

When Are Women More Effective Lawmakers Than Men?

Craig Volden, University of Virginia*
Alan E. Wiseman, Vanderbilt University
Dana E. Wittmer, Colorado College

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Abstract

Previous scholarship has demonstrated that female lawmakers differ from their male counterparts by exerting higher effort, by being more policy focused, and by engaging more fully in consensus-building activities. We argue that these behavioral differences do not serve women equally well in all institutional settings. Contentious and partisan activities of male lawmakers may help them outperform women when in a polarized majority party. However, in the minority party, while men may choose to obstruct and delay, women continue to work hard, focus on policy goals, and build coalitions. We find strong evidence that minority party women in the U.S. House of Representatives are better able to keep their sponsored bills alive through later stages of the legislative process than are minority party men, across the 93rd-110th Congresses (1973-2008). The opposite is true for majority party women, however, who counterbalance this lack of later success by introducing a greater amount of legislation. Moreover, while the legislative style of minority party women has served them well consistently across the past four decades, majority party women have become less effective as Congress has become more polarized.

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The 1992 congressional elections marked a watershed moment in American electoral history, with far and away the largest influx of women elected into the U.S. Congress. With a combined number of 48 women elected to the House, and 6 women sitting in the Senate, 1992 was denoted the “Year of the Woman,” with the implicit promise for the 103rd Congress to produce dramatic policy changes in the United States. While it is true that the 103rd Congress ushered in a notable increase in women in the U.S. House and Senate, it was not clear, *ex ante*, how an increase in the number of women in Congress would necessarily induce notable political and policy differences from what was deemed “politics as usual.” Would these new lawmakers be able to effectively turn their ideas and policy goals into the law of the land?

Unfortunately, such a question is difficult to answer, in no small part due to the puzzle of conflicting scholarly evidence about the overall effectiveness of female legislators. Some studies show women to be more effective than their male counterparts (e.g., Anzia and Berry 2011; Volden and Wiseman 2011), some less effective (e.g., Lazarus and Steigerwalt 2011), and some equally effective (e.g., Jeydel and Taylor 2003), both within Congress and across U.S. state legislatures (e.g., Bratton and Haynie 1999; Saint-Germain 1989). We argue that this puzzle can be resolved by uniting two disparate literatures on legislative politics. One, focused on gender and legislative behavior, has uncovered substantial evidence that men and women behave differently in legislative settings. The second focuses on legislative institutions, such as committees and parties, illustrating their importance in bringing about new public policies. Put simply, we argue that the goals and typical legislative styles of women serve them extraordinarily well in some institutional settings and quite poorly in others.

More specifically, substantial scholarly work has established gender to be an important variable for explaining political behavior and legislative interactions.¹ Numerous studies (e.g., Barnello and Bratton 2007; Boles 2001; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Burrell 1994; Carroll 2001; Poggione 2004; Reingold 1992; Saint-Germain 1989; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Swers 2002; Thomas and Welch 1991, 2001) have demonstrated that female legislators are more likely than their male counterparts to sponsor “women’s issue” bills such as education, child-care, and family health legislation. Additional gender differences have been found everywhere from leadership styles (Jewell and Whicker 1994; Rosenthal 1998), to the nature of constituency service (Richardson and Freeman 1995; Thomas 1992), to communication patterns in hearings (Kathlene 1994). Taken together, this literature collectively points to discernable differences between the behaviors of men and women in Congress.

Having identified these baseline differences, however, this line of research has only tentatively taken the next step to focus on how these behaviors map into legislative outcomes. Separate from the literature on women and politics, much legislative scholarship has analyzed how parliamentary rules (e.g., Dion and Huber 1996), parties (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 2005), coalition leaders (e.g., Groseclose and Snyder 1996), the committee system (e.g., Krehbiel 1991), and other institutional features of Congress influence the creation of public policies. These theories and perspectives are all, purportedly, gender-neutral. Yet, in light of the research noted above, one wonders whether this inattention to gender differences has limited our understanding of legislative politics and policymaking. For example, although we know that female lawmakers

¹ Throughout this manuscript, we will be using the term “gender differences” to denote differences between men and women. That said, many scholars might argue that while sex is biologically determined, gender is socially constructed. As Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995, 6) explain, “Sex relates to the biological categories we know as males and females.... Gender is the social construction of biological sex, how we take biological differences and give them social meaning. In the process, we create a set of practices and norms for interpersonal behavior, roles for individuals to perform, ways of being, ways of knowing, standpoints and worldview.”

tend to be more collaborative than their male counterparts (e.g., Carey, Niemi, and Powell 1998; Rinehart 1991; Rosenthal 1998; Thomas 1994), it is not clear whether these more collaborative legislative styles might help or hinder women as they navigate the legislative waters to set the agenda, build coalitions, and broker deals necessary to create laws. More generally, given that Congress (and the U.S. House, in particular) conducts its business according to well-specified rules and procedures, it is unclear what impact, if any, the underlying behavioral differences between men and women might have for overall legislative effectiveness.

Of course, it is possible that these behavioral differences across men and women do not matter much at all for which bills become law and which lawmakers are best able to advance their agenda items. Instead, perhaps the electoral environment that female candidates face helps explain their differential effectiveness. For example, Anzia and Berry (2011) argue that “sex based selection” in the electoral environment ensures that the average female lawmaker is generally more effective than the average male lawmaker. More specifically, because women find themselves facing a generally more challenging electoral environment than men, those female candidates who succeed in being elected are of exceptionally high quality (and generically higher quality than the average male candidate).²

While electoral and legislative politics are undeniably intertwined, we suggest that the behavioral differences between men and women found across numerous legislatures are not merely an artifact of electoral challenges. And these behavioral tendencies allow women to be more effective than men given the right configuration of lawmaking institutions. Specifically, we draw upon the substantial literature suggesting that female lawmakers tend to be more policy-

² Women may face a more challenging electoral environment than men for a variety of reasons, including having to face more candidates in the primary and/or general elections (Lawless and Pearson 2008, Palmer and Simon 2006), having to face consistently higher quality challengers (Milyo and Schosberg 2000), receiving less support from party organizations (Sanbonmatsu 2006), and needing to work harder to secure campaign funds (Jenkins 2007).

focused, to exert higher effort, and to engage more in consensus building than their male counterparts, tendencies partly developed as coping mechanisms to help overcome institutional barriers that women face in Congress.³

Any given political strategy will work better in some settings than in others. Members who are talented at seeing solutions to policy problems may not be as skilled at navigating those policy solutions through the legislative process. So, too, may the behavioral tendencies of women in Congress serve them well only under specific circumstances. Rather than take up all of the institutional intricacies of the U.S. Congress, we illustrate the conditional nature of the legislative effectiveness of women in Congress with a focus on political parties. Specifically, we note the significant structural differences between members of the majority and the minority party. Majority party members can advance their agendas without substantial coalition building across party lines; they often can elevate partisan politics above policy and still prevail. In contrast, to achieve legislative success, minority party members must maintain a focus on policy over political advantage, must reach out to majority party members, and must work extremely hard to gain policy expertise and political acumen.

This latter set of skills and behaviors nicely matches those ascribed to female legislators throughout the literature on gender and politics. We therefore argue that women are likely to be more effective than their male counterparts when in the minority party in Congress. Such legislative success should manifest itself in the advancement of their sponsored legislation further through the lawmaking process. Such a result, however, should differ for members of the

³ For instance, as revealed by an open-ended survey of state-level lawmakers, approximately one-quarter of all women expressed concerns about discrimination, citing issues such as “getting people to respect me as a woman,” “being a woman in an old boys club,” “isolation of women members,” and “having my male counterparts deal with me on their level” (Thomas 2005, 252). It may not be surprising, therefore, that since the early 1970s, five percent of all men compared to one percent of all women held a committee chair in any given Congress; and in the 93rd through the 109th Congresses only *three* women held committee chairs in the U.S. House of Representatives, with two of them only serving a single term each as chair.

majority party. Here, especially in recent polarized Congresses, cross-party policy coalitions should be of little use, leaving women no substantially more effective than men.

In the following sections, we develop this argument in hypotheses that build upon the existing literature about the behavioral tendencies of female lawmakers, and test these hypotheses by drawing on a dataset of every bill introduced by men and women in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1973-2008. Such analyses support the hypotheses and demonstrate the conditions under which women are more (or less) effective lawmakers in Congress than are men. These conditions are not merely derived from the electoral challenges all women face, but instead arise from the institutional positions women find themselves in within the Congress itself.

