

Sex, Bipartisanship, and Collaboration in the U.S. Congress

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On June 11, 2015, 56 members of Congress (55 men and Linda Sanchez) arrived at Nationals Park ready to play ball. Since 1909, the Congressional Baseball Game has been a staple of DC politics.¹ Although the game has been described as an annual “antidote for much of the toxic polarization suffusing the Capitol Hill work day,” Democrats and Republicans fielded teams that were as competitive on the baseball diamond as they are on the House and Senate floor.² Indeed, *Roll Call’s* accounts of the “yearly partisan face off” read like ESPN’s homepage. Well, sort of. Most sporting event recaps don’t mention that the athletes had hours earlier faced a “nail-biting procedural vote to pave the way for a Friday floor vote on two trade measures.”³ And rarely do baseball fans chant, “TPA! TPA,” referring to the Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015. But for the most part, the coverage was run of the mill. “Republicans had a rough start, making a series of errors in the bottom of the first inning that gave Democrats their first two runs,” political analysts noted. And despite a “brief moment of hope in their last at-bat . . . the momentum ultimately did not shift in the GOP’s favor.” The Democrats attained their seventh consecutive victory, besting the Republicans 5 to 2.

Two weeks later, at Watkins Recreation Center in Southeast DC, the scene was quite different. Twenty female members of Congress – 11 Democrats and nine Republicans – came together to play the female press corps in what has become an annual seven-inning softball game.

¹ There have been some interruptions, of course: the Great Depression, World War II, and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn’s decision to cancel the game from 1958 to 1962 because it had become “too physical.” See “History,” Congressional Baseball Game for Charity. Accessed at: <http://www.congressionalbaseball.org/history.html> (March 7, 2016).

² David Hawkings, “Going to the Baseball Game? Sit in the Middle,” *Roll Call*, June 8, 2015. Accessed at: <http://blogs.rollcall.com/hawkings/congressional-baseball-game-2015-republicans-vs-democrats/?dcz=> (March 7, 2016).

³ Bridget Bowman, “Democrats Win Seventh Straight Congressional Baseball Game,” *Roll Call*, June 12, 2015. Accessed at: <http://hoh.rollcall.com/democrats-win-7th-straight-congressional-baseball-game/?dcz> (August 9, 2015).

Leaving their party affiliations off the field, the women engaged in an evening of bipartisan bonding. Democrat Kirsten Gillibrand bragged about convincing “top-recruit” Republican Elise Stefanik to join the team.⁴ Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz could be seen high-fiving Alabama Republican Martha Roby.⁵ (Rightfully so – the women just realized they were about to secure a 1-0 victory over the “Bad News Babes.”) And emcee Senator Amy Klobuchar gushed about her female colleagues – Democrats and Republicans alike: “We call it beat the press, not meet the press!”⁶ Described by Democrat Donna Edwards as a “wonderful way for us to get to know our colleagues,”⁷ and by Republican Mia Love as an opportunity to “meet some people that I wouldn’t have had the chance to actually meet,”⁸ the early summer face-off fostered across-the-aisle collegiality that rarely surfaces on Capitol Hill.

Of course, it’s not only the softball field where female members of Congress have been known to cross party lines and socialize with one another. From chronicling bipartisan dinners (sometimes even at the White House) to trips to the theatre, and bowling nights to baby showers, media accounts routinely highlight the friendships that women in Congress have built with one another.⁹ As a result of these friendships – so the conventional wisdom goes – women are more likely to trust and cooperate with one another when it comes to governing. Senator Klobuchar, for

⁴ Christina Bellantoni, “Freshmen Join Congressional Women’s Softball Game,” *Roll Call*, May 21, 2015. Accessed at: <http://hoh.rollcall.com/congressional-womens-softball-game-2015-list-of-players/> (March 7, 2016).

⁵ Bridget Bowman, “A Record-Breaking Congressional Women’s Softball Game,” *Roll Call*, June 26, 2015. Accessed at: <http://hoh.rollcall.com/a-record-breaking-congressional-womens-softball-game/> (March 7, 2016).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bridget Bowman, “Running the Bases while Running for Senate,” *Roll Call*, June 24, 2015. Accessed at: <http://hoh.rollcall.com/edwards-senate-congressional-womens-softball-game/?dcz=> (March 7, 2016).

⁸ Bridget Bowman, “A Record-Breaking Congressional Women’s Softball Game,” *Roll Call*, June 26, 2015. Accessed at: <http://hoh.rollcall.com/a-record-breaking-congressional-womens-softball-game/> (March 7, 2016).

⁹ See, for example, Jay Newton-Small, *Broad Influence: How Women Are Changing the Way America Works*, New York: Times Books, 2016.

example, believes that social relationships allowed women in the Senate to “craft a long-term budget without the counterproductive barbs that some politicians throw at each other when they don’t agree.”¹⁰ Republican Senator Susan Collins contends that “women of the Senate are more likely to collaborate and to realize that we can disagree on an issue but still seek common ground.”¹¹ When women – referred to by reporters at the time as the “Only Adults Left in Washington” – received credit for ultimately ending the government shutdown in the fall of 2013, then-Senator Mark Pryor became a “huge fan” of his female colleagues. “Women in the Senate is a good thing,” he told a reporter. “We’re all just glad they allowed us to tag along so we could see how it’s done.”¹²

As normatively appealing as this prevailing view might be, no systematic analysis has yet to demonstrate that female members of Congress are more adept at solving problems than their male colleagues. And there are at least three reasons why a rigorous examination is warranted. First, we tend to conclude that congresswomen’s social behavior makes them “different” from men, but we have no sense of how often men engage in similar activities. It’s just not newsworthy and doesn’t present a photo opportunity when male legislators dine together, take in a sporting event, or meet for a drink. Second, it is imperative to look beyond high-profile examples of cooperation to conclude that women govern differently. To be sure, women played an instrumental role in ending the 2013 shutdown. But was the shutdown an anomaly? Were the stakes so unusually high that legislators behaved differently than might otherwise be the case? Third, in an era of unprecedented levels of party polarization, is it plausible to believe that women, just because they are friends with

¹⁰ Laura Bassett, “Men Got Us into this Shutdown, Women Got Us Out,” *Huffington Post*, October 16, 2013. Accessed at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/16/shutdown-women_n_4110268.html (March 14, 2016).

¹¹ Christopher Cousins, “Susan Collins Named One of the 25 Most Influential Women in Congress by CQ Roll Call,” *Bangor Daily News*, May 18, 2015. Accessed at: <http://stateandcapitol.bangordailynews.com/2015/05/19/susan-collins-named-one-of-the-most-powerful-women-in-washington/> (March 14, 2016).

¹² Laura Bassett, “Men Got Us into this Shutdown, Women Got Us Out,” *Huffington Post*, October 16, 2013. Accessed at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/16/shutdown-women_n_4110268.html (March 14, 2016).

each other, will be more likely than men to focus on problem solving and less likely to engage in partisan gamesmanship? Despite growing bodies of research about party polarization, women's leadership, and legislative effectiveness, these remain largely open questions.

