legislature. My analysis of women's caucuses and hypothesized correlates found no significant relationships between the presence of women's caucuses and factors

expected to be associated with them like party control, proportion of women in the legislature, or the presence of other types of legislative caucuses. Despite this, my analysis did capture the range of women's organizing for that year nationally and, in conjunction with other data, could contribute to a more long term analysis of women's organizing in the U.S. On its own, my evidence supports my argument that gender works differently in different contexts, and my null findings are important for dispelling the idea that gender is a static concept that simply delineates men and women into distinct categories.

I identified two types of women's organizing in legislatures: Informational/Social and Legislative. Informational/Social caucuses do not seek to influence policy, but rather set relationship building as the purpose and priority of the group. The legislative category includes two types according to strategy. The first, Position Taking, is a caucus which takes on policy as it comes onto the larger legislative agenda. Agenda caucuses, on the other hand, are women's caucuses which create a legislative agenda from the start of a session and make their priorities public in some way. While my quantitative analysis in Chapter 3 focused on the difference between states with or without a caucus, establishing this categorization of different types of women's caucuses is vital to the proper evaluation of the impact of women's organizing in legislatures. Without delineating these groups by their own defined purposes, improper analysis will come to erroneous conclusions about the effect of women's caucuses. I will discuss the explanations for these different types of caucuses later in this chapter.

### *Case Studies*

Because my 50 state analysis did not find correlations between any of my expected hypotheses and the existence of women's caucuses, I conducted four case

studies of caucus emergence between 2006 and 2011. To appreciate why caucuses emerge where they do and the complexity of gender as a contextual process, I conducted a different type of analysis to capture the dynamic way in which gender affects organizing within legislatures. My first analysis of these most recent caucus attempts evaluated the correlation of quantitative conditions in the states where women attempted to create a women's caucus, demonstrating a link between higher party competition and smaller proportions of women within the Republican Party with attempt failure. Smaller legislature size was associated with successful attempts. I further examined each case in depth with interview evidence to identify the favorable and unfavorable conditions leading to a successful caucus attempt. Through this analysis, I uncovered the importance of the political experience of entrepreneurs, party differences, party leader and male opposition, staffing resources, and personal relationships among legislators. Also important was the enthusiasm of newly elected women when matched with more senior women legislators' support.

When comparing the four cases for motivations to create a caucus, I found that the motivating factor for the organizers was to give women a stronger voice in policy discussions. In New Jersey, women legislators took on policy positions from the beginning, rallying around the Party Democracy Act and setting women's health policy as a high priority. In Colorado, although the founder, Representative Middleton (D), wanted a policy-based caucus, she realized that, due to party differences among women, a social caucus would be the only way to work toward her ultimate goal. In Iowa, who is responsible for the attempt is unclear. Lieutenant Gov. Patty Judge (D) cites then Representative Dandekar (D) as the one to first mention the idea of creating a women's

caucus while most legislators perceived it to be Judge's (D) initiative. Judge (D) stated the motivation to attempt a women's caucus was to build relationships which could lead to policy impact while Representative Dandekar (D) cited the original purpose as an opportunity to work on women's issues. Regardless, once the attempt was underway, the decision was put to the legislators, and no one picked up the ball for either pursuit. In Pennsylvania, organizers focused their first event on energy policy. Women legislators who organize caucuses want to influence policy. Whether or not they are able to do that directly or not is determined by their evaluation of how this purpose will affect participation of other women legislators. In some cases, policy has to be downplayed or put on the back burner in order to get a caucus off the ground or get it through a rough patch.

Who are these organizers? In the two successful cases, New Jersey and Colorado, there was a combination of newly elected and senior legislators motivated to participate. In New Jersey, the initiative was by senior legislators, while in Colorado, it was a newly elected member who consulted and had the support of more senior women. In Pennsylvania, a newly elected legislator started off on a bad foot by joining with another newly elected co-chair and rallying participants without consulting more senior members in her own party which ultimately turned them off the idea. In Iowa, a senior legislator (who denies her role as an organizer) and a former legislator then serving in the executive branch were the initiators. Without the connection between senior and newly elected women, it appears that a caucus launch will be less likely to succeed.

When considering the racial diversity of caucus entrepreneurs, we find both white women legislators and women legislators of color initiating these women's caucus

attempts. In New Jersey, white women were the entrepreneurs as was the case in Colorado. In Pennsylvania, an African American legislator and a white legislator were co-founders of their failed attempt. While, in Iowa, a white former legislator and Lieutenant Governor Patty Judge (D) was perceived most widely as the caucus attempt leader while she credits the idea to an Indian American women legislator. The racial diversity of caucus founders did not feature in the interviews of either white women legislators or women legislators of color. The founders did not specifically mention their racial identity or lived experience as motivating their decision to organize a women's group. But Representative Brown (D) in Pennsylvania did express that with a black caucus in the legislature, the absence of a women's caucus from her perspective was an obvious void that needed to be addressed.

Informal women's organizations existed in New Jersey, Colorado, and Iowa previous to the attempts described here. All women referred to these "informal women's caucuses." In New Jersey and Iowa, participants in these hoped to revive these caucuses. Only those women in New Jersey were successful. In Colorado, the previous organizations had existed before any of the current caucus participants were in office. In Pennsylvania, as discussed previously, any and all attempts at organizing prior to 2009 had been squashed by a particularly influential Republican woman legislator. From this evidence, it appears that women's caucus attempt success is not a given just because a state previously had a women's group, but it may help to explain where attempts occur.

Looking at the quantitative variables I expected to be associated with attempt success or failure, I find only a few correlations between higher party competition and the proportion of women in the Republican Party with attempt failure. Smaller legislature

size was correlated with successful attempts. I had expected higher party competition states to emphasize party discipline, and in fact this was borne out in the quantitative and qualitative evidence. In the two failed cases, Iowa and Pennsylvania, party competition and party differences were challenges for these caucuses, making trust across party lines strained. In the two successful cases, Republican women made up more than 20% of the party while in Iowa it was 20% and in Pennsylvania it was 16%. This evidence supports the argument put forth by Kanter (1977) and Kanthak and Krause (2012) that women in smaller minorities are likely to experience pressure to conform, making caucusing with Democratic women more difficult. There is only a small difference, however, between the proportions of women in the Republican Party in the successful and failed attempts. As for legislature size, New Jersey and Colorado had smaller legislatures than Iowa or Pennsylvania, but only subjects in New Jersey attributed the easiness of relationships as a consequence of this variable.

