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Connecting Descriptive and Substantive Representation: An Analysis of Sex Differences in Cosponsorship Activity

Women-and-politics research emphasizes the importance of social identity as a determinant of legislative behavior, yet congressional scholars largely ignore identity and focus on the impact of constituency, party, and institutional factors. To examine the link between descriptive and substantive representation, I utilize an original database of cosponsorship activity in the 103d and 104th Congresses that encompasses five social welfare issues that reflect the gender gap in the mass public. I find that the policy preferences of elites do reflect gender differences in the mass public and voter expectations concerning the policy expertise of women candidates. These differences are constrained by changes in the political and institutional contexts since women increase their activity on social welfare issues when they gain access to strategic positions of power, particularly majority party status, to a greater extent than do similarly situated men.

The ability of Congress to accurately reflect the will of the people is an issue that has preoccupied scholars and political activists since the founding period. Today the politics of identity have taken center stage as women's groups raise money to elect female candidates and groups representing Hispanics and African Americans fight for the creation of majority-minority districts under the assumption that the election of more group members will improve substantive representation of their interests. Meanwhile, opponents insist that social identity is irrelevant to the representation of constituency interests. Empirical research on legislatures reflects this dichotomy. Women-and-politics scholars focus on illuminating the ways in which gender as a social identity affects policy preferences and legislative activity, but these scholars often discount the importance of constituency interests, party affiliation, and institutional structures. Meanwhile, congressional scholars

generally ignore issues of social identity and rely on constituency and institutional factors to explain the development of policy priorities.

This article brings together insights from the congressional and women-and-politics fields to determine the circumstances in which social identity affects legislative choices and to illuminate the ways in which those choices are constrained by the partisan, constituency, and institutional factors that guide legislative behavior. Utilizing cosponsorship activity in the 103d and 104th Congresses as a guide to policy preferences, I examine whether or not gender influences members' decisions to support issues of traditional concern to women, including education, children-and-family issues, women's health, general health, and welfare. By contrasting legislative behavior in the Democratically controlled 103d Congress and the Republican-controlled 104th Congress, I demonstrate how political context and a legislator's position within the institution affect the decision calculus concerning whether or not to pursue these policy initiatives.

Connecting Descriptive and Substantive Representation of Women

In her classic work, *The Concept of Representation* (1967), Hanna Pitkin draws a distinction between descriptive and substantive representation. According to Pitkin, descriptive representation is largely symbolic: the representative mirrors certain social characteristics of the constituents, such as race, class, or sex. Substantive representation refers to the ability of the representative to act for the interests of the represented. Pitkin discounts the need for electing descriptive representatives to achieve substantive representation of constituent interests, asserting that the representative's descriptive characteristics will only be relevant if they affect his or her actual actions and decisions.

More recently, feminist scholars have argued that increasing the descriptive representation of women in legislatures is a necessary condition for achieving the substantive representation of women's interests (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995). For example, Mansbridge (1999) claims that increasing descriptive representation is necessary when there is a history of discrimination in institutions and electoral processes that has allowed one group to dominate and ignore the interests of the subordinate group, thus breeding distrust among the subordinates. Additionally, she maintains that the election of descriptive representatives is necessary when a group's interests are relatively uncrystallized and the issues have therefore not been on the political agenda long and the parties are not organized around these issues. In this case, the

presence of more women will bring new issues to the agenda and will allow female representatives to bring a different perspective to issues by explaining how specific policies being considered will affect particular groups of women.

Evidence from studies of the gender gap in the mass public demonstrates that if there is a unique perspective of women that requires descriptive representation in the legislature, then a heightened interest in social welfare issues is central to that perspective. Studies of voter attitudes indicate that women are more likely to support increased spending on social services and to identify issues including education and health care as more important determinants of their votes than do men (Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Pearson 2001; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). Similarly, surveys and experiments concerning gender stereotypes about women candidates show that voters favor female candidates on compassion issues like education, health care, children, and the elderly but view male candidates as more capable of handling foreign policy and tax issues (Burrell 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Sanbonmatsu 2002).

It is an open question whether or not the policy priorities of women elites in Congress reflect the gender differences found in the mass public and in voter's expectations about women candidates. To evaluate gender differences at the elite level, I examined cosponsorship activity in the 103d and 104th Congresses on legislation concerning education, children-and-family issues, women's health, general health care, and welfare. I consider cosponsorship akin to "loud voting." Cosponsorship offers a less censored view of preferences than do roll-call votes because members are not required to take a position on a predetermined set of alternatives. Instead, legislators can choose whether or not to take a stand on an issue and can select the type of initiative to support. At the same time, cosponsorship is not so restrictive that a member's position within the institution will hamper his or her ability to express a policy preference through cosponsorship. First-term minority party members with limited influence over the policymaking process are just as free to cosponsor a bill as members of the committee with jurisdiction over the issue.

Past research has found that cosponsorship serves as an electoral tool allowing members to take a position on an issue with minimal cost and as an internal legislative signal, a coalition-building mechanism informing individual members and the party and committee leaders who set the agenda about the content of legislation and the level of support for a bill (Balla and Nemacheck 2000; Kessler and Krehbiel 1996; Krehbiel 1995; Koger 2003; Wilson and Young 1997). Koger (2003)

notes that, at the individual level, members utilize cosponsorship both to clarify their position on issues and to take positions for electoral constituencies. As a mechanism for expressing policy preferences, cosponsorship allows members to support bills that more accurately reflect their true policy preferences, in contrast to the circumscribed choices that are offered in a floor vote. By taking advantage of opportunities to cosponsor, the legislator can build a record on issues of personal concern. With regard to position taking, a member can utilize cosponsorship to take positions that satisfy key groups of voters, important interest groups, and potential campaign donors.