Or at least they did until now. In this paper, we offer the first comprehensive study of gender and cooperation on Capitol Hill. Based on an analysis of nearly 14,000 procedural votes, almost 5,000 amendment introductions, and more than a decade's worth of social engagement activities, we find substantial evidence that women are systematically more likely than men to foster a collegial work environment. But that's where support for the conventional wisdom ends. These relationships do not amount to differences in legislative behavior. More specifically, women in neither party are more likely than their male co-partisans to be "problem solvers" – people who create a climate for passing legislation. Rather, the role the sex of a legislator plays in shaping policy is substantially constrained by the party in which she or he serves. Scholars have already noted the lack of gender differences when it comes to substantive votes (e.g. Frederick 2009; Schwindt-Bayer and Corbetta 2004; Swers 2013). Our analysis makes clear that the same pattern persists when it comes to interfacing with congressional procedures. Although women's presence in Congress certainly fosters democratic legitimacy and simple justice – both of which are important in their own right – our results suggests that it is unlikely that more female faces will reduce the hyper-partisanship, gridlock, and stalemate that have stymied the legislative process on Capitol Hill.

Women as Problem-Solvers? Background and Expectations

The notion that women in Congress, even if they don't always agree substantively, are more likely than men to work together to solve problems has become part of the popular political discourse. The logic underpinning this argument is two-pronged: (1) Women are more likely than men to develop personal relationships with one another and, thus, a sense of trust, and (2) Because this trust generates a propensity to cooperate, women are more likely than men to invest in the

institution of Congress by striving to move the legislative process along. Whereas men often create problems because they value partisan gamesmanship, women often solve them by compromising to get the legislature's business done.

Despite the fact that this argument has not yet been tested systematically, the first prong of the logic is well-established. For decades, studies from a range of disciplines have found that friendships in the workplace can promote organizational success and worker satisfaction (e.g., Berman, West, and Richter 2002; Gruenfeld et al. 1996; Pfeffer 1994). Because socializing outside of work can act as a repeated strategic interaction, the social capital that emerges beyond the workplace promotes general trust within it (Cohen and Prusak 2011; Spagnolo 1999). Friends are better able than mere acquaintances to resolve conflicts and perform decision-making tasks (Shah and Jehn 1993). And because people want to avoid damaging their personal relationships, social relations often also come with “expectations of trust and abstention from opportunism” (Granovetter 1985, 490; see also Greenhalgh and Chapman 1998).

A substantial body of research also suggests that women are more likely than men to prioritize these personal relationships and, as a result, to engage in collegial behavior professionally. Studies of corporate boards, for example, find that women are more collaborative than men and that this cooperation enhances the quality of board governance (Konrad, Kramer, and Erkut 2008). Analyses of local and state-level elected officials reveal the same thing. Tolleson-Rinehart's (1991) study of mayors finds, for instance, that women tend to adopt an approach to governing that emphasizes congeniality, whereas men tend to emphasize hierarchy (see also Weikart et al. 2007). Because female state legislators are motivated by building and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Richardson and Freeman 1995), they spend more time than men do negotiating with their colleagues (Epstein, Niemi, and Powell 2005; see also Kathlene 1994; Rosenthal 1998; Whicker and Jewell 1998).

It is the second prong of the argument that we view with skepticism. When it comes to the U.S. Congress, the role a legislator's sex plays in shaping policy is substantially limited by party. For years, scholars uncovered gender differences in members' priorities and preferences. Based on an analysis of bill sponsorship and floor remarks in the 104th through 107th Congresses, for example, Gerrity, Osborn, and Mendez (2007) found that women who replaced men in the same district were more likely to focus on "women's" issues, such as gender equity, day care, flex time, abortion, minimum wage increases, and the extension of the food stamp program (see also Burrell 1996; Frederick 2011; MacDonald and O'Brien 2011). Moreover, in the 1990s, both Democratic and moderate Republican women in Congress were more likely than men to use their bill sponsorship and co-sponsorship activity to focus on "women's" issues (Dodson 1998; Paolino 1995; Swers 2002).

But as the parties have polarized, which has resulted in fewer moderates in both the House and Senate, these patterns have dissipated. Women (and men) are first and foremost partisan creatures. In the Senate, for example, Swers (2013) finds that the stark differences between the parties on issues pertaining to women, families, and children now far exceed any gender differences on these issues. Schwindt-Bayer and Corbetta (2004) find that, controlling for party and constituency influences, member sex does not predict the "liberalness" of roll call behavior from the 103rd to the 105th Congresses (1993-1999). And based on an analysis of roll call votes in the 108th and 109th Congresses (2003-2007), Frederick (2009) concludes that Republican women are ideologically indistinguishable from their male counterparts, even when the analysis focuses strictly on "women's" issues.

If scholars now uncover virtually no evidence of gender differences in the substantive votes members cast, then we are reticent to expect that women and men will approach the procedures that structure floor debate any differently either. After all, the votes on these procedural tactics – which

include resolutions setting up the rules for debate on particular pieces of legislation, motions to adjourn, motions to instruct conferees, cloture motions to restrict filibusters in the Senate, and motions to table amendments – have become increasingly polarized over time. It is actually on these votes where the rise of congressional partisanship has been the most dramatic (Roberts and Smith 2003; Sinclair 2006; Theriault 2008). So much of the partisan war these days is fought on procedural grounds that Democrat John Dingell, the legendary former chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, famously quipped: “If you let me write the procedures and I let you write the substance, I’ll [beat] you every time.”¹³

Dingell was referring to the fact that the parties tend to use many legislative procedures to restrict amendments, cut off debate, or silence the opposition. Using these procedures nefariously may lead to a more efficient final passage vote, but at the expense of engaging in the regular order and bipartisan collaboration (regardless of the fact that those final passage votes are likely to be highly partisan anyway). Members who are “problem solvers” should be more inclined than those who are not to vote with colleagues across the aisle on procedural votes. But to the extent that they cast bipartisan votes, they could be perceived as handing the opposition party sufficient weapons to achieve legislative victory. There is little reason to expect female legislators to be any more naïve than men on this front and thus any less likely than men to obstruct the legislative process, stymie debate, or limit the amendment process.

Taken together, the literatures on gender, Congress, and organizational effectiveness suggest that women in Congress may be more likely than men to develop friendships across the aisle, but that these relationships will not influence their behavior on the House or Senate floor. More specifically, our synthesis of the extant research leads to two expectations: (1) Women will be more

¹³ Quoted from Oleszek (1996, 12). Jackley (1992, 113) attributes a similar quote to Tony Coelho when he was Majority Whip: “Give me process and the other guy substance, and I’ll win every time.”

likely than men to participate in activities that generate comity and collegiality in Congress, but (2) when it comes to interfacing with the procedures that move the legislative process along, women will be just as constrained by their partisan identities as men and, accordingly, will be no more likely to engage in “problem-solving” behavior.

