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# Women's Issues and Their Fates in Congress

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## Abstract

Significant scholarship indicates that female legislators focus their attention on "women's issues" to a greater extent than do male lawmakers. Yet, women's issues have thus far been largely selected by scholars *ex ante*, often without comparison to other issues. We instead define women's issues in terms of those sponsored at a greater rate by women in Congress over a thirty-year period. This analysis reveals that most (but not all) of the classically considered women's issues are indeed raised at an enhanced rate by congresswomen. We then track the fate of those issues, demonstrating that the proposals of women (and their specific proposals on women's issues) achieve far less success than do those of men. We link the bias against women's issues to the committee process, and suggest pathways through which women's issues may gain more attention and legislative success in the future.

## Women's Issues and Their Fates in Congress

The last several decades have seen a significant rise in the number of women gaining

access to political institutions in the United States.  Since the early 1970s women have increased

their numbers in Congress by more than sixfold, and now hold 18% of the seats in the U.S.

House and 20% of the seats in the U.S. Senate.  While still far short of parity, the increase in

female representation has spurred many questions about what differences, if any, exist between

male and female legislators.

The scholarly literature that engages these questions has suggested that gender is an

important variable for explaining political behavior and legislative interactions in areas such as

leadership styles (Jewell and Whicker 1993, Rosenthal 1998), constituency service (Richardson

and Freeman 1995; Thomas 1992) and communication patterns in hearings (Kathlene 1994).  A

conclusion of much of this literature can be parsimoniously summarized by Jane Mansbridge

(2005, 622), who writes that "descriptive representation by gender improves substantive

outcomes for women in every polity for which we have a measure."

If the increasing numbers of women in Congress are to have a major policy impact,

however, certain conditions must be met.  First, women in Congress must have different goals or

agenda items than do men.  Second, women must be able to use their interest and expertise in

such "women's issues" to translate their proposals into law.  Third, women must help transform

the institution of Congress into one that is more open to and friendly toward women's issues.[1]

Whether these three conditions are met in Congress remains an open question, one which

we seek to address.  More specifically, we ask: are there issues that women in Congress dedicate

greater attention to than do men, and do these issues match the commonly labeled "women's

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[1] To an extent, these latter two conditions are substitutes.  For example, even if women are not highly successful on their own sponsored bills, if they convince men to address their issues at a greater rate, they are still making significant progress on behalf of women.

issues" from the scholarly literature?  On such women's issues, are the attention and expertise of women rewarded with a greater likelihood of their proposals becoming law?  And, is the institution of Congress as a whole biased in favor of (or against) the enactment of legislation on women's issues?  The collective answers to these three questions offer an overall assessment of the policy impact of women in Congress.

Moreover, the answer to each of the above questions helps advance the literature on women in legislatures.  For example, many scholars have argued and established that women introduce different bills than do men on particular issues deemed *ex ante* to be of interest to women.  Accordingly, the characterization of "women's issues" has varied substantially, depending on the scholar undertaking the analysis, which has led to scholars employing inconsistent methods to operationalize and define women's issues.  As a result, readers may come away from these literatures wondering, are women's issues those that have traditionally been associated with women or the "private" realm, such as healthcare, children, and education (e.g. Carroll 2001; Dodson and Carroll 1991; Reingold 2000; Saint-Germain 1989; Swers 2002a, 2002b, Swers and Larson 2005)?  Or are they those that have a direct and explicit impact on women, such as sexual discrimination and abortion (e.g. Barnello and Bratton 2007; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Reingold 2000; Saint-Germain 1989)?  Or are they those that are seen as salient to women's advocacy organizations or groups, such as the American Association of University Women (Burrell 1994; Frederick 2010, 2011; Swers 1998, 2002a; Swers 2005) and the Institute for Women's Policy Research (Caiazza 2004; Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009)?  Or are they those that are agreed upon by women across the aisle, as evidenced by prioritization in the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues (Dolan 1998; Swers 2005)?  Or are women's issues those that provide for feminist outcomes (e.g. Bratton 2005; Dodson 2001; MacDonald and

O'Brien 2011; Saint-Germain 1989; Swers 2002b)?[2]  This lack of consistency across definitions

may be problematic, potentially leading to selection biases and contradictory empirical research

findings.

Such concerns are particularly salient when considering the links between descriptive and

substantive representation in legislative policymaking.  Scholars have typically studied these

topics by tracking bill introductions and votes for a sample of bills that they designated *ex ante*

as "women's issue" bills.  Depending on what definition a scholar consults, then, the sample of

bills that deal with women's issues can vary across studies.  As a result, while scholars have

illustrated how female legislators advocate issues that are of presumed importance to women, we

do not have a holistic sense of the types of bills that define women's legislative portfolios, when

considering the broader legislative agenda.  Perhaps more troubling, by selecting only women's

issues, no comparable baseline of other issues is considered to better gauge the actions and

effectiveness of women across all possible issues.

In contrast, rather than beginning with a presumed definition of women's issues in

Congress, we employ a novel dataset to examine all 119,845 public bills (H.R.s) introduced

across all 19 major issue areas in the U.S. House of Representatives over three decades (from

1973-2002).  We then identify women's issues as those on which women introduce significantly

more bills than do men (and we use a comparable approach to define "men's issues").  We then

compare the lawmaking success of women on these issues to their success elsewhere, to gauge

whether women are rewarded for their efforts and expertise.  And finally, we assess whether the

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[2] Sometimes the above definitions are used in combination with one another.  For example, Reingold (2000, 169) categorizes bills as addressing women's issues if they satisfy at least one of two criteria: either (a) those issues that "in an immediate and direct way, are about women exclusively (e.g., abortion, sex discrimination) or almost exclusively (e.g., domestic violence or breast cancer)," or (b) issues that "reflect women's traditional areas of concern, including children and families, education, health, poverty, and the environment."

institution as a whole is open to the advancement of women's issues at the same rate as men's issues or neutral issues.

Our approach of endogenously defining women's issues and tracking their fates across all bills introduced over thirty years is quite expansive. That said, in order to provide the broad brush strokes offered here, we necessarily set aside many finer details. For example, our substantive categories are rather broad. Whereas other studies may code bills dealing with abortion policy as distinct from contraception policy, our classification places them both in the general category of Health (with each bill assigned to only one general category). Similarly, our approach does not allow us to decipher the ideological dimensions or policy directions of each bill. A bill mandating abstinence-only education and a bill outlawing abstinence-only education, for example, are both categorized as Education bills. Moreover, although our quantitative approach provides an important perspective on women's issues in Congress, it prohibits us from accounting for such things as conversational dynamics in committee or self-reports about gendered interactions (e.g., Hawkesworth 2003), which also shed light on the policy impacts of female lawmakers' legislative strategies. We believe that our study complements such qualitative scholarship; and taken together, these different methodologies can present the most complete picture of the role that women play within legislative institutions. Finally, since our data are focused solely on the U.S. House, we cannot speak to the policy impact of women in the U.S. Senate, in state legislatures, or in comparative political bodies. Our hope is that the empirical approach and findings presented in this paper can be applied more broadly in future work.

## Theoretical Considerations

*Defining Women's Issues*

As alluded to above, much of the literature concerning representation and women has focused its attention on the substantive benefits of descriptive representation. Underlying this research are notions that there is a definitive collection of "women's issues," that these issues arise because women in politics "act for" women in the public, and that women's interests and issues can be systematically characterized and quantified (Baldez 2011).[3] As articulated by Reingold and Swers (2011, 429): "the assumption that women's interests exist, that women have political interests that can be defined and measured, is central to much of the…research and discussion of women in politics."

Building on this premise, many scholars of substantive representation have investigated whether there are, indeed, distinct differences between the policy priorities of male and female legislators. A pervasive finding in this literature is that, even after controlling for a host of other factors, female representatives are more likely to care about, sponsor, and vote for women's issue bills.[4] While scholars are in general agreement regarding female legislators' propensities to advance women's issues, less agreement can be obtained regarding what, precisely, constitutes a women's issue.[5] Indeed, scholars have defined and operationalized women's issues in a multitude of ways.

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[3] That being said, scholars have spent much time engaging the difficulties and dangers of defining women's issues. For a recent review this debate, see the *Politics & Gender* Critical Perspectives symposium on the "Meaning and Measurement of Women's Interests" (Baldez 2011; Beckwith 2011; Schwindt-Bayer and Taylor-Robinson 2011; Reingold and Swers 2001; Smooth 2011; Weldon 2011).