In framing this project, I hypothesized that certain political opportunities would be more favorable for the development of women's caucuses than others. It is clear in the two successful cases that organizers were motivated by a surge of newly elected women. Whether it was senior legislators choosing this time to reinvigorate an older informal caucus or a newly elected legislator wanting to take advantage of a large proportion of women in the institution, the opportunity of a fresh surge of women legislators in Colorado and New Jersey in 2009 was seized. In the failed cases, Pennsylvania's attempt was the result of newly elected women, but the larger momentum was not there. In Iowa, no such political opportunity was present. Low numbers were cited in both cases as a possible explanation for the attempt failure. Although I had predicted that a large

proportion of women of color would be associated with successful attempts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania had the most diverse groups of women legislators as a successful and failed attempt respectively demonstrating no support for this hypothesis.

Political party, in particular, was a factor I thought would hurt the chances of a caucus launch in different ways. As for the political opportunity of Democratic Party control, I hypothesized that it would be a positive for caucus launch. All launches occurred during Democratic control (in Pennsylvania, the attempt took place in the House only, which was controlled by Democrats despite a split legislature). As to how important this was to the success of the launches, it is clear that legislators in New Jersey and Colorado would have undertaken their launch regardless of who was in the majority. In the failed cases, launches probably would not have been attempted under Republican control, but a Democratic majority didn't seem to positively encourage caucus development in any more specific way. While in Pennsylvania, Representative Brown (D) was encouraged by party leadership to develop a caucus, the senior Democratic women offered no encouragement and instead refused to participate. In Iowa and New Jersey, Democratic control of the executive branch was also significant. In the case of Iowa, without the election of Democratic Lieutenant Governor Patty Judge (D), an attempt would not have been made. In the case of New Jersey, the election of a Republican governor created problems, at least from the Democratic participants' points of view, for longer term caucus maintenance.

Interestingly, when considering the influence of the existence of other caucuses in the state, which I predicted would be positively associated with attempts, I found that three of the four states had other caucuses present. In New Jersey and Pennsylvania, there

were a number of rather established caucuses apart from women's. It was something encouraged by Democratic Party leadership in Pennsylvania, and it was this that triggered Representative Brown's (D) efforts. Colorado's legislature had other caucuses, but these were characterized as very informal and not very influential in the legislative process. In all three of these cases, no one felt that these caucuses were very respected or feared by party leadership. It is interesting, then, that in Iowa there were some reports that both Democratic and Republican party leadership opposed the development of the women's caucuses. One legislator also indicated that Democratic leaders opposed the creation of a black caucus. In the other legislatures, leadership has not discouraged their development because they are not a real challenge to party caucuses. This wasn't detrimental in the failure of Pennsylvania, but for Iowa it was, despite the historical precedent of a women's caucus.

I anticipated polarized legislatures and those with strong party competition would not foster the type of relationships necessary for a successful women's caucus attempt. Further, I thought that party discipline as enforced by party leaders would discourage women from participating or launching a women's caucus. Finally, women's own policy differences as a result of party affiliation would be likely to prevent the successful launch of a legislative women's caucus.

In the successful cases, women were much less likely to describe any of these roles of political party in the legislature as a problem. They may have admitted to the legislature being partisan but cited women legislators as almost an exception to that rule. They didn't note it hurting relationships between women. Eventually, partisan voting affected the maintenance of the New Jersey caucus, but it was not detrimental to the

launch. In the failed cases, partisanship was much more visible. While some legislators still described the legislative environment as collegial or cited personal relationships across the aisle, there was an undercurrent of distrust among women. This was very present in the Pennsylvania interviews, especially among more senior legislators. In Iowa, it appeared more of a case that party kept women from agreeing on policy and from getting to know each other personally. It was not a strident environment, but rather one in which as one subject put it, “party members just kind of stick together” (Berry 2011).

A final political opportunity was considered. The size of the legislature, because of its potential to facilitate relationship building, was only mentioned as an asset in the New Jersey case, enabling women to get to know one another which was important to their ability to more formally organize. In the other three cases, chamber size was not emphasized as helping or hurting the attempt. Colorado and New Jersey are, however, as established in the quantitative analysis, the smaller of the four cases and the two successful attempts.

Resources in these four cases included the level of professionalism of the legislature, staff size, support from external organizations, and time in office as mitigated by term limits. I predicted that more professional legislatures would offer caucus organizers more time and staff to execute a launch and likewise that support from external organizations would facilitate success. Finally, I predicted that term limits would hurt a caucus launch because of the time limitations on legislators discouraging them from prioritizing a caucus.

Time and scheduling were cited as challenges to organizing in all the cases. None of these legislatures offered any staffing or financial support for non-party caucuses. In

order to address the lack of staff, the successful cases had a dedicated staffer with no other professional responsibilities apart from the launch of the women's caucus. In New Jersey, this was a retired legislative staffer with lots of experience, who volunteered her time and expertise. In Colorado, a paid volunteer, again with experience as a legislative staffer, took on the role full-time to organize caucus events and do the historical research deemed important to caucus participants. In Iowa, the entrepreneur attempting the caucus had staff at her disposal which was the Administrator of the Commission on the Status of Women. She had political experience outside the legislature but presumably other professional responsibilities. In the failed Pennsylvania attempt, it was legislative aides doing the legwork when they were not tending to their other legislative responsibilities.

The successful cases worked around this by securing a full-time caucus staffer to do all the logistical planning. Like the successful cases, Iowa had someone outside the legislature doing all the practical work of event planning and recruitment of participation, but this resource failed to be enough for it to result in success. In Pennsylvania, Representative Brown (D) and Representative Boback (R) simply used the free time available to their official legislative staff to conduct the day-to-day business of the women's caucus which ultimately failed in this state. It is clear from these interviews that legislators are pulled in many directions and that regardless of the level of professionalism, women in the legislature must demonstrate gender consciousness for a caucus to work. I will say more about this when I discuss the effect of frames.

Support from external organizations was most important for the Colorado caucus. Without the financial support from the Women's Foundation and the opportunity to manage those funds from a local college, the women's caucuses would probably not have

succeeded here. These funds financed the staffer, the events held, and the research conducted by the staff on women's contributions to politics in the state, which was a motivating factor for participation for many legislators. In New Jersey, external organizations offered meeting space, but it is likely legislators in this state would have met at the Capitol if necessary. In the failed cases, no external support was offered or pursued by organizers. In Iowa, external support from the Commission on the Status of Women was available but not taken advantage of by the legislators. Based on these cases, there is mixed evidence on the value of external support for the execution of a caucus attempt.

Finally, I considered term limits as constraining women's potential resources by limiting their time in office. I expected them to negatively impact women's caucus launches by putting a strain on women's time and priorities. Of these four states, only Colorado is term limited. While it did not negatively affect the launch in this state, women legislators were keenly aware of the potential problems it could create and put into place structures to maintain the caucus over time. A full-time staffer outside the legislature and a larger number of caucus leadership were cited as important for continuity. While in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Iowa there are not term limits, I should speak to the importance of longer serving women in these cases.