Gender, Comity, and Collegiality: Assessing Patterns of Social Engagement

The first step in testing the argument that women are more likely than men to be “problem solvers” is with an assessment of whether they are more likely than men to contribute to civility in Congress. After all, the assumption that congresswomen are more cooperative than their male colleagues is predicated, at least in part, on the assumption that the social relationships they develop outside the chamber generate a sense of trust and collegiality inside the halls of Congress. Unfortunately, tracking social engagement is difficult because no data repository houses information about the comings and goings of members of Congress. Moreover, many of the high-profile, bipartisan social activities that garner attention, such as the virtually all-male congressional baseball game or the female senators’ monthly dinners, are single-sex events.

Two regularly-scheduled social activities in the Senate, however, allow us to begin to gain leverage over gender differences in social engagement. These activities have the important feature that they are open to men and women, Democrats and Republicans alike. The first is the Secret Santa Gift Exchange. Initiated by Democratic Senator Al Franken in 2011 as a new strategy to combat rampant partisanship, the activity regularly elicits some of the broadest bipartisan language heard on Capitol Hill. Franken describes the gift exchange as a way to “create comity and good cheer in an institution badly in need of both.”¹⁴ Republican Senator Tim Scott says that it’s a way “to

¹⁴ Jordain Carney, “Senators Give Candy, Adele Albums in Secret Santa Gift Swap,” *The Hill*, December 8, 2015. Accessed at: <http://thehill.com/blogs/in-the-know/in-the-know/262572-senators-hold-secret-santa-gift-swap> (March 10, 2016).

sweeten the pot and improve the relationships; to get across the aisle.”¹⁵ Independent Senator Angus King looks forward to the festivities because the event gives senators “a chance to cut through the clutter, spend time together and have a laugh.”¹⁶ Senators who participate are held to a \$15 limit and are encouraged to select a gift with special meaning for the giver or the recipient (like the map Al Franken gave to Indiana’s Joe Donnelly, marked with all of the significant moments in Donnelly’s life, or the two lumps of coal West Virginia’s Joe Manchin had sculpted into a donkey and an elephant for Chuck Schumer).

Seersucker Thursday provides a second opportunity to track social engagement. Started by then-Senator Trent Lott in 1996, Seersucker Thursday is a way to “bring a little Southern charm to the Capitol,” and to remind senators how their predecessors had to dress in the 1950s, before air conditioning cooled down the chamber.¹⁷ On one Thursday in May, senators are encouraged to join the “fashion parade,” which, according to Lott, “some might call frivolous, but actually helps get things done.”¹⁸ Even the official webpage of the United States Senate mentions the collegiality the event aims to inspire, noting that “senators voluntarily make this annual fashion statement in a spirit of good-humored harmony.”¹⁹

Official records are of no help when it comes to tracking participation in these activities, but through photos, news articles, and conversations with the Office of the Senate Historian, we

¹⁵ Tamara Keith, “Senators Laugh and Joke During Secret Santa Exchange,” *National Public Radio*, December 18, 2013. Accessed at: <http://www.npr.org/2013/12/18/255185918/senates-secret-santa-successful> (March 10, 2016).

¹⁶ Kyle Plantz, “Franken’s Senate Secret Santa Hits 5th Year of Bipartisan Giving,” *The Hill*, November 16, 2015. Accessed at: thehill.com/blogs/in-the-know/260326-frankens-senate-secret-santa-hits-5th-year-of-bipartisan-giving (March 10, 2016).

¹⁷ Paul Bedard, “Suckers for Seersucker,” *U.S. News & World Report*, June 13, 2007. Accessed at: <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/washington-whispers/2007/06/13/suckers-for-seersucker> (March 10, 2016).

¹⁸ Phone call with Trent Lott, June 24, 2015.

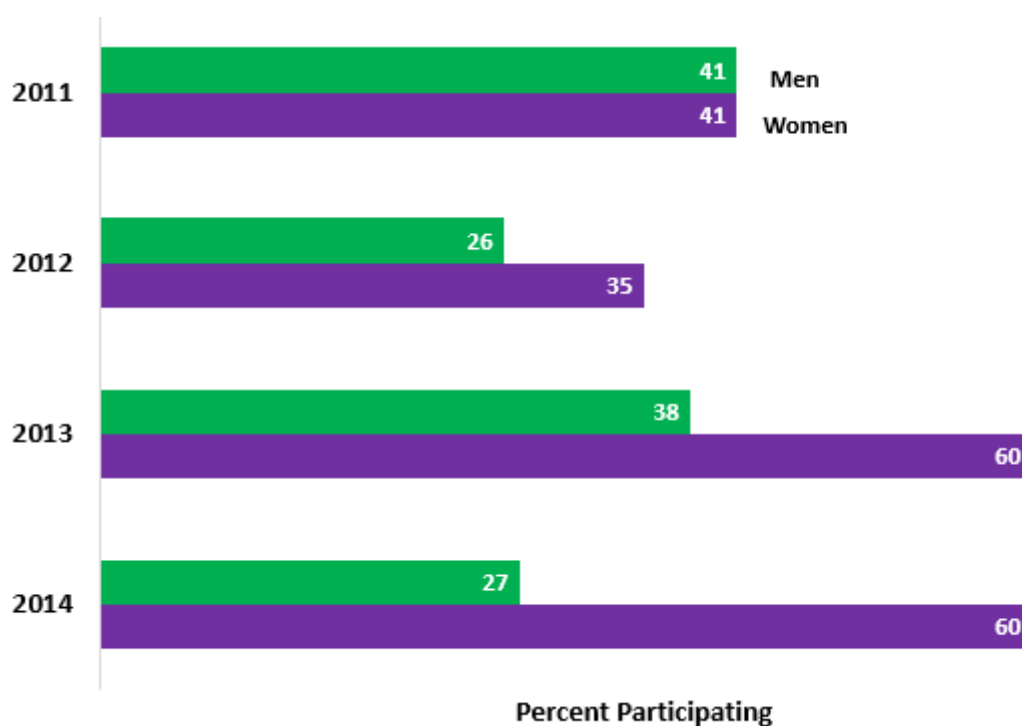
¹⁹ U.S. Senate. “Seersucker Thursday.” Accessed at: <http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/SeersuckerThursday.htm> (March 10, 2016).

assembled rosters of participants. These two data sets allow us to determine whether women and men differ in their rates of participation in symbolic activities that contribute to a sense of collegiality in the Senate.

And in a nutshell, they do. We uncover clear evidence that women differ from men when it comes to social engagement off the Senate floor. Across time, women have been consistently more likely than men to participate in both activities geared to promote a sense of comity and collegiality.

