The Gendered Construction of Interpersonal Power in Political Office

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Abstract

This study examines the use of interpersonal power by women in elected political positions. Power relationships, access to power, and the way in which power is perceived and wielded, are heavily influenced by the individual's gender schema. Gender schema, by nature of its social construction and reliance on individual cognition, is influenced by the power relationships that the individual engages in. At the hub of the schema's attempt to evaluate and organize information are interaction and the reinforcing power that is achieved through social acceptance of the individual. The basis of interaction, then, becomes the gender appropriate use of power. The analyses of data test a single hypothesis: H1: Female and male political leaders will differ in their uses of interpersonal power. Strong support is seen in the findings for the gendered construction of interpersonal power in political office. The differences between males and females identified in the findings indicate that females receive different information than males about the acceptability of their roles and that females both process information differently from males and employ different sources and levels of interpersonal power to achieve their goals. Males are more likely to rely on both coercion and expert power, while females are more likely to rely on connection power, the power of important relationships. This reliance on social network suggests a direct linkage between gender and the formation of interpersonal power.

1.0 Introduction

This study examines the use of interpersonal power by women in elected political positions. Interpersonal power, as defined by Nelson and Quick (1994, *330*) is the process of affecting the thoughts, behavior and feelings of others through interactions with them. Parsons (1969) suggests that power relationships become, like other social roles, institutionalized. Power relationships, access to power, and the way in which power is perceived and wielded, are heavily influenced by the individual's gender schema. Gender schema, by nature of its social construction and reliance on individual cognition, is influenced by the power relationships that the individual engages in. The research examines interpersonal power, focusing on women in elected political leadership positions, using a comparison of women and men matched by elected positions in the State of Mississippi, USA.

2.0 Problem Statement and Hypothesis

Studies of women and development indicate that women's economic status improves as more women hold elected office, thus improving overall economic development through the influence of policies that ensure equal rights and access to services (IWPR, 2000). The United States Agency for International Development notes that while almost all women around the world have a legal right to vote, their participation is inhibited by cultural,

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social, economic, legal and education constraints (USAID Fact Sheet, 1997). The exclusion of women or other groups through social or cultural barriers results in political under-representation, which effectively leaves those members of the population voiceless in the formation of policy. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, better known as The World Bank, recognizes the linkage between the lack of political representation and poverty. Where social groups have little political voice, they are overlooked in the distribution of public goods and have less access to education and health, leading to lower income and higher female and child morbidity rates (The World Bank, 2001).

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR, 2002), despite a population that is fifty-two percent female, Mississippi ranks in the bottom five in the U.S. in education level achieved by women, business ownership by women, the percentage of women above poverty, women's median annual earnings, women in managerial and professional occupations, and the percentage of women in elected office.

While there is significant documentation of political representation, barriers to voting access, and partisan affiliation by gender, little has been written about the differences between the genders in the exercise of interpersonal power, a significant factor in access to political office and the use of influence once in office. Ritter and Mellow (2000) observe that gender research in political science is less likely to produce work that challenges deep-seated beliefs because quantitative methods rely on broad assumptions about the fixed or predictable nature of political and social life. Cook and Mendleson (1984) and Grubbs and Olson (1989) review power and political propensity, while the Kenworthy and Malami (1999) and the Liddle (2000) studies relate to class and other factors of gender inequality in political representation.

The objectives of this research are: (1) to identify and measure differences between female and male political office holders in their sources of interpersonal power and (2) to provide a basis of understanding about gender disparity which will lead to more inclusive practices to promote equal representation. The analyses of data test a single hypothesis: *H1: Female and male political leaders will differ in their uses of interpersonal power.*

3.0 Participation of Women in Mississippi Politics

Fifty-two percent of Mississippi's population is female, but women remain significantly underrepresented in all elected policy-making positions. The Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers' Eagleton Institute of Politics tracks U.S. states' female representation in elective office since 1975. As recently as 1987, Mississippi ranked 50th in women in the state legislature, and by 2001 had moved up to 46th, with 22 of 174 House and Senate positions held by women, for a total of 12.6% representation in the two bodies (CAWP, 2001). Aldermen and city council positions comprise the largest percentage of elected women in policy-making positions in the state at approximately 22.66% (MMA, 2001). These are local positions, election to which requires less reliance on party affiliation, media coverage and campaign funding, and more reliance on social network, grassroots campaigning, and personal knowledge of the candidate.   Lack of political efficacy, rather than political complacency, appears to be an issue influencing the sub par representation of women in public office.