[4] The body of literature on this topic is voluminous, and important contributions can be found in the works of Barnello and Bratton (2007), Bratton (2005), Bratton and Haynie (1999), Burrell (1994), Carroll (2001), Dolan (1998), Dolan and Ford (1995), Gerrity, Obsorn, and Mendez (2007), MacDonald and O'Brien (2011), Poggione (2004), Reingold (1992, 2000), Saint-Germain (1989), Swers (1998, 2001, 2002a, 2002b), Thomas (1991, 1994), and Thomas and Welch (1991, 2001). Barnello (1999), Cowell-Meyers and Langbein (2009), and Jenkins (2012) explore various contingencies of women's issues.

[5] While we use the terms *interests* and *issues* interchangeably in this essay, Beckwith (2011) provides an alternative perspective on how these terms are distinct.

One approach has been to use external sources to delineate the boundaries of women's issues. Dolan (1998) and Swers (2005), for example, define women's issues as those that are supported by the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues (CCWI). Frederick (2011) and Swers (1998, 2002a, 2005) consult groups such as the American Association of University Women. Cowell-Meyers and Langbein (2009) look to the Institute for Women's Policy Research. Other scholars (e.g., Burrell 1994; Reingold 2000; Welch 1985) define women's issues to be those that create a demonstrable gender gap in public opinion.

Another approach has been to define women's issues in more theoretically-based terms, such as arguing that women's issues are those issues that are "particularly salient to women – either because they primarily, more directly, or disproportionately concern or affect women in particular or because they reflect the more 'traditional' concerns (or interests) that women presumably have about others" (Reingold and Swers 2011, 431).[6] While this approach does not rely on external groups to categorize issues, it still raises potential measurement concerns. More specifically, scholars employing such an approach must (effectively) make *ex ante* judgment calls regarding whether they will operationalize women's issues as those policy areas that are explicitly about women (e.g., sexual discrimination or domestic violence), those policy areas that have conventionally been associated with women or the private realm (e.g., children and families), or those that aim for feminist outcomes (e.g., establishing fair pay). Taken together, it should be unsurprising that a multitude of issues, such as abortion, women's health, childcare, education, social services, discrimination, welfare, family leave, and general healthcare have all, at times, been categorized as women's issues.

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[6] See also Carroll (2001), Dodson and Carroll (1991), Reingold (2000), Saint-Germain (1989), Swers (2002a, 2002b), and Swers and Larson (2005) on this point.

Reingold and Swers (2011, 431-432) summarize the nature and limitations of the current

scholarly approach:

> "all of these attempts to define and measure women's interests and issues have one thing in
> common: none relies on the subjects of inquiry (elected officials, in this case) to define
> (actively or passively, directly or indirectly)…their own conceptions of women's
> interests/issues. Instead, each of us has defined our terms exogenously, assuming perhaps
> that our primary task or challenge as researchers is to create *a priori* a valid, defensible, and
> appropriate definition of women's interests/issues."

As a result, "no matter how careful, conscientious, or inclusive [scholars] may be, [they] still risk

some degree of oversimplification or overgeneralization" (Reingold and Swers, 2011, 432).

In a departure from past practice, we embrace Reingold and Swers' implicit suggestion of

allowing female lawmakers themselves to define what they consider to be women's issues.[7]

Specifically, we label an issue as a women's issue if women are more likely than men to raise the

issue or if women raise the issue in a greater volume than do men.  These self-defined women's

issues therefore need not match those of the prior literature.  That said, given the scope and

breadth of previous research, we believe it likely that the extant scholarship has been closely

related to female legislators' actual areas of interest; and this belief is testable, as characterized in

the following hypothesis.[8]

***Women's Issues Hypothesis:*** *Women in Congress sponsor more bills than do men on the
classically defined women's issues of: civil rights and liberties; education; health; housing and
community development; labor, employment, and immigration; law, crime, and family; and
social welfare.*

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[7] An alternative approach to addressing Reingold and Swers's (2011) concerns may be to examine how women and
men choose to frame their bills, in terms of the language used in floor speeches and within the bills themselves.  For
example, under what circumstances do women specifically present their legislation as representing issues of concern
to women in particular?

[8] The seven potential issues listed in the hypothesis are drawn from the 19 issue areas discussed below, as drawn
from Baumgartner and Jones' *Policy Agendas Project*.  These seven best match those in the extensive current
literature.  Several scholars have considered the environment to be a women's issue (e.g., Little, Dunn, and Deen
2001; Reingold 2000; Thomas 1991, 1994).  Given that most scholars, however, do *not* categorize the environment
as a salient women's issue, we left it out of the Women's Issues Hypothesis.  Indeed, as found below, women do not
focus more on the environment than do men.

*Expertise and Lawmaking Success*

In specializing on women's issues, do women experience an enhanced legislative success in correspondence with their interests and expertise?  Theoretically, there are several reasons why one might expect women's issue specialization efforts to yield such benefits.  First, previous research has demonstrated that female politicians are viewed as better suited to handle issues such as social welfare and healthcare, whereas male politicians are considered experts in such areas as economics and business (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b; Leeper 1991; Mueller 1986).  On this point, interview data suggests that "both female and male representatives [feel] that women in elected office have a better sense of how to develop and implement feminist policy as a result of their life experiences" (Tamerius 1995, 102).  Hence, legislators may be more willing to support bills that are introduced by women if they fall within one of these women's issue domains.[9]

Consistent with this view, several studies have identified a pattern of deference in state legislatures, whereby women appear to be more successful than their male counterparts at advancing bills that engage women's issues.  Thomas (1991), for example, finds that bills pertaining to women, children, and families had a success rate of 29% when introduced by women, but only 13% when introduced by men; and Saint-Germain (1989, 965) finds that "bills concerning women's issues had a better chance of passing if proposed by women legislators than proposed by men."  Hence, one might suspect that female legislators would be rewarded for their specialization efforts, particularly if they specialize in bills that engage women's issues. Whether such success carries over to Congress and to all self-defined women's issues is an open question that we test based on the following hypothesis.

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[9] Moreover, it is on these issues that women have shown a propensity to cross the aisle (Swers 2005), which may increase their chances of legislative success.

***Expertise and Lawmaking Success Hypothesis:*** *Women are more successful than men at converting women's issue proposals into law.*

*Institutional Biases*

In contrast to the above hypothesis, it is also plausible that the findings from state legislatures may not generalize to all legislatures, and to the U.S. Congress in particular. That is, while female members of Congress may specialize in women's issues, they might not receive deference and enhanced legislative success in these areas. As noted by Githens and Prestage (1977, 399), politics has long been considered a "man's business," and thus, female legislators may face a unique set of institutional hurdles due to their gender. A survey of state legislators found, for example, that approximately one-quarter of all women have concerns about institutional discrimination, citing issues such as difficulty "getting people to respect me as a woman," "being a woman in an old boys club," "isolation of women members," and trouble "having my male counterparts deal with me on their level" (Thomas 2005, 252). Similarly, Kathlene (1994) offers evidence of gendered patterns in legislative committee hearings, where men were much more likely to interrupt and talk over female legislators than over their male counterparts. Thus, while "legislative egalitarianism" might follow from formal congressional rules (Hall 1996), informal practices continue to impact social interactions and policy processes.[10]

Such considerations may lead to two distinct institutional biases. First, women themselves may find their proposals dismissed at a greater rate than do men. Whether because they are raising issues that do not resonate with men, and thus with the vast majority of

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[10] Moreover, evidence suggests that such gendered patterns may become more pronounced at higher levels of political office. Although scholars have documented a push towards increased "feminization" in leadership styles on the state-level (Jewell and Whicker 1993), it appears as if legislative professionalism and feminization are negatively related (Duerst-Lahti 2002).

lawmakers, or whether their proposals are taken less seriously for other reasons, women may be less effective as lawmakers than are men.[11] On the question of effectiveness, the existing literature is mixed (e.g., Bratton and Haynie 1999; Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Lazarus and Steigerwalt 2011; Saint-Germain 1989), although it recently points to the enhanced effectiveness of women (e.g., Anzia and Berry 2011; Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013). We are well-positioned to continue this line of research not only for lawmaking as a whole, but also within each specific issue area.