Let's begin with the Secret Santa gift exchange. Although participation rates vary from one congress to the next, approximately 40% of senators partake in the holiday festivities. Women, however, are statistically more likely than men to do so. From 2011 to 2014, 49% of women, compared to only 33% of men, participated in Franken's gift exchange (gender difference significant at $p < .05$). The data presented in Figure 1 indicate that, with the exception of the inaugural gift exchange (in which women and men participated in equal proportions), female senators have been consistently more likely than their male colleagues to participate. Furthermore, the gender gap has grown each year. This pattern persists over time and across party (analysis not shown).

Figure 1. Participation Rates in the Senate’s Secret Santa Gift Exchange, 2011 – 2014

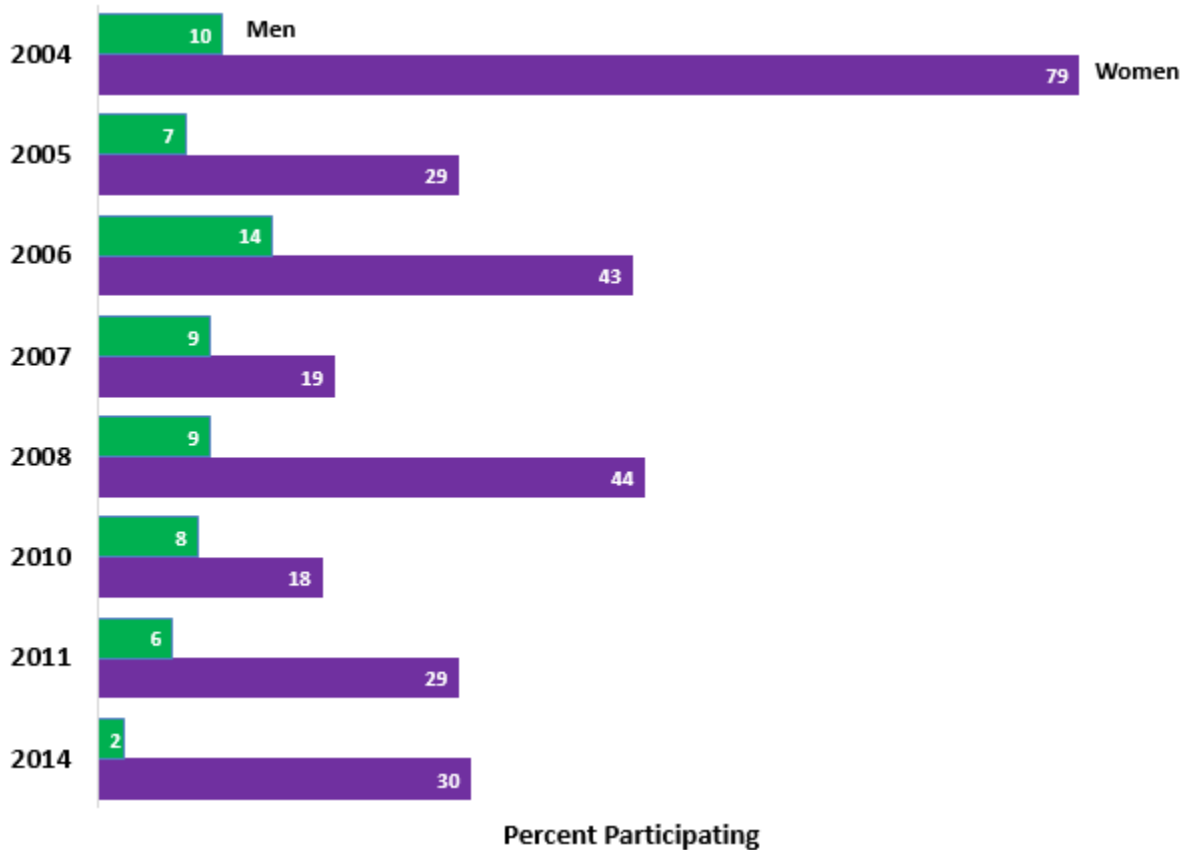


We also see greater female participation when we turn to Seersucker Thursday. The overall rates of participation are lower than they are for the holiday gift exchange – indeed, the average number of senators participating in any given year is only about 12 – but gender differences are clear. Over time, women have been almost four times as likely as men to participate (35% of women, compared to 9% of men; difference significant at $p < .05$). And once again, this is true on both sides of the aisle (analysis not shown). As indicated in Figure 2, these results have been quite consistent through the years. The only notable exception is 2004, which was the first time women were invited to participate. Four out of every five chose to do so. Even though women’s numbers have dropped off in the last decade, they are still far more likely than men to engage.

Insofar as Secret Santa and Seersucker Thursday represent activities that offer senators an opportunity to build the Senate’s social fabric, the results are consistent with our expectations: the

data reveal that women place a higher premium on comity than men do. Whether that spirit of collegiality translates into legislative behavior is the question to which we now turn.

Figure 2. Participation Rates in Seersucker Thursday, 2004 – 2014



Gender and Problem Solving: Test #1 – Assessing Procedural Votes

If popular news accounts of women’s problem-solving roles extend beyond high-profile and commonly cited examples, then we should see it borne out in how they evaluate the procedures setting up floor debate in both chambers of Congress. Most procedural votes merely create the structures by which the chambers get to the final passage votes; they in no way lock a member into a final passage vote. But majority parties use them try to silence the voice of minority parties, and minority parties use them to try to construct roadblocks to stop the legislative process. Members who are “problem solvers” should be more inclined than those who are not to vote with colleagues

across the aisle on procedural matters. A bipartisan vote indicates that the parties are, together, trying to move the legislative process along. A partisan vote, on the other hand, indicates a strictly partisan strategy where either Democrats or Republicans are trying to game the legislative process.

In order to analyze procedural votes, we developed a multi-step data collection and configuration process:

- (1) We determined which votes during each congress (dating back to the 93rd Congress in 1973) were procedural. This massive data collection effort involved coding as procedural or not 24,936 votes in the House of Representatives and 15,706 votes in the Senate.²⁰
- (2) For each procedural vote – 7,202 in the House and 6,792 in the Senate – we coded how each member of Congress actually voted.
- (3) We employed Poole and Rosenthal’s W-Nominate algorithm to generate a “score” for each member based strictly on procedural votes.
- (4) We merged the procedural vote scores with demographics about the members, their institutional standing, and the political conditions in their constituencies.