Our results follow from quantitative analyses of the fate of all 138,246 bills introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives over the past four decades. While such an approach provides the broad outlines of conditions under which women are more effective at advancing their sponsored legislation than are men, it is also limited in a variety of ways. First, in looking at the progression of bills through Congress, we are studying only one form of the “effectiveness” of lawmakers. Members of Congress advance their own interests and those of their constituents not only through their sponsored legislation, but also through a complex set of activities ranging from managing large staffs, to negotiating behind-the-scenes deals, to fundraising, to bringing home projects to the district, and beyond. Gender differences across this range of activities also merit study, but such an enterprise is beyond the scope of our present research. Second, while we uncover broad patterns that may result from such activities as high effort or consensus building, we are not currently able to establish the exact mechanisms that produce our aggregate

patterns. As such, future work is needed to clarify the manner in which effort, a policy focus, and/or consensus building activities influence lawmaking, which remain as conjectures here.

Third, we recognize the inherent limits of the quantitative approach taken in this study. More specifically, some scholars (e.g., Duerst-Lahti 2002a, 2002b; Hawkesworth 2003; Kenney 1996) suggest that the subtleties of conversational dynamics, norms of masculinity, and gendering of institutions may all be better understood by employing various qualitative methods. Our study seeks to complement such qualitative work; 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 of Representatives, we cannot speak to gender and effectiveness in the U.S. Senate, in state legislatures, or in international political bodies. Our hope is that the arguments and findings that are presented in this paper can be applied more broadly in future work.⁴

Theoretical Considerations

In its simplest form, our argument is that behavioral differences between male and female legislators interact with legislative institutions to lead to differential patterns of lawmaking effectiveness between men and women. To make this argument more concrete, we limit our study to the institution of majority and minority parties in Congress and to three behavioral tendencies of women in legislatures relative to men – their high effort, policy focus, and consensus building.⁵ We begin with a description of these latter three behavioral tendencies.

In motivating our analysis, we draw upon a substantial literature that identifies distinctive behaviors of women in legislatures, which may influence their legislative effectiveness under

⁴ We also hope that future tests across theories that account for gender differences both electorally and in legislative institutions can be conducted by building on our approach, perhaps by focusing on the state level in the U.S.

⁵ In so doing, we wish neither to suggest parties as the only relevant differentiating institution, nor to argue that these three tendencies are the most important gender differences, nor to imply that all women or all men are alike in their lawmaking behaviors in these settings.

certain conditions. First, scholars have suggested that female lawmakers might generally work harder than their male counterparts. In framing this argument, scholars have suggested that, because the political world has traditionally been “a man’s business” (Githens and Prestage 1977, 339), female legislators may feel that they “have to work harder than men to be equally successful and respected” (Reingold 1996, 475).⁶ Consistent with this argument, Reingold (1996, 475) finds that “fewer Arizona women than men felt that they had the latitude or ability to be successful without working extremely hard.” Therefore, it is not surprising that, in a nationwide survey conducted by the Center for American Women and Politics, 74% of female state legislators reported working harder than their male colleagues (CAWP 2001). Ann Richards playfully summed up this notion by declaring that “Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, only backwards and in high heels.”⁷

In addition to these performance pressures, women may also be exerting higher levels of effort because they are concerned with a greater number of causes and constituents, as a result of “surrogate representation.”⁸ In other words, Congresswomen may feel that it is their responsibility to represent all women, even those outside of their district’s borders (Carroll 2002),⁹ which may lead to them cultivating diverse and substantial legislative portfolios.¹⁰ In sum, surrogate representation, combined with the possibility that women may feel an increased

⁶ A growing body of work explores Congress as a gendered space, identifying how (e.g., Acker 1992, 567) “the institutional structures of the United States and other societies are organized along lines of gender.”

⁷ Lawless and Fox (2005) provide further examples and an excellent discussion of this topic.

⁸ As Mansbridge (2003, 522) describes, surrogate representation is “representation by a representative with whom one has no electoral relationship.”

⁹ As Barbara Boxer explains, “There are still so few women in Congress...so you really do have to represent much more than your own state...women from all over the country really do follow what you do and rely on you to speak out for them” (Carroll 2002, 53).

¹⁰ In a related vein, Pearson and Dancy (forthcoming) argue that women’s “underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress, coupled with the related challenges that female legislators face in a predominantly male institution” will induce women to be more active and visible than their male colleagues. Consistent with this argument they find that women do, indeed, engage in more one-minute floor speeches than male legislators.

pressure to perform, suggest that women work harder than their male counterparts; and if so, this “high effort” might enhance their overall legislative effectiveness.

Second, women’s sense of surrogate representation and their focus on women’s issues may be closely tied to the goals of female politicians, which often differ from those of male politicians. Whereas women tend to seek office to bring about policy change, men enjoy the political, personal, and power aspects of lawmaking to a greater degree. For instance, in a survey of legislators from the states and Congress, Thomas, Herrick, and Braunstein (2002) find that most women became involved in politics because of “issues” (36%) or for “societal change” (42%), compared to just 15% and 28% for men, respectively. While women tended to seek “social change,” men were more likely to seek “personal fulfillment” through their legislative service (411). Policy success was reported to be a key goal for women in Congress who “were more likely than men to leave the legislature based on their perceived ability (or inability) to affect policy” (414).

Third, substantial scholarship has also uncovered significant differences between the political approaches employed by male and female lawmakers, with women being more collaborative and consensual, and men being more individualistic and competitive (e.g., Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Rinehart 1991; Rosenthal 1998; Thomas 1994).¹¹ For example, in their study of state legislatures, Carey, Niemi, and Powell (1998) find that women report spending more time engaging in building within-party and across-party coalitions than men. The authors conclude that women are “more committed team players than men” and that “gender differences

¹¹ Duerst-Lahti (2002a, 23) outlines a comprehensive overview of proto-attributed gender differences. Masculine traits are individuation, instrumental, rule-focused, dominate, power over, competition, hierarchy, speak out, public sphere, breadwinning; feminine traits are connection, contextual, relationship focused, collaborate, power to, cooperation, web-center, listen well, home sphere, caregiving. A counterpoint to this argument, however, can be found in Reingold’s (1996) analysis of the Arizona and California state legislatures, wherein she demonstrates how male and female legislators report themselves as engaging in substantively similar legislative strategies.

are more pronounced with respect to activities that involve communication and compromise” (Carey, Niemi and Powell 1998, 101). Turning to laboratory settings, Kennedy (2003) finds that female subjects are more likely to desire universalistic outcomes and group cooperation, whereas male subjects are more likely to prefer competitive solutions. These traits collectively contribute to female majority groups being more likely to arrive at unanimous and consensual decisions. Although these feminized strategies of cooperation, conciliation, and consensus building have been theorized as excluding or hindering female legislators in national politics, it seems plausible that these leadership approaches may be valuable under certain political circumstances.¹² Specifically, these strategies may help female legislators effectively work with members in the majority party coalition, even when they are members of the minority party.¹³ Hence, we might expect that minority party women are more effective than their male counterparts because they are able to form cross-party bridges in ways that are less common for men.¹⁴

While the behavioral literature has suggested that female legislators are more likely to exert high effort, to focus on policy over politics, and to engage in consensus building tactics than their male counterparts, much less is known about how these behaviors affect the advancement of legislation sponsored by women, or their ultimate effect on the adoption of new public policies. We argue that such links depend conditionally on legislative institutions. In

¹² These traits that are typically ascribed to women are thought to be undervalued, or even detrimental. And although increased “feminization” in leadership styles has occurred at the state level (Jewell and Whicker 1994), it appears as if legislative professionalism and feminization are negatively related (Duerst-Lahti 2002b).

¹³ As Senator Barbara Mikulski claims, female legislators “check our party at the door and work really on civility” (Alvarez 2000).

¹⁴ Yet another possible reason that female legislators might be more effective than their male counterparts is that they engage in issue specialization, by focusing their legislative efforts on specific policy matters; and they are deferred to on these matters by the majority of the legislature. Volden, Wiseman and Wittmer (2010) investigates whether such a pattern of policy specialization and legislative deference occurs across the 93rd - 110th Congresses. He finds that, while female legislators appear to focus their efforts largely on “women’s issue” bills (i.e., Barnello and Bratton 2007; Carroll 2001; Poggione 2004; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Swers 1998, 2002, 2005; Thomas and Welch 1991, 2001), their efforts are not systematically rewarded, as they are no more likely to see their bills in these areas pass the House nor to be signed into law than their male counterparts.

particular, one important consideration regarding whether these behavioral tendencies of women translate into effective lawmaking is the majority or minority party status of lawmakers.

