

The Utah State Senate: Effects of Tokenism and Implications for Future Gender Parity

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During the 2002 legislative session, women held twenty-one percent of the Utah State Senate seats. This percentage fits within Kanter's (1977) definition of a skewed group and thus opens the Senate to examination using her framework of tokenism. To investigate tokenism in relation to the Senate, I conducted in-depth interviews with five of the six female senators. After analyzing the interview tapes and notes, I found evidence of tokenism, specifically role entrapment. With further examination of the evidence using Kanter, Sapiro's (1990) concept of gender consciousness and Yoder's (1991) criticism of tokenism, I concluded that there was strong evidence of tokenism in the Utah State Senate as well as varying degrees of gender consciousness. Despite evidence in support of Kanter, I agree with Yoder's criticism that Kanter's proposed solution to the problems associated with tokenism is insufficient. Simply increasing the number of the token group, women in this case, will not address cultural bias. To adequately address the systemic and cultural sexism present, women and men must develop gender consciousness, recognize the inherent inequalities in the current political system, and collectively pursue the recruitment and development of women within political party structures and within electoral politics. Gender parity will only be reached in the Utah State Legislature when the barriers associated with tokenism are addressed and the development of gender consciousness occurs.

INTRODUCTION

At the conclusion of the 2002 General Session, the Utah State Senate was composed of twenty-three men and six women; seventy-nine percent of the body was male and twenty-one percent female. Four of the six women were members of the Democratic caucus, which only holds thirty-one percent of the Senate (nine of twenty-nine). This dismal picture for gender parity and equal female participation in the legislative process is worth exploration to better understand current power and gender dynamics and to improve future action to increase female participation in the state legislature.

Kanter's (1977) tokenism theory will be utilized in this paper to explore the obstacles facing the six female senators. According to tokenism theory, the female senators face formidable obstacles in fulfilling their duties as legislators

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because of their numerical insignificance and forced one-dimensional gender roles. Kanter argues that women in "skewed" groups (groups where the minority is less than twenty percent of the overall group) face three perceptual phenomena from the dominant group, male senators, which will greatly affect their success as legislators. The first is heightened visibility, where the female senators hold a disproportionate amount of attention compared to the male members of the body. The second is polarization, where the female senators' differences and deviations from the male-defined norms are highlighted and exaggerated. Third is assimilation, where the female senators' attributes are perceptually distorted in order to fit existing generalizations about women.

I will spend most of the analysis focusing on the third perceptual phenomena, assimilation. A key component of assimilation is role entrapment, where women's characteristics are used to pigeon hole them into one of four stereotypical roles. These roles limit women's abilities to network and succeed in the specified environment.

I will argue that Kanter's tokenism does apply to the power dynamics of the Utah State Senate. I will discuss interviews with the current female senators, which exemplify the role entrapment faced by these elected officials and their attempts to use those roles to create and sustain power.

In what follows, I will discuss the tokenism theory, emphasizing the role entrapment component. I will discuss gender consciousness and its impact upon the issues presented within tokenism. Then, I will test the tokenism theory in light of interviews with five of the six female senators and their committee assignments and responsibilities. The implications of these roles in terms of future advancement, the expansion of female presence in the state legislature, and the limitations of this study will then conclude the paper.

TOKENISM AND ROLE ENTRAPMENT

In her generalized theory, Kanter (1977) argues that proportions (i.e. relative numbers of different people within a group) are fundamentally important to understanding group interaction. She studied a small group of female managers in a large corporate company. The women were a relatively new edition in the managerial level of the studied company. From extensive interviews, observation, and previous studies on related subject matter, Kanter proposed the following general assertions.

Group ratios shape the manner in which individuals interact with one another and perceive one another. The type of group most explored is a “skewed” group, one in which there is a sizable preponderance of one type of group member over another. Skewed groups are generally made up of a large “dominant” group (eighty percent or more) and a “token” group (twenty percent or less).

Tokens, members of the minority group, are “people identified by ascribed characteristics or other characteristics that carry with them a set of assumptions about culture, status, and behavior that is highly salient for majority category members” (1977, p. 968). Tokens can be members of a minority ethnic or racial group compared to the dominant group; they can be members of a minority religious or cultural group; they can be women or men in a group dominated by the opposite sex.

Kanter argues that the tokens take on the role of representative for their entire social or cultural group, regardless of whether that role was desired. An example of this representative function is the hyphenated title: male-nurse, woman-senator, black-professor, etc. The person is never just their professional title, but rather a representative for his/her race, culture, or gender within that profession.

The effects of tokenism are heightened when the minority categorical difference is physically obvious and new or rare in the setting of the dominant group. Physically obvious distinctions can include gender, race, religious affiliation (if associated with specific dress), physical disability, or any other physical distinction. Newness or rareness is often associated with the initial minority entrance into a majority group. Kanter bases her study on a large industrial corporation, where women in sales jobs were new and rare in the mid 1970s. The workplace is not the only venue for this dynamic to occur. Any gathering place or stable group is bound to face

these issues if the group is largely or completely homogeneous. The first of a distinctly different minority to enter the group will face issues of tokenism.

There are three perceptual phenomena on the part of the dominant group in relationship to women as the token group. The first is surplus *visibility* within the group. Visibility is when all of the actions of the token are noticed and public. There is little to no ability on the part of the token to blend in, so every action is noted. If there are only two women in a group of fifty men, the actions of the women are far more likely to be noticed by the male members than the actions of the other men. Visibility is attached to the token’s representative function for her entire category. The actions of the individual women studied are then attributed to women in general. There is added pressure in terms of performance because the woman is not only acting on her own behalf, but she is perceived as acting as a “woman” would act.