As a mechanism for coalition building, the number and identity of cosponsors serves as an important signal to party and committee leaders concerning the nature and depth of support for a piece of legislation. For example, Wilson and Young (1997) find that the number of cosponsors influences whether or not a bill receives committee consideration. It has no impact, however, on the probability that a bill will advance to the floor. Kessler and Krehbiel (1996) highlight the importance of the ideological distribution of the cosponsors as a signal of which policies will be favored by a congressional majority. Koger (2003) notes that bill sponsors pursue particular legislators, such as members of the committee of jurisdiction, committee leaders, or members of a state delegation, for proposals of cosponsors in order to affect a specific state delegation and to bolster the legitimacy of a bill in the eyes of the agenda setters, the party and committee leaders who decide whether a bill is given consideration in committee and on the floor. Because of the voluntary nature of cosponsorship as a mechanism for expressing policy preferences and its importance as a mechanism for coalition building, if congresswomen are more likely to cosponsor legislation that reflects the underpinnings of the gender gap than are their male colleagues, then this fact provides support for the idea that increasing the descriptive representation of women in Congress enhances the substantive representation of women in the mass public.

Much of the current research on cosponsorship has ignored the impact of social identity on the decision to cosponsor bills in specific policy areas. This disregard stems from a larger consensus in congressional research that legislative behavior is best predicted by constituency influence, party affiliation, and institutional position. Yet rational-choice models do allow for the possibility that the same district can support different reelection constituencies (Fenno 1978; Fiorina 1974), thus allowing for the possibility that women candidates might be more likely to attract female voters or those concerned with social welfare issues as key groups of supporters (Carroll 2002; Reingold 2000). Among

those who have studied the impact of social identity on cosponsorship of specific legislation, Canon (1999) found that African American representatives were much more likely to cosponsor legislation with racial content than were white representatives with large minority populations in their districts. In their study of managed-care bills, Balla and Nemacheck (2000) found that women were more likely to cosponsor bills targeted at women's health concerns, but the sex of the legislator had no impact on the decision to cosponsor comprehensive reform bills. Similarly, Wolbrecht (2000, 2002) and I (Swers 2002) have demonstrated that congresswomen are more likely to support bills dealing with feminist or women's rights issues, such as domestic violence and abortion.

Prior to the 103d Congress, which brought the number of women in the House of Representatives from 28 to 47¹ (Center for the American Woman and Politics 1994), the paucity of women in the House made it difficult to systematically evaluate the policy consequences of electing more women to Congress. Most studies of women in Congress focused on interviews and anecdotal evidence or roll-call vote analyses (for example, Dolan 1997, Swers 1998, and Welch 1985). Therefore, the majority of systematic longitudinal evidence concerning gender differences in policy priorities comes from studies of state legislatures. Researchers have found that female legislators sponsor more bills concerning issues such as health care, education, children and families, and women's rights than do their male colleagues. Women are more likely to consider these bills a priority, and they are more successful in achieving passage of these initiatives into law (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Saint-Germain 1989; Thomas 1994).

One significant drawback to some of the state research is that the focus on evaluating aggregate gender differences across time and different states prevents them from adequately addressing how political context and institutional dynamics affect legislative behavior. In these studies, gender differences in legislative activity are explained by the presence or absence of a women's caucus or by the proportion of women in the legislature reaching a "critical mass" (see, for example, Dodson and Carroll 1991, Saint-Germain 1989, and Thomas 1994).² These studies do not address the possibility that differences attributed to gender are better explained by the fact that more women in the legislatures are Democrats or, alternatively, that more women may be clustered on the social welfare committees that have jurisdiction over many of the issues where gender differences are found. Additionally, these state-level studies do not address how changes in the institutional and political contexts, such as a shift from majority to minority party

status, the openness of the external political climate, or an assignment to an important committee post, affect the decision calculus of a representative concerning which policies to support.

A new generation of research has begun to focus on how the legislative choices of women are mediated by the political environment and the member's position within the institution (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Dodson et al. 1995; Norton 2002; Rosenthal 1998; Reingold 2000; Swers 2002). In this study, I examined cosponsorship activity in the widely varying political climates of the 103d and 104th Congresses. The Democratically controlled 103d Congress convened after the "Year of the Woman" elections, which focused on issues favorable to women—such as national health insurance—and brought a large increase in the number of women in Congress. Most women were members of the majority party, the policy agenda was open to new proposals on social welfare issues, and the election of a Democratic president brought unified government and increased the possibility that new policy innovations could become law (Wilcox 1994). By contrast, the Republican-controlled 104th Congress relegated most women in Congress to the minority party and brought the election of more ideologically conservative women. Control of the issue agenda shifted to fiscal and social conservatives and the Republican party, led by Speaker Newt Gingrich, embarked on an effort at party government by reducing the power of committees and their leaders and enforcing loyalty to a party agenda embodied in the "Contract with America" (Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Gimpel 1996). The dramatic changes reflected in these two Congresses provide the perfect natural experiment for investigating the influence of political climate and institutional position on the policy choices of individual legislators.

By examining the impact of women in the presence of major partisan, constituency, and institutional factors known to influence legislative behavior, my research can more accurately assess the extent to which gender contributes to the decision to support bills in specific policy areas. The comparison of legislative behavior in the 103d and 104th Congresses allows me to assess the stability of women's commitment to gender gap issues and to illuminate how their legislative choices are shaped by changes in the political context. Finally, by focusing on the impact of institutional position, particularly majority party status and committee position, I demonstrate that in certain cases, when women achieve positions of strategic advantage (such as majority party status or a seat on a relevant committee), they increase their cosponsorship activity at higher rates than do similarly situated male colleagues.