We focus here on party status because of the crucial role that party plays in Congress (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 2005).¹⁵

If women truly exert higher effort than men, then, regardless of party status, women will begin the lawmaking process with a more substantial legislative portfolio than their male counterparts, due to their hard work needed to overcome gender biases. In addition, the pull of surrogate representation, and the increased legislative portfolio that may accompany it, should be relevant to women regardless of whether they are in the majority or minority party.¹⁶

While the impact of exerting high effort may pertain equally to both majority and minority parties, the effects of a policy focus and consensus building activities may not be as party-neutral. More specifically, unless one's main goal is to bring about policy change, a minority party member's best strategy may just be to obstruct and help ensure policy gridlock (e.g., Brady and Volden 2006). Minority party men often choose this path, while women are more driven to bring about social change and more willing to make compromises to facilitate such change. Moreover, the propensity of women to be "better at working across the aisle" (Alvarez 2000) may serve mainly to enhance the effectiveness of women in the minority party. Since members of the majority party could exclude the minority party rather than collaborate and cooperate, consensus building may not necessarily advantage female members in the majority.

¹⁵ Because of such intriguing work as Carroll (2001) and Swers (2005), in the analyses that follows, we also controlled for legislators' party affiliations (i.e., Republican or Democratic) and found that party affiliation has no substantive bearing on legislators' effectiveness; rather, the crucial consideration is, indeed, majority or minority party status. These results are presented in Supplemental Appendix Table S1, which replicates our analysis in Table 1 (below), controlling for a female legislator's party affiliation, rather than status, and confirms that our general findings regarding women are not specific to a woman's party, but rather to whether her party controls the House.

¹⁶ Consistent with this argument, Carroll (2002, 56) finds that "with few exceptions, a commitment to representing women was widely shared by congresswomen regardless of their party, ideology, race, ethnicity, tenure in office, or institutional position."

The propensity of female lawmakers “to bring people together” (Carroll 2002, 61) may be less rewarded under such circumstances. Drawing on these arguments, we arrive at our first hypothesis.

Party Differences Hypothesis: *In the minority party, women are more effective than men due to their high effort, policy focus, and consensus building. In the majority party, women and men are more likely to be equally effective.*

The Party Differences Hypothesis suggests that the relative legislative effectiveness of men and women differs by party status. However, such differences may be assuaged or exacerbated by the nature of party conflict in the Congress. For instance, for decades up through the 1980s, the majority Democratic Party was internally divided between conservative Southern Democrats and more liberal Northern Democrats (Black 2004). Democratic women who were able to bridge this divide may have been more effective than their male counterparts, just as they would be in the minority party. In contrast, the higher degree of polarization between Democrats and Republicans in recent decades (e.g., McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006) may strongly reinforce the logic of the Party Differences Hypothesis. In fact, under “conditional party government” (Aldrich and Rohde 2001), with parties polarized against one another but internally united, one might expect bipartisan consensus-building to give way to strong majority party rule, which could favor more typically male strategies. Such conditions lead to a second hypothesis.

Polarized Party Differences Hypothesis: *With less polarized parties, both majority and minority party women will be more effective than their male counterparts. With more polarized parties, this effect will continue for minority party women but diminish for majority party women.*

The Party Differences Hypothesis suggests that overall legislative effectiveness may differ by party status; and the Polarized Party Differences Hypothesis argues that this effect will

be particularly profound when the parties are polarized. In addition to these aggregate effects, the logic above indicates that we should be able to detect these gender differences through specific patterns across various stages of the legislative process. First, if women are generally exerting higher effort than men, then both majority and minority party women would likely introduce more legislation than their male counterparts. In other words, the increased performance pressures of being a woman, combined with feeling “a responsibility to represent those concerns of women in addition to representing the concerns of their districts” (Dodson 1998, 130) should result in women having larger legislative portfolios than men.

Once a bill is introduced, however, hard work may only advance sponsored legislation so far, as further movement depends on institutional positioning and leadership strategies. And, as noted above, we argue that potentially effective strategies for members of the majority party are quite distinct from effective strategies for those in the minority. Specifically, while “leadership styles that lean more towards consensus building may be less efficient and not as conducive to moving an issue through the legislative process” (Kathlene 1995, 187) for majority party members, they are crucial for members in the minority party. Since members of Congress are responsible for assembling “a coalition that will carry the bill to passage,” (Tamerius 1995, 103), it is essential for minority party members to be able to cooperate and work across the aisle in order to build enough support to push their bills through the pipeline. If, as the Party Differences Hypothesis suggests, consensus building is essential for minority party women and relatively ineffective for majority party women, these different effects should be most evident in later legislative stages, such as in committee, on the floor, and in the enactment into law.¹⁷

¹⁷ Note that we are not arguing that only women in the minority party engage in consensus building activities. Rather, our claim is that women, generally more so than men, engage in these types of strategies; and that the impact of these strategies will be more substantively significant for minority party women than majority party women due to the fact that majority party women are already part of a natural majority coalition. In contrast, minority party

Legislative Advancement Differences Hypothesis: *Women in the minority party will introduce more legislation than their male counterparts, and their effectiveness will increase in stages that depend on consensus building. Women in the majority party will introduce more legislation than their male counterparts, but their effectiveness will diminish in later legislative stages.*

Taken together, these hypotheses seek to translate a well-established body of behavioral scholarship into specific conditions under which female legislators attain an equal, or greater, degree of effectiveness than their male counterparts, despite the numerous obstacles that they might face. The next section discusses how we test these hypotheses.

Empirical Approach

To investigate the above hypotheses, we rely upon a multi-stage method of analysis that identifies the success of each member's sponsored legislation at each stage of the legislative process, from bill introduction to enactment into law.¹⁸ Such an approach allows us to determine whether women are more effective than their male counterparts on the whole, as well as from which stage(s) of the legislative process, and for which party, this enhanced effectiveness is derived. We build upon previous work by Volden and Wiseman (2010), in which they develop a Legislative Effectiveness Score (LES) for each member of Congress based on how many bills each legislator introduces, as well as how many of those bills receive action in committee, pass out of committee and receive action of the floor of the House, pass the House, and ultimately become law.¹⁹ Unlike a typical "hit-rate" analysis that looks only at bill conversions from introductions into law, this type of analysis can account for whether there are gender differences

women are disadvantaged in the legislative process by default (due to their party's position), and hence, their consensus-building activities will be particularly notable in comparison to their minority party male colleagues.

¹⁸ Here we are therefore setting aside cosponsorship and amendment activities, as well as non-bill-related activities and other potential determinants of effectiveness for members of Congress. An examination of cosponsorship data, not reported here due to space considerations, shows a significant positive gap in the number of cosponsors gained by minority party women over minority party men, with a smaller and less significant gap for majority party women.

¹⁹ For a more thorough description of this process, see Volden and Wiseman (2010).

in the quantity of bills introduced, and how successful the bills are throughout key intermediate stages of the legislative process.

In addition to tracking each member's bill successes, the LES method also accounts for bills' varying levels of substantive importance.²⁰ For example, dedicating a statue can arguably be achieved with less legislative effort than passing the Family and Medical Leave Act. To account for such variation, Volden and Wiseman (2010) categorize all bills as being commemorative/symbolic, substantive, or substantively significant.²¹ After classifying each bill into one of these three categories, the LES is calculated for each member i in each Congress t , as follows:

$$LES_{it} = \left[\begin{aligned} & \left(\frac{\alpha BILL_{it}^C + \beta BILL_{it}^S + \gamma BILL_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N BILL_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N BILL_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N BILL_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \\ & + \left(\frac{\alpha AIC_{it}^C + \beta AIC_{it}^S + \gamma AIC_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N AIC_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N AIC_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N AIC_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \\ & + \left(\frac{\alpha ABC_{it}^C + \beta ABC_{it}^S + \gamma ABC_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N ABC_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N ABC_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N ABC_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \\ & + \left(\frac{\alpha PASS_{it}^C + \beta PASS_{it}^S + \gamma PASS_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N PASS_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N PASS_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N PASS_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \\ & + \left(\frac{\alpha LAW_{it}^C + \beta LAW_{it}^S + \gamma LAW_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N LAW_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N LAW_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N LAW_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \end{aligned} \right] \left[\frac{N}{5} \right],$$

²⁰ While our analysis implicitly assumes that members of Congress want the bills that they introduce to advance further in the legislative process (and ultimately signed into law), we concede that legislators could also be introducing bills for position-taking, strategic, or other idiosyncratic reasons. That said, we feel comfortable in assuming that the overwhelming majority of legislation that is introduced is sponsored with *sincere* motives (i.e., wanting to see the legislation advance in some capacity), rather than these other considerations.

