

Women in Congress: Is Gender Powerful?

Kathleen Anne Ward

Introduction

While many thought that the controversy concerning women in American politics had ended with gaining the right to vote in 1919, others speculated that this fervor was simply a hint of what was to come. Each subsequent generation has seen freedoms and opportunities evolve for the women of this nation, as differences between the genders in terms of education, occupations, and wealth become less distinct. However, while females increasingly gain professional degrees, become key players in corporations and act as community leaders, there are only a few women who participate in the highest levels of the United States government. For example, this year women compose only 13% of the U.S. Senate (which is 13 seats out of 100) and 14.19% of the U.S. House (which is 62 seats out of 437). Once these women have won their elections, many wonder how much power and influence they will have on Capitol Hill, especially in Congressional committees where many of the decisions are made.

Research Question & Hypothesis

This study focuses specifically on women's committee power in the U.S. Congress. Why do some members of Congress have more power than others; specifically, does gender matter? Thus it is necessary to examine all of members of the 107th U.S. Congress, assessing how many committees they are appointed to, which are their most powerful committees, and which individuals hold leadership positions to see if personal characteristics (like gender) give anyone a distinct advantage or disadvantage. This information raises the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Female members of Congress are less likely to be placed on influential and powerful Congressional committees.

Hypothesis 2: Female members of Congress are less likely to have leadership positions than male members of Congress.

Hypothesis 3: Female members of Congress are appointed to more Congressional Committees than male members of Congress.

Significance of Question

Research concerning the impact gender has within Congress contributes to the greater issues and concepts of political science as a discipline in many ways. Primarily, studying the women of Congress, their role on committees and their leadership positions, addresses the question of who holds the power in the upper levels of the U.S. government. Further, analyzing women's role in Congressional politics helps in classifying elites into the groups that they are affiliated with. Studying Congressional gender relations also highlights which personal characteristics affect one's ability to gain leadership roles and powerful committee appointments. In addition, studying Congressional women emphasizes that the discipline of political science is noticing the social environment in which laws and regulations are being created. Overall, analyzing the role of females in Congress adds to the overall objectives of political science research.

Those who specialize in studying the relationship between gender and the American political process will be interested in this research for a number of reasons. In many ways, this research study takes the next step in examining the relationship between gender and politics, by empirically testing the literature that has preceded it. This study addresses the degree to which

gender is a force that confronts women legislators on a daily basis. It also evaluates the level of power that women who are at the top ranks of the United States government actually hold.

This research is also relevant to the politicians and policy makers of this country, particularly those that are female. This project's literature review synthesizes important past research on gender and politics. It also reveals the social and political climate of our country, thus aiding those in public service to be aware of the greater influences surrounding them. In addition, it gives female politicians insight into their own interworkings, helping them to determine what issues they need to address to gain power. This literature also brings to light something that our society does not often choose to recognize; that there are distinct differences between men and women, the ways they operate and see the world. Recognizing that men and women are unique allows for people to build professional relationships particularly within the national legislative bodies. Thus, empirically testing the theories of the preceding literature is the next logical step in the study of gender and its relationship to politics. In general, this project analyzes how a Congressperson's past experience and personal characteristics impact their ability to gain leadership positions and prestigious committee appointments.

Literature Review

The literature addressing different components of this topic really helps to place this study amidst similar research thoughts, theories and conclusions. Much of the literature addresses issues of legislative governance, specifically, the role of committees and subcommittees within Congress. In fact, scholars assert that Congressional committees have substantial power because it is where bills are first considered and formulated (Hall 1990). These committees are responsible for bill management and as a result the number of committee

meetings has drastically increased (Hall 1990). Further, committee members have become specialists the area that the committee is concerned with, gaining specific knowledge and persuasion about committee issues and using their past experiences to make key decisions (Jones 1962). Additionally, studies show that women place legislative importance on gender and that it comes through in their Congressional participation (Hall 1996). In general, studies show that members of Congress who identify with underrepresented groups (in terms of ethnicity, race or gender), will place legislative importance on that identification (Hall 1996). Specifically, research also shows that women legislators view issues differently than men, vote more liberal than men and choose or are placed on committees for different reasons than men (Thomas 1994). Scholars note that this is due to the fact that women legislators feel that their actions ought to advance the status of women in the public arena (Thomas 1994). Thus, because Congressional committees have substantial power and influence, women legislators will have to work effectively within this structure in order to be successful.