Consequences of this heightened visibility are that women have to be conscious of all actions in regular settings because of the representational function, and they also have to work doubly hard to get noticed for their work achievement. Because so much attention is paid to their status as women, it is difficult to get their work noticed for its own merit. Women either became overachievers, striving for as much attention for work as possible, or socially invisible, where work was done in private and publicly minimized in order to avoid the heightened level of scrutiny.

The second perceptual phenomenon is *polarization*, where the dominant members become aware of the similarities and differences between them and the tokens and respond to this awareness with heightened boundaries. The boundaries are clarified and tokens are reminded of their outside status through interruptions to the group process, informal isolation, and loyalty tests.

Interruptions to the group process are when the group momentarily stops functioning to ask whether the token is okay or fully understands the process about to occur. An example of this is when a group has inside jokes or inside lingo that may or may not be appropriate in the eyes of the token. The dominant members ask the token if it is okay if they continue the standard process, putting the token clearly outside the group and forcing the token to either assert her difference by saying the process is not okay, or making the token approve something that may not necessarily be acceptable. Either way, the boundaries are clarified and the token is forced to acknowledge those boundaries.

Informal isolation is when “back room” deals or conversations occur because there are items that the dominant group does not or feels it cannot share with the tokens for fear of breaking down the established boundaries. Tokens are then left out of the informal decision making within the overall group.

Loyalty tests are used to promote dominant rule by forcing the token to be the gatekeeper for the overall group and, at times, to turn against her own social or cultural group to

gain acceptance by the dominant group. Tokens may be expected to be the source of jokes or to go along with jokes concerning their minority group, participate in prejudicial talk or action about their group, or laugh as others within the group are the target of jokes or prejudicial talk. The accepted token is "exceptional" compared to the engrained stereotypes.

The third perceptual phenomenon is that of *role entrapment*. Role entrapment is "the distortion of characteristics of tokens to fit preexisting generalizations about their category" (1977, 980-981). This is a product of the dominant group's tendency to try to assimilate the tokens into a perceptual framework based on one-dimensional stereotypes. Rather than change the mental category based on the actual person, the token is forced to fit into preexisting generalities.

For women in male-dominated workplaces, there are four identified roles in which women are perceptually trapped. These roles are based on over-simplified notions of gender categories that are more easily understood by the dominant group. The first of these roles is that of *mother*. The mother role is that of emotional support, sympathy, and domestic wisdom. Women in the mother role are perceived to be supportive, not independent or driven for personal success. They are rewarded for service to others, and discouraged from pursuing individual success. Mothers are supposed to stay supportive, non-critical, and upbeat. Mothers are identified almost solely with emotional tasks, so the men will provide the intellectual work while the mothers fulfill emotional needs.

The second trapping role is that of the *seductress*. She is a sexual object, a scarce commodity within the overall group. Even if she is not literally engaged sexually with any of the men in the group, she is still viewed as desirable and an opportunity for the man to play "protector." She is to be sexy, flirtatious, entertaining, and boosting to the men's egos. Her sexuality and the focus on her as a scarce resource makes it nearly impossible for this woman to have multiple male allies, and she is often branded as a sexual object, thereby alienating her from other women.

The third trapping role is that of the *pet*. The pet is the cute, amusing cheerleader for the overall group. Her role is to be a "symbolic mascot," providing cheers for instances of male prowess and achievement. The pet is surprising when she shows competency or skills beyond being cute or charming. She is given extra attention for moments when she shows unexpected knowledge or expertise. This role is trapping because it greatly diminishes the likelihood of a woman exploring or achieving recognition for her competency and skill potential.

The last trapping role examined is that of the *iron maiden* (crudely known as the bitch). This is the strong woman role, where a woman who is assertive and who will not play the other roles is seen as dangerous and threatening. If a woman insists on full participatory rights within the male-dominated group, she is seen as someone who could threaten the makeup and function of the group. She is kept at a dis-

tance and treated with exaggerated politeness. Terms like "women's libber" and "femi-nazi" are used on women who are perceived to play this role. Iron maidens demand rights and access that have either never or rarely been asserted in the past.

Some results of the role entrapment are that women are forced to play roles that may not fit well, but are easier and less trouble to play than redefining the gendered work roles. Women maintain greater comfort and job security if the roles are played than if challenged, because some access is still guaranteed, even if on unfavorable terms. Lastly, women are often forced to distort themselves in order to maintain their positions, at the expense of a higher stress level, diminished self worth, and frustration with a system ill equipped to fully include them.

Kanter's study concludes with her solution to the problems faced by a token group. She proposes that when enough of the token group is added to the larger group, the effects of tokenism will diminish because the newness, rareness, and stereotypes will break down in light of more exposure to the token. The role entrapment will not hold up to scrutiny once enough men, or members of the dominant group more generally, are regularly in professional contact with enough women, or tokens.

GENDER CONSCIOUSNESS

Another important theoretical component to this study is gender consciousness. A woman's political identity and understanding fundamentally shape her action or inaction within the political sphere. The woman's own perspective compared to the imposed gender stereotypes and expectations will determine much of her action in terms of other women and working toward gender parity.