²¹ A bill is deemed substantively significant if it had been the subject of an end of the year write-up in the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*. A bill was deemed commemorative/symbolic if it satisfied any one of several criteria such as providing for a renaming, commemoration, and so on. All other bills (as well as "commemorative/symbolic" bills that were also the subject of a *CQ Almanac* write-up) were categorized as substantive.

where the five large terms represent the member's fraction of bills (1) introduced, (2) receiving action in committee, (3) receiving action beyond committee, (4) passing the House, and (5) becoming law, relative to all N legislators. Within each of these five terms, commemorative bills are weighted by $\alpha = 1$, substantive bills by $\beta = 5$, and substantively significant by $\gamma = 10$ in line with Volden and Wiseman's earlier analysis. The overall weighting of $N/5$ normalizes the average LES to take a value of 1 in each Congress.²²

Several features of this construction are worth noting. First, because of the substantial differences in the number of bills that are introduced (138,246 bills over our time period) and the number of bills that advance to further stages (5,907 becoming law, for example), this operationalization necessarily gives greater weight to members who are more successful in later stages of the process (e.g., having a bill pass the House or become law) than earlier stages of the process (e.g., bill introduction or action in committee).²³ Thus, if women are introducing more bills than their male counterparts, but are less successful at getting their bills passed into law, we should see this reflected in their LES values. Moreover, since this approach uses the number of bills passing through each stage, rather than the percentage of bills, a seemingly insignificant coefficient may actually be quite telling. For example, if women are introducing significantly more bills than men, but have similar numbers passing the House, this means that a lower *percentage* of the bills that a woman introduces is advancing through the pipeline.

In order to test our hypotheses, we begin by estimating a series of OLS regressions where the dependent variable is a member's Legislative Effectiveness Score. Since our hypotheses

²² While it is true that much has changed in regards to legislative procedure during the time that we study (e.g., the rise of omnibus bills, committee and conference committee written bills, etc.), much remains the same (e.g., comparable success rates across time, when controlling for relevant institutional positions) in the lawmaking process, such that we consider our approach to the data to be appropriate.

²³ In other words, this empirical specification ensures that the impact of a bill reaching the later steps in the process (e.g., passing the House, being signed into law) on a member's LES effectively dwarfs the relative impact of introducing several bills that never make it out of committee.

concern the difference between women in the majority and minority parties, we include indicator variables for whether a legislator is *Female*, and either a *Majority Party Female* or a *Minority Party Female*.²⁴ A *Lagged Effectiveness Score* is incorporated into the analysis to control for the fact that members are expected to have consistent interest and innate abilities from one Congress to the next.²⁵ *Seniority* and its squared value measure the number of terms that the member has served in Congress, which helps to capture the institutional influence that might be acquired by more senior members (and the squared value allows the seniority effect to taper off over time).²⁶

State Legislative Experience is a dummy variable that captures whether a member served in the state legislature prior to entering Congress. As Carroll (2004, 6) points out, “many of the women who run for Congress have gained experience and visibility in state government before seeking federal office.” In fact, over 40% of the female Representatives in the 107th Congress had served in their state’s legislative body (Carroll 2004, 6), which one might expect would translate into increased effectiveness. Because state legislatures vary significantly in their professionalism, we also interact State Legislative Experience with an updated version of Squire’s (1992) *Legislative Professionalism* measure to account for the possibility that members who served in more professional state legislatures will be more effective in Congress.

Majority Party is a dummy variable for whether a member is in the majority party, which is thought to be important for policy advancement generally. *Majority Party Leadership* accounts for whether a member is among the leadership (majority party leader, deputy leader,

²⁴ See the Appendix for a description of all of the independent variables.

²⁵ A member’s lagged effectiveness score in any Congress (t) is that member’s LES in the previous Congress ($t-1$). Hence, freshman members are excluded from any empirical analyses where we control for a member’s lagged LES.

²⁶ While seniority is relevant to any investigation of legislative effectiveness, it is especially important to consider in the context of gender and politics. The “Year of the Woman,” when female legislators gained 19 seats in the House, did not occur until the 103rd Congress, and it was not until the 109th Congress that women made up more than 15% of the House. Therefore, many female legislators have fewer years of experience than their male counterparts, which may be related to their abilities to be effective lawmakers.

whip, and deputy whip), with a similar variable included also for *Minority Party Leadership*. *Speaker* is a dummy variable for the Speaker of the House; *Committee Chair* captures whether a member is a chair of a standing committee; and *Power Committee* captures whether a member serves on the Rules, Appropriations, or Ways and Means Committees. All of these variables are particularly relevant as controls for this analysis, as female legislators have been generally less likely to attain these positions of influence, and we are interested in women's effectiveness when accounting for these institutional differences.²⁷

Distance from Median captures the absolute distance between the member and the chamber median on the DW-NOMINATE ideological scale (built upon Poole and Rosenthal 1997), to control for the possibility of more centrist members offering proposals that are more likely to find their way into law. Since previous research has demonstrated that female lawmakers are more liberal than their male counterparts, especially when in the Republican Party (e.g., Burrell 1994; Swers 1998, 2005), this variable is particularly relevant to our study.²⁸

Members' personal characteristics, including *African American* and *Latino* are incorporated because they have been shown to be important in earlier studies of effectiveness. Approximately 23% of the women that are currently serving in Congress are women of color, and minorities make up a larger proportion of the female delegation than of the male delegation.²⁹ *Size of Congressional Delegation* within the member's state captures the possibility of natural coalitions among members who share the same state constituencies. *Vote Share* and its square are included to allow for the possibility that members from safe seats can

²⁷ As one example, even though women make up an all-time high of 17% in the current Congress, they still comprise less than 10% of the Ways and Means Committee.

²⁸ In auxiliary analysis, we estimated identical specifications as those in Tables 1 and 2, but controlling for *Distance from Majority Party Median*, rather than *Distance from Median*. Our results are substantively identical to those reported in Tables 1 and 2, with *Distance from Majority Party Median* being negative and statistically significant.

²⁹ For example, African American women comprised approximately 13% of all female Representatives, while African American males represented less than 7% of all men in the House, over our period of study.

dedicate greater time and effort to internal legislative effectiveness rather than external electioneering, and to allow this effect to be nonlinear.

Results

Our first area of inquiry concerns how majority and minority party status may impact the legislative effectiveness of women. To reiterate, the Party Differences Hypothesis states that women in the minority party benefit from the combination of high effort, a policy focus, and consensus-building; however, these tendencies are less valuable for members of the majority party. Thus, to the extent that women in general are more effective in the LES measure as a whole, we expect women in the minority party to be driving such an overall finding. In order to test the hypothesis, we conduct two multivariate analyses with a member's overall LES value as the dependent variable. In the first analysis we include an independent variable for whether the member is female, which is meant to replicate Volden and Wiseman's (2011) findings demonstrating that female lawmakers are generally more effective than their male counterparts, all else equal. The second analysis, however, moves beyond existing findings by controlling for whether the female legislator is in the majority or minority party.³⁰

As Model 1 of Table 1 demonstrates, female members do appear to be more effective than their male counterparts. In fact, being a female lawmaker translates into approximately a 10% increase in legislative effectiveness, given the mean LES value of 1.0 in each Congress.

³⁰ In the analysis that follows, we also considered how the aggregate number of women in the legislature might affect female legislators' effectiveness. As motivated by the "critical mass" literature (e.g., Kanter 1977), scholars have recently focused on whether and how increased numbers of female legislators impact political behavior and policy outputs (Bratton 2005; Crowley 2004; Thomas and Welch 1991). We engaged this point in two ways. First, following the lead of previous research, we examined whether there was a significant increase in the legislative effectiveness of women after they reached the critical (i.e., Kanter 1977) threshold of 15% of the chamber, which occurred in the 109th Congress. Second, we also analyzed whether female legislative effectiveness increased over time, as the percentage of women in the chamber increased. In neither analysis did we find support for the presumed relationship between the number of women in Congress and legislative effectiveness. Of course, a plausible interpretation of these findings is that women have not yet obtained a critical mass in Congress; and hence, our null findings would be entirely consistent with the critical mass thesis.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

That being said, Model 2 suggests that this overall finding about gender and effectiveness is driven mainly by women in the minority party. The coefficient for minority party female is positive, highly significant, and nearly double that for majority party women. Although the coefficient for majority party female fails to attain statistical significance, it is positive. Put into more concrete terms, when compared to the average member of their party, women in the minority are about 33% more effective, and women in the majority are about 5% more effective than their male counterparts, all else equal.³¹ Taken as a whole, these results lend support to our Party Differences Hypothesis; minority party women seem to be more effective than minority party men, while majority party women are not significantly more effective than their male counterparts.

The Polarized Party Differences Hypothesis suggests that these findings should depend on the degree to which the two parties are polarized. Specifically, given our data, the 1970s and 1980s should generally show different patterns than the 1990s and 2000s. The latter era should show significant support for the Party Differences Hypothesis, whereas the earlier time period may show evidence of higher levels of effectiveness among women in both parties, as even the majority party Democrats needed significant consensus-building across its factions. Models 3 and 4 in Table 1 replicate the analysis of Model 2, breaking the data into two congressional eras (1970s-'80s and 1990s-2000s, respectively). In comparing across specifications, we see that the results are remarkably consistent for minority party women, who are significantly more effective than their male counterparts at moving bills through the legislative process. Although the coefficient on Majority Party Female in Model 3 is not statistically distinct from zero (given its

³¹ The relevant calculations for these percentages are based on the average Legislative Effectiveness Score among minority party members of 0.404 and among majority party members of 1.451.

large standard error), its size is on par with that for Minority Party Female. In the polarized era shown in Model 4, however, the Majority Party Female variable drops not only in statistical significance but also in substantive terms to zero.