In both Colorado and New Jersey, senior legislators supported and championed the caucus attempt. In Pennsylvania and Iowa, the more senior women legislators' political baggage prevented them from participating, damaging the chances for success. It is possible in these cases that if women were term limited out, their jaded experiences

may not have stood in the way.<sup>30</sup> Alternatively, in the Pennsylvania case, more political experience would have been an asset since the lack of it by Representative Brown (D) hurt the chances of support for the caucus by senior Democratic women. These cases only consider four states, and it is possible that the mix of senior and freshmen women in New Jersey and Colorado were amenable to caucusing while women in those states at another time may not have been. I do think it is important, however, to consider how time within an institution may affect women legislators' perspectives on bipartisan endeavors. As Dodson (2006) observes, "Women may not only transform institutions, but be transformed by them and the larger political environment" (249).

The final components to be examined were frames. These are arguments utilized by organizers to motivate participants to join and support the cause. In some cases, oppositional frames emerge to challenge organizational attempts. First, let me explain which frames were utilized in these four cases, and then I will discuss why they did or did not resonate with potential participants. In New Jersey, caucus organizers from the beginning framed the organization as one which would deal with public policy issues. A social networking purpose was not utilized because for many legislators these bonds already existed. Additionally, there was a shared feeling of party dissatisfaction with women on both sides of the aisle reporting discrimination and challenges as far as equity in leadership positions. This was all undergirded by a strong sense of gender consciousness among legislators, acknowledging women's difference both in terms of life experience and legislative skills.

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<sup>30</sup> I am not suggesting this as a reason to institute term limits. I am merely suggesting that term limits may offset some of the negativity of partisanship which impacted the failed cases. Obviously, there are other ways to mitigate partisanship.

In Colorado, organizers' main frame was social networking. While Representative Middleton (D) and her Democratic colleagues hope that the caucus will one day take on policy issues, from the beginning those were taken off the table and the focus put on social support for legislators and a celebration of women's contributions to the legislature. This signified strong gender consciousness as in New Jersey. Party dissatisfaction or women's ability to rise through the leadership ranks were not utilized in this case, nor did those themes resonate broadly through my interviews.

In Pennsylvania, Representative Brown (D) and her counterpart, Representative Boback (R), attempted a policy-oriented caucus. After an initial policy information meeting on energy, a lack of participation moved them to change the frame to one of less controversial women's issues, such as charitable activities focused on disadvantaged women. This shift did not improve participation. There was mixed opinion in this case as to broader party dissatisfaction or women's ability to achieve leadership positions. While some legislators admitted to these problems, others did not, and it was not something that caucus organizers ever used to motivate participation in the group. There was not a strong presence of gender consciousness among legislators in this state. Some women did acknowledge women's difference, but many others disagreed with a gender separatist ideology and found the idea of a women's caucus to be problematic, again hurting participation rates.

In Iowa, while caucus organizers desired a policy-oriented caucus (as in Colorado) they left it to the legislators to decide what the purpose of the group would be. The initial event was framed as a social occasion where women were invited to discuss the options of being policy-oriented or more social in nature, but conversations did not

persist beyond this event. Again, there were mixed perspectives in this case as to women's difference and the value of collective action on behalf of women. Women's difference from their male colleagues was not highlighted by organizers in recruiting women to participate. Legislators themselves in this state did not express dissatisfaction with political parties or their ability to climb the leadership ranks. The outside organizers acknowledged gender issues with regard to party leaders, but inside the institution, it was not something that resonated with women broadly.

As for oppositional frames, party leaders or male colleagues did not express any objection to the formation of caucuses in New Jersey or Colorado. Women did not face any opposition during the formation stage, although in New Jersey, Democratic women suspect interference from Republican leaders which has led to strained relationships between women across the aisle and putting any future caucus activities on hold. In the Pennsylvania case, Democratic Party leaders actually encouraged the development of caucuses, including the women's attempt by Representatives Brown (D) and Boback (R). In this state there had been historical opposition by Republican leadership and suspected opposition in this case, although it was not confirmed by Republican women themselves (just like the New Jersey case). In Iowa, there was unconfirmed evidence that both Democratic and Republican leadership opposed the formation of the women's caucus which hurt participation by women legislators. In Colorado, the legislators I interviewed reported in some cases mild teasing from male colleagues, which they brushed off or by which they were seemingly entertained. None of them indicated that these comments were damaging to them professionally or would have influenced their decision to participate in a caucus.

So while party leader opposition or male bias appeared in some form in all four cases, in Colorado women were able to overcome any perceived opposition from party leaders by creating a caucus which focused on informational/social purposes rather than policy. In New Jersey, opposition did not appear until after the caucus was established and women in the Republican Party voted initially against the Republican governor's policy preference. This opposition has put the survival of the caucus in question. Finally, in Pennsylvania and Iowa, some evidence suggests Democratic and Republican Party leaders pressured women early on, preventing their participation in a bipartisan caucus. These examples demonstrate that when opposition appears, what form it takes and how women legislators react determine, in part, whether or not a caucus attempt will be successful.

In New Jersey, opposition appeared (according to Democratic women) after the caucus had already had some policy success. In Colorado, Democratic women, anticipating reluctance on the part of Republican women, framed the purposes of the women's caucus as social in nature and therefore harmless. This may have also warded off any significant opposition from party leaders. Party leaders in Pennsylvania and Iowa acted immediately upon the first bipartisan meeting of women legislators whether the purpose was policy related (as in Pennsylvania) or social (as in Iowa). In Pennsylvania, opposition was from Republican Party leaders (according to Democratic women). In Iowa, opposition from both Democratic and Republican party leaders was perceived by

the caucus entrepreneurs outside the legislature. This pressure presented organizers with an insurmountable lack of participation.<sup>31</sup>

As for my hypotheses concerning the purpose frames of women's caucuses, both a policy-oriented and social networking frame were successful in the launch of a women's caucus. Party leadership opposition, where it was present or suspected, did damage participation even in the case of New Jersey after the caucus was well established. In states where women more strongly identified with other women and saw collective action as appropriate, attempts were successful. In the case of New Jersey, solidarity was built around experiences of past and present dissatisfaction with political parties. In the failed cases, women did not have a strong sense of gender solidarity or a shared feeling of discrimination. The idea of collective action was not one that resonated for them to motivate participation in a women's group, even when women acknowledged unique challenges facing women in political life.