Data and Methodology

To determine whether or not the policy preferences of female elites in Congress reflect the expectations of voters and the gender differences in opinion surveys of the mass public, I examined members' cosponsorship activity during the 103d and 104th Congresses in five issue areas commonly identified as important sources of gender differences: education, children-and-family issues outside of education, women's health, general health care, and welfare. I analyzed the impact of gender on the number of bills a legislator cosponsored in each of these issue areas after accounting for major partisan, constituency, and institutional factors known to influence legislative decision making.

To identify a sample of bills in each of these issue areas that could be easily duplicated by other scholars, I consulted the monthly legislative reports and publications of five liberal and conservative women's groups. Each group claims to represent women's interests and regularly follows issues of concern to women as they proceed through Congress. The groups include the American Association of University Women (liberal), the National Organization for Women (liberal), Concerned Women for America (conservative), Eagle Forum (conservative), and the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues (CCWI)/Women's Policy, Inc. (bipartisan).³ To ensure there was no systematic bias in the sample, such as a bias toward bills cosponsored by Democrats or bills cosponsored by women, I reviewed the approximately 5,000 bill summaries per Congress and supplemented the sample by adding bills that matched the subject area of bills identified by the women's groups. For example, in the 103d Congress, the women's groups identified 11 bills concerning adoption and foster care. In my review of the bill synopses, I found 8 additional bills on this topic and I added them to the children-and-family issue sample. Thus, the number of bills included in each issue category does not include all bills that could possibly be characterized as related to education, children and families, or one of the other issue areas. This sampling method does, however, generate a representative sample of bills in each policy area.⁴

Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of the samples for each issue area. Table 1 displays the patterns of cosponsorship in each policy area for individual members. For example, legislators in the 103d Congress cosponsored an average of 2.7 education bills, the standard deviation was 3.3 bills, and 18 was the maximum number of education bills cosponsored by an individual member. In the 103d and 104th Congresses, examples of bills in the education policy area include bills related to major federal education programs (such as the Elementary and

TABLE 1
Individual Member Cosponsorship Descriptive Statistics
by Issue Area, 103d and 104th Congresses

Issue Area	Mean Cosponsored	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>103d Congress (N = 433)</i>				
Education	2.7	3.3	0	18
Children and Family (Non-Ed)	7.47	5.98	0	41
Women's Health	4.3	4.6	0	21
General Health	3.27	2.39	0	13
Welfare	2.9	2.2	0	15
<i>104th Congress (N = 430)</i>				
Education	1.48	1.66	0	8
Children and Family (Non-Ed)	5.89	4.47	0	30
Women's Health	4.49	5.19	0	27
General Health	10.1	5.6	0	40
Welfare	1.5	1.3	0	8

Secondary Education Act, Head Start, and the Women's Educational Equity Act); job training programs; education for the disabled; the creation of the National Service program; school vouchers; and education savings accounts.⁵ Some bills are included in more than one policy category. For example, bills dealing with children's health are included in both the children and family (non-education) sample and the general health sample.

Table 2 displays the same descriptive statistics for the individual bills within each issue category. Clearly, individual bills vary greatly in the number of cosponsors they attract, ranging from zero to almost an entire party delegation when an issue is salient to the public and constitutes a battleground between the two parties. For example, in the 103d Congress, the Clinton Health Plan and the Republican alternative attracted 103 Democratic and 141 Republican cosponsors, respectively, and in the 104th Congress, the Republican Welfare Reform Bill had 120 cosponsors.

To evaluate the importance of gender as an independent influence on members' policy preferences, I created dependent variables that measure the number of bills cosponsored by each member for the five policy areas. Since the majority of research on legislative decision making does not include a role for social identity, it is possible that differences

TABLE 2
Cosponsorship Descriptive Statistics by Issue Area,
103d and 104th Congresses

Issue Area	Total Bills	Mean Cosponsors	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>103d Congress</i>					
Education	56	20.7	34.5	0	221
Children and Family (Non-Ed)	157	20.3	34.9	0	217
Women's Health	71	25.9	37.6	0	166
General Health	74	19	29.7	0	141
Welfare	59	21.6	29.7	0	164
<i>104th Congress</i>					
Education	44	14.5	23.6	0	120
Children and Family (Non-Ed)	132	19.3	33.7	0	220
Women's Health	77	25.2	28.6	0	115
General Health	168	26	43.8	0	243
Welfare	60	10.6	20.3	0	120

attributed to the unique policy contributions of women could be better explained by other factors. For example, research on cosponsorship highlights the centrality of ideology as a determinant of which bills a member cosponsors (Balla and Nemacheck 2000; Kessler and Krehbiel 1996; Koger 2003). Therefore, what appears to be a gender effect may actually reflect the fact that more women are elected from liberal districts and that all liberal Democrats are more likely to take an interest in issues like education and health care. Similarly, research demonstrates that members of relevant committees are more likely to cosponsor bills within the jurisdiction of their committees and that these committee members are highly sought after by bill sponsors (Krehbiel 1995; Koger 2003; Swers 2002). Therefore, differences attributed to gender may be explained by a clustering of women on particular committees, and these women could be no more interested in these issues than other members who are carrying out their committee responsibilities.