This large-sample evidence comports nicely with numerous anecdotal accounts that point to how men and women behave differently upon moving from the majority party to the minority party, or vice versa. For example, consider Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Charles Schumer. Both served as Democrats from New York in the majority party in the 103rd House of Representatives. Both introduced legislation on war crimes, and both had their bills bottled up in the Subcommittee on International Law, Immigration, and Refugees within the House Committee on the Judiciary. In the 104th Congress, as minority party members under Republican control, Schumer chose to no longer even sponsor legislation on this topic, whereas Maloney built up support across party lines, helped navigate her War Crimes Disclosure Act through three different committees, and won its passage through the House and eventually into law.³² Across numerous other examples, highly partisan male lawmakers appear to take on a very different role when in the minority than they do when given more power. For instance, lists of the ten minority party members with the *lowest* Legislative Effectiveness Scores in each Congress during the era of Democratic control feature such names as Newt Gingrich, Tom DeLay, John Boehner, and Dick Cheney, none of whom would be thought of as ineffective upon gaining power.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

³² This is not to say that Schumer stopped his bill sponsorship activities altogether in the 104th Congress. Rather, it is the thousands of individual decisions like those in this example that bring about the overall statistical patterns uncovered in this paper.

In addition to the aggregate analyses of Table 1, we also estimated regression models, using the specification for Model 2 for each Congress separately.³³ The regression coefficients for Majority Party Female and Minority Party Female over time are plotted in Figure 1. It is important to recognize that this figure represents the *relative* effectiveness of women as compared to men. Taking the 104th Congress as an example, the LES gap of 0.8 between minority party women and majority party women is driven by the fact that women in the minority party are more effective than their male counterparts (with a 0.4 coefficient), whereas women in the majority are less effective than their male counterparts (with a coefficient of about -0.4). As can be clearly seen, compared to their male counterparts, women in the minority party have fared much better in every Congress other than the 93rd.

The findings for majority party women are much more uneven, but appear to be divided into two eras. Prior to the 100th Congress (1987-88), majority party women outperformed majority party men in all but one Congress. However, in the eleven Congresses since 1987, majority party women have been *less* effective than their male counterparts in eight, whereas minority party women have maintained their positive relative effectiveness. These results hold regardless of which party is in the majority; as the Democrats and Republicans held the House for comparable lengths of time throughout this period.³⁴ The results of Figure 1 and Table 1 thus provide significant support for the Polarized Party Differences Hypothesis.³⁵

However, as striking as these findings may be, it is difficult to fully understand gender and legislative effectiveness by only looking at these types of general analyses. Additional

³³ For the results depicted in Figure 1, the regressions did not include lagged dependent variables, as here we are looking at snapshots of the data rather than a cross-sectional time series.

³⁴ Democrats held the majority for five Congresses (100th - 103rd and 110th) and Republican held the majority for six Congresses (104th - 109th).

³⁵ The findings in Figure 1 are also consistent with the aggregate analysis in Models 3 and 4 in Table 1, aggregated by the decades of interest.

insight can be gleaned from unpacking effectiveness into the various stages of the legislative process. As noted previously, our dataset allows us to investigate effectiveness across five stages: bill introduction, action in committee, action beyond committee, passage of the House, and becoming law. Taking these stages into consideration, the Legislative Advancement Differences Hypothesis suggests that women in both the majority and minority party will introduce more legislation than their male counterparts, but only women in the minority will be more successful than men at getting their bills through the legislative pipeline. In order to investigate this possibility we conduct five separate OLS regressions, one for each stage of the legislative process.³⁶ In each analysis the dependent variable is the number of bills reaching that stage, and the independent variables include majority party women, minority party women, and the additional controls considered above.³⁷

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Model 5 in Table 2 demonstrates how gender and party status impact legislative effectiveness at the bill introduction stage. Consistent with the Legislative Advancement Differences Hypothesis, we find that, after controlling for other relevant factors, women in both the majority and minority party introduce more bills than do their male counterparts. However, this effect is only statistically significant for women in the majority party. In substantive terms, women in the majority party introduce 3.3 more bills than majority party men, which translates into about 17% more introductions on average by majority party women, when compared to majority party men. On the other hand, women in the minority party introduce only 0.75 more

³⁶ Analyzing these data with negative binomial regressions (e.g., Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003) and exploring the role of outliers both yield similar patterns to those reported here. For ease of interpretation and presentation, we continue to rely upon the ordinary least squares approach.

³⁷ Notice that here bills are not weighted by their commemorative or substantive nature, nor by any measure of their substantive significance. Running the analyses upon excluding commemorative bills yields similar results.

bills than their male counterparts all else equal, an increase that translates into approximately 5% more bills being introduced by minority party women than by minority party men.

Moving to the second part of the Legislative Advancement Differences Hypothesis, Models 6-9 illustrate how gender and party status impact effectiveness in the stages after bill introduction. With the exception of the number of bills receiving action in committee, the coefficients for minority party female are positive and statistically significant in every stage of the legislative process.³⁸ For example, the coefficient of 0.204 for Action Beyond Committee indicates that for every five minority party women, there will be one more bill that reaches the floor of the House. A similar pattern also holds for whether a bill passes the House and for whether a bill becomes law. In relative terms, the average minority party woman has a 28% greater volume of sponsored legislation reaching the floor of the House and 33% more laws resulting from her sponsored legislation than does the typical minority party man.³⁹

For majority party women, the insignificant coefficients for stages after bill introductions are telling. Because they introduce substantially more bills than their male counterparts, the insignificant findings across Models 6-9 indicate that majority party women are experiencing less success than their male counterparts at every stage after bill introduction. For example, although majority party women average more than three additional bill introductions than their male counterparts, this advantage is completely erased within the committee system.⁴⁰

³⁸ Part of the reason that Lazarus and Steigerwalt (2011) uncover evidence of women being less effective than men is their model specification, which translates roughly into a hit-rate assessment. Because majority party women introduce so much more legislation than men, they appear less effective subsequently, while still ultimately producing approximately the same number of laws, as shown in our analysis.

³⁹ On average, minority party members have 0.659 pieces of legislation reach the floor in any Congress and 0.328 sponsored bills become law.

⁴⁰ A clear illustration of this decreased effectiveness can be seen when we model effectiveness as the *percentage* of a member's sponsored bills passing through each subsequent stage. In auxiliary analyses (not presented here), we find that the coefficients for majority party female in such hit-rate models are negative and statistically significant for action in committee, action beyond committee, passage of the House, and becoming law. For example, being a majority party female is associated with a 6% lower likelihood of each introduced bill passing into law. Thus, the

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Figure 2 illustrates these findings by stage, relative to the activities of men, based on the regressions reported in Table 2. For example, on the left of the figure, majority party women are shown to introduce 17% more bills than majority party men. This difference is 5% for minority party women, leading to an average of 11% more introductions for women than for men. Moving to the right, we see the advantage of majority party women over men completely eliminated by the Action in Committee stage, ultimately leaving these women with about the same number of laws as majority party men. In contrast, minority party women become more and more effective throughout the lawmaking process, culminating in 33% more laws produced than minority party men. That the overall effect for women hovers around the 5-10% range explains the initial finding in Model 1 of an approximate 10% higher effectiveness for women over men, all else equal.

Taken as a whole, these findings support the Legislative Advancement Differences Hypothesis. Although female legislators in both the majority and minority party are introducing more legislation, only minority party women are more successful than their male counterparts in pushing their bills through the legislative pipeline. In fact, majority party women are significantly *less* likely than their male counterparts to get their bills signed into law. Coupled with earlier analyses above, these findings suggest that, although female legislators in both parties tend to work harder by introducing greater amounts of legislation, only women in the minority party are finding success at stages that depend on consensus building. These findings lend support to the notion that a focus on policy over partisan political goals and the ability to

finding that majority party women are about equally as effective as their male counterparts (Model 2) is strongly influenced by the fact that majority party women introduce many more bills than their male counterparts, but then experience less subsequent success across every further stage of the legislative process.

work across the aisle are important legislative assets for minority party members wishing to advance their policy agendas.⁴¹

Putting aside these findings regarding direct gender differences, it is important to note several auxiliary results from our regression analyses. First, it is clearly the case that members of the majority party, *ceteris paribus*, are generally more effective than members of the minority party. In comparing across the results in Tables 1 and 2, we see that majority party members generally have higher LESs than members of the minority, and majority party members experience greater success at every stage of the legislative process than members of the minority. Second, being a committee chair also significantly increases a member's effectiveness, both overall and throughout every stage of the legislative process. For example, committee chairs average nearly seven more bill introductions, five more bills receiving action beyond committee, and two more bills being signed into law (some of which may result from chairs sponsoring bills on behalf of their committees). Seniority is also positively associated with legislative effectiveness. An increase from one to five terms served in Congress translates into approximately seven additional bills introduced, and one additional bill receiving action beyond committee. In considering these latter two factors (committee leadership and seniority), we note that their impacts on effectiveness are particularly relevant for women. Simply put, since women have not yet attained comparable levels of seniority to their male counterparts, nor been awarded equivalent numbers of committee chairs, they appear to have been structurally disadvantaged. Their enhanced number of introductions and subsequent legislative success in the minority party only partially offset these limitations.