Additional factors which I had not included in my initial hypotheses, but which emerged from my interviews included: the importance of respected and experienced entrepreneurs, previously existing informal women's organizations, institutional rules regarding lobbying, and political culture. In the successful cases, entrepreneurs were given a great deal of credit by participants for the success of the group. Likewise, in the failed case of Pennsylvania, some of the blame can be placed on the political naiveté of one of its founders. Unfortunately, the experienced Lieutenant Governor and former state legislator Patty Judge (D) in Iowa could not overcome the other challenges facing the attempt in her state. Nor could the precedent of a historical women's caucus overcome

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<sup>31</sup> In all cases, Republican women legislators did not acknowledge this pressure and denied it when asked directly. In Iowa, it should be noted, that one Democratic woman legislator admitted that Democratic leaders opposed the creation of a black caucus and would likely be opposed to a women's caucus as well.

the distrust and disinterest of present-day legislators. The informal caucus that had existed in New Jersey, however, was important for senior legislators, who took advantage of these pre-existing relationships, to seize a particular political opportunity when new women were elected. In Colorado, strict lobbying laws limiting socializing among legislators were an opportunity for an alternative social mechanism to emerge. Unfortunately, in Iowa this same political opportunity presented by restrictive lobbying laws did not result in a successful caucus perhaps because there were no real strong ties between women across the aisle prior to these regulations. Finally, women in Colorado cited their western political culture with being more open to women's participation in politics and engendering a sense of gender difference because of their historical contributions to the state's political life. This was one of the important shared interests which brought women together in this state.

I will now compare these caucus attempts to the first women's caucuses created in the U.S. to consider whether women's motivations to caucus and challenges in doing so are the same or have changed over time.

### Yesterday and Today

The oldest women's caucuses in the country were created in Maryland (1972) and Massachusetts (1975) and are still active today – Maryland as a Legislative Agenda caucus and Massachusetts as a Legislative Position Taking caucus.

The Women Legislators of Maryland was created in 1972 in reaction to clashes between men and women legislators in the heightened political climate of the Women's Movement nationally. The caucus' website highlights the last straw as perceived by the women legislators of the day:

The increasing presence of women in the Maryland legislature had begun to create some stresses and pressures. While their numbers and tenure had increased, women had been entirely shut out of key positions in both the Senate and the House. Delegate Pauline Menes pointed out this lack of representation when she criticized her party's leadership for its failure to appoint any women to the key standing committees in the House of Delegates. The Speaker of the House, Thomas Hunter Lowe, responded by appointing Delegate Menes "Chairman of the Ladies' Rest Room Committee." Delegate Menes recognized, however, that this obvious slight could be put to her advantage. She interpreted her appointment as committee chair as grounds for her attendance at the weekly leadership meetings held by the Speaker and President of the Senate. She was refused admittance because her presence would "make the men feel uncomfortable" and since there was "really no reason for the Chairman of the Ladies' Rest Room Committee to attend anyway" (Women Legislators of Maryland 2000).

This caucus was formed in direct reaction to bias against women inside the institution. In addition to dissatisfaction with the status of women inside the institution, specifically, the lack of attention paid to issues they felt were of vital importance, the Caucus also cites the establishment of the Black Caucus in 1971 as inspiration.

The Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators was created in 1975 to pass the state's equal rights amendment. Legislators organized around this issue, and the state constitution was amended in 1976 to change the existing language of "all men are born free and equal" to "all people" (Sainsbury-Wong et al. 2011). Leadership was decided alphabetically with leaders serving two years and the position moving to the next name alphabetically, regardless of seniority, with one chair from the House and one from the Senate. Today, the caucus has several subcommittees which host informational meetings on issues, but there is no consensus agenda created at the beginning of the session. They have staff, pay dues, and create a quarterly newsletter. The mission statement of the Caucus reads, "The Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators is a bipartisan, bicameral group of female legislators, the mission of which is to enhance the economic status and equality of women and to encourage and foster women in all levels of

government" (Sorenson 2010, 6). This caucus was created to address women's issues within the legislature and continues to do so today.

These older caucus creation stories share some commonality with the cases I examine here. Bias against women was a useful frame in the case of Maryland in 1972 and in New Jersey in 2009. While both caucuses in the 1970s were formed to be policy-oriented caucuses, the caucuses of today find challenges associated with this purpose. Some organizers choose to postpone that goal in order to get a group off the ground, as in Colorado, while others push forward sometimes with success as in New Jersey (however short-lived). Others are not able to establish a group with policy as a goal as in Pennsylvania. Still in Iowa, even when the purpose was left up to the participants, a caucus failed to materialize.

#### Explanations for the Variety and Lack of Women's Caucuses

The difficulty in establishing a women's caucus demonstrated in all of my case studies points to potential explanations for why women do not organize around their gender in some legislatures or create caucuses which do not specifically address public policy. Using information from the interviews collected through my 50 state data collection, I will now turn to my final two research questions: 3) Why do women's caucuses take different forms across the country? and 4) Why do women in some states choose not to act collectively as women within legislatures?

The evidence concerning the variety and absence of women's caucuses which I gathered in my 50 state data collection (discussed specifically in Chapter 3) is uneven across the states. For example, not all interview subjects offered explanations for the lack of a caucus. Additionally, women in states offered contradictory explanations with one

legislator citing party differences while another may have blamed time constraints. Similarly, legislators did not always offer reasons for why one type existed rather than another. It is for these reasons that a more scientific examination of the variety and absence of a women's caucus is important, but I can begin the discussion with evidence from the interviews I conducted.

As I explained in Chapter 3, women's caucuses can be divided into two categories: Informational/Social and Legislative. Legislative caucuses can be further broken down by the strategy by which they try to influence substantive outcomes of legislatures whether it is through specific agendas or on an ad hoc basis. I will now attempt to explain the justifications for the development of one type of caucus rather than another.

### *Agenda*

Women's agenda caucuses most closely emulate party caucuses by creating a legislative agenda prior to the session. Because they are made public, legislators are able to demonstrate their commitment to the constituents affected by the policy they prioritize in these agendas. This type of caucuses is typically present in very Democratic legislatures. California, Hawaii, Maryland, and New York all have Democratic majorities in the lower chamber of 65% or more (NCSL 2011). South Carolina is the only outlier in this category with only 39% of the State House of Representatives held by Democrats (NCSL 2011). In these legislatures, women were more likely to agree on issues enabling the development of a policy agenda. Likewise, three of these five states have high levels of professionalism where formality, like policy agendas, would be common (Squire 2003).

*Position Taking*

Women in states with Position Taking caucuses explained that, like Informational/Social caucuses, women in their state were unlikely to agree on issues enough to warrant an Agenda caucus but that they wanted social ties to other women. Women in five of these states appreciated an alternative to other social events of the legislature which often involved alcohol that made them uncomfortable. A lack of time was also cited as an obstacle to a more formal approach to issues like having a set legislative agenda. Within this type, I discovered three gender open caucuses which were focused on improving the lives of women but allowed male legislators to join as caucus members. The women legislators in these state explained that because there are so many women in the legislature, a gender exclusive group was unnecessary.