Second, the issues that women care about the most may be dismissed more easily in male-dominated institutions than are the issues that men care about the most. Raising new issues and introducing a new agenda may be of little use if women's issues are then immediately bottled up in committee, never voted upon, never enacted, and thus never actually allowed to address the needs of the constituents that women are seeking to represent. In contrast, women may be making a major difference even if their own bills do not attract attention, if instead they help change the nature of the discussions and legislative actions of their male counterparts.

The existence, extent, and nature of any gender bias in Congress can be explored based on our approach to defining women's issues and tracking their progress through the lawmaking process. We center such investigations around the following hypothesis.

***Institutional Bias Hypothesis:*** *Women's issues and the proposals offered by female lawmakers are less successful in moving through Congress and into law than are men's issues and the proposals offered by male lawmakers.*

## Empirical Approach

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[11] Related to this point, Blofield and Haas's (2005) analysis of the success of women's issue-oriented legislation in Chile suggests that the keys to legislative success rest, in part, on the ability to frame the legislation in a manner that comports with existing gender and economic conventions. If advocates of such legislation are unable to overcome this hurdle, their legislation is more likely to fail.

In order to investigate women's issues and their fates in Congress, we employ a dataset that tracks every public bill (H.R.) that was introduced into the U.S. House from the 93rd-107th Congresses (1973-2002), categorized by substantive issue area, and tracked from bill introduction to enactment into law. By analyzing all of the 119,845 bills that were introduced during this time period, we are able to identify the substantive areas (and quantities) of the bills that female and male legislators introduced, and assess how far these bills advanced across different stages in the legislative process. That is, rather than analyze the progress of a subsample of legislation that we denote *a priori* as constituting "women's issues," we are letting the legislators' portfolios speak for themselves to inform us about what differences, if any, exist across male and female legislators' sponsorship activities, and rates of success in various substantive areas.

Although there are a number of different ways that one could categorize each bill, we adopted the issue classification protocol that was introduced by Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones (e.g., Baumgartner and Jones 2002) in which each bill is assigned to one of nineteen major topics. This coding scheme has been incorporated into several substantial research projects, including the *Policy Agendas Project* that was developed by Bryan Jones, John Wilkerson, and Frank Baumgartner (www.policyagendas.org), and the *Congressional Bills Project* that was developed by Scott Adler and John Wilkerson (www.congressionalbills.org).[12] Building on this coding protocol, the *Congressional Bills Project* has manually classified every bill from 1947 to 2002 according to the coding system of the *Policy Agendas Project*; and it is from this dataset that we categorize our bills into issue areas. To rely on this consistent coding scheme, we end

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[12] The nineteen major topics are (in alphabetical order): Agriculture; Banking & Commerce; Civil Rights & Liberties; Defense; Education; Energy; Environment; Foreign Trade; Government Operations; Health; Housing & Community Development; International Affairs; Labor, Employment, & Immigration; Law, Crime, & Family; Macroeconomics; Public Lands; Science & Technology; Social Welfare; and Transportation.

our analysis with the 107th Congress. We begin with the 93rd Congress, as this is the first

Congress tracked by the Library of Congress website, from which we draw information about

bill sponsors and the progress of bills through the lawmaking process.[13]

After categorizing each bill into one of the nineteen issue areas, we then identified (for

each issue area) the percentage of women who introduced bills, the percentage of men who

introduced bills, the average number of introductions by women, and the average number of

introductions by men. While bill introduction is only one of the many ways (along with

cosponsorship, amendment activities, public declarations and the like) that legislators can signal

dedication to an issue, it is the one activity that is consistently the focus of attention to scholars

of gender and politics (Bratton 2005; Gerrity, Osborn, and Mendez 2007; Swers 2002a, 2002b).

As Swers (2002a) explains, sponsorship is the most evident way in which members exert effort

to advocate for particular issues.[14]

Having identified bill introductions, we then calculated bill success rates for women and

men, where bill success is equivalent to the frequently examined "hit-rates" characterizing the

percent of introduced bills that become law (e.g., Box-Steffensmeier and Grant 1999; Jeydel and

Taylor 2003). Unlike a typical "hit-rate" analysis that looks only at the aggregate number of

bills that were converted into law, however, our analysis also identifies whether there are gender

differences in the quantity and substance of the bills that were introduced across each issue area.

Taken together, this approach allows us to test the above hypotheses. We determine

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[13] To collect our data, computer code was written to collect all relevant information from the Library of Congress website, THOMAS. For every bill, we identify the sponsor and every step in the legislative process as identified in the "All Congressional Actions with Amendments" section of the bill's "summary and status" hyperlink. Hence, we are able to easily assess how many bills were introduced by each member, how they were treated in committee, and how many of those bills were ultimately signed into law.

[14] In Swers' (2002a, 32) language, sponsorship behavior "provides important insights about which members are working to place women's interests on the national agenda. In contrast to other legislative activities like offering amendments in which restrictive rules governing debate can prevent members from offering women's issue proposals, representatives have complete control over the number and content of the bills they sponsor."

whether self-identified women's issues match the *a priori* categories of previous scholars.  We
test whether women are more or less successful in these issue areas.  And we examine whether
the institution as a whole is biased against women's issues in its attention and legislative action.

**Findings**

Our first objective is to identify whether women consistently advance specific policies as
parts of their legislative agendas, and (if so) whether these issue areas differ from those that are
advanced by men.  We begin by plotting the percentage of women who introduce at least one bill
in each of the nineteen issue area categories, which are illustrated in Figure 1.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

One clear finding that emerges from Figure 1 is that while women sponsor bills that draw
from each of the substantive issue areas, this sponsorship is not equally distributed across areas.
In fact, there is nearly a fifty percentage point participation gap between the issue areas with the
highest and lowest percentages of women introducing bills.  Those issue areas that attract the
highest percentage of women sponsors include: Government Operations; Health; Law, Crime, &
Family; and Labor, Employment, & Immigration (all at 52% or above).  In contrast, the issue
areas that attract the lowest percentage of women sponsors include: Science & Technology;
Agriculture; and International Affairs (all at 20% or below).  The remaining issue areas all fall
somewhere in between these extremes, with approximately 25-45% of all women introducing at
least one bill in each of these categories.

Consistent with the Women's Issues Hypothesis, three of the top four (Health; Law,
Crime, & Family; and Labor, Employment, & Immigration) would be categorized as women's
issues by conventional definitions that are employed in the extant literature (e.g. Cowell-Meyers

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and Langbein 2009; Saint-Germain 1989; Swers 2002a, 2005).  In contrast, none of the four lowest categories (Energy; International Affairs; Agriculture; and Science & Technology) are generally categorized as women's issues.  In other words, the types of bills to which female legislators are paying the most attention seem to comport, at least roughly, with the ways that scholars of descriptive and substantive representation conventionally characterize women's issues.

While these data are useful for establishing general patterns, they do not necessarily help identify whether women specialize in particular areas in comparison to their male peers.  To clarify, although issues areas such as Government Operations, Defense, and Public Lands attract many proposals by women, they could also attract an equally large number of proposals from men.  Indeed, a greater percentage of women introduce Defense bills than Civil Rights and Liberties bills, yet one would hesitate to label Defense a women's issue.  Instead, we need to analyze the legislative portfolios of women *in comparison* to those of men.

In making such comparisons, we place each issue into one of three categories.  Issues in which a larger proportion of women introduce than do men are labeled women's issues (where the difference is judged in terms of its statistical significance).[15]  Likewise, in terms of the number of bills sponsored, we label as women's issues those with more introductions by women on average than by men (again at a statistically significant level).  Similarly, issue areas that attract a larger percentage of male sponsors than female sponsors and/or those with more bills introduced on average by men over women are labeled "men's issues."  The remaining issues, with no statistically significant gender differences, are labeled as "neutral issues."  All issues, their categorizations, and the criteria used to label them, are detailed in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

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[15] A chi-squared test is used to determine statistical significance in each case.