⁴¹ To the extent that garnering cosponsors is evidence of consensus-building tactics (i.e., Campbell 1983, Cho and Fowler 2010, Wawro 2001), we also explored the relative numbers of cosponsors attained by men and women, finding greater levels of cosponsorship for minority party women's bills than for minority party men's bills. This gender difference was not as stark in the majority party.

Other significant independent variables also are relevant for the fate of the legislation of women. Members who have served in professional state legislatures are more highly effective, especially in the number of laws they ultimately produce. African Americans are somewhat less effective, arising mainly from the narrower set of bills they introduce initially. And the nonlinear effect of the Vote Share and Vote Share Squared variables indicates that the most effective members on average come from districts that are neither highly contested nor perfectly safe, giving members the leeway and the incentives to advance their legislative priorities. Controlling for all of these factors is important, as each differentially speaks to the backgrounds and experiences of women in Congress. The last set of controls, in particular, highlights that the support for our hypotheses remains above and beyond the challenges women face in the electoral arena (Anzia and Berry, 2011).

Implications and Future Directions

While much scholarship has demonstrated gender-based behavioral differences in legislatures, relatively less work has engaged whether, and how, these differences ultimately translate into changed public policies. This paper begins to fill this gap by investigating the conditions under which women in Congress are more effective at moving their sponsored bills through the lawmaking process than their male counterparts. Moreover, it seeks to address how these patterns of effectiveness are related to an interaction between the important institutional structure of majority party status and the behavioral tendencies that have been specifically attributed to female lawmakers. In analyzing the fates of all bills introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1973-2008, we uncover aggregate findings that suggest that exerting high effort, maintaining a policy focus, and engaging in consensus building can help female lawmakers achieve increased legislative effectiveness, but only under certain circumstances.

More specifically, we find that the heightened effectiveness of women over men varies by party status and over time. In particular, while minority party women consistently outperform minority party men, the same is not true for majority party women. In the majority party, women were shown to be more effective than men throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but not so in the more highly polarized 1990s and 2000s.

We also found that the effectiveness of men and women varies by stage of the legislative process. Although women in the minority party introduce slightly more bills than their male counterparts, their true effectiveness is seen in their ability to navigate these bills onto the floor of the House and into law. On the other hand, women in the majority party are less successful at these later stages of the process, starting even with a relative inability to receive hearings and markups of their bills in committee. Despite introducing significantly more bills than their male counterparts, majority party women have nothing more to show for these efforts than majority party men in committee hearings, floor activities, bill passage, or laws enacted.

Taken together, these findings offer support for the Party Differences, Polarized Party Differences, and Legislative Advancement Differences Hypotheses, and are suggestive of the following narrative regarding women's legislative effectiveness. Put simply, women in Congress are disadvantaged in a variety of ways. Their newly rising numbers mean that they have lower levels of seniority (throughout our dataset women average 3.7 previous terms in Congress compared to 5.3 for men); and because seniority-based institutions effectively limit women's influence (by default), these institutional differences across genders (and perhaps other considerations) result in bills sponsored by women (especially those in the majority party) being more likely to die in committee and less likely to ultimately become law.

In response to these disadvantages, women in Congress adopt a series of legislative tactics common to female legislators elsewhere, including exerting high effort, focusing on policy over politics, and engaging in consensus building strategies. As a result of these tactics, and controlling for women's lower levels of seniority and lesser frequency in committee leadership, women emerge as effective lawmakers, and more effective than their male counterparts in several contexts. Yet, these legislative tactics do not serve all women in Congress equally well. While consensus building may benefit women in the minority party, this collegial strategy of majority party women seems to be dominated by the highly partisan and polarizing strategies adopted by majority party men, especially in recent Congresses.

In sum, we find a variety of circumstances under which women in Congress have achieved legislative effectiveness, but also areas where success is much less likely to come by. This work thus complements and sheds light on earlier findings in the literature. Consistent with earlier works, there do seem to be strong institutional hurdles for women to overcome in advancing their legislative agendas in Congress. Also consistent with past research, women seem to adopt clear strategies to overcome these obstacles. Finally, perhaps the inconsistent results previously uncovered in the literature of women being less, more, or equally effective in some state legislatures and some sessions of Congress arise from variance across these settings in the institutional factors that contribute to the translation of women's behavioral tendencies into their legislative accomplishments. As such, we provide an institutions-based explanation for understanding the effectiveness of women in Congress. To the extent that women generally pursue different policy agendas than men, our research stands as an essential step towards understanding whether increasing numbers of women in legislatures will yield significantly different policy outcomes than what would occur in their absence.

While our study therefore builds upon previous work and provides some key pieces to the puzzle regarding the legislative effectiveness of women, some significant holes remain in the overall picture. We conclude by highlighting three remaining questions as fruitful lines of future research. First, one might ask whether more direct and substantial evidence could be generated that captures the effort levels, policy focus, and consensus building activities of women in Congress. Although we found strong support for the hypotheses that were related to these behavioral tendencies, our focus was not on establishing the validity of these underlying behavioral claims. High effort, for example, has been suggested here by the large number of introductions made by women, but is that broader agenda sustained later in the legislative process or are women and their agendas hurt by being stretched too thin? Similar questions can be explored regarding women's policy focus or their consensus building activities.

Second, why are women so unsuccessful in promoting their sponsored bills in committee? In examining patterns of effectiveness across stages of the legislative process, it is startling how frequently the bills introduced by women receive no attention in committees whatsoever. Studies of decisions in congressional committees regarding which bills to advance and which to ignore, and the nature of subsequent committee hearings and markups, with a specific focus on issues of gender, would be most welcome.

Third, and finally, how can women further overcome the obstacles they face to legislative effectiveness in Congress? While we identify the overall patterns for women in Congress, by no means do these patterns of behavior characterize the legislative activities of each and every woman in the House. If consensus building by majority party women is indeed ineffectual, why are these strategies not altered or abandoned? Here, qualitative analyses of the different paths that women take in advancing their agendas may be quite insightful.

We conclude with one brief example of a woman who deviated slightly from the tactics discussed here to great effect recently. To some extent, the promise of the Year of the Woman was scarcely realized until the 110th Congress, when Nancy Pelosi assumed the Speakership and numerous women rose to key committee and subcommittee chair positions. By one account, the policy impacts were profound: “Congress had tried to hammer together a national health-care initiative for a century, but it wasn’t until a woman ascended to a key position of power in Washington that a plan actually passed” (Bzdek 2010). The author goes on to say that Nancy Pelosi would not give up on health care because of its essential impact on women (her policy focus), that she exerted high effort in the health care battle, and that she was a consensus builder. The key differences from most women in our analyses are the institutional position Pelosi was in (Speaker of the House) and the fact that the consensus she sought to build was *within* the Democratic Party, rather than *across* parties. This last element may point a way forward for majority party women given the polarization across parties so prevalent in recent Congresses.

Appendix: Data sources, definitions, and descriptive statistics

Independent Variables	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.
Majority Women	Equals “1” if member is a majority party woman	0.042	0.201
Minority Women	Equals “1” if member is a minority party woman	0.045	0.208
Seniority ^a	Number of terms served by member in Congress	5.205	3.964
State Legislative Experience ^a	Equals “1” if member served in state legislature	0.487	0.500
State Legislative Professionalism ^b	Squire’s index of state professionalism relative to Congress	0.142	0.177
Majority Party	Equals “1” if member is in the majority party	0.569	0.495
Majority Party Leadership ^a	Equals “1” if member is in majority party leadership	0.016	0.125
Minority Party Leadership ^a	Equals “1” if member is in minority party leadership	0.017	0.131
Speaker ^a	Equals “1” if member is Speaker of the House	0.002	0.042
Committee Chair ^c	Equals “1” if member is a committee chair	0.050	0.218
Power Committee ^c	Equals “1” if member serves on Rules, Appropriations, or Ways and Means	0.251	0.434
Distance from Median ^d	Member <i>i</i> ’s DW-NOMINATE score – Median member’s DW-NOMINATE score	0.353	0.223
African-American ^a	Equals “1” if member is African-American	0.065	0.246
Latino ^a	Equals “1” if member is Latino/Latina	0.035	0.185
Size of Congressional Delegation ^e	Number of districts in state congressional delegation	18.35	13.99
Vote Share ^a	Percentage of vote received in previous election	68.53	13.89

Data sources:

^aConstructed by authors based on *Almanac of American Politics*, various years.