Sapiro delineated the development and importance of women developing a "gender consciousness," which is partially defined as "a politicized form of social identity" (1990, 268). Gender consciousness, having a collective identity as women within the political sphere, is key to women gaining political power and equal access to the democratic process. The foundation for gender consciousness is an awareness of collective identity and an awareness of the inequalities faced by that collective, women. Then, based on strength of that consciousness, women are able to create coalitions, garner support from others, and translate that consciousness into political action that benefits that collective. An example of such action is electing women and female-friendly candidates, making women more prominent within party power structures, and using women's money to support those favorable to the collective's advancement.

Women who possess gender consciousness not only view themselves as members of this collective, but they see the problems faced by all women as theirs to address and act upon. Gender consciousness allows one to see the sources of

inequality and disparity as more than merely personal failing or inadequacy, but rather originating in systemic and cultural sexism. This consciousness allows one to see the answers to systemic and cultural bias as resultantly collective as well. Gender consciousness “implies a critique” of the surrounding environment and an acknowledgement that subordination based on sex exists in contemporary society. According to Sapiro, many women never gain gender consciousness, and the inequalities experienced rarely translate into mass political action.

To gain gender consciousness, one must have enough autonomy and critical orientation to separate from the power structure to reformulate an identity not blindly tied to the powerful. An example of this is when a young woman has the education and physical space to critically examine the society in which she resides – common places for this to occur are college or the workplace. When a woman is old enough to think for herself and given the space to do so, gender consciousness is far more likely to result because there is likely to be a realization that women hold significantly less power and resources than men in this society. There must be the realization that that specific woman and women in general are harmed by this gender inequality.

Two situations create more opportunity for the formulation of gender consciousness. The first is the presence of a women’s movement. If new and progressive ideas about women and their place in society are circulating through the media and social groups, it is far more likely that women will discuss and think about issues fundamental to gender consciousness. The second is regular interaction of women in the absence of men. Groups solely comprised of women allow women to hold power positions, converse with other women about their life experiences, and allow for the building of coalitions and networks of support. Through these two situations, women are allowed to wrestle with and create their own gender identity within society and to gain allies in that newly formed identity. There is collective identity and support.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Utah became a state in 1896. The legislative branch of the state government was modeled after the United States’ example, thereby designating two separate yet equal bodies, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Senate is composed of twenty-nine members; the House has seventy-five.

Since 1979, there has been at least one female member of the Utah State Senate (Center for American Women in Politics, 2002b). Spikes in female numbers were in 1991 and 1992, when there were three female senators; in 1999 and 2000, there were four female senators; in 2001, where there were five female senators; lastly, in 2002, there were six female senators. Six is the highest number of female senators in Utah history.

Compared to other states, Utah currently ranks twenty-third in terms of female representation, with women holding

twenty-one percent of the senate seats (Center for American Women in Politics, 2002a). The top state in terms of female representation is Washington, with thirty-nine percent. Females are approximately fifty-one percent of the general population nationwide.

In terms of party affiliation, Utah is heavily Republican. Twenty of the twenty-nine state senators are Republican, controlling sixty-nine percent of the Senate. Two of the twenty are women; meaning ten percent of the caucus is female. The other nine senators are Democrats. Four of the nine Democrats are women, thereby making women forty-four percent of the Democratic caucus.

In terms of gender and party representation, the case is similar in the Utah State House of Representatives. Eighty percent of the body is male (fifty-seven of seventy-five seats). Sixty-four percent of the body is Republican (fifty-one of seventy-five seats); thirty-six percent is Democrat. Women are seventeen percent of the Republican caucus (nine of fifty-one). Women are thirty-three percent of the Democratic caucus (nine of twenty-seven).

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA IN RELATION TO KANTER’S TOKENISM

In this section, the major concepts from Kanter’s theory of tokenism are explored them in light of the interviews with five of the six female senators. Where appropriate, I will discuss issues of consciousness related to Kanter’s tokenism.

The first perceptual phenomenon in Kanter’s theory is surplus visibility, where all actions taken by the token are public and noticed. There is little ability to blend in with the larger group. This concept is then tied to the representational function the token serves for the token’s group at large. There was evidence of this phenomenon in every interview.

Democratic Sen. Paula Julander (2002) discussed her first campaign, where she was the first woman to run against an incumbent woman for a seat in the State House of Representatives. Because this was a new situation in Utah politics, and women were (and still are) relatively few compared to men, Sen. Julander felt that her electoral race received greater attention than other legislative races that year. There was a divide among women in terms of support of her candidacy. Sen. Julander is a moderate Democrat from a moderate/liberal urban district. Her opponent was a moderate Republican who had held the seat for eight years. Sen. Julander felt that party affiliation and policy stance were more important than supporting a candidate just because she was a woman. She got feedback from some women that running against another woman was a bad idea because there were so few women in office as it was. More women, though, came to Sen. Julander to offer support of her campaign because they felt that if women were going to be equal participants in the political process, women needed to get used to the idea of competing against one another. Sen. Julander won the race by a small margin.

Within the Senate itself, there were also examples discussed of this heightened visibility. Democratic Sen. Millie Peterson (2002), who has been in the Senate since 1990, served for several years as the only woman in the entire body. She described sections of the nineties as “lonely” years. Though she felt respected and competent, she expressed that it was clear that she was “different.” The difference was not specified during the interview.