Despite its low statues for female politicos, Mississippi ranked 9th among all states and the District of Columbia in women's voter registration in 1992 and 1996, but 38th in voter turnout, and 50th on the overall Composite Political Index for women in elected office compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR, 1998). The composite includes such measures as women in elected political positions and the existence of appointed commissions to represent and research women's issues. By 2002, the state's ranking had improved to 42nd, due in part to the establishment of the Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women (Mississippi Legislature, 2001). Other factors were the improvement in women's voter turnout to 23rd in the nation and the overall improvement in women's voter registration to 7th in the combined years of 1998 and 2000. Mississippi was still ranked 48th among states for women in elected office (IWPR, 2002).

Mississippi was among six states that, as recently as 2002, had not elected a female to the U.S. Congress. Only two women in the state's history had served in the state's executive branch of government. Between 1960 and 1980, Evelyn Gandy served two terms as State Treasurer, one term as Insurance Commissioner, and one-term as

Lieutenant Governor, and was twice defeated in her candidacy for Governor, prompting one political columnist to blame "Mississippi's political machismo" that does not trust women with the top public responsibility (Minor, 2001). Amy Tuck, the only other woman to breach the male-dominated executive branch in Mississippi during the twentieth century, served briefly in the legislature, posed an unsuccessful bid for Secretary of State, was elected Secretary of the Senate in 1996, and was elected to the Executive Branch in 1999 (SOS, 1997, 2000). Both women were unmarried and childless, and while those are not conditions necessary for candidacy, several studies have noted the relationship between representative political power and domestic behavior (Koch, 1995; Lindsey, 1997; Aguinis and Adams, 1998; Dollar and Gatti, 1999).

4.0 Gender Schema and Interpersonal Power Theory

Gender is one avenue through which power is articulated, according to Klenke (1996, 153). Gender schema is an appropriate lens through which to view interpersonal power, and provides a framework for understanding the uneven participation of candidates in political races by sex. Gender schema theory, as defined by Bem, states that once a child learns appropriate cultural definitions of gender, this becomes the key structure around which all other information in organized (Bem, 1981, 1983). As a structure, a schema anticipates and searches for information, then processes the information in terms of schema relevance. The schema remains ready to organize and sort information by category based on pre-determined confines, despite the availability of other categorizing dimensions. At the hub of the schema's attempt to evaluate and organize information are interaction and the reinforcing power that is achieved through social acceptance of the individual. The basis of interaction, then, becomes the gender appropriate use of power.

In the political context, gender schema works closely with interpersonal power to influence both the candidate's self concept and his or her cultural acceptability to the electorate, thus affecting both access to public office and the choice of relationships once in office. Culture dictates types of behavior acceptable for use by individuals based on their gender (Bem, 1981, 1983, 1984) and, therefore, dictates the type of interpersonal power that the electorate sees as appropriate for the acceptable candidate.

In their review of social roles versus structural role behavior in organizations, Aguinis and Adams (1998) illustrate that an individual's choice of behavior and use of interpersonal influence are a result of gender-role expectations that extend into organizational settings. Females, perceived to use more indirect influence such as negotiation, occupy the low-status roles. Males, perceived to use direct, assertive influence, occupy more high-status roles. Therefore, in a culture significantly influenced by gender, for females to assume positions of power (high status roles), they would be required to exhibit more direct, assertive behavior, or "act like men." In a more gender tolerant culture, however, women would be free to, as Judy Rosener states, "draw upon the skills and attitudes they developed from their shared experience as women" (Rosener, 1990, 119).

Power has been defined in many ways. In developing his writings on charisma, Weber used Macht's definition of power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (Weber, 1947, 152). Since this definition was developed, many other ways of conceptualizing power have emerged. Power is a complex social phenomenon that is hard to define and measure. Once facet of power is leadership. Indeed, Plunkett and Attner (1991) cite the use of power to influence others as the foundation of leadership.

The two types of power identified by McClelland (1975) are personal power used for personal gain and social power used to create motivation or accomplish group goals. Personal power employs the concept of domination over others, while social power is drawn from outside the self. Characteristics of social power include the belief that the authority system is valid, preference for work and discipline known as the Protestant work ethic, altruistic behavior that puts the good of the group before self, and the belief that justice should be sought after.