Committee assignments in the United States Congress are determined through a process filled with political elements. The party dominated perspective suggests that political parties influence committee appointments because legislators are considered to be extensions of the party (Deering 1997). In general, the majority party has the advantage in terms of committee appointments (Murphy 1978). Each party in the Congress has a Committee on Committees, which determines the committee appointments of their specific members (Murphy 1978). Leaders who make committee appointments frequently use an optional method of assigning committees known as the Johnson Rule, which mandates that no legislator can be assigned to a second powerful committee until all legislators have one important assignment (Murphy 1978).

The distributive committee perspective notes that legislators can have some choice by asking for committees that focus on their own interests (Deering 1997).

There is also a considerable amount of literature concerning other personal characteristics that affect an individual's committee appointment besides gender. All the research emphasizes the huge impact seniority has on committee assignments. Tobin (1986) puts it best by saying, "seniority is the key to power in the United States Congress: length of service determines committee rank and the committees control legislation. The power, naturally, resides within the chairman, the member of the majority party who has the longest unbroken committee tenure (3)." Additionally, incumbents are often guaranteed their old committee assignments, leaving newcomers to battle over the vacant positions (Hall 1996). Another important variable that affects committee appointment is the region that a Congressperson is representing. Historically committees have had disproportionate representation from certain areas of the U.S. because the decisions of some committees are perceived by Congresspersons to have a direct impact on the citizens of their home state (Deering 1997). For example, one study emphasized the disproportionate amount of Midwestern and Southern Congresspersons on the Agricultural Committee (Deering 1997). Overall, the literature highlights several personal characteristics that tend to affect a Congressperson's appointment.

Some scholars point out that regardless of how individuals obtain committee appointments, it is the nature of legislative committees that limits female members of Congress from addressing issues that really matter to them because few of them hold leadership positions that allow them influence over the final drafts of the legislation (Norton 1995). Historically, women elites have been less likely to meet with lobbyists, address their committee and the general assembly, or negotiate with peers to pursue their political objectives (Diamond 1977).

One scholar suggests is due to the fact that the political realm of society is one that is still dominated primarily by men (Kathlene 1995). It has been found that although bills are debated and amended on the floor, the Congressional committees maintain most of the control of these policies (Norton 1995). Because individual power over policymaking occurs in these committees, women may face barriers if they are unable to get appointed to powerful positions, influential committees or are unable to participate in the committees they end up in (Kathlene 1995). Thus, until women legislators can obtain key Congressional leadership roles, their ability to have significant influence over legislation is limited (Norton 1995).

In addition, there is a substantial amount of literature about women candidates; those running for elite positions, their political attitudes, and their chances of a victory. It is important to note that one reason there are so few women legislators is because so few run for elective office (Seltzer 1997). Furthermore, women who do run face challenging incumbents who have served for many years (Witt 1994). Also important is the fact that in general, women are less likely than men to win elected offices in the U.S.; and the more powerful the office, the less likely they are to attain it (Bledsoe 1990). Because of all this, the women who do get elected perceive that their small numbers limit them. This is because women view the presence of other women as essential support, not only in bringing about gender equity, but also increasing women's perceived understanding of their own success and accomplishment (Kathlene 1995). Thus while women have dominant voting power in the United States, because there are only a few female elected officials, they have little influence on law and policy (Mandel 1981).