Sen. Beverly Evans, who served as the only Republican woman from 1998 until 2000, described caucus meetings where she was looked at differently. Sen. Evans played the “woman’s representative” during a 1999 debate over a bill which would require insurance companies to equally cover birth control pills compared to covered male sexual enhancers, like Viagra. Sen. Julander (D) sponsored the “pill bill,” and garnered enough support to bring the bill to the Senate floor. On the third reading, the final vote for passage, Sen. Evans passed the first go round. At the conclusion of the first round of voting the body was tied, fourteen in favor and fourteen opposed. Sen. Evans was the tiebreaker. She describes waiting to vote last as a rookie mistake. She had supported the bill on second reading, but decided to oppose it on the third. That one vote got her more attention than almost anything else done that year. She was the only Republican woman in the Senate, and she had voted against a bill perceived as largely a woman’s issue. Her vote gave opponents of the bill leverage in arguing that it was not really a woman’s issue because this important woman in a decision-making capacity had killed the legislation. Sen. Julander has brought the bill every year since, but it hasn’t been heard in committee or on the floor.

The second component to the representational function of heightened visibility is that of notice of work quality and quantity. Kanter argues that women have to work doubly hard to be recognized, and that this would either push a woman to become an overachiever or socially invisible. I asked each of the senators whether they thought they had to work harder than their male counterparts. Four of the five said a definitive “yes.”

Sen. Peterson (D) likened her need to work harder than male senators to the work expectations of new female doctors. Both the female doctors and senators needed to prove that were not weak and that they were extremely competent in these demanding positions. She also emphasized that women had to really prove themselves in areas outside of traditional women’s issues. This was difficult, but once accomplished it garnered a woman greater leverage and respect among the male senators than women who focused on education and human services.

Sen. Evans and Sen. Carlene Walker (2002), the two Republican female senators, both emphasized throughout their interviews the need for women to have expertise in a broad array of issues and to get beyond education and human services as their sole focus. They both discussed the fact that though those issues are of great importance, women gain more

respect and are able to be more representative of their districts rather than women in general when they carry issues that are less culturally gendered. Sen. Evans is an expert on property rights and natural resource issues because she represents a large, mostly rural district. If she does not have a firm grasp of water rights, for example, she would lose a sizable portion of her support base.

Sen. Karen Hale (2002), a moderate Democrat, did not think she had to work harder than her male counterparts. She thought that every senator had to work very hard and that it was impossible to gauge who was working harder.

The fact that four of the five senators, ranging widely in time spent in the senate, political ideology, and life experience, all identified and had personally addressed the issue of heightened visibility leads one to accept the reality of this aspect of tokenism within the Utah State Senate. Each senator had individually come to the conclusion that they were more visible in this visible body, and that visibility demanded greater work output in order for the female senators to maintain their positions and make political progress.

The heightened visibility also forced these senators to more carefully request their committee assignments from the Senate President because of the symbolic significance of those positions. Though any one of them could have run on an “education first” platform (and many did), once in the Senate it could more greatly benefit them to be on a less “womanly” committee, like transportation or natural resources.

Each one of the senators exhibited gender consciousness in this portion of the study. They are aware that gender matters and act upon a clear understanding that their actions affect the way other women are seen and treated in more general society. They also realize that in order for women, as a collective, to make progress toward greater equality, individual legislators needed to buck the stereotypes and establish credibility beyond traditional women’s issues.

Senator Hale’s departure from the general consensus is significant in that her sense of heightened visibility is not attributed to being a woman senator, but rather to being a senator in general. She has a more egalitarian understanding of the body in that her perception has led her to see everyone’s work output as equal. She does not sense a great divide between the scrutiny and assumptions made about her committee positions and those of her colleagues. It may be important to note that Sen. Hale is the youngest of the female senators, leading her to possibly having a more egalitarian perception of society in general. The sexism and struggles that her more senior colleagues have faced may have colored their perception. Moreover, the lesser degree to which she has faced these barriers in life may be a key component to understanding her departure on this aspect of tokenism. Further interviews of both Senator Hale and her male colleagues about these perceptions would shed greater light on heightened visibility.

Senator Hale’s level of gender consciousness is not clear from this section of the interview, although it appears to be

different from the other senators. This could be because of lower level of awareness, which seems unlikely in light of her other work and positions, or because in the particular arena of the senate there is not an inequality that she perceives compared to other areas.

The second perceptual phenomenon is *polarization*, where the majority group becomes aware of the similarities and difference between themselves and the token group and responds with heightened boundaries. The three types of this boundary heightening are interruptions to the group process, informal isolation, and loyalty tests.

There was clear evidence of interruptions to the group process and loyalty tests. Sen. Evans (R) describes moments within her caucus where the male members told inappropriate jokes or made potentially questionable remarks, and she either ignored them or told a joke back. This enabled her to stay inside the circle, and gained her acceptance to the overall group process. She also described how early in her senate career there were moments when conversations with her peers were halted briefly to ask her permission to progress. She talked about how even simple issues like movies elicited a gendered response, and her ability to not be offended by the commentary allowed her to then have an opinion after the conversation lagged. She was not offended by any of this process, and analyzed it by saying that men and women are “just different,” and that this was one example of gender differences.

Sen. Evans (R) had passed key loyalty tests by being a friendly member of the caucus. She counted it a great compliment when someone came into the caucus lunch for bill discussion and paused, when talking about a gender sensitive issue (issue not specified during interview), nodding in her direction; one of her male counterparts said not to worry about her because she was just “one of us.”

Sen. Walker (R), on the other hand, did not see or describe any of the manifestations of this phenomenon. She said she had been treated like an equal and that she did not perceive any gender differentiation in terms of substantive issues. She, too, asserted the fundamental differences between men and women. She said that men and women think and behave differently, and that an understanding of this difference was necessary to be an effective legislator in a body of mostly men.