French and Raven's theory of interpersonal power suggests that people are influenced by five bases of power – reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert. Reward power is based on an agent's ability to control rewards that a target wants. For instance, in the case of politicos, a policy maker could wield significant reward

power over a lobbyist through legislation or the rewarding of contracts. Coercive power, on the other hand, is based on an individual's ability to cause an unpleasant experience for another. For instance, an appropriations committee member could use the threat of an agency budget cut to influence the behavior of an agency manager. Legitimate power is based on position status and mutual agreement. An elected official holds specific legitimate power based on the duties described by his or her office. Legitimate power does not, however, take into account position-related privileges or perquisites that may accompany acquired legitimate power. Referent power, also thought of as charisma, is based on interpersonal attraction. Politicians are expected to have at least a minimal presence of referent power to achieve election. Expert power exists when the individual has knowledge that another needs. The exertion of this type of power is based on trust in the accuracy of the information, relevance and usefulness of the information, and the target's perception of the agent as expert (French and Raven, 1959).

Hersey and Natemeyer (1988) add two dimensions of power to those posed by French and Raven, both stemming from the social network of the individual. The first is information power, the power of access to key information flows. The second is connection power, which is the power of important relationships. Multi-term elected officials would be expected to have a relative amount of both information power and connection power. For example, a Majority Leader in the U.S. Congress would have significant power through the development of relationships over time. While the loss of majority would represent the removal of legitimate power, the Leader's information and connection power would be potentially unchanged, and could, in fact, be increased as efforts double to regain majority.

Power structures, embedded at the societal level, are conveyed and perpetuated throughout society's institutions, the structures established to maintain the social order, standards of conduct and cultures. Imitation, social obligation, and coercion serve to transfer established patterns of action and thought, which, over time, become accepted into culture, then into society's institutions. So while society makes slow constant changes to its structure, institutions, such as government, remain intact, changing even more slowly than the society. At the same time, the institutional structure of government acts as a conduit for the basic needs of society to be met (Lindsey, 1997).

Wingood (2000) asserts that there is structural division of power between the sexes in social institutions such as government. The relationship of power and politics is rife with institutionalized processes, such as candidacy and election, policy formation, and power acquisition within the governing bodies. In fact, the application of institutional theory to politics suggests that to achieve election to the institution of government, one must first demonstrate culturally acceptable, even ideal, behavior. Then, to gain power within the institution one must adopt the belief system of the institution. An elected official would be expected to adapt to the existing culture of the office, if he or she did not subscribe to it prior to election. Therefore the possibility of any radical culture shift inspired by an individual, or a minority, from within the elected body is unlikely. On the contrary, the necessary percentage of like-minded individuals necessary to effect change within an institution is estimated to be between thirty percent and fifty percent, as noted by Kenworthy and Malami (1999) and Ivins (1997).

Lindsey (1997) argues that political power and legal authority restrictions that favor men over women are at the core of inequality that spreads to occupational reward through money and prestige, social stratification, and the compromise of interpersonal power by females in the family setting, suggesting that gender role socialization may actually impede female participation in politics and the ability to achieve positions of power. If women are thought to compromise interpersonal power in the domestic setting, organizational settings lacking a critical mass necessary to influence policy should also require the compromise of interpersonal power. A review of voting records on policy-making issues would not be expected to reveal gender differences nor would a review of key leadership positions held by women and men, but would more likely reveal political power based on party affiliation. In support of this premise, Greene (2001) observes that, although the trend since 1980 has been for women to serve longer tenures in the Mississippi Legislature, thus establishing a power base through committee leadership, they are no more likely to support women's issues than are men.

Another popular course of investigation in politics and gender studies is political party platform loyalty. While party identification has emerged as a significant factor in women's voting behavior nationally, Clark and Clark (1999, 78) caution that focusing on the political gender gap to identify a "women's position" obscures the

distinction between women who are more liberal and those who are more fundamental. Therefore, to reveal differences in the use of interpersonal power between males and females, the methodology of this research narrows to a focus on individual responses to a self-rating questionnaire, analyzed by gender, but not by partisanship.

5.0 Methodology and Design

To test the hypothesis that males and females would differ in their self-valuation of interpersonal power, the study groups were composed of males and females influenced by a comparable culture, that is, a population primarily endogenous to the political geography of the area. Given the controls provided in the selection and analysis, differences should be revealed on the basis of group gender. To further test the applicability of gender schema to interpersonal power, only those male and female candidates who have achieved elected leadership were included in the research.