^bConstructed by authors based on updates to Squire (1992).

^cConstructed by authors based on Nelson (1992) and Stewart and Woon (2005).

^dConstructed by authors from DW-NOMINATE scores provided by Keith Poole.

^eConstructed by authors.

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Table 1: Determinants of Legislative Effectiveness

	Model 1: Overall LES	Model 2: By Party Status	Model 3: 1970s & 1980s	Model 4: 1990s & 2000s
Female	0.107*** (0.039)			
Majority Party Female		0.076 (0.071)	0.105 (0.116)	0.001 (0.093)
Minority Party Female		0.135*** (0.034)	0.082* (0.044)	0.211*** (0.044)
Lagged Effectiveness Score	0.490*** (0.030)	0.490*** (0.030)	0.646*** (0.040)	0.375*** (0.034)
Seniority	0.057*** (0.015)	0.057*** (0.015)	0.076*** (0.021)	0.043** (0.015)
Seniority ²	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.004*** (0.001)	0.0001 (0.001)
State Legislative Experience	-0.075 (0.058)	-0.076 (0.058)	-0.113 (0.088)	0.0002 (0.073)
State Legislative Experience × Legislative Professionalism	0.354* (0.184)	0.355* (0.184)	0.464 (0.302)	0.214 (0.199)
Majority Party	0.587*** (0.045)	0.592*** (0.046)	0.460*** (0.054)	0.718*** (0.069)
Majority Party Leadership	0.174 (0.142)	0.178 (0.143)	-0.174 (0.175)	0.267 (0.199)
Minority Party Leadership	-0.076 (0.064)	-0.076 (0.064)	-0.064 (0.075)	-0.088 (0.085)
Speaker	-0.576** (0.242)	-0.579** (0.246)	-0.981*** (0.190)	-0.706** (0.311)
Committee Chair	1.918*** (0.194)	1.916*** (0.194)	1.219*** (0.218)	2.420*** (0.280)
Power Committee	-0.226*** (0.037)	-0.226*** (0.037)	-0.190*** (0.047)	-0.247*** (0.049)
Distance from Median	-0.132 (0.088)	-0.134 (0.088)	0.264** (0.131)	-0.301** (0.135)
African-American	-0.194** (0.077)	-0.195** (0.077)	-0.377*** (0.116)	-0.067 (0.076)
Latino	0.017 (0.076)	0.016 (0.076)	-0.0003 (0.143)	0.061 (0.085)
Size of Congressional Delegation	0.00007 (0.002)	0.00005 (0.002)	-0.0004 (0.002)	-0.0002 (0.002)
Vote Share	0.030*** (0.011)	0.030*** (0.011)	0.013 (0.015)	0.032** (0.015)
Vote Share ²	-0.0002** (0.0001)	-0.0002** (0.0001)	-0.00007 (0.0001)	-0.0002* (0.0001)
Constant	-1.141*** (0.404)	-1.140*** (0.404)	-0.648 (0.540)	-1.160** (0.561)
N	6154	6154	2871	3283
Adjusted-R ²	0.55	0.55	0.61	0.52

Results from Ordinary Least Squares regressions.

Robust standard errors in parentheses, observations clustered by member.

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01 (two-tailed).

Table 2: Determinants of Bill Progression in Congress

	Model 5: Bill Introductions	Model 6: Action In Committee	Model 7: Action Beyond Committee	Model 8: Pass House	Model 9: Become Law
Majority Party Female	3.249** (1.647)	-0.052 (0.216)	0.124 (0.194)	0.074 (0.180)	-0.017 (0.132)
Minority Party Female	0.750 (1.226)	0.122 (0.124)	0.204** (0.091)	0.160** (0.077)	0.109** (0.048)
Seniority	1.908*** (0.239)	0.372*** (0.044)	0.253*** (0.033)	0.183*** (0.029)	0.061*** (0.019)
Seniority ²	-0.083*** (0.015)	-0.011*** (0.003)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.003* (0.002)	0.0003 (0.001)
State Legislative Experience	-2.720** (1.333)	-0.336 (0.212)	-0.190 (0.156)	-0.111 (0.129)	-0.083 (0.072)
State Legislative Experience × Legislative Professionalism	2.655 (3.804)	1.211* (0.681)	0.865* (0.511)	0.614 (0.414)	0.369* (0.215)
Majority Party	2.530** (1.118)	1.777*** (0.166)	1.505*** (0.108)	1.176*** (0.092)	0.494*** (0.048)
Majority Party Leadership	-5.024*** (1.863)	0.198 (0.442)	0.510 (0.385)	0.584* (0.348)	0.506** (0.250)
Minority Party Leadership	-3.146 (2.242)	-0.531*** (0.192)	-0.362** (0.161)	-0.280** (0.142)	-0.127 (0.081)
Speaker	-15.475*** (2.061)	-3.635*** (0.480)	-2.284*** (0.457)	-1.709*** (0.430)	-0.612* (0.328)
Committee Chair	6.842*** (2.045)	4.731*** (0.541)	5.294*** (0.487)	4.063*** (0.378)	2.171*** (0.244)
Power Committee	-2.438** (1.000)	-1.306*** (0.144)	-0.950*** (0.108)	-0.716*** (0.088)	-0.206*** (0.053)
Distance from Median	-3.068 (2.445)	-0.131 (0.298)	0.031 (0.219)	-0.041 (0.186)	-0.156 (0.098)
African-American	-5.482*** (1.452)	-0.679*** (0.184)	-0.484*** (0.155)	-0.384*** (0.133)	-0.187** (0.076)
Latino	-6.086*** (1.785)	-0.025 (0.316)	0.263 (0.224)	0.257 (0.202)	0.130 (0.126)
Size of Congressional Delegation	0.049 (0.035)	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.002)
Vote Share	0.437** (0.202)	0.058** (0.026)	0.049** (0.020)	0.039** (0.018)	0.030*** (0.011)
Vote Share ²	-0.003* (0.001)	-0.0004** (0.0002)	-0.0003** (0.0001)	-0.0003** (0.0001)	-0.002*** (0.0001)
Constant	-5.650 (7.324)	-2.142** (0.918)	-1.977*** (0.732)	-1.539** (0.643)	-0.996*** (0.387)
N	7641	7641	7641	7641	7641
Adjusted-R ²	0.07	0.31	0.38	0.35	0.27

Results from Ordinary Least Squares regressions.

Robust standard errors in parentheses, observations clustered by member.

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01 (two-tailed).