Before turning to the data, let us elaborate a bit on how we arrive at these procedural vote scores. The algorithm arrays members of Congress on a continuum from -1 to +1. For each chamber in each congress, we can think of this algorithm as placing the two members who disagreed with each other on the most procedural votes at the endpoints. Consider, for example, the Senate in the 113th Congress: Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) was at one end (-1) and James Risch (R-ID) was at the other (+1). The algorithm places the remaining 98 senators along the continuum so that they are lined up according to how they vary with the two extremes. Importantly, the algorithm allows for someone who is an ideologue on substantive votes – someone like Ted Cruz (R-TX) or Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), for instance – to be more “in the middle” on procedural votes. After all, the calculation is based only on the procedural votes we’ve identified. Democrats’ scores typically – and

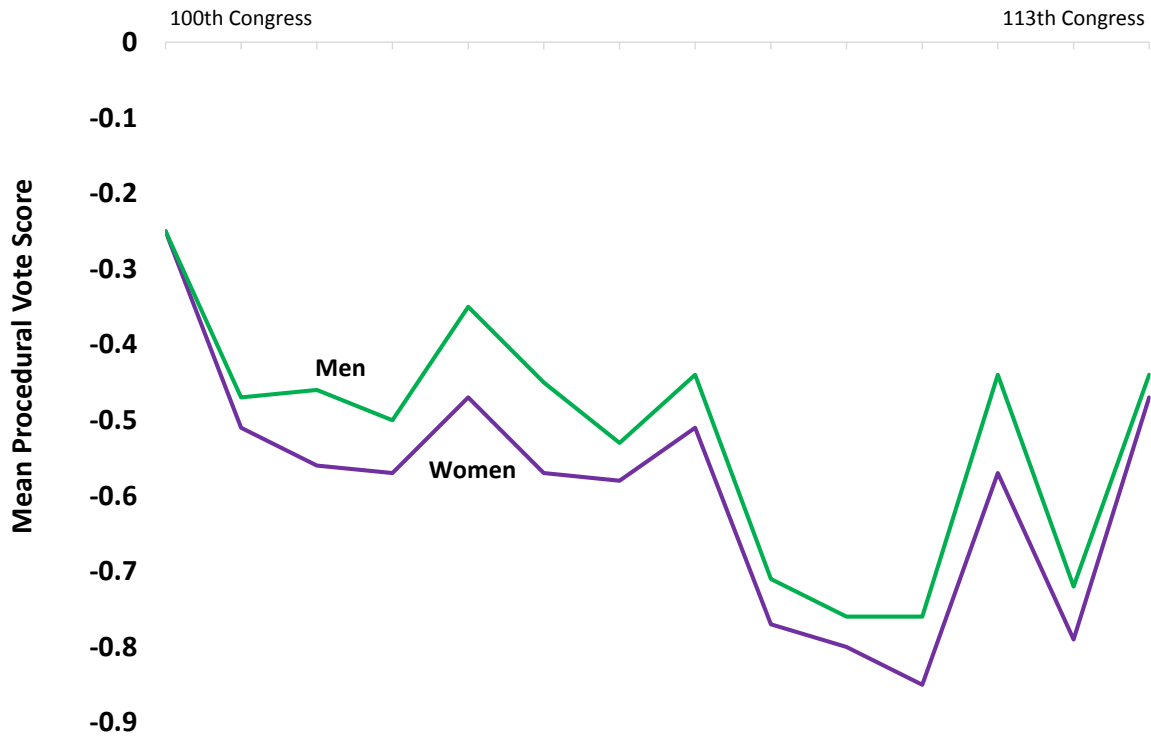
²⁰ These determinations were made by consulting the Library of Congress’s website on congressional action (<https://www.congress.gov>) and each chamber’s roll-call vote summary (<http://clerk.house.gov/legislative/legvotes.aspx> and <http://www.senate.gov/legislative/votes.htm>).

increasingly over time – fall between -1 and 0, whereas Republicans’ scores normally range from 0 to +1. We calculated these scores separately for each chamber and each congress from the 93rd through the 113th Congress.

In short, we uncover very little evidence that women and men act differently on procedural votes. Let’s begin with the House of Representatives. Figure 3 presents the mean procedural vote score for Democrats in the House from the 100th through the 113th Congress. (Although we have data going back to the 93rd Congress, there were too few women in the chamber to allow for meaningful comparisons. Thus, we focus on 1987 through 2014.) Remember that Democrats’ scores typically range from -1 to 0, with numbers closer to zero indicating a procedural vote profile that is more bipartisan. That is, the more positive a Democrat’s vote, the more times the member voted with Republicans. The purple line tracks the mean score for women over time; the green line represents men’s mean scores.

The meaningful comparisons in Figure 3 are the differences between women and men at each point in time. (The algorithm does not standardize scores across time, so a dip in mean scores from one congress to the next cannot necessarily be interpreted as a shift in mean procedural vote scores.) Contrary to the conventional wisdom, in every single congress, the mean score for female Democrats is *more negative* than the mean score for Democratic men. In 11 of the 14 cases, the gender difference even reaches conventional levels of statistical significance ($p < .05$). At least among Democrats in the House, women are no more likely than men to vote with Republicans on measures that would move the legislative process along; in fact, Democratic women’s votes may actually work to stymie the chamber more than Democratic men’s votes.

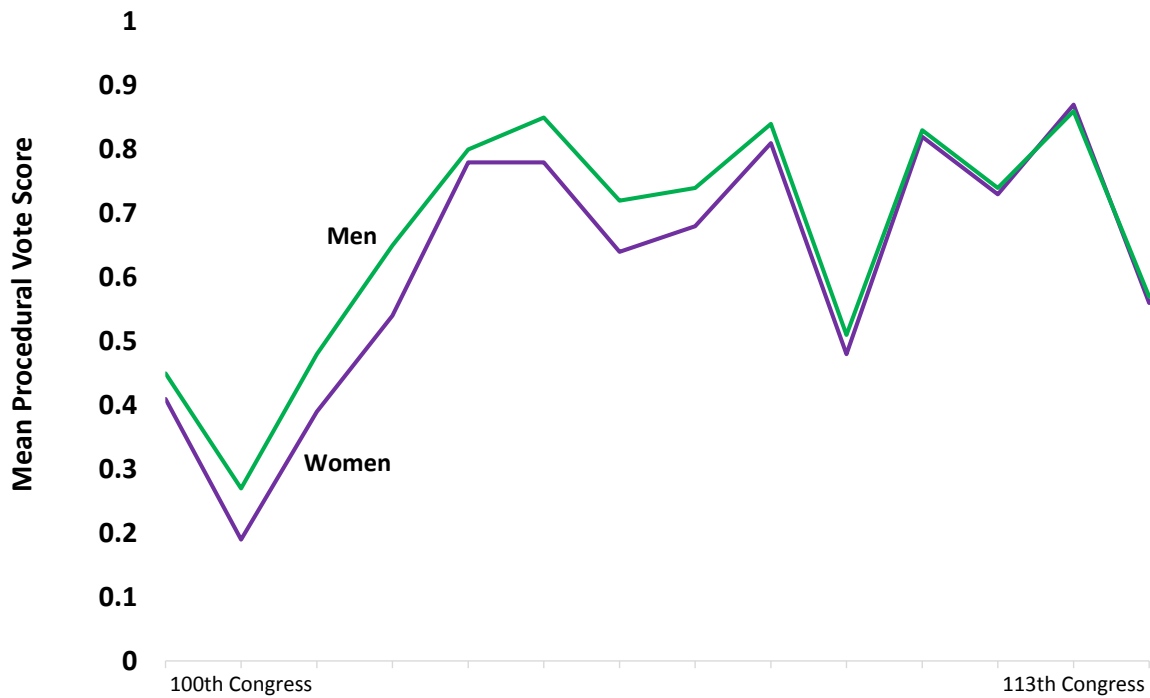
Figure 3. Procedural Vote Scores, by Sex: House Democrats, 1987 – 2014



Note: In no case is the gender difference statistically significant (at $p < .05$) in a direction consistent with the expectation that women cast more bipartisan procedural votes than men do.