Scholars suggest that the lack of women legislatures needs to be resolved both for symbolic and substantive reasons (Fox 1997). Many note the unique gifts and talents they bring to the organizations they are involved with (Constantini 1990). Symbolically, the governing

institutions should be a fairly accurate reflection of the citizens it serves (Fox 1997).

Substantively, women and men have different worldviews and different understandings about the common good which ought to be reflected in laws and policies (Fox 1997). This is particularly compelling when it is revealed that although women are winning more and more seats every year, the legislative branch is still 90% male (Fox 2000). In the past, some scholars have speculated that until gender roles are redefined, women will still feel some amount of pressure from society to stay out of the political arena (Lee 1976). For many scholars, electing large numbers of female legislators is the only way to bring about new legislative initiatives, ensuring that women's place in society is equal to men's and alter the status quo (Thomas 1994).

The hypotheses of this paper contribute to the existing research on gender and politics in several ways. Primarily, it analyzes whether a Congressperson's gender affects their committee appointment. In addition, this research assesses if gender impacts the ability of a Congressperson to obtain a leadership position. It also evaluates whether or not gender plays a role in the number of committees a Congressperson is appointed to. Finally, it is important to note that in addition to testing whether or not gender impacts each of these variables, this study looks at the affect that seniority, party, region and previous government experience have as well.

Theory & Hypothesis

Each of the aforementioned areas of political science scholarship contributes to the formulation of this study's hypotheses. In general, all of the hypotheses build upon the understanding that Congressional committees are some of the most powerful bodies within Congress. Further, all of the hypotheses rest on the theory that there are significant barriers to women being involved in the political and legislative practices in the first place. The hypotheses

also assume that the personal characteristics of Congresspersons have an important impact on committee assignments and in selecting Congressional leadership.

The first hypothesis (which asserts that women are less likely to be placed on influential committees) rests on the literature, which states that the committee structure inhibits women from being successful. Additionally, hypothesis one is also based on the perception that having a powerful committee appointment is essential any member's overall influence in Congress. It is important to note that the level of power of committee appointments might have less variance because of the Johnson Rule, which, if used, requires party leadership to appoint all individuals to at least one powerful committee before making the remainder of the assignments. The second hypothesis (which states that women are less likely to obtain leadership positions) is directly rooted in the fact that there are so few of them. The literature also suggests that women need the support of other women to successfully promote their ideas and further themselves. Thus, the literature asserts that women will only have real power on any committee if there are enough of them present to rely on group support. Overall, previous research asserts that women depend on others of their own gender to help them in their political endeavors. The third hypothesis (which states that women are on more committees than men) is again based on the fact that there are so few of them and that the leadership tries to give each committee some female members.

In order to examine the effect that gender has on Congressional committee appointments, several variables must also be analyzed in this project. Political scientists who study American government generally maintain that *Seniority*, *Previous Government Experience*, *Region* and *Party* all affect an individual's committee appointment. *Seniority* is a key variable because those who have had more experience in Congress are more likely to get appointed to prestigious committees. As a result, a Congresswoman on her third term is more likely to receive a better

committee appointment than a Congresswoman serving her first term. *Previous Government Experience* may also affect a person's committee appointments. Having previous experience in state legislatures, city legislatures or experience as a mayor or governor may give certain individuals a distinct advantage or disadvantage.

In addition, *Region* is another important variable because some committees have more relevance to some parts of the country than others. For example, an appointment to the House Committee on Agriculture will be much more coveted by states that are primarily rural and less important to states that tend to be more urban. *Party* is also a significant variable in terms of Congressional committee appointment because the majority party has the most influences and all of the committee and subcommittee positions. Thus, if the Democratic Party has control of the House, members of that party are more likely to get a prestigious committee appointment and its members hold all of the committee leadership positions. Looking at these variables in addition to gender is essential if this study is going to accurately examine the effect of gender on Congressional committee appointments, because these four variables also have an impact on this very thing.