The study is cross-sectional in design, with survey data collected at one point in time using both a priori knowledge and constructed controls (Rossi and Freeman, 1993). A review of multivariate data analysis techniques indicated that multiple disciminant analysis was the appropriate statistical technique for research that is either predictive or profiling. The objectives of multiple discriminant analysis are: (1) to determine if statistically significant differences exist between the average score profiles of the two (or more) a priori defined groups; (2) to establish procedures for classifying statistical units (individuals or objects) into groups on the basis of their scores on several variables; and, (3) to determine which of the independent variables account most for the differences in the average score profiles of the two or more groups (Hair, et. al., 1987, *79*).

Several approaches were considered for population sampling and analysis, including matching subjects, disproportionate random sampling, and creating a control group for comparison purposes. The process of matching subjects according to gender and elected position provides the more compatible comparison for this research. While disproportionate random sampling could be deemed to be acceptable due to the fact that the female population is underrepresented (O'Sullivan and Rassell, 1999) in positions of elected political leadership in Mississippi, surveying only women in elected political positions would serve the purpose of identifying only the sources of interpersonal power but with no gender comparison. Alternately, the use of a control group of women from the general population for comparison would make the incorrect assumption that all members of the population are compelled to seek public office or have a political propensity. On the other hand, the matched subjects approach provides a basis for control of the research by including another population as a comparison group, but limiting the group to those who have made the choice to run for elected office, thus assuring that the subjects surveyed have a basis of knowledge about the survey matter from which to draw. The use of male comparison groups of elected political officeholders enabled the analysis of relationships between gender and power. The analysis was conducted at the aggregate level, with groups stratified by the geographical jurisdiction of their elected political offices, as follows: (1) statewide elected officials serving in the legislature and the executive branch of state government; (2) county officials elected as supervisors; and (3) mayors, elected at the local level to serve a constituency living within a city, municipality or township.

Several elected positions were excluded from the study to limit skewing which occurs when a distribution has a few extreme values affecting the arithmetic mean (O'Sullivan and Rassel, 1999). In addition, the duties of several elected positions do not involve direct influence of policy. Congressional offices were excluded because there were no female elected officials in that category in Mississippi. Elected officials in the judicial system were excluded because of the education requirement of a law degree and status as a practicing attorney for most posts and because the system does not involve development of policy. All county wide elected officials that involved execution of, rather than development of, policy were excluding, including the offices of chancery clerk, circuit clerk and tax assessor/collector, as well as coroner, surveyor, sheriff, superintendent of education, constable and election commissioner. Alderwomen and councilwomen were excluded at the local level, although they represent the greatest percentage of females in elected leadership positions in Mississippi. Mayors were believed to be representative of this group. As mentioned previously, no data were collected regarding partisanship. Females are not in ample enough supply in the Republican camp in Mississippi to offer generalizable results by political party,

nor would identification of respondents by political party offer the level of confidentiality assured to research participants.

Under the guidelines established for surveying small populations, those of 500 or less (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2000, *343*), a census of the population of females was conducted and the subjects were matched with males in comparable elected positions. Participants included elected female and male political office holders serving during the latter half of the year 2001. Due to the existence of a single female in the executive branch, the executive branch was combined with the legislative branch for evaluation purposes. At the time the survey instrument was distributed, public documents detailing the sex of office holders had not been published. A first name search of office holders in each pool revealed a number of gender anomalous names, therefore, sex of these officeholders was confirmed by staff of their respective office associations.

The total population of 78 confirmed female elected officials in the enumerated positions was surveyed. Two mayors were excluded after the name search and subsequent independent consultation with association staff failed to confirm their sex. Females surveyed included 42 female mayors, 13 county supervisors, 16 representatives, six senators, and one executive department female. The remaining 78 survey recipients were selected using random number generation (Research Randomizer, 2001) from the pools of males matched by elected positions. Matching subjects is a complement to random selection in small samples (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002, *147*). The males were first categorized by position into three pools – legislative and executive, county and municipal. Within each pool of alphabetized names, numbers were assigned to the males only. The total number of males in each pool was entered into the randomizer as well as the desired sample to be chosen from each group. The numbers generated by the randomizer were then cross-matched with the numbers assigned to individuals in each group to select the male elected political participants for the study.