For the most part, we uncover similar results when we analyze the House Republicans (see Figure 4). Because Republicans' scores normally range from 0 to +1, the graph is flipped. But the way to read it is the same. Numbers closer to zero reflect more bipartisan procedural vote scores. The more positive a Republican's score, the more often he or she voted with Republican colleagues. In 10 of the 14 congresses we analyzed, the gender difference is not statistically significant; women's procedural vote scores are no bipartisan than men's. But unlike with the Democrats, we do find four congresses (the 103rd, 105th, 106th, and 107th) in which women's scores are statistically distinguishable from men's in the way the conventional wisdom would predict. Of course, in the six most recent congresses, male and female Republicans voted very similarly on procedural matters. If they ever did, GOP women no longer hold a premium on procedural bipartisanship.

Figure 4. Procedural Vote Scores, by Sex: House Republicans, 1987 – 2014

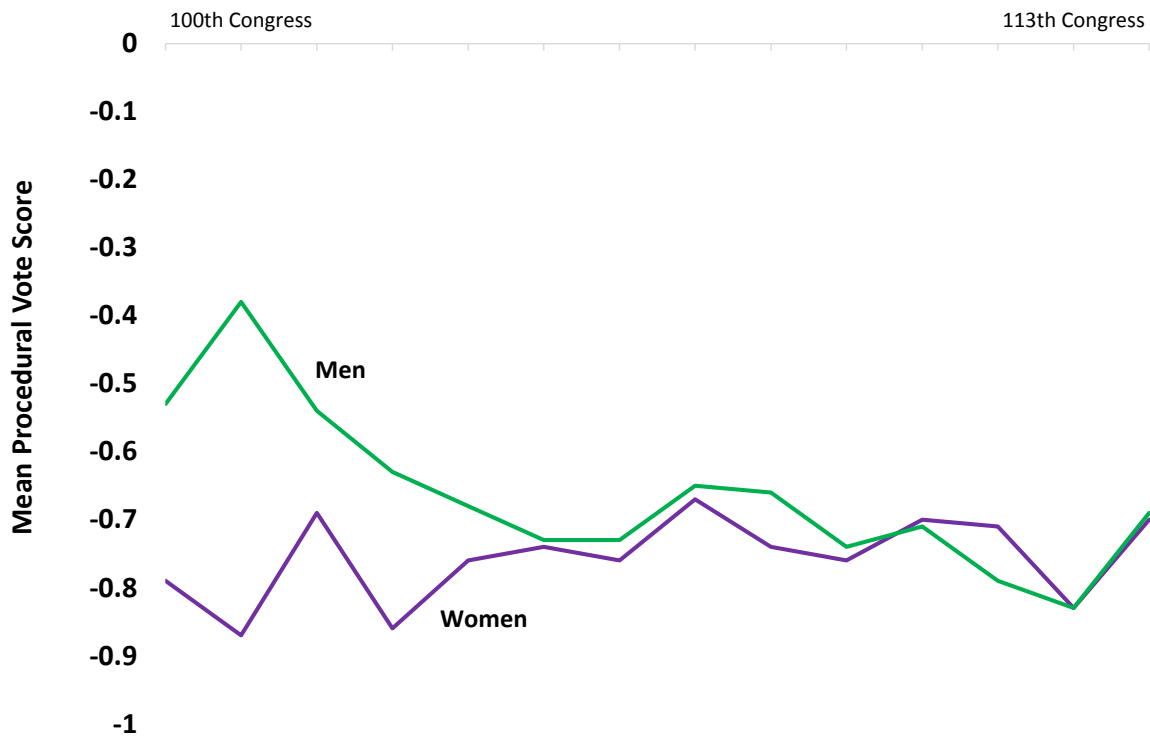


Note: In the 103rd, 105th, 106th, and 107th Congresses, the gender difference is statistically significant (at $p < .05$), with women more likely than men to cast bipartisan procedural votes.

We conducted a similar analysis in the Senate. Here, it is important to recognize that the results are driven – especially among Republicans – by a very small number of women. Never have more than 20 women served in the U.S. Senate, and Republicans have never had more than six at any given time. Still, as long as we interpret the results cautiously, these data can shed light on the relationship between sex and procedural votes in the chamber.

Turning first to the Democrats, we find no evidence whatsoever that women and men vote differently on procedural matters. Only in the 103rd Congress is the gender difference statistically significant (see Figure 5). But as was the case for the House, the difference is one in which the mean score for women is more negative than the mean score for men. Democratic women in the Senate are not systematically more procedurally bipartisan than their male counterparts.

Figure 5. Procedural Vote Scores, by Sex: Senate Democrats, 1987 – 2014



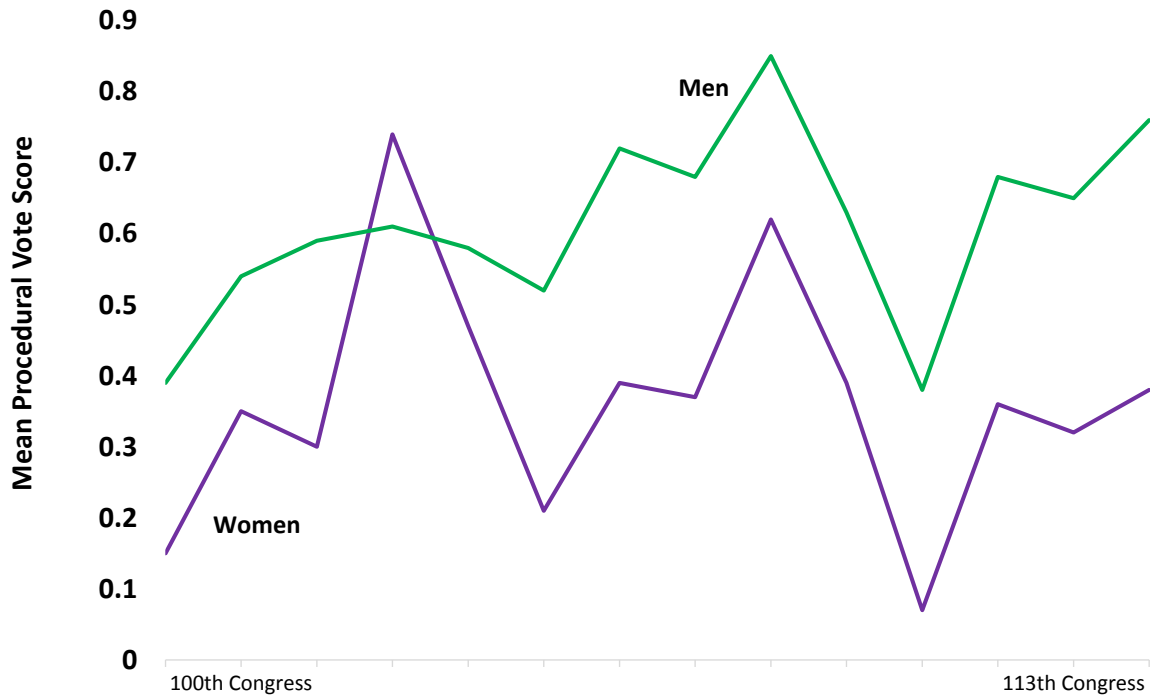
Note: In no case is the gender difference statistically significant (at $p < .05$) in a direction consistent with the expectation that women cast more bipartisan procedural votes than men do.