Specifically, this research project will significantly contribute to theories about gender and politics, particularly in the realm of Congressional power. It empirically tests variables that numerous scholars have cited as being essential to attaining powerful committee appointments and leadership positions in Congress. The intent of this study is to evaluate what becomes of women elites once they are elected into office and the results will reveal whether or not gender makes a difference in power distribution in the upper ranks of the United States government. This paper builds off literature about women in elective office and how power is distributed in Congress, combining both areas of thought into a single study. From this, new theories and

research studies can be developed. For example, researchers could theorize about what societal elements cause women to take on certain roles and responsibilities in the legislature. Also, future projects could evaluate other elements of Congressional jobs and how they affect women. New research studies could also investigate whether or not gender affects legislators' participation. Overall, the goal of this research project is to build on the existing theories and studies about women in Congress as well as to lay the groundwork for future studies in the area.

Data & Variables

There are several sources of data used to compile the facts and figures that are the most appropriate measures for this research study. The primary data sources are the *United States Government Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, and the U.S. Senate* which all compile a plethora of information on legislators, including their gender and committee appointments. These sources also provide information about some of the other variables as well, which include each Congressperson's party and the state they represent. It is important to note that this study will be controlling for region; to do that the states were compiled into the same regions that the *National Election Study* uses. Additionally, data showing how many terms the Congresspersons of the 107th Congress have served and their previous government experience can be found through *Project Vote Smart*. This data source maintains complete biographical information on current and previous US government officials at all levels. More importantly, these data sources give precise information that can be used to measure and examine the variables presented in this study.

It is easy to see that the variables chosen in this study accurately measure what they are intended to measure. The independent variable, *Gender*, is a nominal variable that is tabulated simply by determining whether the Congressperson is female or male.

This study has three dependent variables: *Most Powerful Committee Appointment*, *Leadership Position*, and *Number of Committee Appointments*. *Most Powerful Committee Appointment* is an ordinal variable, which is measured by tabulating each Congressperson's highest committee appointment. In this research project, Congressional committees are ranked according to YourCongress.com, which is the fastest growing Congress-tracking organization. In the Senate, committees are each given a numerical rank the highest being eight and the lowest being one. The numeric rank each committee received is as follows:

- Appropriations (8)
- Finance (8)
- Armed Services (7)
- Commerce, Science, and Transportation (7)
- Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs (6)
- Judiciary (6)
- Energy and Natural Resources (5)
- Environment and Public Works (5)
- Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (5)
- Governmental Affairs (4)
- Budget (4)
- Rules and Administration (3)
- Aging (3)
- Veterans' Affairs (3)
- Intelligence (2)
- Ethics (2)
- Indian Affairs (1)
- Small Business (1)

In the House, committees are also ranked numerically with thirteen as the highest score and one as the lowest score. The numeric rank each committee received is as follows:

- Appropriations (11)
- Ways and Means (10)
- Energy and Commerce (9)
- Rules (9)
- Armed Services (8)
- Transportation and Infrastructure (7)
- Financial Services (7)
- House Administration (6)
- Judiciary (6)
- Resources (6)
- Education and the Workforce (5)
- Agriculture (5)
- Budget (4)
- International Relations (3)
- Veterans' Affairs (3)
- Governmental Reform (3)
- Intelligence (2)
- Science (2)
- Small Business (1)
- Ethics (1)

It is important to note that the joint Congressional committees were not ranked by YourCongress.com and were not used in this study. Further, any Congressperson who was not appointed to any committees received a score of 0 for this variable.

Leadership Position is a nominal variable, which looks at whether or not a Congressperson currently has a leadership position. In the study, those that had a leadership position were assigned a 1 and those that did not were assigned a 0. Two types of leadership positions were used: major Congressional leadership positions and committee leadership positions. Major Congressional leadership positions include: majority leader, assistant majority leader, minority leader, and assistant minority leader. Committee leadership positions include: committee chair, committee vice-chair and subcommittee chair. Finally, *Number of Committee*

Appointments is an interval variable measured by tabulating the number of committee appointments each legislator has.