To examine the impact of gender on the cosponsorship decision while accounting for important partisan, constituency, and institutional

factors known to influence legislative behavior, I utilized negative binomial and Poisson regression models⁶ (see Tables 3 and 4). These models are more suitable than ordinary least squares regression when the dependent variable is a count of events—in this case, a count of the number of bills cosponsored in specific policy areas. The Poisson regression model is the most common event-count model. This model assumes that the probability of an event occurring at any given time is constant within a specified period and independent of all previous events (G. King 1989). It is likely, however, that members who cosponsor one bill concerning education or children's issues will be more inclined to cosponsor another bill on the subject, thus violating the assumption of independence. The negative binomial accounts for this dependence through a dispersion parameter. A dispersion parameter of 0 indicates an absence of dispersion and an independence of events; a dispersion parameter greater than 0 indicates overdispersion (Balla and Nemacheck 2000; G. King 1989). I first estimated Poisson models for each of the dependent variables. In six of the ten policy area models, chi-squared tests indicated that the dependent variables were not Poisson distributed and so I employed a negative binomial model.

The independent variables used in the regression analyses in Tables 3 and 4 were drawn from the vast congressional research concerning the elements that motivate legislators' policy decisions. Since party affiliation is one of the most reliable guides to how members of Congress approach issues (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Rohde 1991), I created variables for Republican men and women and Democratic men and women. Dividing men and women by party allows me to assess the possibility that differences attributed to gender are better explained by the fact that more women in Congress are Democrats and Democrats are viewed as more active on social welfare issues. Because I expect that Democrats are more supportive of these proposals, the models in Tables 3 and 4 include the variables for Republican men and women and Democratic women. Democratic men are the comparison category. Therefore, a positive and significant coefficient for Democratic women would indicate that being a Democratic woman is an important predictor of cosponsorship and that Democratic women are even more likely to cosponsor bills on these social welfare policies than are Democratic men.⁷ To further examine the impact of identity on legislative choices, I also included variables for African American and Hispanic representatives.

Since previous research has shown that members sign onto bills whose cosponsors have ideological views similar to their own (Balla and Nemacheck 2000; Koger 2003; Swers 2002), I utilized Poole and Rosenthal's DW-NOMINATE scores to measure individual ideology

(Poole and Rosenthal 1997). These scores range from -1 , indicating “most liberal,” to $+1$, indicating “most conservative.” Although party and ideology are highly correlated, these scores allow me to capture intraparty differences in interest in social welfare policy issues. I hypothesized that liberal Democrats would be more active on these issues than conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans would be more active than conservative Republicans.⁸

The needs of the district rank foremost in the minds of all representatives (Fenno 1978; Fiorina 1974; Mayhew 1974). I accounted for the nature of the legislator’s constituency by including census data measuring the percentage of the district that was urban, the district’s median household income, the elderly population in the district, the African-American population in the district, and whether or not the district was in a Southern state.⁹ I used the proportion of the district that voted for Clinton in 1992 to assess the level of Democratic support in the district.

Finally, a legislator’s position within the institution will affect the utility of cosponsorship as a means of communicating his or her positions to constituents and achieving policy goals. I included a variable indicating whether or not the representative was a first-term legislator because I believe that such members’ inexperience with developing legislation and their lack of access to important committee posts and leadership positions will make cosponsorship an important tool for communicating their policy priorities. Numerous scholars discuss the importance of a member’s committee seat as a guide to that member’s policy activity (Hall 1996; Krehbiel 1991; Norton 2002; Shepsle and Weingast 1987). Members participate most in the shaping of legislation that falls under their committee jurisdiction. Therefore, members of committees and subcommittees with jurisdiction over education, children-and-family, women’s health, general health, and welfare issues should be the most active cosponsors of bills on these issues. Unfortunately, because of the complex division of labor and turf battles for jurisdiction that have developed over time, these social welfare policies do not fall neatly within the jurisdiction of a single committee (D. King 1997). For example, eight different House committees considered President Clinton’s national health insurance bill. To account for the importance of committee membership, I used information on jurisdiction, bill referral, and committee action to develop variables for each policy area that measure the committees and subcommittees that considered the most legislation in the policy area for that Congress.¹⁰

While I expected committee members and first-term legislators to be more active cosponsors than the average member, I expected the

leaders of these committees, particularly the committee and subcommittee chairs, to be less active cosponsors because they can draw on more resources, such as their access to more staff and their control of the committee markup process, to achieve their policy goals. To test this hypothesis, I included variables for the chairs and ranking minority members of the committees and subcommittees that constitute the committee variables for each policy area. Similarly, I included a separate variable for members of the Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education because I believe that the high levels of influence that these members wield over the distribution of funding for social welfare programs will make cosponsorship a less necessary tool for the achievement of their policy goals.¹¹ Finally, I used a variable measuring the total number of bills cosponsored by each member to account for the fact that those members who cosponsor more bills are mathematically more likely to cosponsor a bill in one of the policy areas in this study.

Analysis and Discussion

The regression results in Tables 3 and 4 indicate that, in addition to ideology and committee position, being a female representative is one of the most consistent predictors of interest in education, children-and-family issues, women's health, and general health issues. Being a woman has no impact, however, on the decision to cosponsor welfare bills. To gain insight into how much support for legislative action on these issues would be increased if more women were elected to Congress, I calculated predicted probabilities that compare the number of bills that liberal and conservative, Republican and Democratic men and women would cosponsor.¹²

The differences are not always large, ranging from no difference in the education cosponsorship patterns of Republicans in the 104th Congress to a difference of 5.3 more women's health bills cosponsored by liberal Democratic women in comparison with liberal Democratic men in the 103d Congress. Nevertheless, the results in Table 5 reveal some interesting patterns in the policy interests of men and women and the ways they use their institutional positions to advance their policy goals.