Of the top four issues from Figure 1, three are classified as women's issues according to our criteria. Specifically, 61% of women introduce Health bills, compared to 44% of men; 52% of women introduce bills in the Labor, Employment, and Immigration issue area, versus only 43% of men; and 55% of women sponsor Law, Crime, and Family legislation, compared to 39% of men. The fourth prominent issue area from Figure 1, Government Operations, is now characterized as neutral, with 63% of both men and women introducing bills in this area. The other women's issues that emerge from our analysis are Civil Rights and Liberties as well as Education. In sum, five of the seven issues from the Women's Issues Hypothesis are indeed classified as women's issues. The other two, Housing and Community Development, and Social Welfare, are both classified as neutral, with men and women introducing them at equal rates.

Near the bottom of the table are "men's issues." As shown in the final two columns of the table, the average male lawmaker introduces more bills in these areas than does the average female lawmaker. This difference is most dramatic in Agriculture and in Energy, areas in which the average man introduces more than twice as many bills as the average women. None of these eight issue areas is among the seven typically listed as women's issues in the existing literature. On the whole, then, our findings tend to support the Women's Issues Hypothesis, suggesting that previous work on women's issues has not been dramatically off course.

That said, one may be concerned that we are detecting partisan differences, rather than gender differences. In particular, in our data there were about twice as many female Democrats as female Republicans. If Democrats embraced women's issues at a much higher rate than did Republicans, that difference may account for the patterns in Table 1. For instance, Dolan (1998b, 89) finds that Democratic women are the strongest advocates of women's issues, but Democratic men were the next strongest advocates (followed by Republican women and

Republican men, respectively). To address this potential confounding explanation, we reconstructed the first two columns of Table 1 separately for Democrats and Republicans, displaying the results in Table 2.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

The results show our classification scheme to be robust across political parties. Specifically, all five women's issues feature a greater proportion of women than men sponsoring these issues. For Democrats, all of these differences are statistically significant, while three are statistically significant for Republicans.[16] Likewise, men's issues are raised by a significantly larger proportion of men than women within each party (for seven of the eight issues among Democrats and three among Republicans). And the neutral issues remain as such when broken down by party, albeit with slightly more Democratic men introducing Transportation bills than do Democratic women. Our findings thus complement Swers and Larson (2005, 128), as "both Democratic and Republican women are more likely to advocate women's issues bills than are their male partisan colleagues" (see also Carey, Niemi, and Powell 1998; and Poggione 2004).

Having established that women do, indeed, specialize in a particular subset of issue areas, most of which comport with conventional definitions of women's issues, we now investigate whether women are rewarded for their specialization efforts. That is, are women generally more successful in advancing bills in these areas of specialization through the legislative process than men? We begin by analyzing the bill success rates of women and men by issue area, where success is defined as the percentage of bills introduced that ultimately become law. Figure 2 shows the success rates for male and female sponsors by issue area. Issues are grouped by category (women's, neutral, and men's issues) and then organized from the most gridlocked to

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[16] Given the smaller number of Republican women, a larger difference is required in order to attain statistical significance.

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the least.  The more darkly shaded and starred columns represent a statistically larger success

rate for the starred gender in the particular issue area.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Three major findings are illustrated in Figure 2.  First, men have a greater success rate

than do women.  For fourteen of the nineteen issues, men convert a larger fraction of their

sponsored bills into law.  In seven of those areas, the enhanced lawmaking success of men is

statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).  In only Transportation are women statistically more

successful than men.

Second, in the five areas identified above as women's issues, men are more successful

than women for all of them.  In three cases (Health; Labor, Employment, and Immigration; and

Education), women are statistically less successful than men.  For example, 1.7% of Health bills

sponsored by men become law, whereas only 0.9% of those sponsored by women become law.

Collectively, this is strong evidence against the Expertise and Lawmaking Success Hypothesis.

Indeed, based on this figure, the only reason why women may alter the production of women's

issues in Congress is because they sponsor so much more legislation in these areas.  For

example, women on average sponsor twice as many bills as men on Civil Rights and Liberties.

Because their success rate is more than half that of men, the net is a small increase in legislation

in this area.  However, any such differences are not statistically significant.  Moreover, men do

not suffer the same fate.  Not only do they sponsor more bills on men's issues on average, but

their success rates are no lower than those of women in those areas (and significantly higher in

Macroeconomics and Agriculture, areas in which no bills that were sponsored by a woman

became law over our entire time period).

Third, women's issues are among the most gridlocked of all issues in Congress. Of all 119,845 bills introduced between 1973-2002 in the House, 4,962 became law, for an overall success rate of 4.1%. However, the success rate for women's issues is less than half that, at 2.0%. Moreover, the most gridlocked "neutral issues" are Social Welfare and Housing and Community Development, commonly deemed women's issues by previous scholars. Combined with the finding that bills sponsored by women are less likely to become law in most issue areas, these results provide strong support for the Institutional Bias Hypothesis. In short, the bills sponsored by women, and the issues that they care the most about, are systematically more gridlocked than are male-sponsored bills and men's issues.

Put another way, the legislative portfolio of women in Congress is made up of a large proportion of women's issues at the bill proposal stage. Moving through the lawmaking process, however, those women's issue bills fall away at a greater rate than do other bills, leaving congresswomen little further along in advancing issues important to American women than are congressmen. We illustrate this process in Figure 3.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

The top set of pie graphs show the proportion of women's issues, men's issues, and neutral issues among the bills sponsored by women (on the left) and men (on the right). In constructing these figures, we excluded bills on Government Operations and on Public Lands. Both are outliers in terms of the large number of bills advanced and laws produced and neither is representative of the types of substantive issue areas discussed in the expansive literature on women's issues.[17] Setting these issues aside, we see a clear difference in bill sponsorship

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[17] Examples of bills that are drawn from these issue areas include H.R. 15 (in the 93rd Congress): "A bill granting the consent and approval of Congress to the California-Nevada interstate compact" (coded as Government Operations), and H.R. 89 (in the 100th Congress): "A bill to provide that the recreation portions of the project for Cooper Lake and Channels, Texas, shall be constructed at full federal expense" (coded as Public Lands). Including these two

between men and women in Congress.  Across the thirty years of our study, men and women each sponsor about thirteen to fourteen bills per Congress.  While nearly half of those bills sponsored by women raise women's issues, that proportion is about one third for men.  Beyond women's issues, women divide their attention about evenly between neutral and men's issues.  In contrast, men concentrate more of their efforts on men's issues than neutral issues, as would be expected by our classification technique.

What becomes of these sponsored bills?  To answer that question, we tracked the proportion of each type of bill through four additional major stages of the lawmaking process: (1) did the bill receive "action in committee," in terms of hearings, bills markups, and subcommittee votes; (2) did the bill make it out of committee and onto one of the legislative calendars; (3) did the bill pass the House; and (4) did the bill become law?  Of these, the critical stage in translating the aspirations of women into their legislative accomplishments is whether their bills immediately die in committee or whether they receive some form of action there. Following that stage, the proportion of women's issues to other issues changes very little, right on through the passage into law.

As such, in our second set of pie charts in Figure 3, we see how the mix of bills changes when it enters the committee process.  Before discussing the changing proportions, it is worth noting the extent to which proposals die in committee without so much as a hearing.  Of the bills sponsored by women, only 7.2% receive any attention in committee at all.  This is in contrast to 11.5% of men's sponsored bills receiving action in committee.  It is really at the committee stage that the institutional bias leaves its mark.  Moreover, this bias alters the mix of bills moving forward.  For women sponsors (on the left), the share of women's issue bills remaining alive is

issue areas, the graphs show similar patterns to those discussed here, although they are masked by the larger proportions of men's issues and neutral issues associated with Public Lands and Government Operations, respectively.

now less than one-third, a drop of 14% in terms of their overall portfolio.  So, not only do the

proposals of women fall by the wayside at a greater rate than those of men, but their women's

issues proposals suffer an even greater reduction.  This is consistent with the findings illustrated

in Figure 2.  Unlike women's issues, the men's issues sponsored by women fare rather well

within committees, rising to 38% of women's portfolios.  A similar (although less pronounced)

pattern emerges for men's portfolios, with women's issues diminishing and men's issues

advancing in greater proportions at the committee stage.

In the subsequent stages to becoming law, another two-thirds to three-fourths of the bills

fall by the wayside.  Yet the proportional mix of bills remains about the same.  In terms of laws

produced, illustrated in the bottom set of pie charts, women's issues make up 31% of the average

woman's portfolio, compared to 25% of the average man's portfolio.  This slightly larger share

of women's issues sponsored by women is offset by the smaller number of laws produced by the

average woman (about 0.3 per woman per Congress, compared to 0.4 per man).  While women's

issues fade as a proportion of all legislation in moving through the lawmaking process, the same

cannot be said for men's issues, remaining at about 30% of the average woman's portfolio and

40% of the average man's portfolio.