When we turn to Republicans in the Senate, it's a different story. In nine of the 14 congresses we analyzed, women's scores are more negative than men's, a pattern that has persisted since the 105th Congress (see Figure 6). These data provide at least prima facie support – albeit just on one side of the political aisle – for the veracity of recent headlines proclaiming that women in the Senate are more concerned than men are with working together to get Washington's business done.

Of course, the bivariate results do not account for any other relevant factors that could contribute to the decision calculus underlying a procedural vote. A district's partisanship, after all, as well as a member's electoral safety and legislative experience, can shape the way he or she decides to vote. Thus, before we can draw any firm conclusions about the extent to which sex drives

differences in procedural vote scores, we must rule out that the limited gender effects we uncovered are an artifact of institutional or district factors. And we can't.

Figure 6. Procedural Vote Scores, by Sex: Senate Republicans, 1987 – 2014



Note: In the 105th – 113th Congresses, the gender difference is statistically significant (at $p < .05$), consistent with the expectation that women are more likely than men to cast bipartisan procedural votes.

In order to determine the relative effects of the sex of a legislator on his or her procedural vote score, we performed a series of regression analyses. In each equation, the dependent variable is the procedural vote score (on the -1 to +1 continuum). In addition to the sex of the legislator, we account for key variables that previous research has identified as relevant for legislative voting behavior: (1) the Republican presidential candidate's vote advantage in the state relative to how he performed nationwide in the previous election, (2) the legislator's win margin in the previous election, and (3) the number of terms he or she has served in Congress. Although this model is sparse, it controls for the biggest drivers of roll-call voting (Therriault, Hickey, and Blass 2011). If

gender differences don't emerge from this simple model, they are unlikely to reveal themselves in more complex models. In the model for Republican senators, we also include a dummy variable for Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, the two female senators from Maine whose moderate voting records set them apart from their GOP colleagues. It's important to account for their presence so as to avoid sweeping conclusions about female Republicans based on two unusual senators.²¹

Table 1 presents the results, separated by party and chamber. In three of the four models, sex is not statistically significant; female legislators' procedural vote scores are no different than those of their male colleagues. For House Republicans, and for both parties in the Senate, the multivariate results indicate that women's procedural roll-call voting does not appreciably differ from men's. Even in the Senate, Republican women are first and foremost partisans, and no more likely than men to vote with their Democratic colleagues at least on procedural matters. Only among Democrats in the House is the coefficient on sex significant at conventional levels. But it is *negative*, which means that women's procedural vote scores are less bipartisan than men's. The magnitude of the coefficient is small, so we do not want to make too much of it. But the fact that it is significant in a direction opposite what the conventional wisdom would expect is noteworthy (and consistent with the bivariate results).

The upshot of the regression analysis is that once we account for electoral performance and the partisan composition of the state, women and men look strikingly similar when it comes to voting on procedural issues. This is the case in both chambers and across political parties. The data simply do not support the notion that women are more likely than men to be "problem solvers" who vote with members of the other party when it comes to moving the legislative process along.

²¹ Each model also includes congress fixed effects to account for idiosyncratic factors unique to each congress, as well as variation in the congress-to-congress procedural vote score means. Without these fixed effects, the observations from a particular congress would not be independent. We also include random effects for members to control for the dependence among the observations from the same member.

Table 1. The Effect of Sex on Procedural Vote Scores in the U.S. Congress, 1973 – 2014

	House of Representatives		Senate	
	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>
Member Sex (female)	-0.065 * (0.018)	0.005 (0.020)	-0.047 (0.057)	-.092 (0.099)
Republican Presidential Vote Advantage	0.477 * (0.031)	0.390 * (0.039)	0.573 * (0.010)	0.572 * (0.127)
Vote Margin in Previous Election	0.041 * (0.017)	-0.053 * (0.016)	0.037 (0.028)	-0.074 * (0.027)
Number of Terms Served	0.000 (0.001)	-.000 (0.016)	-0.001 (0.001)	-.001 (0.001)
Olympia Snowe-Susan Collins Indicator				-.304 (0.191)
Constant	-0.355 * (0.016)	0.520 * (0.014)	-0.621 * (0.030)	0.626 * (0.031)
R ²	0.413	0.604	0.383	0.336
N	5,070	4,137	1,092	997

Note: Cell entries are GLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. All models include member random effects and fixed effects for each Congress. Level of significance: * p < .05.

Gender and Problem Solving: Test #2 – Assessing Amendment Introductions

Procedural votes are one clear way to measure the extent to which women and men cooperate and collaborate on Capitol Hill. But they're not the only way. Indeed, amending behavior in the Senate is an additional lens through which to assess these dynamics. Until very recently, for most pieces of pending legislation, any senator could offer any amendment to any part of a bill being debated on the Senate floor.²²

Offering an amendment can serve one of at least four purposes. First – and most basically – senators can attempt to re-word legislation so that it more closely aligns to their preferred policy.

²² The House, with its larger membership, has never enjoyed such a free-flowing amending process. As such, analyzing House amendments along these lines would be inappropriate.

Second, because the Senate does not adhere to a germaneness rule, senators can attach unrelated provisions to a bill on the floor with the hope of fast-tracking its adoption. Third, offering amendments on the floor can place other senators on the record for controversial policies that might divide them from their constituencies or their parties. Finally, amendments can slow down, or essentially kill, the passage of legislation. As long as 20 senators agree, amendments must be disposed of through roll-call votes, which can take up to half an hour to complete, rather than a 10-second voice vote. This strategy of stalling legislation by offering an endless number of amendments and demanding roll-call votes is referred to as “death by amendment” (Sinclair 2011).