With regard to policy issues, the largest differences between men and women are found on the women's health issues. Liberal Democratic women take the lead in promoting these issues in both the 103d and 104th Congresses. Liberal Democratic women were predicted to cosponsor 10.6 women's health bills in the 103d Congress, 5.3 more

bills than their liberal male colleagues. In the 104th Congress, these women were predicted to cosponsor 9.5 women's health bills, 4.1 more bills than liberal Democratic men. Similarly, in the 103d Congress, moderate Republican women were predicted to cosponsor 3.3 more women's health bills than their moderate male colleagues. In the 104th Congress, they would cosponsor 2.4 more women's health bills than moderate Republican men. Additionally, these moderate Republican women were predicted to cosponsor about as many women's health bills as liberal Democratic men in the 103d Congress and more women's health bills than conservative Democratic men in both Congresses.

The heightened interest of female legislators in women's health issues across party and the ideological spectrum is consistent with theories about the connection between descriptive and substantive representation of women. Women's health issues are relatively new to the congressional agenda and have not been fully incorporated into committee jurisdictions. Therefore, identity will play a heightened role in determining which members act as legislative entrepreneurs on these issues. Additionally, among the policy issues examined, these issues have the most direct consequences for women as a group. Women of all ideological predispositions may believe that by advocating these issues they are representing the interests of women as a district and a national constituency.

As expected, the coefficients for the DW-NOMINATE scores indicate that, with the exception of education issues in the Republican-controlled 104th Congress, liberals are the most active cosponsors of social welfare legislation¹³ (see Tables 3 and 4). The predicted probabilities in Table 5 indicate that liberal Democratic women often take the lead in cosponsoring the most bills in the education, children-and-family, women's health, and general health policy areas. In comparison to conservative Democratic men, moderate Republican women are consistently more active cosponsors of social welfare issues across both Congresses, indicating that for moderate Republicans the sex of the legislator is a very important influence on the decision to focus on social welfare issues, contradicting the normal partisan and ideological trends in the development of policy priorities in these areas.

Beyond ideology, the probabilities demonstrate that women's activism on these policy issues varies with their level of institutional influence, particularly their status as members of the majority or minority party. When members are in the majority, they wield agenda power, which provides increased opportunities to see favored policy initiatives enacted into law. Therefore, when members are in the majority, they should increase their activism on issues of personal concern. Although

TABLE 3
 Education and Children-and-Family Issues Cosponsorship Negative Binomial and Poisson Models,
 103d and 104th Congresses
 (standard errors in parentheses)

Independent Variables	103d Congress Education	104th Congress Education	103d Congress Children & Family (Non-Ed)	104th Congress Children & Family (Non-Ed)
Republican Women	.456 [^] (.268)	-.311 (.326)	.482*** (.148)	.518*** (.161)
Democratic Women	.307** (.101)	.552*** (.197)	.23*** (.07)	.25*** (.076)
Republican Men	-.308 (.217)	-.324 (.291)	.247* (.115)	.077 (.141)
Ideology	-1.36*** (.243)	1.27*** (.289)	-.575*** (.135)	-.029 (.139)
African American Representative	.059 (.28)	.44 (.289)	-.189 (.131)	-.269* (.136)
Hispanic Representative	.256 (.183)	-.008 (.334)	-.068 (.122)	.179 (.127)
First-Term	.119 (.083)	.264** (.097)	.176*** (.049)	-.002 (.058)
Clinton Vote	-.489 (.564)	-.621 (.781)	.291 (.345)	.346 (.368)
Southern State	-.234* (.102)	.076 (.111)	-.028 (.058)	.137* (.058)
% Elderly	2.13 [^] (1.25)	1.68 (1.33)	-.406 (.707)	.515 (.688)
% Black	.456 (.457)	.336 (.637)	.198 (.281)	.616* (.298)
% Urban	-.507* (.226)	.029 (.255)	.035 (.129)	.172 (.133)
Median Household Income	.032 (.06)	.031 (.073)	-.017 (.035)	.019 (.036)

(continued on next page)

TABLE 3 (continued)

Independent Variables	103d Congress Education	104th Congress Education	103d Congress Children & Family (Non-Ed)	104th Congress Children & Family (Non-Ed)
Committee Seat	1.25*** (.186)	1.01*** (.145)		
Committee Chair	.123 (.202)	-.18 (.243)		
Committee Ranking Member	.722* (.286)	1.04*** (.292)		
Subcommittee Seat	-.331^ (.197)	-.055 (.096)	.127* (.053)	.153* (.064)
Subcommittee Chair			.025 (.176)	-.114 (.207)
Subcommittee Ranking Member			.405* (.173)	-.472^ (.269)
Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee	.092 (.193)	.25 (.219)	-.021 (.129)	-.087 (.131)
Number Bills Cosponsored	.004*** (.0003)	.006*** (.0005)	.005*** (.0002)	.006*** (.0003)
Constant	-.625* (.319)	-1.23** (.44)	.297 (.188)	-.003 (.21)
Dispersion Parameter	.05 (.025)		.034 (.01)	.012 (.01)
Log Likelihood	-682.59	-582.47	-1,024.17	-951.82
Log Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	481.29***	365.34***	505.22***	421.74***
Pseudo-R ²	.261	.239	.198	.181
N	432	429	432	429

Note: The model for education issues in the 104th Congress is a Poisson model. The other three models are negative binomial models. The log likelihood ratio chi-square statistics compare the equations to the constant-only model. In the education models for the 103d and 104th Congresses, the variables for committee chair and ranking minority member include the chairs and ranking members for the full Education and Labor (Education and Economic Opportunities in the 104th Congress) committee and all the subcommittee chairs and ranking members for that committee. A complete listing of all committee and subcommittee variables is available from the author upon request.