The Hersey-Natemeyer Power Perception Profile Perception of Self (Hersey and Natemeyer, 1988), was included as a component of the survey packet, which was distributed by mail, following an initial call to each of the elected officials selected for inclusion in the study. The Power Perception Profile consists of twenty-one pairs of statements. Six statements are related to each of the seven sources of power – coercive, connection, expert, information, legitimate, referent and reward. The summed scores for each power description were treated as interval scale measures, with a possible minimum score of "0" and a possible maximum score of "18" on each item (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002).

A total of 156 survey packets were distributed during the month of November 2001. This is roughly the size of the entire population of female elected officials (78) in executive, legislative, supervisor and mayoral offices, plus a comparable number in the sample group of male elected officials (78) in the same political offices. A follow-up card was sent to all survey recipients approximately ten days after the survey mailing. Three additional surveys were mailed after the distribution of the follow-up card to officials who requested replacements for surveys not received in the first mailing.

6.0 Findings

Data coding and entry were conducted as surveys were returned, during the month of December 2001, and the data set was verified using research volunteers. The responses to the twenty-one pairs of items were categorically summed and coded upon receipt of the completed surveys.

6.1 Response Rate

One-third (33.3%) of elected officials surveyed participated in the study. Fifty-two (52) total surveys were returned by participants within the time frame allowed for the research. Two of the fifty-two surveys returned were discarded due to non-completion or inconsistency in response. A total of fifty surveys were used in the descriptive statistics, however, three were disallowed from the gender analysis based on non-response to the gender item. Therefore, forty-seven surveys, or 30.12% were deemed useable based on the response to the gender item. Of the forty-seven, one male elected official did not identify the office to which he was elected. Of the forty-six useable

surveys based on gender and political office held, male county supervisors and female mayors had the highest return rates at 69.2% and 30.9%, respectively. Female statewide elected and legislators exhibited the lowest completion and return rate at 17.4% of surveys distributed.

The matched distribution of the survey contributed to the similar overall rate of return of the surveys by males and females. Complete responses from twenty-six males and twenty one females were used in the gender analysis on select portions of the survey, constituting respective returns of 33.3% male and 26.9% female for an overall valid return rate of 30.1%. It should be noted that the percentages of males listed in the survey are representative of the total matched group and not necessarily of the total population of males in the elected positions defined for the study. The percentage of females, on the other hand, is the percentage of the entire population of females in the elected positions surveyed.

Of the total of fifty, nine respondents completed all sections of the survey packet, but did not complete the Power Perception Profile Perception of Self, reducing the total number of surveys analyzed for sources of interpersonal power to forty-one (41). Two respondents replied in writing that they believed the profile did not apply to them, and seven either left the profile blank or only partially completed it. By design, the profile requires that respondents rate themselves using a total of three points divided between competing pairs of twenty-one statements regarding the use of power. Possible pair scores would include 0-3, 3-0, 1-2, and 2-1.

One explanation for lower response to the profile could be the placement of the power section at the end of the survey instrument when participant attention span has waned. The lower response rate may be due to the difference in style of the profile compared to other sections of the survey. Observation suggests that there is reason to suspect a gender relationship to non-completion of the power section. Females were at least twice as likely as males to return the Power Perception Profile not completed. Six of the nine- elected officials who did not complete the power section were female, two were male and one was not identified by sex. The higher proportion of female non-respondents would support the Klenke (1997) claim that women tend to shy away from any mention of power. The non-respondents were evenly distributed by political office, suggesting that the lack of completion of the power section was not related to holding office at a particular jurisdictional level.

6.2 Data Analysis

Analysis for this study was conducted using SPSS 9.0 (Norusis, 1999). Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation were calculated for the sample, then group statistics were run using the t-test and chi-square to determine significant difference between males and females. Based on the high number of items to be analyzed by gender response, as well as the mixture of continuous measure and nominal scale items, multiple discriminant analysis was selected as appropriate for this research. The majority of the ninety-nine items, including the Power Perception Profile, involved continuous scale measures. Pairwise comparison using two sample t-tests was conducted on the continuous measure items, and variances were validated using Levene's test for equality of variances. Two-group discriminant analysis was conducted in SPSS, using all items determined to be significant at the level of .10 or greater. Equality of group means was tested using the Wilks' Lambda test, with Box's test performed on the covariance matrices. The stepwise method of analysis, using the Mahalanobis procedure, identified a reduced set of variables to be used in the function and eliminated those not useful in discriminating between the groups. All tests of validity conducted in the research were consistent with the SPSS 9.0 data analysis software package. Findings are reported at a 95% confidence level with an associated probability of ten percent (.10) or less (O'Sullivan and Rassel, 1999).