### Implications for the Fate of Women's Issues

In sum, these figures paint a rather bleak picture of the fate of women's issues in

Congress.  Although women do emphasize a particular subset of issues in their sponsored

legislation, many of which comport with traditional definitions of women's issues, the proposals

of women in general (and for women's issues specifically) are systematically dismissed and

disregarded throughout the legislative process.  And most of this narrowing of their legislative

ambitions takes place immediately upon sending their bills to committee.  A full 93% of bills sponsored by women (and 95% of their sponsored bills on women's issues) receive no attention in committee whatsoever.  Taking all of this into consideration, what is the future of women's issues in Congress?  Based on our research, we see two relevant considerations in answering this question.

*Seniority and Leadership*

First, the rising numbers of women in Congress have come due to the election of new members who are women.  However, given the seniority norms within the House, they do not start out on an equal footing with the men already serving in Congress.  Across the thirty years that we study, women averaged 3.4 terms of prior service, compared to 5.2 for men.  Such a seniority gap has nontrivial consequences for the policy priorities of male and female legislators.

At the most basic level, Congress remains a heavily seniority-driven institution, and increased seniority is generally associated with larger legislative portfolios, greater issue expertise, better coalition building skills, and thus the ability to advance bills through the legislative process.  Seniority also translates into influence in committees and subcommittees. The chairs of committees are selected by the majority party, based largely on seniority.  Because of their enhanced seniority, 9.1% of men in the majority party served as committee chairs across the Congresses in our dataset, compared to only 1.7% of women in the majority party.[18]  With more than five times the likelihood of serving as a committee chair, it is unsurprising that men and their preferred issues receive more favorable treatment in committee.

As an indication of the importance of seniority and chair positions, consider the recent findings by Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer (2013).  After controlling for the seniority and

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[18] The gap is smaller for subcommittees, where 32% of majority party women and 45% of majority party men served as chairs over our time period.

institutional positions of members of Congress they determine that, all else equal, women are *more* effective than men in the House of Representatives over the past forty years. Such is an indication that women, when they establish greater seniority and expertise, and when they rise into important leadership roles, can indeed make an impact at least as great as their proportions in the legislature.

Building on these points, we find evidence that the low relative success rates of women highlighted in Figure 2 are indeed due to their limited seniority and committee leadership. More specifically, as documented in the Supplemental Appendix, none of the differences in success rates across women's issue areas are statistically significant if we focus only on those non-chair legislators who are relatively junior (defined as serving less than five terms in Congress). Indeed, among such junior lawmakers, women exhibit greater success rates in nine of the nineteen policy areas studied here.[19]

As scholars consider the next steps for research in these areas, then, several key questions emerge. Are women differentially able to convert their seniority into expertise, deference, and leadership positions (e.g., Rosenthal 2008)? Are there gendered patterns in which subcommittees and committees women eventually chair, which match women's issues as defined here? And, upon attaining leadership positions, such as committee and subcommittee chairs, are women more open to the advancement of women's issues and female-sponsored legislation than their male counterparts had been?

*Critical Mass*

In addition to seniority and leadership considerations, it is also important to consider the likely impacts of increases in the *overall number* of women in Congress. Although the new

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[19] That said, none of these nine differences is statistically significant at *p < 0.05*. This may be partly due to the small sample sizes, restricting the data to its nineteen subsets and only to relatively junior members of Congress.

women arriving in Congress must start with no seniority and limited, if any, institutional leadership positions, their rising numbers in recent years may have important implications for the success of their issues and interests in the future. This is especially true in light of the literature on the "critical mass" of women in legislatures, which speaks to how the percentage of women in a legislature affects political behavior and policy outputs (e.g., Bratton 2002, 2005; Kanter 1977; Murphy 1997; Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas 1991, 1994). Taken together, this work suggests that increasing gender diversity within a legislature may lead to increased attention to, and successful passage of, women's issue bills (but see Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2000, Kathlene 1994, and Reingold 2000 for complexities of this relationship).

There are several reasons why this relationship may occur. First, as we demonstrate here, female legislators have a distinct set of policy priorities. Hence, increased gender parity in Congress may lead to the introduction and support of more women's issue bills. Second, as women move beyond token status, they may be more willing to advocate on behalf of issues that are important to them (e.g., Kanter 1977).[20] And third, increasing the presence of women in Congress can change the behavior of men in Congress (e.g., Bratton 2005, 122).[21] Critical mass, therefore, offers the possibility that Congress as a whole (for men, as well as women) will be more accepting of women's issue bills. We illustrate this concept in Figure 4, in which we replicate the bottom pie charts from Figure 3, but now separately for the first three Congresses in

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[20] It is also possible that as the number of women in Congress increases, each individual legislator feels less pressure to be surrogate representatives for women across the country, and thus may be less likely to introduce women's issues bills. However, even if this occurs, the *overall* attention paid to women's issues is likely to increase (Bratton 2005, 122).

[21] Recent work by Boyd, Epstein, and Martin (2010) suggests that a similar dynamic exists in judicial interactions and decision making. Likewise, Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker (2012) demonstrate that increasing the number of women increases their levels of participation and perceived influence in deliberative settings that decide according to majority rule; and Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Oliphant (2013) extend this analysis to demonstrate that when women are in the minority in a majority-rule deliberative setting, they are more likely to be interrupted and subsequently disengage from deliberation. These findings are particularly noteworthy given that the majority of lawmaking in the U.S. Congress occurs in small deliberative bodies (i.e., legislative committees) that operate under majority rule.

our dataset and for the final three Congresses.  These figures show the proportions of each type

of issue that become law, divided by those sponsored by women and those sponsored by men.

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

Between the mid-1970s and the turn of the century, women's issues nearly tripled as a

share of the bills sponsored by women that became law, from 13% in the top left figure to 38%

in the bottom left.[22]  A similar, albeit less stark transition occurred for the bills sponsored by

men, as well.  Women's issues moved from 21% of the laws produced by male sponsors in the

1970s to 30% by the end of the dataset.  Put a different way, the laws of the 1970s featured two

to three times as many men's issues as women's issues.  By the turn of the century, however,

men's issues only slightly outpaced women's issues.  This is indicative of a greater interest in

and acceptance of women's issues in Congress across recent decades.  Indeed, through the first

half of our dataset, the success rate of all women's issue proposals was 1.6%, whereas it rose to

2.7% in the latter half of our dataset.[23]

While such progress is substantial, it is important to recognize that the link between

increased descriptive representation and an overall focus on women's issues is not inevitable

(e.g., Kanthak and Krause 2013; Kathlene 1994; Yoder 1991).  Future research may help

uncover the conditions under which critical mass helps advance women's issues, or produces a

backlash against them.  Replicating our analysis across the U.S. state legislatures may prove

useful, given the variance in female representation found across those institutions over time.

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[22] The large proportion of neutral issues in the top chart is a function of the small number of women in Congress in that early era and the remarkable success of a few women (and especially Leonor Sullivan, a Democrat from Missouri with twelve terms of seniority) in sponsoring widely-accepted Transportation legislation.  This success also helps account for the relative success of women in Transportation in Figure 2.  In explaining her accomplishments, Sullivan is noted as saying, "A woman with a woman's viewpoint is of more value when she forgets she's a woman and begins to act like a man" (http://thinkexist.com/quotes/leonor_kretzer_sullivan/, accessed March 26, 2013).
[23] This increase is statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.  Specifically of the 19,829 women's issue bills introduced in the 93rd-100th Congresses, 325 became law.  In the 101st-107th Congresses, 10,998 women's issue bills were introduced, with 295 becoming law.

In sum, the findings that we uncover show that women in Congress have a long way to go to achieve success on the issues they most frequently advocate. The full effect of the rising numbers of women in Congress will take time to reveal itself, as their seniority increases, they obtain institutional leadership positions, and they continue to alter the prioritization and acceptance of women's issues. Perhaps at that point, consistent with Mansbridge's (2005, 622) argument, the United States Congress will join the many other legislative bodies around the world in which greater representation by women improves substantive outcomes for women.