Sen. Hale (D), who did not believe that women had to work any harder than their male counterparts, did see differences in the way she was treated by her caucus leadership. She felt that though it was unconscious, her opinion and input was not sought out. She felt that she had to be more assertive and vocal about her position in order to get equal time with the male leadership of the Democratic caucus. She had to cause an interruption to the group process in order to be fully participatory. She attributed some of this to a difference in social and conversational behavior. She did not share the same pastimes as her male counterparts, and she felt that

bringing informal conversation to a formal level for the purposes of strategizing sometimes alienated her from her caucus and their informal bonding.

Polarization based on gender within the senate was present in most of the interviews. The degree to which the senators sensed this aspect of tokenism was far less than the sense of heightened visibility in almost every interview. Though the senators all had a clear position on whether women were more visible and had to work harder, the sense that there was a social and conversational divide was far less defined. Senator Evans (R) most clearly discussed this aspect of tokenism. Her understanding that getting along with and being accepted by her male colleagues was clear. She knew that a friendly casual relationship was key to sustaining her position in the Senate and the Republican caucus.

Senator Hale (D) also exhibited a more refined sense of this aspect of tokenism. The fact that she realized she needed to be part of less formal interaction, while feeling alienated because her pastimes are significantly different than her caucus leadership, showed how important casual conversation is to coalition building and access to power sharing in an elected body. Her realization that she has to be more assertive and become more engaged in caucus conversation shows the level to which these women, specifically Democrats, have to be aware and act upon this divide. Otherwise, their ability to maintain position and progress is limited or eliminated.

The fact that this aspect was less clear in the other interviews in no way means it is less powerful or present in the Senate than heightened visibility. This aspect of tokenism may be more insidious and subtle than most assumed, thereby making it more detrimental to female senators because it is not discussed the way level of work production is. It is easier to see who writes more letters, spends more time in meetings, and is connected to community groups than who is friendly and part of the “in” crowd within the body. To further explore this aspect of polarization, more interviews about the social nature of the body, including who socializes informally with whom and how often, would have to be completed. Observation of the body both in session and especially during breaks would also provide more evidence. If male senators golf and share meals only with other male senators, then there may be more concrete evidence of this more subtle aspect.

Gender consciousness in regards to polarization is critical. When elected women have a heightened level of gender consciousness, there is a clear awareness of the subtle entrapments associated with polarization. When gender consciousness is less developed, these entrapments may be seen as innocuous. Senator Hale (D) is a good example of a heightened level of awareness of this aspect of tokenism; she not only sees clear examples of this separation going on, she has determined the best means for addressing that polarization by using her voice and asserting her equality. Senator Evans (R) is a good example of the internal negotiation that accompanies a heightened level of gender consciousness. She has

learned how and has been successful in becoming an accepted member of her caucus by choosing her battles. She simply listens to gender based jokes and stories when they are of minor concern to her. When she feels a response is necessary or that the talk is greatly offensive, she steps aside with the person in question and expresses her position. She reports being successful in eliminating talk that goes beyond her own comfort level while maintaining her position within the caucus.

The third perceptual phenomenon is that of *role entrapment*, where the dominant group distorts the characteristics of the tokens in order to fit them into one-dimensional pre-existing stereotypes. The four roles are that of the mother, the seductress, the pet, and the iron maiden.

There was abundant discussion of the “woman as mother” within every interview. Gender and functional definition centered on the notion that because women are and can be mothers, they are fundamentally different than men. Now, none of the female senators in any way implied that that made them subordinate or weak, but they each gained identity and strength from the notion of distinct difference. Words like “nurturing” and “caring” peppered discussions surrounding these issues.

Sen. Peterson (D), who is not married and does not have children, did make the distinction discussed above. She saw the differences between men and women as mainly natural and inherent. She is a social worker by profession, and thusly plays a “motherly” role in the public sphere.

Sen. Hale (D), who is a mother of children ranging from grade school age to college age, discussed how that vantage point allowed her a unique perspective into the lives of young families. It is a defining role in her life. Her legislative priorities are those that center on children’s lives – education, health care, and public safety. She judges the effectiveness of the government by how it treats children. Her previous work experience was that of an editor of a parenting magazine. The role of mother fits quite easily.

Sen. Julander (D) is a nurse and has spent a goodly portion of her legislative career working on health care and higher education issues. She is branded as a “woman’s” senator because of her work on the pill bill and her pro-choice stance. She gains credibility by positioning herself as a mother and grandmother. She also discussed the differences between men and women as “inherent,” but in addition she discussed the cultural implications of gender. She described the choices she and her sisters had as children. They could become teachers, nurses, clerical workers, or homemakers. Sen. Julander stressed to me that the choices women have now are much broader than those she and her contemporaries had.

Sen. Walker (R) is a mother and grandmother with professional experience as a real estate agent. She talked about the differences between men and women in terms of the book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Women and men inherently think, feel and communicate differently. She viewed this as strength and stressed that she liked being a woman, she did not want to become a man in the legislature.

Motherly qualities like caring and compassion were important in her self-definition. She also stressed that her business experience made her a better legislator because she was able to speak the language of her male counterparts while maintaining her femininity.

Sen. Evans (R) is a mother and grandmother, and she is a professional educator in the applied technology field. She represents a mostly rural area where women with college educations are fewer than in more urban areas. She described at length how her roles as a mother and wife cooled many voters’ initial reactions to her. She had to overcome the notion that a caring and pleasant woman could represent the complicated issues facing the population of northeastern Utah. She did this by becoming an expert on water, gas, mining, and property rights issues in her area. She proved her knowledge at debates and public meetings, and was able to overcome the low expectations of being a family woman.