The other independent variables that are evaluated in this study are precisely measured as well. *Seniority* is a variable that is measured by looking at the number of terms each Congressperson has served. The more terms they have, the higher their level of seniority. *Region* is a nominal variable, which is measured by compiling the states into regions the same way that the National Elections Studies does. This is a valid measure that is widely accepted in the political science community. *Party* is also a nominal variable, which is determined by looking at the individual's party membership. In general, the variables are valid measures because they are both concrete and are directly linked to what the study actually wants to evaluate.

This research project is also internally valid, meaning that it shows that variance in the independent variable directly causes the dependent variable to change, even when controlling for other variables. In other words, this research study tests if a Congressperson's gender causes their appointment onto certain committees. Also, it expects to show that gender affects the number of committee appointments a legislator receives and who holds leadership positions. In addition, the study is externally valid because it is an accurate reflection of the population being studied. This is true because the study is in fact examining the entire population of the 107th Congress.

Methods

Because the variables in this study are interval, nominal and ordinal, using frequency tables, a crosstab and multiple regressions are the best tools to conduct data analysis for this

project. The 3 frequency tables (4, 5 and 6) show the bivariate results between gender and each of the dependent variables. These tables show the distribution of men and women in their most powerful committee appointment, the number (and percent) of men and women that have leadership positions and the number (and percent) of committees men and women are assigned to. The purpose of these charts is to show the distribution of men and women in terms of each dependent variable. A crosstab will also be useful because this type of analysis will show whether there is a relationship between region and most powerful committee assignment as well as the patterns of that relationship. The regressions reveal which independent variables affect the dependent variables the most. By looking at the unstandardized coefficients, one will be able to see which variables give individuals an advantage or disadvantage and by how much. Then, by accessing the standardized coefficients, one will be able to look at the relative strength of all the variables together. Finally, t-tests for the regression slopes indicate which relationships are statistically significant, although this does not matter much for this project because it is a population study.

Results

The data reveals a number of interesting things about the organization of the United States Congress. The frequency tables show the biivariate results between gender and each of the dependent variables. Table 4 shows *Gender* and *Most Powerful Committee Appointment* in the Senate and House. In the Senate *Most Powerful Committee Appointment* only ranges between 8 and 5. More importantly, the data shows that half of Senators are on the chamber's two most powerful committees. In the House *Most Powerful Committee Appointment* ranges between 11 and 0. Most House members *Most Powerful Committee Appointments* have a rank of

7 or higher. Unlike in the Senate, some House members are not appointed to any committees (5 to be exact) and thus have no committee power. Table 5 shows *Gender* and *Leadership Position* in the two legislatures. In the Senate, half of Senators hold leadership positions, 44 positions are held by men and 5 are held by women. In the House, out of the 136 leadership positions, only 10 of them are held by women. Table 6 shows *Gender* and *Number of Committee Appointments* in Congress. In the Senate, the most committees a person is appointed to is 7 and the least is 2; most people are appointed to 4 or 5 committees. In the House, the most committees a person is appointed to is 4 and the least is 0; most people are appointed to 2 committees. It is important to note that in both bodies, no women have the fewest or most committee appointments. Finally, a crosstab was used to analyze *Region* and *Powerful Committee Appointment*, but it was not statistically significant.

The Regression Tables 1 on *Most Powerful Committee Appointment* evaluate which variables matter the most in terms of getting appointed to a prestigious and influential committee. These models only explain a part of committee appointment because the House R^2 is .10 and the Senate R^2 is .15 which are somewhat small. This might be because of the Johnson Rule which encourages party leadership to appoint everyone to one prestigious committee before making the remainder of the assignments. Still, the models show that seniority is the most important attribute a legislator can have if they desire a powerful committee appointment. This is because the standardized coefficients of years in the House and years in the Senate (which are measures of seniority in each of the bodies) are the largest of all the variables tested in this model; .33 and .10 respectively.