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## Table 1: Introductions by Issue Area

| Issue Area | % of Women Introducing Bills | % of Men Introducing Bills | Avg. # Intros (Women) | Avg. # Intros (Men) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WOMEN'S ISSUES** | | | | |
| **Civil Rights & Liberties** | 29.8%*** | 19.5% | 0.727*** | 0.383 |
| **Education** | 37.3*** | 29.4 | 0.655 | 0.628 |
| **Health** | 61.0*** | 44.3 | 2.28*** | 1.40 |
| **Labor, Employment, & Immigration** | 52.0*** | 42.8 | 1.17 | 1.04 |
| **Law, Crime, & Family** | 55.3*** | 39.3 | 1.20 | 1.07 |
| **NEUTRAL ISSUES** | | | | |
| **Defense** | 40.8 | 38.8 | 0.941 | 1.13 |
| **Government Operations** | 62.9 | 62.8 | 2.13 | 2.04 |
| **Housing/Community Dev.** | 25.8 | 23.0 | 0.479 | 0.415 |
| **International Affairs** | 20.2 | 21.4 | 0.359 | 0.416 |
| **Social Welfare** | 34.1 | 34.8 | 0.969 | 0.946 |
| **Transportation** | 34.7 | 37.8 | 0.796 | 0.868 |
| **MEN'S ISSUES** | | | | |
| **Agriculture** | 18.6 | 25.4*** | 0.302 | 0.636*** |
| **Banking & Commerce** | 41.8 | 45.6 | 0.937 | 1.17*** |
| **Energy** | 23.7 | 32.6*** | 0.394 | 0.801*** |
| **Environment** | 33.5 | 36.3 | 0.618 | 0.806** |
| **Foreign Trade** | 29.8 | 33.2 | 0.641 | 0.819* |
| **Macroeconomics** | 26.5 | 35.4*** | 0.482 | 0.821*** |
| **Public Lands** | 42.4 | 47.6** | 0.957 | 1.31*** |
| **Science & Technology** | 15.1 | 18.9** | 0.202 | 0.330*** |

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$, on differences across genders, shown next to gender with higher value.

## Table 2: Introductions by Issue Area for Democrats and Republicans

| Issue Area | % of Women Introducing Bills | % of Men Introducing Bills | % of Women Introducing Bills | % of Men Introducing Bills |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Democrats* | | *Republicans* | |
| **WOMEN'S ISSUES** | | | | |
| **Civil Rights & Liberties** | 32.3%*** | 18.9% | 30.6% | 20.5% |
| **Education** | 39.8*** | 30.0 | 31.5 | 28.8 |
| **Health** | 65.8*** | 46.3 | 50.6** | 42.1 |
| **Labor, Employment, & Immigration** | 52.7*** | 43.2 | 51.2** | 42.6 |
| **Law, Crime, & Family** | 54.2*** | 38.8 | 56.8*** | 40.3 |
| **NEUTRAL ISSUES** | | | | |
| **Defense** | 42.3 | 40.2 | 37.0 | 37.0 |
| **Government Operations** | 60.8 | 61.8 | 66.0 | 64.3 |
| **Housing/Community Dev.** | 28.7 | 24.6 | 20.5 | 21.1 |
| **International Affairs** | 21.6 | 22.1 | 17.9 | 20.5 |
| **Social Welfare** | 33.2 | 34.9 | 37.7 | 35.1 |
| **Transportation** | 32.6 | 37.9* | 39.5 | 37.7 |
| **MEN'S ISSUES** | | | | |
| **Agriculture** | 20.4 | 25.3** | 19.1 | 25.7*** |
| **Banking & Commerce** | 42.0 | 47.5* | 41.4 | 43.3 |
| **Energy** | 23.8 | 34.0*** | 22.8 | 31.2** |
| **Environment** | 32.3 | 36.0 | 35.8 | 37.0 |
| **Foreign Trade** | 26.3 | 33.8*** | 36.4 | 32.7 |
| **Macroeconomics** | 26.3 | 32.2** | 28.4 | 40.0*** |
| **Public Lands** | 36.4 | 48.4*** | 51.9 | 45.9 |
| **Science & Technology** | 12.2 | 19.5*** | 37.7 | 35.1 |

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$, on differences across genders, shown next to gender with higher value.

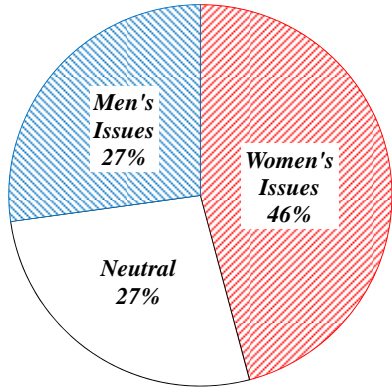**Figure 1: The Percentage of Women Introducing Bills by Issue Area**
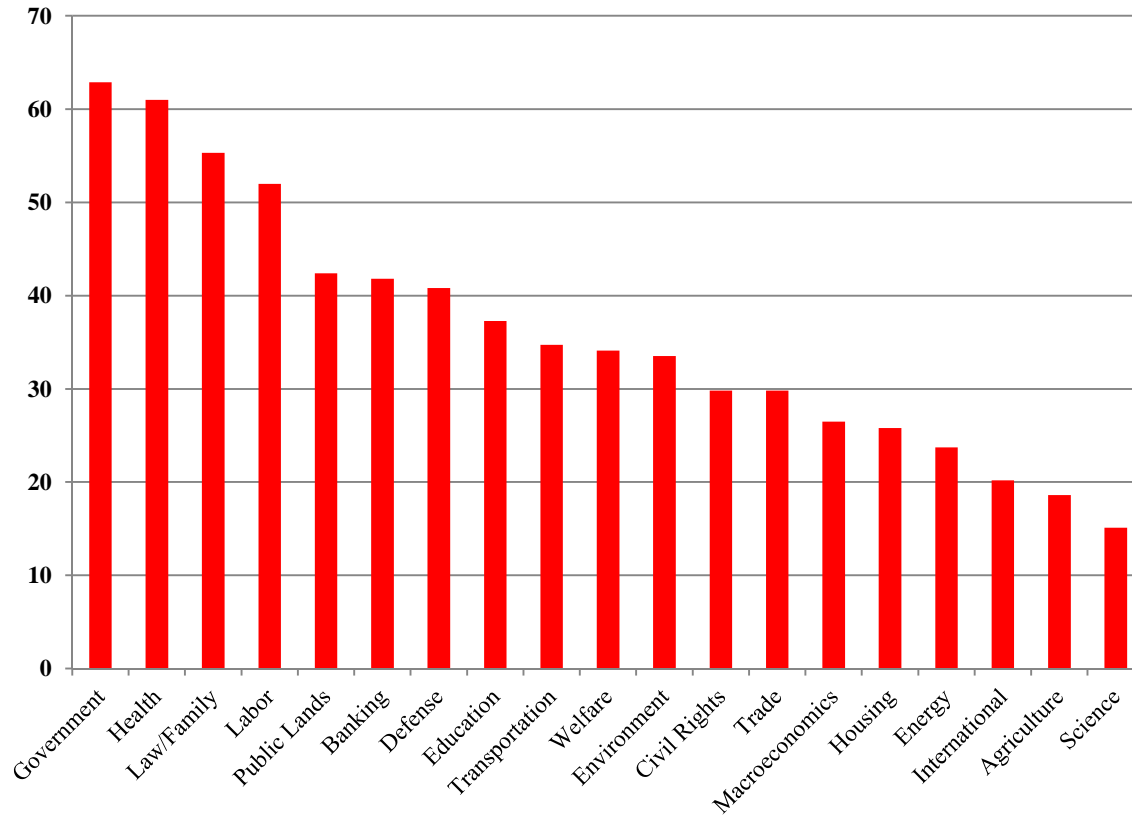
# Figure 2: Percent Bill Success Rate, by Issue Type and Gender of Sponsor
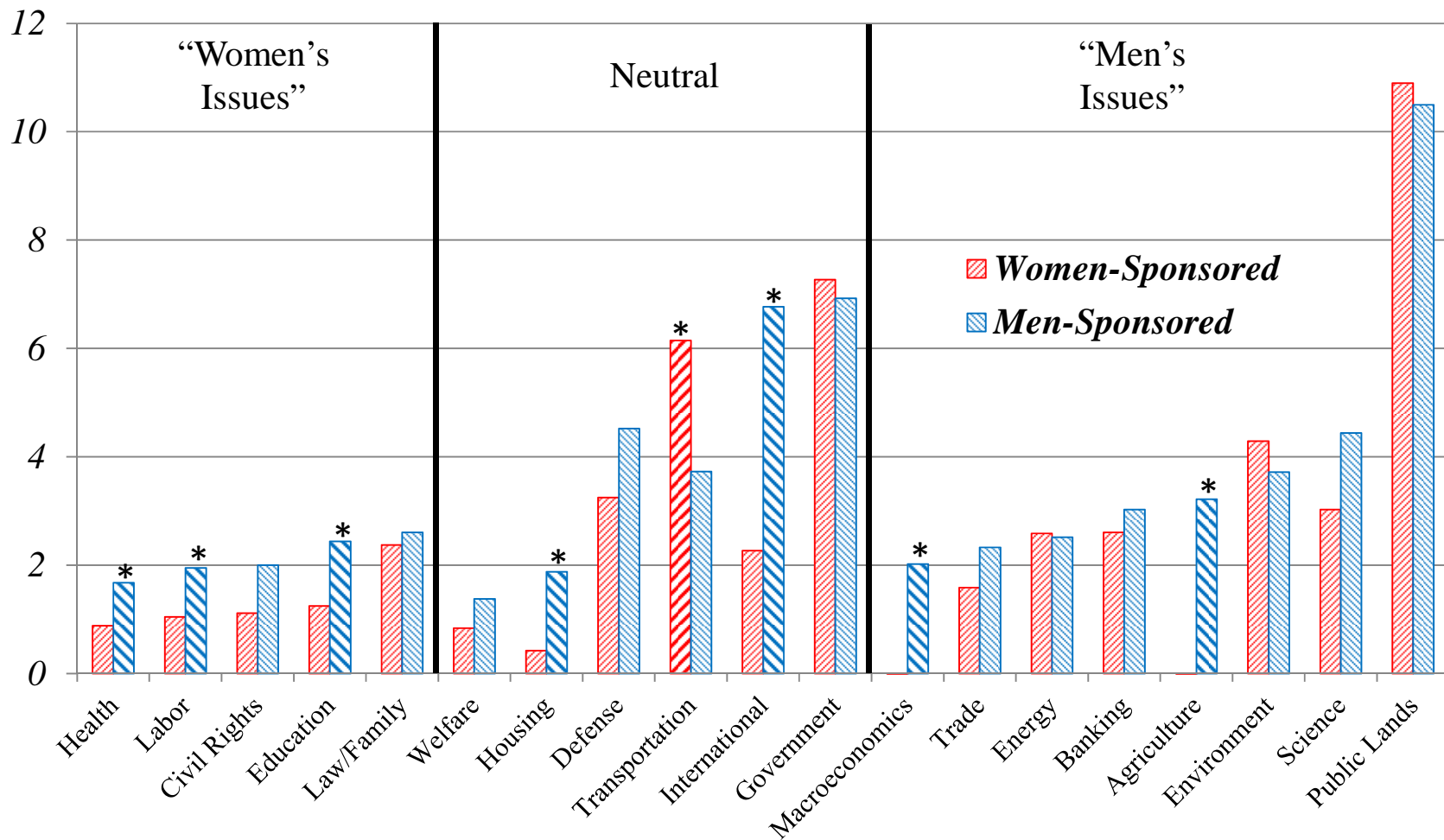