^p ≤ .1; *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

TABLE 4
 Women's Health, General Health, and Welfare Cosponsorship Negative Binomial
 and Poisson Models, 103d and 104th Congresses
 (standard errors in parentheses)

Independent Variables	103d Congress Women's Health	104th Congress Women's Health	103d Congress General Health	104th Congress General Health	103d Congress Welfare	104th Congress Welfare
Republican Women	1.35*** (.196)	1.07*** (.235)	.903*** (.197)	.318* (.13)	.066 (.223)	-.482 (.321)
Democratic Women	.691*** (.084)	.562*** (.097)	.258** (.093)	.068 (.062)	.162 (.104)	-.123 (.158)
Republican Men	.338* (.17)	.355^ (.206)	.799*** (.154)	.099 (.109)	.397* (.158)	.406 (.277)
Ideology	-1.49*** (.195)	-1.02*** (.199)	-.771*** (.181)	-.217* (.108)	.005 (.184)	-.008 (.273)
African American Representative	.194 (.176)	-.043 (.195)	.093 (.165)	.047 (.108)	.214 (.181)	-.065 (.259)
Hispanic Representative	-.075 (.159)	-.063 (.176)	.326* (.143)	-.043 (.104)	.362* (.162)	.481* (.237)
First-Term	.014 (.069)	.05 (.09)	-.053 (.066)	.043 (.045)	.178** (.067)	-.133 (.113)
Clinton Vote	.218 (.471)	.794 (.524)	.549 (.452)	.211 (.289)	.468 (.493)	-.423 (.719)
Southern State	-.093 (.082)	.09 (.088)	.166* (.074)	.049 (.046)	-.067 (.081)	-.048 (.113)
% Elderly	.281 (1.0)	-.179 (1.04)	2.16** (.841)	.261 (.55)	-1.77^ (.99)	.445 (1.36)
% Black	-.486 (.388)	-.155 (.427)	-.126 (.367)	-.01 (.238)	.36 (.397)	.932^ (.574)
% Urban	.105 (.183)	.151 (.196)	.355* (.173)	-.145 (.102)	-.053 (.182)	-.07 (.256)
Median Household Income	.067 (.047)	.062 (.052)	-.073 (.047)	-.002 (.029)	.016 (.047)	.031 (.069)

(continued on next page)

TABLE 4 (continued)

Independent Variables	103d Congress Women's Health	104th Congress Women's Health	103d Congress General Health	104th Congress General Health	103d Congress Welfare	104th Congress Welfare
Committee Seat	.167** (.06)	-.096 (.066)	.154** (.05)	.05* (.024)	.08 (.098)	.159 (.104)
Committee Chair	-.18 (.3)	-.499 (.537)	.105 (.265)	.081 (.132)	.228 (.449)	.88* (.369)
Committee Ranking Member	-.081 (.364)	.247 (.282)	.003 (.233)	-.182 (.153)	.187 (.423)	.322 (.521)
Subcommittee Seat	.086 (.124)	.314* (.139)	.143 (.093)	.168*** (.038)	.169 (.106)	.199^ (.111)
Subcommittee Chair	-.356 (.388)	-.666 (.578)	-.147 (.306)	.081 (.101)	.362 (.28)	-.081 (.307)
Subcommittee Ranking Member	-.179 (.467)	-.392^ (.347)	-.008 (.291)	-.014 (.093)	.154 (.274)	.115 (.352)
Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee	-.309^ (.171)	-.018 (.208)	-.15 (.167)	.039 (.101)	-.119 (.195)	-.12 (.262)
Number Bills Cosponsored	.004*** (.0002)	.007*** (.0004)	.003*** (.0002)	.005*** (.0002)	.003*** (.0003)	.005*** (.0004)
Constant	-.771** (.259)	-.719* (.3)	-.862*** (.245)	.982*** (.18)	-.292 (.272)	-1.34** (.424)
Dispersion Parameter	.063 (.023)	.109 (.026)		.012 (.007)		
Log Likelihood	-873.31	-887.39	-788.24	-1,103.57	-779.67	-586.77
Log Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	468.95***	451.52***	377.18***	400.21***	312.81***	159.91***
Pseudo-R ²	.212	.203	.193	.154	.167	.12
N	432	429	432	429	432	429

Note: The two models for women's health issues and the model for general health issues in the 104th Congress are negative binomial models. The model for general health issues in the 103d Congress and the two welfare issues models report the results of Poisson regressions. The log likelihood ratio chi-square statistics compare the equations to the constant-only model. A complete listing of all committee and subcommittee variables is available from the author upon request.
 ^p ≤ .1; *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

TABLE 5
 Predicted Number of Bills Cosponsored by Gender, Party, and Ideology,
 103d and 104th Congresses

Issue Area	Liberal Democrats		Conservative Democrats		Moderate Republicans		Conservative Republicans	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>103d Congress</i>								
Education	3.6	4.9	2.3	3.1	.76	1.6	.55	1.2
Children & Family	7.5	9.4	6.1	7.7	5.6	7.1	4.9	6.2
Women's Health	5.3	10.6	3.2	6.3	1.9	5.2	1.3	3.6
General Health	3.1	4.0	2.4	3.1	3.4	3.8	2.8	3.1
Welfare	2.2	2.6	2.2	2.6	3.3	2.4	3.3	2.4
<i>104th Congress</i>								
Education	.46	.81	.76	1.3	1.5	1.5	2.0	2.0
Children & Family	4.8	6.2	4.8	6.1	5.0	7.8	5.0	7.8
Women's Health	5.4	9.5	3.6	6.4	2.3	4.7	1.8	3.7
General Health	10.4	11.1	9.5	10.2	8.0	11.0	8.4	10.5
Welfare	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.7

Note: Cell entries represent the mean number of bills that members with a given gender, party, and ideology are predicted to cosponsor. All other variables are set to their means. To categorize a member as a liberal or conservative Democrat (a moderate or conservative Republican), I set the DW-NOMINATE scores at the 25% and 75% quartile values within each party.

the evidence is not definitive, differences in the cosponsorship patterns of women as majority and minority party members suggest that women often increase their cosponsorship activity at higher rates when they have access to the prerogatives of majority power.