*Informational/Social*

The most common explanation women offer for organizing an Informational/Social caucus as opposed to one that creates an agenda or takes policy positions is that women in their state would not agree on issues and, therefore, a caucus with this mission would be unsuccessful. The second most cited explanation is that women wanted a group that would bring attention to women in the legislature, acknowledging their political contributions to the state making a legislative purpose irrelevant to these legislators or at least not a primary motivating frame.

*Non-Caucus States*

In attempting to explain why women do not organize women's caucuses, I will look within the interviews for explanations pertaining to political opportunities, resources, and frames.

In some instances, the explanations offered are positive. They indicate that women are satisfied with their experience in the legislature and their ability to enact their personal agendas without the need for a caucus. An example of this type of comment comes from a legislator in Washington. She said, “When you have so much equality you don't want to rub it in, you need to be more inclusive - there is a progressive caucus which is women and men” (Keiser 2011).

Other positive explanations for the lack of a women’s caucus were that women were already included in the legislative leadership, already worked together in a bipartisan fashion or had good personal relationships making the need for any type of organization unnecessary. In three states, Democratic women (or DFL) organized as women within their party and felt this met their needs for gendered organization. Here again, frames utilized in the case studies in the previous chapters met on deaf ears in legislatures where women do not feel excluded from leadership positions and do not desire more opportunities for social networking.

In the preceding chapters, I hypothesized that women’s groups outside the legislature may provide resources to women inside the institution enabling the success of a women’s caucus attempt. In some non-caucus states, women indicated that outside organizations like the Order of Women Legislators or Emerge America<sup>32</sup> serve the purposes women would have for a caucus, and an internal organization like a caucus was redundant.

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<sup>32</sup> The National Order of Women Legislators is a non-partisan organization of women serving as current state legislators and former state legislators (<http://www.womenlegislators.org/about/nowl.php>). Emerge America is a national training program for Democratic women with branches in several states (<http://www.emergeamerica.org/about>).

The remaining explanations I refer to as negative because they indicate that some women may want a caucus but that there are forces limiting their choices, some from among women legislators and others from their colleagues or the institution of the legislature. Women in non-caucus states cite ideological differences on issues or a lack of interest among women as explanations for the lack of a gender organization. For example, a legislator in New Hampshire argued, “Just because you are women doesn’t mean you have common values” (Larsen 2011). Democratic women often perceived Republican women in their state as unwilling or unable to participate. In some cases, they cited ideological differences as holding Republican women back, but in others, they perceived their counterparts as pressured from their leadership to not associate with Democratic women. For their part, Republican women did not acknowledge this pressure. In some instances, Republican women indicated that gender was not a relevant political category and therefore they were disinclined to participate in any such group.

The most common explanation for the lack of a caucus was lack of interest among women. This lack of gender consciousness as a motivating frame, in most cases, was really a difference of party, as Republican women are more likely to say they are not interested in organizing and Democratic women are most likely to be interested in creating a women’s caucus and likely to perceive Republican women as not interested. Party differences among women were the most often mentioned obstacles to women’s organizing. Women’s own choices not to caucus because of their lack of interest, initiative, or ideological differences are more common explanations than external opposition. Opposition by leadership or male reactions was the least cited category of explanation. This may be because women are reluctant to report opposition or that it

would influence their decisions. Without more corroboration from women, it is difficult to parse out if Republican women are reluctant to participate because of their own objections or because of pressure from party leaders (which Democratic women perceive).

This evidence points to the previous hypotheses concerning the constraint on women's ability to organize provided by political parties. In some instances, women's own political beliefs as a reflection of their party identity prevents collective action while in other instances party leaders act as obstacles to women's organizing.

When considering the effect of oppositional frames in non-caucus states, women legislators in six states stated that an effort to organize a women's caucus would be opposed by someone in leadership. The states in which this expected opposition was reported include: South Dakota, North Dakota, Maine, and Kansas. In Delaware, Mississippi, and New Mexico, legislators reported a concern over male reactions in general. In Delaware, for example, a legislator said, "Women want to prove to men that they aren't radicals, queen bees" (Petersen 2011). In other states as well, not just non-caucus states, men were reported to be suspicious of any collegiality across party lines among women and intimidated by any social interactions such as casual lunches or dinners of just women legislators. In most instances, this is characterized by the women as light teasing usually indicating that it doesn't bother them. It remains, however, that men congregating on the floor together would go unnoticed while women's behavior is closely monitored or at least perceived to be by many women legislators. Women are reluctant to report that male colleagues are able to shape their legislative decisions and behaviors. This is a challenge of this study which has presented itself throughout my

chapters. When are women free to choose not to caucus and when is there hidden opposition they are unwilling to acknowledge?

Other institutional barriers exist as well. These explanations include an absence of favorable political opportunities like a lack of a caucus culture in their state, too few women or lack of longevity of service in office, the lack of an entrepreneur, or a lack of resources. A common resource often cited was women's lack of time. This lack of time was sometimes due to the legislative schedule but, in some cases, a result of women's dual obligations to office and home.

#### The Future of Women's Organizing in Legislatures

Despite the challenges to organizing, both among women legislators and from external forces, women are still attempting to create a space for themselves in some state legislatures. Although the first women's caucus was created in Maryland in 1972, these organizations continue to emerge today, even in unlikely places. During my data collection in July 2011, Texas legislators reported that they were in the process of forming a caucus. This state is not included among my case studies because I would have been unable to determine if their attempt was successful or not because my definition requires a full year of observation, but I will now turn to a brief discussion of this most recent women's caucus attempt and what I was able to learn from interviews and press coverage of their initial organizing activities. I will follow this discussion with more broad predictions about where I expect to see other future attempts to create women's caucuses and how successful they will be in accomplishing their goals.

Like the Women Legislators of Maryland, the women legislators in Texas have been mobilized by a volatile incident which occurred in May 2011. Women legislators

were outraged when a flyer circulated by the Texas Civil Justice League surfaced, which featured a “child nursing at a woman’s bare breast.” The flyer was a political comment on the nanny state, but women were outraged by its circulation (Ramshaw and Galbraith 2011). Representative Senfronia Thompson (D) testified on the House floor in protest, flanked by women legislators from both sides of the aisle. Representatives Thompson (D), Beverly Woolley (R), and Carol Alvarado (D) immediately sent a letter to all women legislators, requesting their participation in a caucus that would “create the framework for current and future women legislators to get their messages heard, to seek guidance from experienced leaders, and to unite on issues important to us” (Tuma 2011). They will wait until the start of the 2013 session to hold any meetings and undertake further action. In its initial stage, this caucus is similar to those formed in the 1970s, in that it is reacting to a triggering incident of perceived bias and focused on policy issues at least in part of its purpose. Whether or not this will be a successful attempt remains to be seen.