**Notes:** *Column heights show percent of sponsored bills that become law.*
*Darker shaded, starred (\*) columns represent gender with statistically significant greater success (p < 0.05).*

## Figure 3: Share of Women's Issues at Different Lawmaking Stages (Excluding Government Operations and Public Lands)
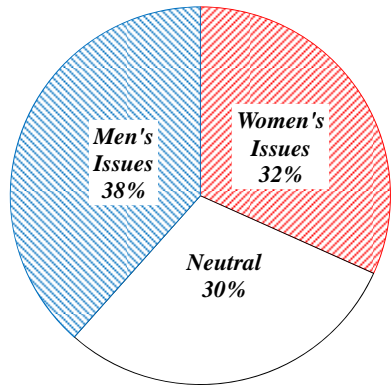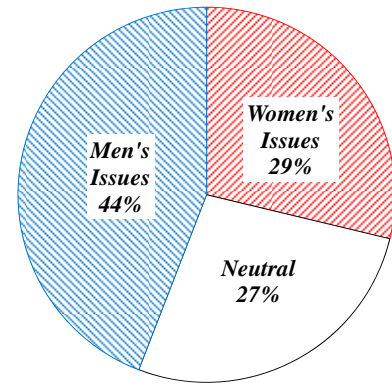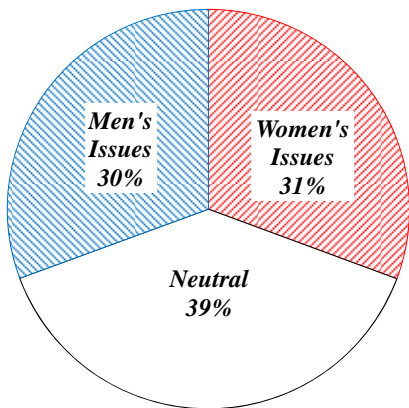
**Average Woman**
Introduces 13.1 bills

Men's Issues 27%
Women's Issues 46%
Neutral 27%

**Average Man**
Introduces 13.7 bills

Men's Issues 39%
Women's Issues 33%
Neutral 28%
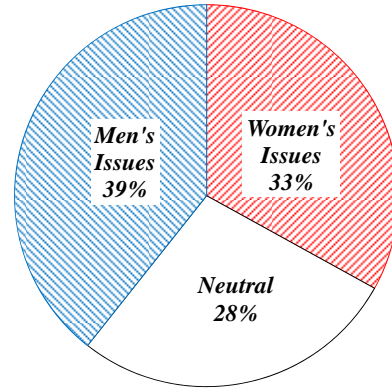
Of which, 0.9 receive *action in committee:*

Men's Issues 38%
Women's Issues 32%
Neutral 30%

Of which, 1.6 receive *action in committee:*

Men's Issues 44%
Women's Issues 29%
Neutral 27%

And 0.3 *become law:*

Men's Issues 30%
Women's Issues 31%
Neutral 39%

And 0.4 *become law:*

Men's Issues 41%
Women's Issues 25%
Neutral 34%
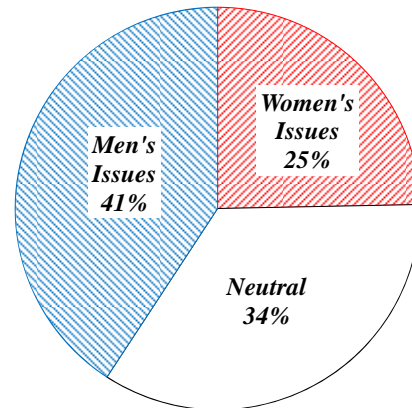
# Figure 4: Women's Issues as Share of Laws, Over Time
## (Excluding Government Operations and Public Lands)