Gender only has a very small impact in both the House (at .01) and the Senate (at .10) in favor of women. In other words, the data suggests that being a woman is slightly advantageous in

gaining a powerful committee appointment. Although gender does not seem to have much effect on committee appointment itself, it does have an effect on seniority. On average, women have 7.5 years less experience in the Senate than men and 3.2 years less experience in the House. Thus gender also effects committee appointment indirectly through seniority. The data also shows that the being a member of the dominating party in each legislature also gives individuals a slight advantage in gaining prestigious committee appointments in the House (-.07).

Additionally, the data reveals that other government experience slightly hinders a person's ability to be on a high ranking committee, because of the negative standardized coefficients in both the House (-.01) and Senate (-.11). This is most likely because these individuals have spent their time in other areas of government instead of developing seniority in Congress. A crosstab between region and powerful committee appointment showed that region only had a very small impact on powerful committee appointment in this session of Congress, affirming that seniority is the most important determinate of Congressional committee power. Thus, women do well in absence of seniority distribution.

Regression Table 2 on *Leadership Position* show which variables most effect obtaining a Congressional leadership position. The these models explain a signifiacnt part of gaining leadership position because the House R^2 is .43 and the Senate R^2 is .48 which strong in terms of political science research. These statisitcal regressions reveal that party membership is the biggest determinate of whether or not a Congressperson will gain a leadership role. In both chambers of Congress, members of the majority party have the advantage of gaining leadership positions. Higher seniority is also a factor in gaining a leadership postion, although it matters more in the Senate than in the House, and less than party membership overall. Gender gives women a small disadvantage in the Senate (-.08) and a small advantage in the House (.02), but

does not matter much in comparison to other variables. Previous government experience also gives all Congresspersons who possess it a slight advantage, although not much. Overall, in gaining leadership positions, it is being a member of the majority party which matters most. In terms of party there are 44 female Democrats versus 18 female Republicans in the House and 10 female Democrats versus 3 female Republicans in the Senate. This is interesting because in the 107th Congress more women are Democrats than Republicans, so women have an advantage in the Senate and a disadvantage in the House. Only if the Republican party has the majority in either or both chambers does the research support hypothesis two, which states: female members of Congress are less likely to have leadership positions than male members of Congress.

Regression Tables 3 on *Number of Committees Appointed To* shows which variables are most valuable in gaining a larger number of committee appointments. These models explain a small part of receiving large numbers of committee appointments because the House R^2 is .10 and the Senate R^2 is .07 which explains a small amount of the variance in terms of political science research. In this particular regression, no single variable stands out as the key to obtaining more committee appointments. In the Senate being a member of the majority party matters most, followed by gender which shows men as having a slight advantage. Seniority (in the Senate specifically) actually has a small negative impact in terms of gaining a larger number of committee appointments. This makes sense when one looks at the other data that suggests people who have high seniority are on powerful committees and have leadership roles, making them unavailable for lots of committee appointments. Also in the Senate, previous government experience gives individuals a small disadvantage and number of years served in the house gives individuals a small advantage; though neither is particularly strong. In the House, it is lack of

seniority that matters most, probably for the same reasons that it matters in the Senate. In addition, being female, a member of the minority party and having previous government experience all slightly hinder an individual's chances of obtaining more committee appointments. Overall, it is party and lack of seniority which matter most in obtaining a large number of committee appointments. Thus, because gender impacts seniority, women are more likely to get more committee appointments than men, particularly if they are members of the chamber's majority party. This research asserts that women have an advantage in gaining more committee appointments because they lack seniority and if they are members of the minority party, which supports hypothesis three: female members of Congress are appointed to more Congressional Committees than male members of Congress.