Based on my findings here, I predict that in the short term any women legislators’ attempts at caucus creation will more likely occur in states with lower levels of party polarization. Two examples might be Delaware or Mississippi which do not have women’s caucuses presently and have political parties with less distance between their ideological means (Shor and McCarty 2011).<sup>33</sup> I expect this to be the case even when the purpose of the organization is only social in nature, and I expect policy-based caucus launches to be fewer and less likely to succeed.

Despite New Jersey’s initial success, their ability to maintain a policy-based caucus is not yet proven. Texas is another case to watch. Will their fervor over this flyer

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<sup>33</sup> I reported earlier that Delaware and Mississippi women legislators had concerns about male opposition to a women’s caucus. As previously discussed in this chapter, how they choose to deal with any opposition may, in part, determine whether or not an attempt would succeed or fail.

incident be enough to unite them when the reality of policy differences emerges? I doubt it, but they may be able to form a group which works toward elevating the status of women inside the institution. This is one of the key points I uncovered in completing this project. Women's status within legislatures is still not equal to that of men, regardless of proportions of women in the body or leadership. Women still experience teasing and isolation from policy decisions, but many are reluctant to admit it or adhere to the idea that collective action is a way to address it. I believe this is the sometimes untapped power of these groups.

Whether or not women's caucuses ever address policy issues for women constituents or others, they can serve to bolster women's status in the institution and improve women's experience as legislators. The mentoring and information sharing that occurs when women have relationships with more senior legislators and women across the aisles is a decided advantage to women in states without such organizations. Even without reaching consensus on policies like abortion or birth control, women can unite to promote the election of more women to leadership positions within the legislature. Kanthak and Krause (2012) have found evidence this may be effective if the proportions of women legislators are moderate in the majority party. Some women's caucuses are already doing this, like in New Jersey, where the members of the women's caucus supported legislation to bring transparency to state political party nominations. In the absence of more substantive policy focus, these are areas in which women's caucuses could make a real difference in legislatures.

### Contributions to the Literature

This project has a lot to contribute to political science and the body of work existing on legislative behavior, as well as the experience of women in political office. My study examines the relationship between gender and the political behavior of elites, as well as the institutional factors which create and reinforce gender dynamics. My study specifically engages the tension for women between their gender and party identity in the pursuit of their legislative goals and their lived experience within the legislature.

This study has moved scholarship on gender and legislative behavior forward by examining more closely women's relationship to each other and their political parties. From my case studies, I have determined that women's collective action is constrained by party polarization and party competition among women legislators. As Osborn (2012) reports, when Republican and Democratic women legislators represent women they do so very differently. Similarly, I find that when Republican and Democratic women legislators caucus, they have very different purposes in mind. Throughout the New Jersey and Colorado case studies, it was evident that Democratic women legislators wanted to organize so as to impact public policy. Their Republican counterparts were much more interested in the social support they could obtain through participation knowing that they did not want to compromise their policy positions in a legislative caucus. In the New Jersey case, legislators came to a crossroads having to decide whether or not a caucus could survive when Republican women voted differently than expected on the Family Planning Grant bill. In Colorado, some Democratic women are frustrated by the lack of substance pursued by the caucus. Their hope of future policy impact keeps them interested, but for how long?

In the failed case of Pennsylvania, opposition to the idea of a women's caucus had long been enforced by a senior Republican woman legislator – preventing any participation by women within her party even if there were interest. In Iowa, the other failed case, it is possible that newly elected women were discouraged from participating in a bipartisan caucus by party leaders despite their initial interest. This indicates that Republican women may not be opposed to gender organizing when they are new to the legislature but may become so under pressure from party leaders or more senior colleagues. This may be particularly true when women make up 20% or less of the Republican Party.

This project also uncovers the double-edged sword of legislative service among women. On the one hand, political experience is vital for relationship building and proper deference to key players, but this experience comes with a price. When long serving women are jaded by partisanship, their reluctance to identify with women across the aisle can sink a caucus attempt as was the case in Pennsylvania. As Kanter (1977) suggested thirty five years ago and Kanthak and Krause (2012) point out today, women's proportions in legislatures influence their decision to reinforce the male majority and its agenda or distinguish themselves and their interests. In this study, the attitude of senior women legislators is important for whether or not a women's caucus attempt is successful. In New Jersey, longstanding women legislators seized the opportunity of their increased numbers following a surge election of new women. In Colorado, a newcomer was deferential to senior legislators and gained their support early on in the formation process. In the failed cases, senior women were not consulted or not interested to the detriment of the caucus attempt.

The importance of newly elected women also emerged from my findings. This study is a first test of Beckwith's (2007) hypothesis that newly elected women are pressured to conform to legislative norms and less likely to participate in caucuses. My evidence actually points to the opposite conclusion, which is that newly elected women are less constrained by legislative norms and more open to bipartisanship. This is perhaps because of naiveté or enthusiasm to change the status quo, but this hypothesis is certainly deserving of more testing.

Considering the literature on the difference women legislators make within the institution, CAWP's (2001) research on women state legislators finds that women of both parties are more likely to work on women's issues than their male colleagues. While this may be the case, how women legislators choose to do this work is different for Democratic and Republican women. I find that because Republican women have different policy positions, they are more likely to support social networking caucuses than those that address women's issues in public policy. This echoes Osborn's (2012) work which argues that how Republican and Democratic women represent women is mitigated by their party affiliations. Likewise, Republican women are less likely than Democratic women to see caucusing as a legitimate legislative strategy. This corroborates Katzenstein's (1998) work which suggests that institutions can influence the range of possible options women acknowledge when representing women's interests. In this case, the institution of the Republican Party is narrowing the options women legislators see as appropriate legislative behavior. As Banaszak (1996) found in the case of women's suffrage movements, "Missing an opportunity may be the result of a fully rational and intelligent decision. Movement activists may make decisions without fully knowing all

options or discounting certain viable options because of their values" (222). Republican women legislators may not seize the opportunity to caucus because their political values prevent it.

The decision not to caucus or a failed attempt has real consequences for women legislators and their constituents. As Hammond (1998) has demonstrated, caucuses allow legislators to signify themselves as experts in certain legislative areas and advocates for certain constituencies, to develop leadership skills, and to build important relationships within the institution. For the individual, Gertzog (1995, 229) finds that the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues provided members with the opportunity for information exchange, sympathetic sounding boards, distribution of workload, staff integration, image enhancement within the district, and social support. Finally, Kanthak and Krause (2012) suggest that caucuses are positively correlated with higher proportions of women in leadership depending on the proportion of women in the majority party.