**Women Sponsors**

1973-78



Women's Issues 13%

Men's Issues 33%

Neutral 54%

**Men Sponsors**

1973-78



Women's Issues 21%

Men's Issues 42%

Neutral 37%

1997-2002



Women's Issues 38%

Men's Issues 52%

Neutral 10%

1997-2002



Women's Issues 30%

Men's Issues 37%

Neutral 33%
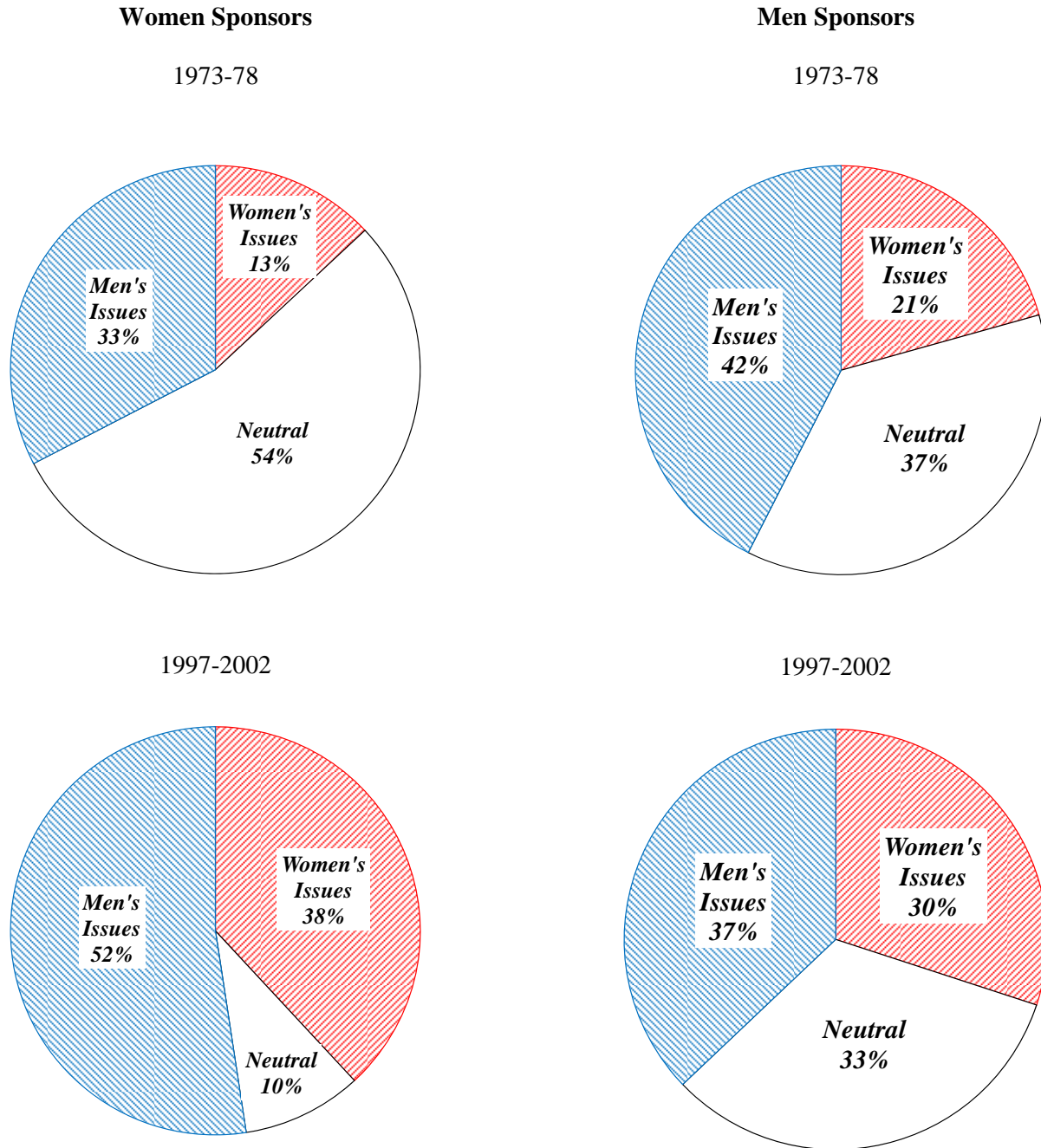
**Supplemental Appendix:**
**Analyzing the Impact of Committee Chairs and Seniority**
**on Women's Success across Issue Areas**

In the text, we establish that women experience a lower success rate than do men, particularly on their women's issue bills. In this supplemental appendix, we explore the extent to which these aggregate patterns may be due to the lower seniority and limited committee chair positions held by women. As illustrated in Figure 2, we calculated success rates in each issue area (i.e., total number of bills that became law in issue area $i$, divided by the total number of bills that were introduced in issue area $i$) for male and female sponsors, and then tested to see whether these proportions were (statistically) different from each other. For this appendix, we then engaged in similar analyses, focusing only on those members who did not hold a committee chair, or those members who were relatively junior in seniority (defined here as having served in five or fewer previous Congresses), to see if the gender differences persisted in such cases.

Although this approach is the most straightforward, a variety of alternative approaches were explored. For example, one alternative way to engage this question would be to analyze the number of bills that a member introduces in each issue area that are passed into law, via a count model such as negative binomial regression (i.e., Anderson et al. 2003), as a function of the member's gender, seniority, and whether the member holds a committee chair (as well as other possible variables), to test whether gender is a statistically significant determinant of legislative success in a given issue area, after controlling for whether a member is a chair and/or relatively senior. Unfortunately, our focus on issue-by-issue policy areas prevents this approach from yielding sufficient data to draw robust inferences. Specifically, due to the limited number of bills that are passed in any given issue, in comparison to the number of bills that are introduced (and introduced by the limited number of female legislators in particular), such models (as well

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as zero-inflated negative binomial regression models) often failed to converge or to produce results that were robust across specifications. After exploring various alternative approaches, we ultimately opted to embrace the former option for data presentation, which provides a transparent comparison to the findings in Figure 2, without complicating matters by relying on (possibly) unstable results that emerge from more sophisticated parametric and nonparametric techniques. Future work analyzing these questions in the context of state legislatures may provide opportunities for further multivariate analyses, given the larger number of female state legislators (and likewise the larger number of bill introductions and successes across genders), in comparison to the U.S. Congress.

Table S1 presents the results of our analyses. The first column of data shows the male-female differences by issue area, as illustrated in Figure 2. The next column shows the results upon excluding bills sponsored by committee chairs. Here, we see a weakening of the results in many issue areas, including: Labor, Employment, and Immigration; Civil Rights and Liberties; and Defense. In contrast, upon setting aside chairs, men do better than previously estimated in such issues as Transportation and Environment.

The next column includes only the subset of men and women who have five or fewer previous terms in Congress. This is intended to eliminate the seniority advantage held by men. For this subset of data, the only statistically significant success rates between men and women exist for Education, International Affairs, Macroeconomics, Foreign Trade, and Agriculture. In the final column, upon setting aside both committee chairs and more senior lawmakers, men and women exhibit no statistically significant differences in their success rates on the women's issues that they sponsor, although greater success rates for men persist in four other issue areas. In sum, the analyses reported here illustrate that the lower success rates for women, specifically on

women's issues, may well be due to the lower levels of seniority and the diminished rates of

holding committee chairs among the women in our dataset.

**Table S1: Differences between Men's and Women's Success Rates, by Issue**

| Issue Type | Percentage Difference | Percentage Difference, Excluding Chairs | Percentage Difference, Excluding More Senior Members[a] | Percentage Difference, Excluding Chairs and More Senior Members |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Women's Issues* | | | | |
| Health | 0.781*** | 0.688*** | 0.117 | 0.096 |
| Labor | 0.904*** | 0.349 | 0.040 | 0.043 |
| Civil Rights | 0.874* | 0.405 | -0.249 | -0.325 |
| Education | 1.190** | 1.214*** | 0.846* | 0.802 |
| Law/Family | 0.231 | -0.333 | -0.567 | -0.563 |
| | | | | |
| *Neutral Issues* | | | | |
| Welfare | 0.535 | 0.202 | -0.175 | -0.174 |
| Housing | 1.455*** | 0.993** | -0.036 | -0.035 |
| Defense | 1.262* | 0.762 | -0.089 | -0.142 |
| Transportation | -2.420** | 0.691 | 0.681 | 0.551 |
| International | 4.493*** | 4.932*** | 2.917*** | 2.934*** |
| Government | -0.341 | -1.217* | -0.671 | -0.693 |
| | | | | |
| *Men's Issues* | | | | |
| Macroeconomics | 2.023*** | 0.688*** | 0.649*** | 0.507*** |
| Trade | 0.734 | 0.347 | 0.831** | 0.805** |
| Energy | -0.069 | -0.170 | -0.739 | -0.734 |
| Banking | 0.419 | -0.558 | -0.981 | -1.080 |
| Agriculture | 3.223*** | 2.225*** | 1.840*** | 1.845*** |
| Environment | -0.574 | 1.707** | 0.867 | 0.550 |
| Science | 1.414 | 0.669 | 0.819 | 0.824 |
| Public Lands | -0.416 | -0.845 | -0.241 | -0.306 |

*\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.10*, one-tailed-tests, where each column measures (% of bills introduced by men that are signed into law) – (% of bills that are introduced by women that are signed into law). Positive values denote greater success by male lawmakers.

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[a] "More Senior Members" is defined as any legislator who has completed more than five terms.