It is in Sen. Evans’ case that the entrapping nature of being branded a mother is most clear. She has a Masters degree and extensive work experience in her community. Yet, the first and most difficult hurdle for her in both the campaigning and legislative processes was the expectation that a motherly type could not handle the complexities of public service. Qualities hailed in the private sphere as good and community building are then seen as weak and threatening in the public sphere. Sen. Evans was able to overcome these low expectations by putting up with jokes and sometimes inappropriate comments. She was proud of the fact that when really bothered, she was able to pull the member aside that offended her and explain why it was bothersome. She said that the comments and jokes have dissipated as the years have passed. She attributes this to her quiet style and hard working attitude.

In the other senators’ cases, the entrapping and limiting nature of this brand is less clear. Every one of these women is proud of her abilities in both the domestic and public spheres. These experiences were used publicly and prominently during the campaigns, thereby lending credibility to the notion that playing off of the assumptions of women’s innate compassion and nurturing is a political advantage in getting elected.

Once in the Senate, however, it is questionable how much a female senator wants to focus on motherly experiences because this may limit her ability to address other important policy issues. Care-taking can be equated with weakness, and if women are perceived as motherly and then act otherwise (assertively, independently, or intelligently) they may be shunned for breaking expectations. Two of the senators interviewed described instances early in their senate experiences where the more senior male members of the their respective caucuses drew boundaries on this issue. The male senators used their experience with a former female senator as a lesson on acceptable behavior within the body. She was a “single issue” senator, only focusing on legislation directly related to children. She used her position as a mother as her basis for expertise on said legislation. She was described as

emotional and single minded. She cried during debates and floor speeches. The male members of the caucus then used her as an example of how to become “ineffective” because she acted too stereotypically weak. They appeared to want the female members of their caucuses to be publicly articulate and not too emotional.

The second role entrapment type is that of the *seductress*, where the woman is a sexual object, a scarce commodity, and an opportunity for displays of male protection and sexual prowess. There was no evidence of this role in any of the conversations with the female senators. This does not mean that it doesn't occur within the Senate, but it may not occur with the female senators. I speculate that if it is a reality, it may happen with female staff, interns, or possibly another subordinate group. To determine whether it is a reality, observation of a legislative session and interviews with these women would be necessary.

The third role entrapment type is that of the *pet*; where the woman is a cute cheerleader for the overall group, a symbolic mascot for male accomplishment. There were traces of this role, but to really determine whether it is a reality, substantial observation would be necessary. When I interned, I remember cases of women cheering for or loudly gaining extra attention for group accomplishment. I also remember female members bringing in treats on special days for male senators. When discussing these activities, none of the female senators seemed to see themselves or feel that this perception was placed upon them. I once again wonder if this role is played to some degree by the staff and interns, or if the female senators are not conscious of this role.

The last role is that of the *iron maiden* (the bitch), where the woman asserts full participatory rights and refuses to play the other roles presented. I think all of the women I interviewed felt that the other roles do not fit them and that they demand equal respect from their male colleagues. Yet, none of them would consider themselves iron maidens. They all stressed that they needed to get along with the other senators in order to propel their own agendas. This is where observation of the session and interviews with their male colleagues is necessary to fully answer whether this role is a reality. Claiming the mother role or even the pet role is fairly safe because it is non-threatening to the hierarchy or established norms. The seductress, if played by a subordinate, frees the female senators from dealing with sexual objectification.

The iron maiden/bitch role is powerful in that it is intimidating to the general populace, but it is ultimately the most isolating and disempowering in an elected body. Elected officials need to create and maintain a power base within and outside of the body in order to be effective leaders. When placed in the bitch category, a female official challenges the norms by which everyone else in the body has risen to power and maintained position. She asserts that a different way is needed and proper, thereby making the current structure seem

flawed. Making one's colleagues seem flawed and part of a discriminatory system does not curry favor or build working coalitions.

Role entrapment is a reality, to a degree, in the Utah State Senate. Each of the female senators has directly confronted issues of forced one-dimensional perception by other senators, lobbyists, and staff. The degree to which this is limiting the senators is complicated by a host of other factors, including the female senators' personalities and expertise, their districts, and the perceptual limitations of their male colleagues and others. It is clear, though, that the female senators have hurdles to overcome in order to gain ground with those involved in legislative politics. These roles are far easier to project on the senators than viewing them as individuals. Their male colleagues, on the other hand, generally have the opportunity to be individuals and more easily create success based on their qualifications because they are not saddled with the same stagnant stereotypes. The underlying assumption appears to be that being a senator is naturally male, so the female senators are exceptions to this cultural rule.

Kanter's proposed solution to tokenism is to increase the number of the token group to the point where the stereotypes disintegrate in the face of three-dimensional reality. The five senators interviewed agreed that more women were needed to balance the power dynamic in the Utah State Senate. They each said that women's perspectives were needed to more fully represent the general community. They also stressed that the fraternal nature of the body took time to get over, meaning the first session was often the hardest because of the newness of position and the hurdles to overcome in fulfilling the position. They believed that the more women elected to the body, the less intimidation and difficulty would be present for new female senators.

A greater development of gender consciousness among the senators is another component necessary to creating a more egalitarian legislative body. The fact that every one of these officials experienced one or more of the aspects of tokenism within their legislative experience leads one to conclude that a heightened level of sharing their struggles is essential to creating the environment where they can dismantle the stereotypes they all face and support each other in the pursuit of a more egalitarian body and politic.