Interpersonal power scores were treated as continuous on a scale of 0-18 for each of the seven measures of power. To obtain a complete response to any one of the interpersonal power items required that participants complete the entire profile of twenty-one pairs of statements. As shown in Table 1, based on range and comparatively low standard deviation of responses, there was strong collective sentiment regarding higher self-categorization in expert power and legitimate power, followed by information power, referent power, reward power, connection power and coercive power, in that order.

Table 1: Interpersonal Power Scoring Among Elected Officials

Q#	Description	Valid	Range	Min.	Max.	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
93	Coercive	41	15	0	15	197	4.80	3.20
94	Connection	41	15	0	15	315	7.68	3.59
95	Expert	41	8	10	18	548	13.37	2.21
96	Information	41	12	3	15	389	9.49	2.63
97	Legitimate	41	13	2	15	437	10.66	2.57
98	Referent	41	16	0	16	368	8.98	3.82
99	Reward	41	11	3	14	326	7.95	2.63

Although elected officials would be expected to exhibit significant levels of referent power in the process of campaigning and election, Mississippi's elected officials did not rate themselves particularly high in charisma, inducing compliance through coercive means, having power to provide rewards, or having powerful connections.

Eight items from the total of 99 were found to be significant in discriminating between male respondents and female respondents. Of the eight, three were the power scores for coercive, connection and expert power. Table 2 identifies the eight items, describes the type of measure and test procedure used, indicates whether or not equal variance was established, illustrates the mean, affirms the significance, and describes the level of significance. Findings are reported at an alpha of .10 and greater with a 95% confidence level.

Table 2: Group Statistics of Significant Items

Q#	Description	Measure	Test	Equal Variance?	Mean		Alpha
					M	F	
19	Encouragement by a family member	Contin.	t-test	Yes	2.96	1.80	.005
45	Family financial responsibility	Contin.	t-test	Yes	3.00	2.07	.081
52	Reports of gender discrimination in current office	Contin.	t-test	No	4.33	2.45	.004
59	Becoming the target of negative political campaign	Contin.	t-test	Yes	3.76	2.75	.040
61	Minor children at time of decision to run	Nominal	Chi Square	N/A	Pearson Test		.033
					Mean		
					M	F	
93	Coercive Power	Contin.	t-test	Yes	5.33	3.53	.086
94	Connection Power	Contin.	t-test	No	6.63	9.47	.008
95	Expert Power	Contin.	t-test	No	13.83	12.40	.026

As illustrated in Table 2, findings support the hypothesis that male and female political office holders will differ in their sources of interpersonal power. Three of the seven power scores varied significantly by sex. While political officeholders overall scored low in the use of coercive power, males tended to rank themselves higher than females in coercive power. Expert power was highly valued by all officeholders, but males relied on it more than females. Females were significantly more likely than males to rely on social networks as exhibited in the mean scores for connection power.

The purpose of conducting the discriminant analysis was to determine which statistically significant variables could numerically separate males and females as much as possible, thus forming a group of discriminants useful in predicting inclusion into one group or the other. In this research, the disciminant analysis was conducted using only the continuous measure variables determined to be significant, thus eliminating the nominal variable for minor children in the home at the time the decision was made to run for public office. Chi-square analysis supported that this variable was significant, but it was excluded from analysis for the predictive model, due to the troublesomeness of mixing variables (Johnson and Wichern, 2002, *641*). Thirty-nine valid cases were used in the discriminant analysis, eliminating two cases with missing or out-of range group codes and eight cases with at least one missing discriminating variable. During completion of the four phases of the stepwise analysis using the Mahalanobis procedure to adjust for unequal variances, the two power scores for expert power and coercive power were eliminated as not contributing significantly to further discrimination. Items determined to be useful in predicting the gender of the elected official were the connection power score, the encouragement of a family member, family financial responsibility and reports of gender discrimination in the elected office.