Discussion

In general the data supports the three hypotheses presented in this paper. Gender gives women in both the House and Senate a slight advantage in gaining powerful committee appointments. In addition, being female gives Congresswomen a small advantage in gaining House leadership positions. Conversely, being female gives women a slight disadvantage when seeking leadership positions in the Senate and in gaining a larger number of committee appointments in both chambers. Although gender itself affects powerful committee appointment, obtaining leadership roles, and number of committee appointments, it also impacts the two variables that are the most influential: seniority and party. Because women have, on average, 7.5 years less experience in the Senate and 3.2 years less experience in the House, they do not have the seniority that Congressmen do. Also, because women are overwhelmingly members of the Democratic Party, they only have an advantage if their party does. Thus this

study supports the statement that gender directly affects the two most important determinants of power in Congress, seniority and party; thus gender also effects power indirectly.

These research findings are significant because reveal the degree to which gender is a factor in the Congressional power struggle. By studying gender and its effect on legislative power, this study has taken the next step in the area of gender and politics by empirically testing much of the discipline's observations and theories. Although there seems to be no significant overt discrimination against women (as some of the literature suggests), being female still puts them at a slight disadvantage because it directly affects seniority and party affiliation. The data suggests that men primarily hold the power in the upper levels of the U.S. government not only because of the gender affects seniority and party but also because they make up 90% of Congress. Most importantly, this research allows politicians and policy makers of both genders to evaluate the reasons that gender inequity exists and gives them the knowledge to understand which standards used for determining committee and leadership appointments have a gender bias.

Generalizability & Limitations

The results of this study are pertinent to the research and scholarship of political science. Primarily this research model could be used on any legislative body on the local, state, national or international level. Also, future researchers could look at other things besides gender, such as race, religion, socioeconomic status, or even level of education. The most compelling parts of this study are its generalizability and the pragmatic measurement of the variables. Perhaps the only limitation on this study is the ranking of the Congressional committees. This is because although some committees will always be powerful, the importance of other committees will

vary as time passes and new issues arise. This limits the evaluation of Congressional committee power to the present time. However, the methodology is still grounded in accurate and precise measures, giving this study confidence to answer questions on this data to test the hypotheses.

Conclusion

This research study reveals that while overt gender inequity is not present in the 107th Congress of the United States, gender indirectly affects the distribution of power through seniority and party. Because women lack the seniority that their male counterparts have been able to develop, they are at a disadvantage in gaining influential committee appointments. However, because seniority is inversely related to the number of committee appointments a Congressperson receives, women have a slight advantage over men in gaining more committee appointments. This raises the question of whether having more committee appointments gives an individual more power or puts them at a disadvantage because it spreads them too thin; something a future study might wish to address. Further, because receiving leadership positions is mostly dependent on affiliation with the majority party, women have an advantage if the party in control is the Democratic Party; otherwise women are at a significant disadvantage.

More importantly, this study suggests that once women are elected and have seniority they are not at a statistically significant disadvantage because of their gender. In fact, in some cases being female actually gives women a slight advantage in gaining powerful committee appointments and leadership positions. Thus it is not the case that women should not run for Congress because they have no chance at holding power. Rather, it seems that once women get elected to Congress, they will be able to gain leadership positions and appointments on powerful and influential committees once they have obtained some level of seniority, especially if their

party has the majority. These findings are significant especially when one considers how few women run for Congress. Hopefully, if more women were aware of these findings, they would consider running.

Overall, this study contributes to the general study of political science because it addresses power issues and the role of elites. It specifically contributes to the study of gender and politics, which seeks to determine whether gender makes a difference in a person's ability to be an influential lawmaker. Based on this research, future study might look to see if gender affects level of participation in the functions of Congress. Overall, research like this will further the goals of political science and the understanding of how gender impacts the interworkings of government and politics.