SUMMARY AND LIMITATIONS

In summary, there was evidence of all major aspects of tokenism in this study, though to varying degrees. Five of five senators interviewed clearly identified manifestations of surplus visibility. Four of five believed they worked harder than their male colleagues. Evidence of the second aspect of tokenism, polarization, was not as strong as surplus visibility, but it was convincing. There was specific discussion of loyalty tests, interruptions to the groups process, and boundaries between the “in” and “out” groups. Evidence of the third

aspect of tokenism, role entrapment, was very strong in terms of the mother role.

Every senator discussed and exhibited specific characteristics and encountered barriers in relation to this entrapment. Though they each defined and specified motherly aspects of their lives as positive, the barriers Kanter discusses are still a real threat to the maintenance and attainment of power within the legislature. Even if these senators actively chose to be branded as mothers, the positives in terms of getting elected must then be weighed against the limitations of being a "mother" once in office. It could mean being placed on traditionally female committees and being separated from other pressing policy debates. Observation and interviews with other key players is necessary to further explore the complexity of this role.

The other three roles – the pet, seductress, and iron maiden – were not as clearly exhibited in the interviews, but further study is necessary to determine the degree to which these are a reality.

The methodology used in this study was very useful in collecting and understanding the perceptions and knowledge of the currently elected female members of the Senate. The study of this group is key to understanding how to select and get more women elected in this political environment. The women interviewed have been able to create coalitions of support, financial backing, and been able to sustain enough power to maintain office. This study also gave ample evidence for testing Kanter's tokenism in a new setting. The barriers specified in tokenism combined with the unique nature of an elected body open a new discussion about the role of women in this democratic republic.

The methodology used in this study also presents some limitations. Further interviews of others involved are necessary to better understand gender relations in the state legislature. By only interviewing the female senators, I only had access to their perceptions and experiences. The next step in analyzing this body in relation to tokenism is to broaden the group of interviewees to include the male senators, staff people, and key lobbyists. Then one would be able to draw more multi-faceted conclusions about tokenism generally and role entrapment specifically.

After assessing the evidentiary strength in relation to Kanter's tokenism and Sapiro's concept of gender consciousness, it is clear that there is support for the contention that gender based tokenism is a reality in the Utah State Senate. The level of individual consciousness of tokenism and the related barriers varies among the senators, but the need for a heightened collective consciousness is clear.

DISCUSSION

Kanter's theory was crafted during the height of affirmative action in the United States. Numerical changes seemed to be the answer to furthering gender equality. In light of the Utah

State Senate in 2002, I think it is necessary to stress the fact that a doubling of the number of women in the last four years has not markedly changed the stereotypes women in elected office face.

Yoder (1991) criticized Kanter on the basis that Kanter ignored and minimized the real effects of sexism. Simply raising the number of a minority group within a larger group cannot, by itself, eliminate cultural assumptions and constructions. I agree with her criticism. Simply increasing the number of women in the legislature does not change the fact that women are generally expected to fill certain constricted roles. A reeducation and society-wide open discussion is necessary if the effects of sexism in general and tokenism specifically are to ever be substantially addressed.

In terms of the mother role, women are faced with a difficult choice. The legitimacy of a mother's perspective within policy discussion is, to a certain degree, needed and important. However, relying on that for most of one's credibility on certain issues, like education and health care, diminishes women's capacities to be part of the debate in more than an emotional manner. The rub is that playing the mother "sells." Many voters are drawn to successful women who are softened by their domestic roles. Using that branding to get into office can then limit one once in office.

Kanter's roles fit the evidence in that it is clear that most women in Utah recognize these easily and see themselves in some relationship with these roles. Kanter's theory does not fit the legislature in that people have to play a representative role in elected office. Individuation and pursuing individual success in a business is perfectly acceptable and necessary in a capitalistic economy. These are not, however, primary or positive goals within an elected body. Individuals can gain prominence or notoriety, but you still need the support of your colleagues in order to further your policy agenda and challenge opposing viewpoints. The other issue is that elected officials represent many people; playing off of cultural expectations is sometimes warranted and demanded by constituents.

The overlap of gender and party affiliation is another important component of this study that Kanter's study does not adequately address. Though the number of women has increased a great deal in the last four years, most of the gains have been in the minority political party. There are so few Democrats in the Senate (nine of twenty-nine) that one could argue that the Democrats are a token group within the overall body. This means that the majority of women in the Senate have a decreased power share because of both their gender and their party affiliation. The power of the two Republican women, however, may be increased on issues related to gender because two people speak for half of the population while eighteen people speak for the other half. In many cases it may be assumed that party affiliation transcends gender in voting decisions, meaning that Democratic women may have tough time getting their agendas furthered simply because they are members of the minority party.

Overall, Kanter's tokenism is a useful framework to use in understanding gender power dynamics in the Utah State Senate. Kanter's proposed solution, simply increasing the number of women in the organization, does not adequately address the complexity of gender bias and systemic sexism. Yoder's criticism is justified and appropriate in this setting. Changing general perceptions about women's capabilities and diversity is critical. An important aspect of that societal shift must be a development of gender consciousness among women primarily. That development will aid in the collective efforts necessary to increase the number of female candidates, campaign workers, and political party office holders. A further development of gender consciousness among those currently in power will allow those officials to better understand the setting in which they are working and to avoid subconscious self-blame for difficulties actually related to gender-based barriers. Then, the officials can seize the opportunities for change and work more collectively to expand female presence within the legislature.