7.0 Understanding Interpersonal Power in Political Office

Strong support is seen in the findings for the gendered construction of interpersonal power in political office. The fact that gender differences exist at all in the analysis supports, in part, Bem's description of gender schema as the key structure around which all other information is organized, based on the learned cultural definitions of gender (Bem, 1981, 1983). The differences between males and females identified in the findings of this research indicate that females receive different information than males about the acceptability of their roles and that females both process information differently from males and employ different sources and levels of interpersonal power to achieve their goals. If, as gender schema theory attests, the self-concept is a subset of gendered behaviors, influencing personal adequacy and esteem, then the likelihood of group differences between the sexes is high, particularly in the use of interpersonal power, as detailed in the findings. One result of culture's influence on gender roles, as noted by Aguinis and Adams (1998), is the perception that females use more indirect influence, while males use more direct influence. This perception is validated in the findings, suggesting that males are more likely to rely on both coercion and expert power, while females are more likely to rely on connection power, the power of important relationships. This reliance on social network suggests a direct linkage between gender and the formation of interpersonal power.

Every finding noted as significant in the predictive model relates to the connection power of the females surveyed. Female elected officials were significantly more likely than males to rely on the encouragement of a family member as a motivator, and significantly more likely than males to cite family financial responsibility as a barrier to participation in candidacy. Of special concern as a barrier to females seeking elected office is the high degree of concern about reports of discrimination in elected office noted by females surveyed.

The family network has much greater significance for females that for males in the decision to run for public office, suggesting that females must defend, both internally and externally, their decision to seek election. Reliance on connection power would suggest that the female candidate has to seek the approval of domestic constituency before approaching a public constituency. Concern about financial security of the family also suggests that females might be more inclined to share ownership of domestic financial resources; whereas, males might consider financial decisions a singular domain. The significance to females of reports of sex discrimination in office implies that females believe in their own ability to overcome or ignore this type of discrimination should they win election to office. However, the significance of the item fully supports Bem's (1983) claim that sex-typing exists and that those who are sex-typed organize their self-concepts and behaviors on the basis of gender. Troubling, however, is the notion that connective power could be perceived as a less direct, less masculine, form of power, thus consigning elected females to lower status roles in elected office.

Females differed significantly from males in not one, but three, sources of interpersonal power. There was substantial resistance by some female respondents to complete the Power Perception Profile, perhaps due to the perception of power as a negative to females. In addition to the sex differences in scores for connective power, other findings from the power styles support that gender schema is applicable to the use of influence and how the

sexes perceive themselves. While elected officials generally did not rank themselves as coercive, female officeholders were significantly less likely than males to view coercive power as an option. This would again support the existence of strong sex-typing in the population, where coercion, though universally distasteful, is considered unacceptable behavior for females. Males were also significantly more like to rely on their expert power than were females, although both groups rated themselves high in this type of power. The implication from the findings is not that female elected officials lack information, but that they seek validation for using their information. Females rely on their connections to achieve both validity and compliance; whereas, males rely more on the respect achieved by their expert status. Applying gender schema theory, connection power is more likely to manifest itself in groups where validity or respect is marginal. This offers some explanation for the higher percentage of females in municipal elected offices, where personal knowledge of the candidate is more common and grassroots campaigns are formed from social networks. The power scores indicate that females are heavily reliant on family and social network for encouragement and support in the campaign for public office, further revealing that females develop relationships that are fundamental to their aspirations. As a function of gender schema, this behavior would be the result of both personal preference and the culture's influence.

Further research into the influence of regionalism and class on interpersonal power is needed. While class items were not measured in detail in this research, findings suggest that the elected officials who responded to this survey were predominantly of one class. Structural access to candidacy is potentially limited by access to class items, such as education, including specific institutions that may offer greater access to powerful social networks.

8.0 Implications of the Research

Possible approaches for increasing the number of women in political office, utilizing the inherent or developed qualities of connection power prevalent in females include: (1) increasing female caucusing opportunities in elected offices; (2) creating mentor programs targeted toward women's political participation; and, (3) developing long-term, public efforts to recruit and support female candidates by political parties.

The research implies that females, more than males, consider the opinions of a network of individuals, particularly in the domestic arena, when deciding to run for political office. This networking, while it offers a conduit for connection power, also tends to reinforce the perceived negative aspects of running a campaign for females, even more so for those with minor children. Social network may well serve as both the chief cultural support and the main cultural deterrent to women's involvement as political candidates. 📖

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