Research has also investigated the impact of women's legislative caucuses for constituents at the national and state levels. CAWP (2001, 2-3) reports that "Women who meet with other women in their legislatures—whether formally through a women's caucus - or informally on a bipartisan or partisan basis—are considerably more likely than other women legislators to have worked on legislation to benefit women." Additionally, Thomas (1991) finds that the presence of women's caucuses is linked with successful passage of women's issues bills in state legislatures. While other studies cast doubt on women's caucuses' substantive contribution to women's representation (Berkman and O'Connor 1993; Reingold and Schneider 2001; Osborn 2012), it is

important that women be free to make the decision to caucus without constraints from institutional barriers or party leader or male opposition.

Despite these important findings, there is still much I was not able to learn about women's caucuses and why attempts at caucusing succeed or fail. I will now move to a discussion of what I consider to be the future of women's caucus research in the states.

### Future Research

In conducting this study, I have discovered that many women's caucuses do not set women's representation as a priority for their group. Instead, six women's caucuses are primarily social in nature, prioritizing relationships between legislators (26% of all women's caucuses). This is important because it demonstrates that the effect of these groups on women's representation may be indirect. Relationships are important for the achievement of legislative success and, therefore, these groups may be affecting the legislative process in unexpected ways. Previous research on the effects of women's caucuses has focused on bill sponsorships and passage (Thomas 1991, Reingold and Schneider 2001). My findings suggest that a more nuanced analysis of Informational/Social caucuses will be necessary to appreciate the full impact of these groups on legislative life and policy. For instance, how do the relationships formed by women's caucus participation affect bill co-sponsorship, legislative strategy, and partisanship in the legislature more broadly? For legislators, what benefits or costs do women face by participating in such groups? Do they have higher feelings of efficacy than non-participants? Do they experience more or less gender bias in the institution? Can these types of organization improve the status of women within the institution?

These are all questions which emerge when the definition of a caucus is expanded beyond those with a policy agenda.

More traditionally, 17 women's caucuses do identify as policy-oriented caucuses, but even within this group, I found a variety of approaches. Only five caucuses set agendas, whereas 12 choose to take on issues as they emerge. This finding suggests that again a more nuanced approach to analyzing the effects of women's caucuses is necessary to fully appreciate whether or not these groups are successful in representing women. My research has identified where scholars should look for this effect, as policy-oriented caucuses identified women and children's health as the primary issues on which they focus their attention. Previous research which looked for effects on children more broadly, family law, violence against women (sexual assault and domestic violence), child abuse, day care and parental leave, welfare, the environment, and other broad categories sometimes categorized as "women's issues" may have been looking in the wrong places because of assumptions made about women's caucuses or because women's caucuses may have changed their priorities over time (Thomas 1991, Reingold and Schneider 2001). Either way, my findings offer a roadmap for future impact studies.

Additionally, a majority of the women in this study, even participants in policy-oriented caucuses, reported that abortion rights were too controversial for caucuses and that the issue as far as expanding abortion rights is widely tabled across the country. This finding is vital to understanding the representation of women across the country, as it indicates that on this very high profile issue, women are acting individually or as partisans, not as a bipartisan collective as used to be the case in Congress (Swers 1998). How this decision by women legislators across the country impacts the debate and policy

outcome is deserving of further study. By investigating the strategies employed and the outcomes achieved by legislative women's caucuses, we can assess the impact these groups have on these issues. My study has narrowed the range of issues where it is appropriate to measure impact.

Another question which emerges from my case studies is whether there is an evolution from an Informational/Social caucus to a policy-oriented one and under what conditions that would be likely to occur. Likewise, under what conditions might an Agenda caucus become Informational/Social and what would that tell us about the institution of the legislature? Because the ultimate outcome of legislative behavior is public policy, it is necessary to connect these organizations to their substantive effects in addition to appreciating their influence on gender relationships inside the institution.

Finally, my work points to the difficulty in obtaining information about women's organizing in the states. Over time data would allow for more sophisticated analysis of state level variables and their relationship to the existence of women's caucuses. These groups are always appearing and fading away, and the disappearance of a caucus in a state is also worthy of attention. While I pose questions about the conditions under which a caucus emerges, the conditions surrounding the demise of a women's caucus can also tell us about the institution of the legislature and its gendering. More scientific analysis of the absence of a women's caucus is warranted as well.

### Conclusion

These questions posed here and my findings are important because they help explain how women are represented in state legislatures. Important policy is being made at the state level, including access to reproductive health, resource allocation for health

services of all kinds, legislation regarding child and elder care, and many other issues which disproportionately affect women because of gender role expectations. Therefore, the behavior of legislators and the norms and rules of legislative institutions are of the upmost importance for women's representation. This study examines the specific conditions under which women legislators choose to act collectively as women within state legislatures.

Findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that women's caucuses across the country take different shapes based on the needs of legislators in that state. In some legislatures, women feel the need to draw attention to women's political contributions as a way to assert their status. This is often a way for women to rally around a common cause when they cannot agree on political issues and legislation. By discounting these groups, we would be ignoring the political environments and institutional features (like party differences) which have shaped these legislative choices and the need for women to assert their importance. This is an important finding because it counters those who would argue equality already exists in today's legislatures. Women in other states may not be able to agree on political outcomes either, but they are willing to meet together to share information about issues of the day, indicating that women legislators may be able to counteract the highly partisan environment in some states. This could improve the quality of representation for constituents in those states, as well as the quality of life for legislators within the institution. To ignore caucuses that do not address legislation is to ignore important aspects of the experience of women legislators around the country.

Finally, I find that women in states without caucuses most commonly explain that party differences prevent women from finding enough common ground through their

shared gender to create an organization. While male opposition does exist in pockets around the country, women do not cite this as the primary reason they do not organize. This may be because it is true or because women are reluctant to admit this power imbalance. They are more likely to cite a lack of time and resources (specifically staff and financial support for events) as explanations for the lack of a caucus. This lack of time in some instances is due to the legislative schedule, but also is a consequence of their gender. Many women explained that their roles as wives and mothers outside the legislature limited their ability to organize within it. This is an important finding as it demonstrates the role gender expectations play in the lives of women legislators, which limits their ability to represent their constituents on equal footing with their male counterparts who do not face the same expectations.

I began this project by arguing that gender would influence women legislators' decisions about how to act within legislatures. Their marked identities as women do not always or only act to hold them back from incorporation into the larger political sphere. In some instances, women's gendered identity serves them positively by attributing to them advantageous political skills or expertise. In other cases, however, women's difference harms their ability to act on behalf of their constituents by limiting their access to power or attributing negative group characteristics to individuals regardless of their veracity. Sometimes these limitations are compounded by other identity markers like race, age, or sexual orientation. Women legislators' decisions to organize around their gendered identity are shaped by these conditions. It is their gendered condition which makes possible even conceiving of an alternative organization beyond the traditional political party affiliation. The context in which this idea emerges is shaped by the

political opportunities available to women, the resources to which they have access, and the frames which are employed by organizers (and their opposition) and whether or not these frames resonate with potential participants. Whether or not women choose to organize and are successful when they do matters for women inside the institution and their quality of life as legislators as well as for their constituents.