Appendix

Table 1. Regression of Most Powerful Committee Appointment in the US House and Senate

	House	Senate
Gender	0.07 (0.01)	0.29 (0.10)
Party Membership	-0.30 (-0.07)	-0.04 (-0.02)
Number of Years in the House	0.03** (0.10)	0.05** (0.27)
Number of Years in the Senate	--- (---)	0.03** (0.33)
Previous Government Experience	-0.06 (-0.01)	-0.21 (-0.11)
Constant	7.79**	6.73**
R	0.12	0.38
R ²	0.01	0.15
N	437	100
<p>Note: entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized coefficients in parentheses.</p> <p>*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01</p>		

Table 2. Regression of Leadership Positions in the US House and Senate

	House	Senate
Gender	0.03 (0.02)	-0.11 (-0.08)
Party Membership	-0.57** (-0.63)	0.53** (0.55)
Number of Years in the House	0.01** (0.24)	0.02* (0.20)
Number of Years in the Senate	--- (---)	0.02** (0.37)
Previous Government Experience	0.02 (0.02)	0.04 (0.04)
Constant	0.42**	-0.11
R	0.65	0.69
R ²	0.43	0.48
N	437	100
<p>Note: entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized coefficients in parentheses.</p> <p>*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01</p>		

Table 3. Regression of the Number of Committee Appointments in the US House and Senate

	House	Senate
Gender	-0.13 (-0.06)	-0.36 (-0.13)
Party Membership	-0.19* (-0.12)	0.32 (0.18)
Number of Years in the House	-0.03** (-0.29)	0.02 (0.09)
Number of Years in the Senate	--- (---)	-0.01 (-0.12)
Previous Government Experience	-0.03 (-0.02)	-0.15 (-0.08)
Constant	2.46**	4.23**
R	0.32	0.27
R ²	0.10	0.07
N	437	100
<p>Note: entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized coefficients in parentheses and significance italicized.</p> <p>*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01</p>		

Table 4. Most Powerful Committee Appointment in the US House and Senate

Level of Power	House		Senate	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
11	55 14.67%	10 16.13%	---	---
10	38 10.13%	3 4.84%	---	---
9	55 14.67%	12 19.35%	---	---
8	54 14.40%	5 8.06%	43 49.43%	7 53.85%
7	102 27.20%	18 29.03%	26 29.89%	3 23.08%
6	33 8.80%	7 11.30%	12 13.79%	2 15.38%
5	23 6.13%	4 6.45%	6 6.90%	1 7.70%
4	2 0.53%	0 0.00%	---	---
3	7 1.87%	3 4.83%	---	---
2	1 0.27%	0 0.00%	---	---
0	5 1.33%	0 0.00%	---	---
N	375	62	87	13

Committee Power Rankings

House

Appropriations (11)
Ways and Means (10)
Energy and Commerce (9)
Rules (9)
Armed Services (8)
Transportation and Infrastructure (7)
Financial Services (7)
House Administration (6)
Judiciary (6)
Resources (6)
Education and the Workforce (5)
Agriculture (5)
Budget (4)
International Relations (3)
Veterans' Affairs (3)
Governmental Reform (3)
Intelligence (2)
Science (2)
None (0)

Senate

Appropriations (8)
Finance (8)
Armed Services (7)
Commerce, Science, and Transportation (7)
Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs (6)
Judiciary (6)
Energy and Natural Resources (5)
Environment and Public Works (5)
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (5)

Table 5. Leadership Positions in the US House and Senate

Leadership Position	House		Senate	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Yes	126 33.60%	10 16.13%	43 49.43%	5 38.46%
No	249 66.4%	52 83.87%	44 50.57%	8 61.54%
N	375	62	87	13

Table 6. Number of Committee Appointments in the US House and Senate

Number of Committee Appointments	House		Senate	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
7	---	---	1 1.15%	0 0.00%
6	---	---	5 5.75%	1 7.70%
5	---	---	27 31.03%	1 7.70%
4	11 29.33%	0 0.00%	35 40.23%	8 61.54%
3	89 23.73%	12 19.35%	17 19.54%	3 23.08%
2	176 46.93%	34 54.84%	2 22.99%	0 0.00%
1	94 25.07%	16 25.81%	---	---
0	5 1.33%	0 0.00%	---	---
N	375	62	87	13

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