**Figure 1:
Relative Effectiveness of Majority and Minority Party Women**

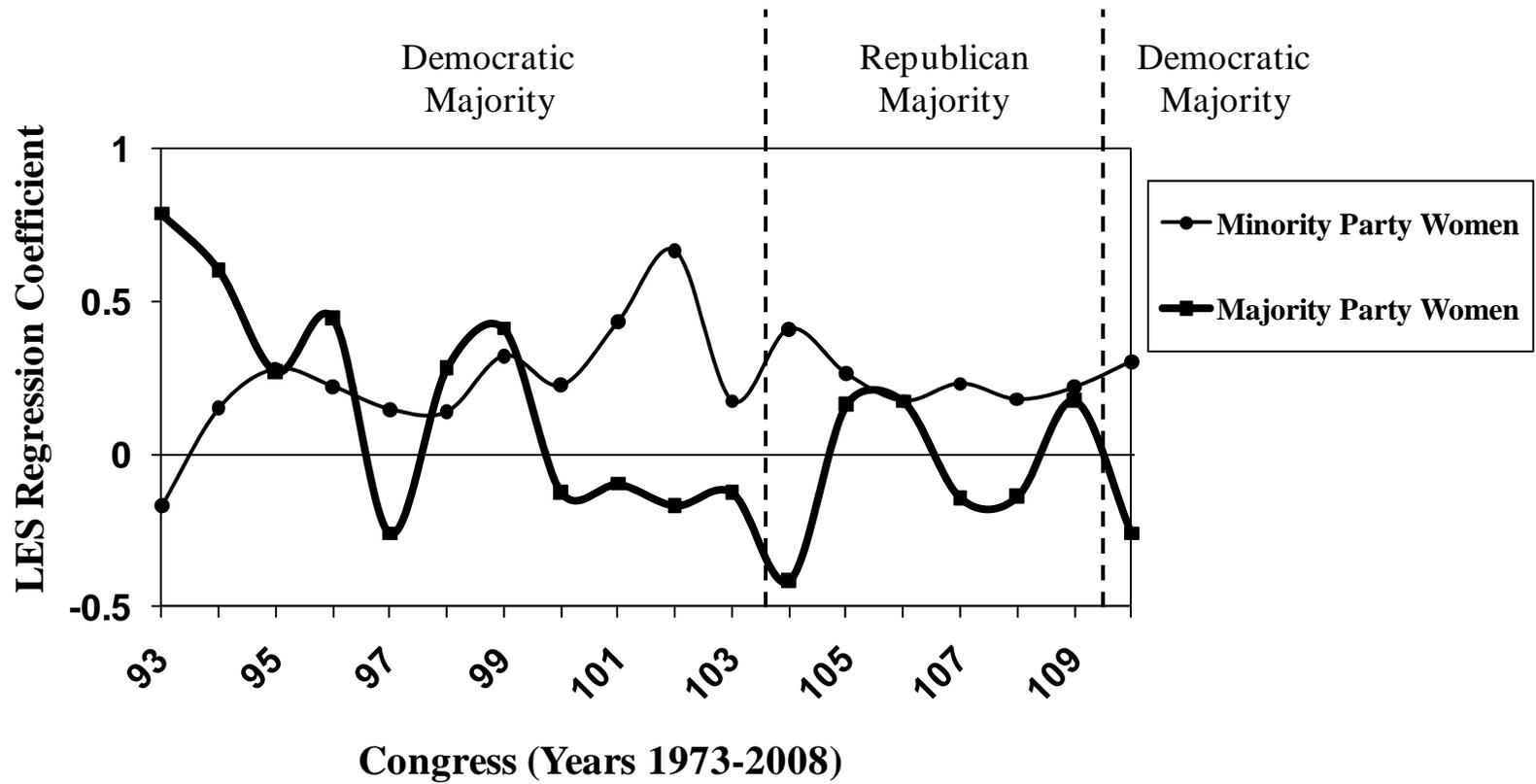
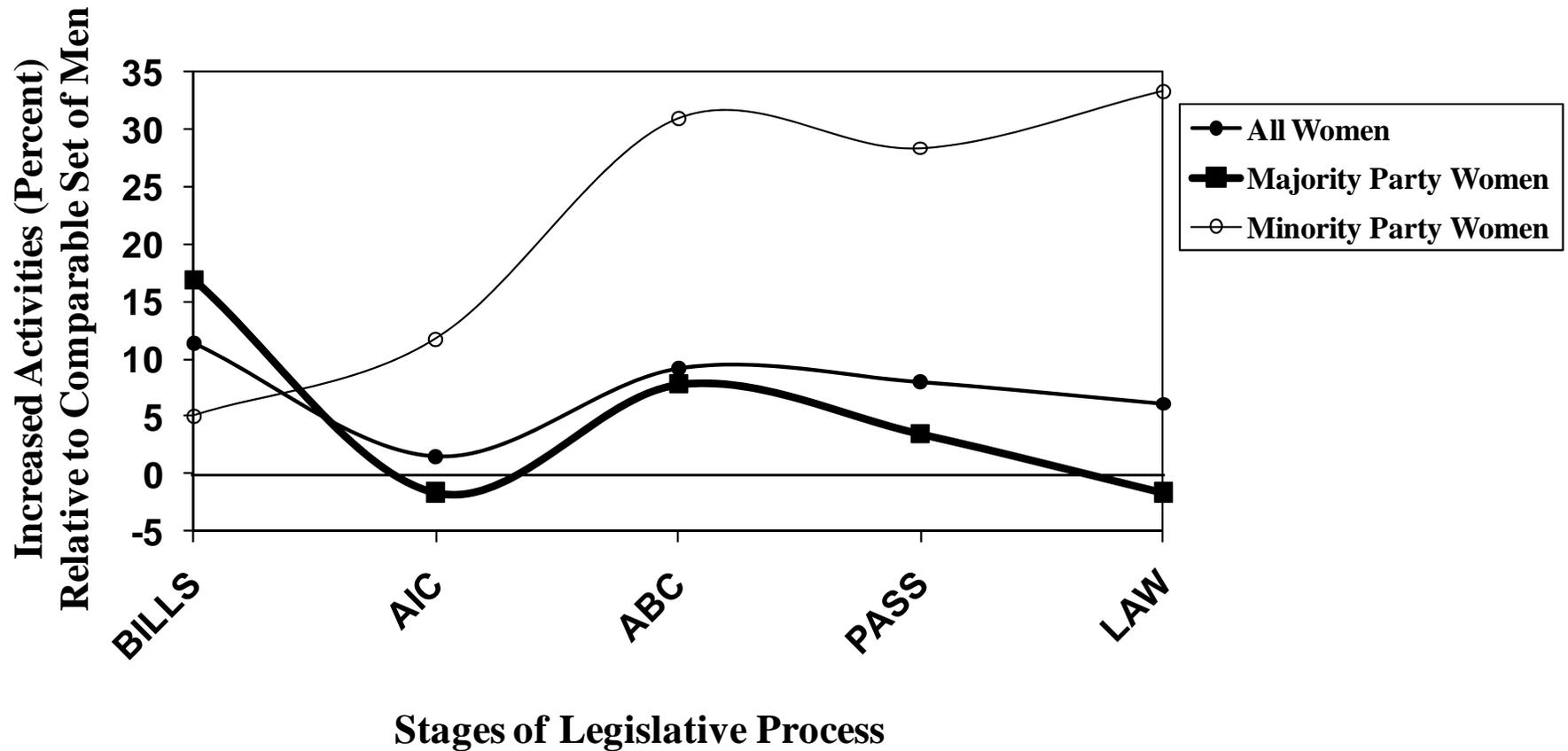


Figure 2:
Legislative Advancement Activities of Women, Relative to Men



Supplemental Appendix [to be made available online]

To explore whether the majority and minority party differences reported throughout the paper were mere artifacts of differences between women in the Democratic Party and women in the Republican Party, we replicated the analyses of Table 1 by party affiliation, rather than party status. The results are reported in Table S1.

[Insert Table S1 about here]

Such an analysis shows little difference between the relative effectiveness of Republican and Democratic women, especially in the recent polarized era, which showed stark differences between minority and majority party women in Model 4. Because of Democratic control throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Model S2 here exactly replicates the results from Model 3 in Table 1. These findings suggest that the results reported throughout the paper are indeed much more clearly related to majority and minority party status than to whether the women studied here belong to the Democratic or Republican Parties, per se. Similar party-by-party results can be gleaned from the per-Congress results illustrated in Figure 1 in the main body of the paper.

Table S1: Partisan Determinants of Women's Effectiveness?

	Model S1: By Party	Model S2: 1970s & 1980s	Model S3: 1990s & 2000s
Democratic Women	0.100** (0.049)	0.105 (0.116)	0.123** (0.055)
Republican Women	0.121* (0.065)	0.082* (0.044)	0.114 (0.095)
Lagged Effectiveness Score	0.490*** (0.030)	0.646*** (0.040)	0.376*** (0.034)
Seniority	0.057*** (0.015)	0.076*** (0.021)	0.042** (0.020)
Seniority ²	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.004*** (0.001)	0.0001 (0.001)
State Legislative Experience	-0.076 (0.058)	-0.113 (0.088)	0.002 (0.073)
State Legislative Experience × Legislative Professionalism	0.355* (0.184)	0.464 (0.302)	0.213 (0.198)
Majority Party	0.588*** (0.045)	0.460*** (0.054)	0.697*** (0.067)
Majority Party Leadership	0.173 (0.142)	-0.174 (0.175)	0.251 (0.198)
Minority Party Leadership	-0.076 (0.064)	-0.064 (0.075)	-0.085 (0.084)
Speaker	-0.575** (0.242)	-0.981*** (0.190)	-0.694** (0.296)
Committee Chair	1.918*** (0.194)	1.219*** (0.218)	2.428*** (0.280)
Power Committee	-0.226*** (0.037)	-0.190*** (0.047)	-0.247*** (0.049)
Distance from Median	-0.131 (0.089)	0.264** (0.131)	-0.292** (0.135)
African-American	-0.193** (0.078)	-0.377*** (0.116)	-0.062 (0.077)
Latino	0.017 (0.076)	-0.0003 (0.143)	0.060 (0.084)
Size of Congressional Delegation	0.0001 (0.002)	-0.0004 (0.002)	-0.0001 (0.002)
Vote Share	0.030*** (0.011)	0.013 (0.015)	0.033** (0.015)
Vote Share ²	-0.0002*** (0.0001)	-0.00007 (0.0001)	-0.0002** (0.0001)
Constant	-1.145*** (0.405)	-0.648 (0.540)	-1.177** (0.563)
N	6154	2871	3283
Adjusted-R ²	0.55	0.61	0.52

Results from Ordinary Least Squares regressions.

Robust standard errors in parentheses, observations clustered by member.

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01 (two-tailed).