As shown in Table 5, in the Democratic-controlled 103d Congress, liberal Democratic women were predicted to cosponsor the most bills in the four policy areas in which sex exerts an important influence on cosponsorship. When Democratic women were relegated to the minority party, they only took the lead in cosponsorship of women's health issues and they cosponsored about the same number of general health bills as Republican women. They also cosponsored fewer children-and-family bills than Republican women and fewer education bills than all Republicans in the 104th Congress. Furthermore, the differences in the cosponsorship activity among male and female liberal Democrats were generally larger when these Democratic women served in the majority. For example, when liberal Democratic women were in the majority party, these women were predicted to cosponsor 1.9 more children-and-family bills and 5.3 more women's health bills than were liberal Democratic men. As minority party members, these differences were reduced: Democratic women were predicted to cosponsor 1.4 more children-and-family bills than were Democratic men, and liberal Democratic women were predicted to cosponsor 4.1 more women's health bills than were liberal men.

In the Republican-controlled 104th Congress, moderate Republican women used their majority status to pursue legislation regarding children, family, and general health care. As minority party members in the 103d Congress, moderate and conservative Republican women were predicted to cosponsor fewer children-and-family bills than liberal and conservative Democratic women and liberal Democratic men. As majority party members, however, Republican women were predicted to cosponsor the most children-and-family legislation. Additionally, following the failure of the Clinton health-care reform bills, as Republicans debated proposals to reform Medicare and Medicaid and guarantee the portability of health insurance, majority party Republican women became even more active cosponsors of legislation concerning general health issues than did their male counterparts. The difference in the number of general health bills that Republican men and women were predicted to cosponsor in the 103d and 104th Congresses expanded from 0.4 to 3.0 bills for moderate Republicans and from 0.3 to 2.1 bills among conservative Republicans.

The patterns of increased activity on women's issues when female members achieve majority status are supported by evidence from

interviews with members and staff. Previously (Swers 2002), I found that when Republicans became the majority in 1994, Republican moderates, particularly women, became targets of aggressive lobbying from liberal interest groups who viewed them as their last hope against an unfriendly Republican majority. These moderate members did not want to be perceived by leadership or by the Republican caucus as carriers for liberal groups. Therefore, they had to carefully navigate the pressures from these competing forces as they made decisions concerning how to achieve their legislative objectives and preserve their political capital.

The regression models also highlight the importance of other aspects of a member's position within the institution, aside from majority party status. Although the coefficient only reaches significance in the models for education issues in the 104th Congress, children-and-family issues in the 103d Congress, and welfare issues in the 103d Congress, status as a first-term representative is generally a positive predictor of cosponsorship behavior. Since first-term members generally lack access to powerful committee seats and their staff is often inexperienced in drafting legislative proposals, cosponsorship provides these members with a valuable opportunity to advertise their policy positions to constituents, important interest groups, and fellow legislators.

As other researchers have found, where one sits in the institution is an important predictor of where one stands on the issues. In almost every case, having a seat on one of the committees or subcommittees that considered the most legislation in a policy category was a positive predictor of which members would cosponsor bills in that issue area. This finding supports the idea that committee members serve as information specializers conveying expertise on the policy consequences of legislation to fellow members (Krehbiel 1991). Thus, the utility of cosponsorship as a legislative signal may be as important as its utility as a method of advertising positions to constituents.

Although cosponsorship has clear benefits for first-term members, the models indicate that it is not an important legislative tool for committee leaders or members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, which controls the funding for the majority of social welfare programs. The coefficients for these variables are insignificant in almost all cases, indicating that the resources these members control, such as the scheduling of hearings and markups and the funding of specific programs, make cosponsoring bills a less necessary tool for achieving their policy goals. Conversely, ranking members, as leaders of the minority delegation, have less influence over the committee agenda. Therefore, cosponsorship holds more

value for minority leaders as a method of signaling their opposition and their true policy preferences. Thus, being a ranking member has a positive and significant influence on cosponsorship of education legislation in the 103d and 104th Congresses and of children-and-family issues in the 103d Congress. The relationship between members' committee positions and their cosponsorship agendas suggests that the inclusion of more women on relevant committees could expand the openness of the congressional agenda to proposals concerning various social welfare issues.

Conclusion

By evaluating the impact of social identity on policy preferences in the presence of important ideological, constituency, and institutional factors known to influence legislative behavior, this study indicates that there is a clear connection between descriptive representation and substantive representation. The policy activity of female elites in Congress does reflect the gender differences found in opinion surveys in the mass public and in studies of voter expectations about male and female candidates. While the differences are not always great, female legislators are more likely than their male colleagues to cosponsor legislation in four of the five issue areas examined, including education, children-and-family, women's health, and general health issues. Sex differences in advocacy of policies in these areas are generally greatest among liberal Democrats, a group that one would expect to be the most active advocates of social welfare initiatives. Yet I found consistent differences in commitment to these policies among male and female legislators across the ideological spectrum. Additionally, moderate Republican women are consistently more active cosponsors of social welfare bills than are conservative Democratic men.

The careful attention devoted to the impact of changes in the institutional and political context demonstrates that members' decisions concerning which policies to advocate and what strategies to employ to achieve policy goals are mediated by their positions within the institution. Cosponsorship serves as an important tool for first-term members to convey their policy preferences on social welfare issues to constituents, legislators, and other interested groups, but committee leaders and members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education can draw on more-effective mechanisms to achieve their policy goals.