## Appendix A – Interview Schedules

### Women's Caucus Participants/Founding Members

Who do you think is most influential in the legislature?

How important are the parties? How important are the committees?

Do you think the parties have been responsive to the needs of women and families? Why or why not?

Do you think caucus membership affects women's status in their parties? How?

Probe: To what do you attribute your rise to leadership within the (Democratic/Republican) Party? Are they looking to promote women, or is it a challenge?

Probe: Does your role as a member of the (Democratic/Republican) leadership conflict with your co-chair position of the women's legislative caucus?

Do you think the committees have been responsive to the needs of women and families? Why or why not?

Do you think legislators have a different experience within the institution as a result of their gender?

How would you describe women's status within the parties over that time? How about in the legislature more generally?

How would you say the legislature has changed as a result of more women serving in the legislature?

Have you also experienced different treatment due to your gender in your party or in the legislature in general?

Can you tell me how the women's legislative caucus came about?

Was there an informal caucus which existed prior to this formal one? Would you say one led into the other or were they separate phenomena?

Who was sort of leading the effort?

Was there a particular patron/group outside of the legislature pushing for a caucus?

Was there a particular event that sparked a reaction by women legislators?

Why now as opposed to some other time? Were there previous attempts? Can you tell me about that?

Did the women at the time have any particular resources which made it more possible at this time than any other?

Was there anything going on within the legislature at the time which created an opportunity for caucus creation?

Do you think Democratic women participate in the caucus for a different reason than Republican women?

What is the mission of the caucus as you understand it?

Why do you think there is a need for a women's caucus in the legislature?  
Why a women's caucus as opposed to another kind?

What is the process by which you officially formed? Can you tell me how the leaders were chosen?

Is there anyone discouraging the caucus development? How did the leadership react to the formation of the women's caucus? How did other legislators react to the formation of the women's caucus?

To your knowledge, has there been any tension for the women who belong to other caucuses such as the Black and Hispanic caucus? Do you anticipate working with them in the future? Can you imagine any issues which may be problematic for the two groups?

What about any other caucuses in the legislature?

What types of legislation do you think they should work on? Just women's?

What should you leave off the table, if anything?

What do you think are the costs and benefits of joining the caucus?

What role has the women's caucus played in the passage of any legislation so far?

What do you think the future holds for the women's caucus?

Who do you think I should talk to in order to learn more about the caucus?

Do you have any materials you can share with me?

(Specific to the New Jersey Case)

What role has the women's caucus played in the passage of any legislation so far?  
How about the Democracy Works legislation which passed in October 2009 specifically?

Probe: How do you think it will affect the state of New Jersey politics?

Probe: Why do you think it emerged as an issue when it did?

### Legislative Leadership in Caucus States

What are your issue priorities this session?

How would you describe the role of the legislative leadership?

How important are the parties?

Possible Probe: What do you think is the best way to accomplish your goals within the legislature?

Do you think caucuses are a necessary part of the legislative process?

Possible Probe: Do they change the way the legislature works?

Possible Probe: Do you notice any important differences between the different caucuses?

Possible Probe: Which caucuses do you work with the most?

Possible Probe: Has the existence of a women's caucus changed your working relationship with female colleagues?

Possible Probe: How do you think a women's caucus can help your party achieve its goals? Can it hinder them?

Do men in the legislature have formal or informal groups that serve the same purpose for them as the women's caucus does for women?

Are there other caucuses or networks in the legislature that serve the same purpose for other groups as the women's caucus does for women?

Does the legislature offer resources or support for these groups, as far as you are aware?

Do you think legislators have a different experience within the institution as a result of their gender?

Possible probe: How would you say the legislature has changed as a result of more women serving in the legislature?

Do you think there is a need for a women's caucus in the legislature?

Possible Probe: What is the mission of the caucus as you understand it?

Possible Probe: What are your general impressions of the caucus?

Have you worked with the Women's Legislative Caucus on any specific issue before?

Has the Caucus changed anything about the way this legislature works?

Possible Probe: Is it a positive or a negative change?

I know some of the women came to you to discuss forming this group, how did you react?

Do you see costs and benefits for the women who choose to participate in this caucus?

Would you serve as an honorary member if men were invited to participate? Why or why not?

Why do you think the women organized at this time, in this way?

Was there anything about the legislative environment which made it more likely to emerge now? Positive or negative factors...

What do you think the future holds for the women's caucus?

Has the Caucus ever opposed one of your initiatives in the legislature?

Possible Probe: What was that issue and can you tell me about that experience?

Possible Probe: Has the existence of a women's caucus changed your working relationship with female colleagues?

(Specific to the New Jersey Case)

Do you think Republican women will have a hard time working with the women's caucus and the governor's agenda?

What role has the women's caucus played in the passage of any legislation so far?

How about the Democracy Works legislation which passed in October 2009 specifically?

Probe: How do you think it will affect the state of New Jersey politics?

Probe: Why do you think it emerged as an issue when it did?

### Legislative Staff in Caucus States

#### General

Can you tell me about your experience as a staffer?

Possible Probe: What are your primary responsibilities?

What issue priorities are you working on this session?

Possible Probe: Who do you think is most influential in the legislature?

Possible Probe: How important are the parties? How important are the committees?

Do you think the parties have been responsive to the needs of women and families? Why or why not?

Do you think the committees have been responsive to the needs of women and families? Why or why not?

How would you describe women's status within the parties? How about in the legislature more generally?

#### Gender Related

Do you think legislators have a different experience within the institution as a result of their gender?

Possible probe: How would you say the legislature has changed as a result of more women serving in the legislature?

Do you think there is a need for a women's caucus in the legislature?

Possible Probe: What is the mission of the caucus as you understand it?

Possible Probe: What are your general impressions of the caucus?

Have you worked with the Women's Legislative Caucus on any specific issue before?

Has the Caucus ever opposed one of the initiatives upon which you worked in the legislature?

Possible Probe: What was that issue and can you tell me about that experience?

Possible Probe: Has the existence of a women's caucus changed your working relationship with female colleagues?

Has the Caucus changed anything about the way this legislature works?

Possible Probe: Is it a positive or a negative change?

How did the leadership react to the formation of the women's caucus?

How did other legislators react to the formation of the women's caucus?

What do you think the future holds for the women's caucus?

Who do you think I should talk to in order to learn more about the caucus?

(Specific to the New Jersey Case)

What role has the women's caucus played in the passage of any legislation so far?

How about the Democracy Works legislation which passed in October 2009 specifically?

Probe: How do you think it will affect the state of New Jersey politics?

Probe: Why do you think it emerged as an issue when it did?

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