LONG TERM IMPLICATIONS

Utah fares slightly better than most states in terms of gender parity. Twenty-one percent is hardly a number to be overly excited about, though. When fifty-one percent of the population can only attain one-fifth of elected offices, there is clearly an inequality occurring. Using Kanter's tokenism and Yoder's criticism, one can see that cultural constructions and stereotypes limit the access that women have to this powerful decision-making body.

When applying Sapiro's concept of gender consciousness, it is clear that a heightened level of gender consciousness is necessary if women in the Senate are going to be able to band together on issues of mutual importance. It is true that all-female coalitions are not always possible because the women in the body have distinct and sometimes contrary political views, but there are issues like educational funding and child protection that all of the senators interviewed generally agreed upon. They did not have the collective force in the body, though, to act as a unit for women.

In order to continue toward gender parity within the Utah State Legislature, it is necessary for both political parties to make recruiting and supporting female candidates a priority. This is especially apparent within the Republican Party. Women have a much better chance in a general election if they run as a Republican, considering the more favorable political climate. If the Republican Party made gender parity an issue of significance within its ranks, the numbers of women in the legislature would rise dramatically. If gender consciousness-raising occurred in a deliberate manner within the Utah GOP's ranks, more women would likely run for office and be involved with campaign work and leadership. The probable result of that assertion, though, is that because of its conservative agenda, women may have to play the

mother and pet role to a greater degree to get elected and to maintain favor within the party structure.

In order to continue toward gender parity, female candidates must be found and developed in both parties. Strong female candidates with well-developed gender consciousness can be found in largely or completely female groups. Examples include nurses' or teachers' groups, which are educated populations with a vastly female base. Women from these groups will likely have a greater sense of collective identity, greater access to leadership positions, and a specific economic stake in public policy. Groups with all or mostly female bases should be the first place party leaders look for viable candidates in upcoming elections. Additionally, a women's caucus or discussion group should be considered for those women already in office. It would aid in the development of a collective identity and a shared sense of place within the legislature.

Part of the solution to gender inequality in the Utah State Legislature is recognizing that it will take more than just increasing the number of women to decrease the perceptual barriers – it will take men and women defining gender more broadly and recognizing that ability exists within people in equally complex and promising ways. Entrapping roles will have to be consciously dismantled in order to allow women and men to be fully human in the public sphere.

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APPENDIX: METHODS

After assessing the numerical ratio between male and female elected officials in the Utah State Legislature, I determined that the legislature did, in fact, meet Kanter's specifications for a skewed group. With twenty-one percent of the body being female, the women potentially represented a token group. After contacting the six female officials, I then determined that interviewing the entire universe, all six senators, was a realistic possibility. Five interviews were completed; the sixth interview was not possible due to scheduling conflicts. Although interviewing all female legislators, senators and representatives, would give a fuller picture of female representation, time constraints made study of the Senate a more reasonable project.

I researched the background of each senator, paying special attention to education, profession, marital status, parental status, age, party affiliation, and district makeup. I then reviewed each senator's committee assignments and apparent policy priorities (Utah State Senate 2002).

I interviewed each senator individually. Each senator quickly agreed to an interview, once I got in touch with her. All interviews were held at the Utah State Capitol, save one that was held in a downtown restaurant. Privacy was maintained during each interview, with virtually no outside presence except the waiter at the restaurant and the occasional passerby. Each senator agreed to have the entire interview tape-recorded. There was no promise of anonymity. Each senator was told that the interview was for my Honors Thesis, which centered on women in elected office and the perceptions of their abilities and capabilities. The interviews varied in length, depending on schedule constraints. The longest interview was over two hours; the shortest approximately forty-five minutes.

I began each interview with a general background inquiry, such as how she got involved in political process or her first experiences with the legislature. From there, depending on the answer to the initial questions, I explored issues of equality, policy prioritization, her perception of herself in relation to the body at large, to constituents, and to lobbyists.

Because I have interned in the state senate, I am well acquainted with the parlance of the body. I was quickly able to build rapport with all interviewees. I stressed my position as a researcher to mitigate the effect of my known party affiliation. I focused on asking questions and probing the answers given rather than following a script (Glesne, 1999). This approach allows for a freer exchange and casual environment, where each of these senators felt that she could talk openly and teach me about her specific perspective.

I asked each senator if she thought she had to work harder than her male counterparts, if she had to prove herself in

ways different than her male counterparts, if she felt that she was seen differently than male senators, and if being a senator was different than what she expected. Each senator answered differently, accordingly very different follow-up questions were asked.

I am specifically interested in role entrapment, so whenever I heard words or sentiments that connected with Kanter's defined roles, I probed. When I heard about the perceived natural differences between women and men, I asked for clarification. When any of the senators connected their legislative experience with their domestic experience, I asked for examples. I never used Kanter's terms, but followed and used the same language provided by the interviewee. This allowed for rich extrapolation of some elements of role entrapment. Each senator led me through her perception of herself in relation to the body and the community at large. Though the words used were not always exactly the same, each woman exhibited clear understanding of the role expected of her.

I also paid careful attention to the awareness and consciousness exhibited by each senator. When there appeared to be a collective sense and intention for action to directly affect women, I took note. Each senator had a clear level of consciousness, but the level of that consciousness varied based upon subject matter discussed and personal contact with the barrier in question.

After each interview, I took careful notes from the tapes. I used the notes and the tapes to look for evidence that both supported and countered Kanter's theory. The results are striking.