The close examination of the importance of institutional position also indicates that when women gain access to strategic positions of

power, they become even more active advocates of policy initiatives on education, children and families, women's health, and general health than similarly situated men. Thus, Democratic and Republican women are more likely to take the lead in cosponsoring legislation on gender gap issues when they are in the majority party. Therefore, in addition to electing more women to office, expanding the representation of women in strategic positions of power—including as members of the majority party and important committees—will enhance the quality of representation by increasing the diversity of viewpoints with a real influence on the congressional agenda.

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NOTES

1. This number includes the delegate from Washington, DC, Eleanor Holmes Norton (D).

2. Guided by the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977), critical mass theorists maintain that in skewed groups the more numerous “dominants” shape the culture of an institution and control group decisions. Until the minority group reaches a critical mass, minorities will be treated as “tokens.” Therefore, these members will not feel free to express their true preferences and will avoid representing the interests of their group for fear of being stigmatized by the dominant group. Alternatively, Kathlene (1994) found that as women increased their numbers in the Colorado legislature, men became more antagonistic in their committee deliberations with women.

3. CCWI is a bipartisan but liberal-leaning congressional caucus devoted to the promotion of women's, children's, and family issues. When the Republican leadership defunded legislative service organizations, the staff formed the nonpartisan think tank, Women's Policy, Inc. Their publications replaced the CCWI in the analysis of the 104th Congress.

4. One could also develop a sample based on a subject-term search of one of the many congressional databases, such as THOMAS. I believe, however, that my sampling method captures a more substantively meaningful range of bills that is more reflective of the policy preferences measured by studies of gender differences in voter attitudes and expectations about male and female candidates. For example, a search of THOMAS for the subject term *education* in the 103d Congress yields 835 bills, excluding resolutions. Many of these bills reflect district interests rather than a focus on education policy—consider Nancy Pelosi's (D-CA) bill, HR 3433, concerning the management of portions of the Presidio or Thomas Lewis's (R-FL) bill, HR 1738, to establish a fresh-cut flowers and greens promotion and information program to benefit the floricultural industry. I believe relying on the women's group reports supplemented by a review of the bill synopses to match subject areas is preferable to a subject-area search followed by a subjective process of eliminating bills that do not reflect one person's vision of education policy.

5. The children and families (non-education) policy area includes bills concerning child support; tax credits for adoption, long-term care of elderly relatives, or childcare; protection of children from crimes; limitation of children's access to sexual and violent material on the Internet and television; and bills promoting children's health. The women's health policy area includes proposals for research on specific diseases, such as breast or ovarian cancer; insurance coverage of services like mammograms and pap smears; and initiatives regarding reproductive services from family planning to prevention of teen pregnancy and regulation of abortions. The general health area includes omnibus proposals for national health insurance or reforming Medicare and Medicaid and more-targeted initiatives concerning medical research, children's health programs, and insurance issues (e.g., medical savings accounts, portability, and managed care). Because of the frenzy of legislative activity surrounding the Clinton Health Plan, there were hundreds of individual proposals regarding health insurance during the 103d Congress, many of which had no cosponsors, as each individual member tried to reassure constituents that he or she had a plan. Therefore, the sample used here is limited to cosponsorship of the seven major plans followed by the women's groups: the Clinton plan, the McDermott plan, the Cooper plan, the Stark plan, the Thomas plan, the Rowland-Bilirakis plan, and the Michel plan. The other general health bills in the 103d Congress sample reflect individual targeted issues identified by the women's groups and bills that matched those areas after a review of the bill summaries. Finally, the welfare policy area includes bills regarding such policies as comprehensive welfare reform, food stamps, and low-income housing. Additional information on the policy area samples is available from the author upon request.

6. I included all members of the House of Representatives in the 103d and 104th Congresses in the analyses except for the Speaker of the House and those members who did not serve full terms. Although William Natcher (D-KY) did not serve the full term, I included him in the analysis for the 103d Congress because he served as the chair of the Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. Given the importance of party affiliation, I counted the independent, Bernard Sanders (VT), who caucuses with the Democrats, as a Democrat.

7. The focus on differences among men and women of varying party affiliations and ideological views provides a more nuanced picture concerning the ways that gender affects policy decisions and the prominence of gender considerations in the decision calculus of different types of members. Nevertheless, the gender, party, and ideology variables cannot fully address the centrality of social identity to the decision-making process of individual members and whether or not individual members approach issues with a strong sense of gender consciousness and identification.

8. The ideology coefficient is also correlated with some of the district variables, such as the district vote for Clinton and the African American population. Therefore, the impact of these district variables is somewhat reduced. Since gender is the main focus of this study, I always included the ideology variable to ensure that differences attributed to gender could not be better explained by a member's ideology.

9. Most Hispanic and African American representatives are elected from districts with high minority populations, thus the African American population variable is highly correlated with minority representative variables, and one must be cautious in the interpretation of these variables.

10. A complete listing of the committees and subcommittees included in these variables is available from the author upon request.

11. Individual appropriations bills are largely shaped by the subcommittees of jurisdiction after they receive their funding allocations from the party leadership and committee chair (Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Oleszek 1996).

12. To generate predicted probabilities, I utilized *Clarify: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results* (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2001). The program runs one thousand simulations in which the variables of interest are allowed to vary and all other variables are set to a constant value (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). In this case, I varied the values of the gender-party and the ideology variables and I set all other variables to their means. To categorize a member as a liberal or conservative Democrat and a moderate or conservative Republican, I set the DW-NOMINATE scores at the 25% and 75% quartile values within each party. The probabilities reported in Table 5 reflect the mean number of bills that a given representative would cosponsor in each policy area.

13. The gender-party variables indicate that Republican men were the most active cosponsors of welfare bills in the 103d Congress.

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