Only the first goal is consistent with the legislative process as practiced when the Senate was a more revered institution. Those who regularly pursue the other three goals can be thought of as “problem creators,” though to differing degrees; their amending tactics are geared to obstruct and stymie the legislative process. The debate on the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) serves as a poignant example. On March 24, 2010, Republican Senator Tom Coburn introduced an amendment that prohibited sex offenders from using Obamacare to pay for Viagra. Given that existing law explicitly forbade it, why would Coburn introduce such an amendment? And given the content of the amendment, what senator would possibly vote against it? As it turned out, 55 of 57 Democrats did. Why? Because the Democrats had orchestrated a complex legislative maneuver that could lead to the passage of health care reform without explicitly overcoming a Republican-led filibuster, which could only be accomplished through the reconciliation process. To do so, the Democrats would only need a majority, but they could not change a word in the bill or the entire process might unravel. As such, the Republicans placed the Democrats in the difficult position of voting down amendments that they did not oppose on substantive grounds. No Democrat disagreed when Democratic Senator

Max Baucus called Coburn’s amendment, “A crass political stunt aimed at making a 30-second commercial.”²³

Teasing out the motivation for offering an amendment is exceedingly difficult. But systematic patterns can suggest who uses the relatively open amending rules in the Senate for worthy, as opposed to more disingenuous, purposes. The more amendments a senator offers, can be a sign of being a “problem creator.” Members who are “problem solvers,” on the other hand, should offer fewer amendments in any given Congress because they will be less likely to offer amendments that are mere gamesmanship or tactical maneuvers. If the conventional wisdom about gender differences in legislative behavior is right, then women should offer fewer amendments that result in roll-call votes than their male colleagues.

In order to analyze Senate amendments, we once again developed a multi-step data collection and configuration process:

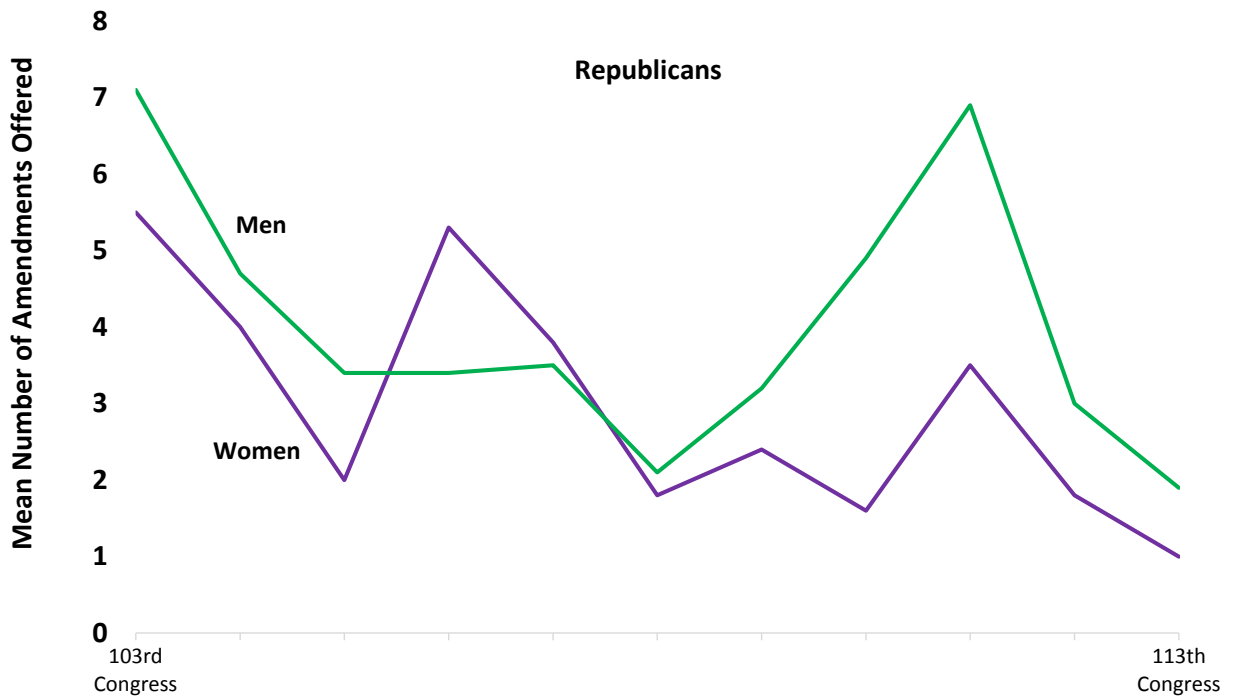
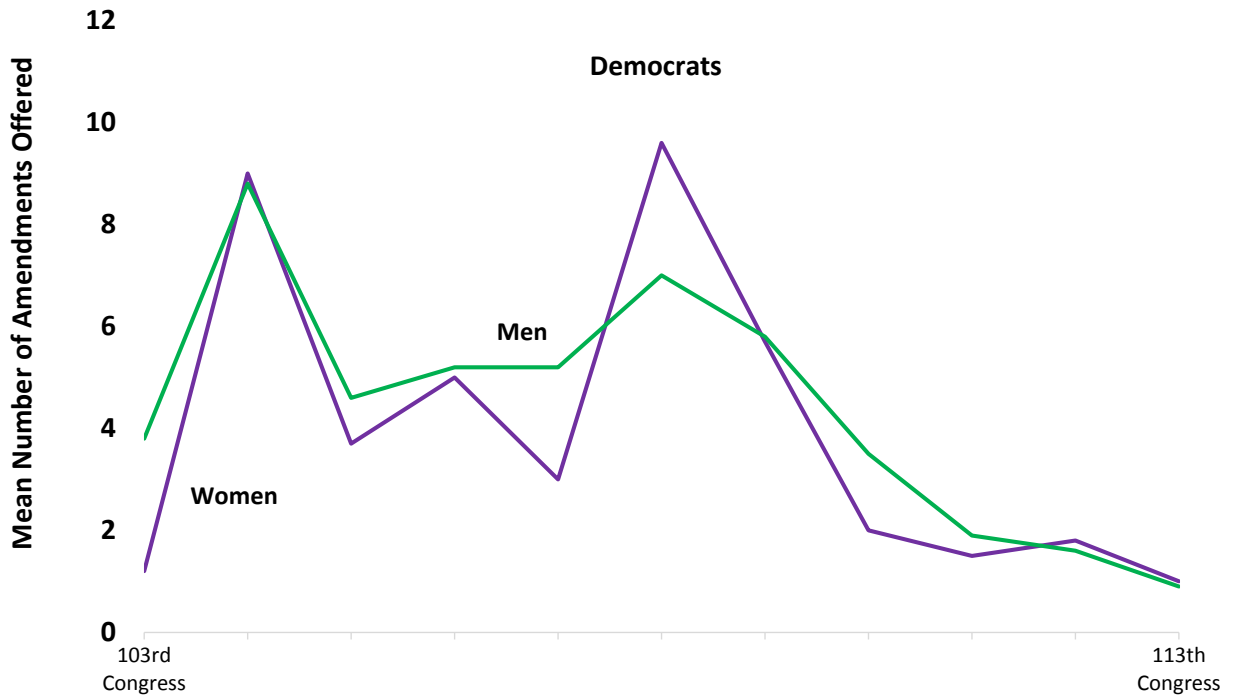
- (1) We identified every amendment that resulted in a roll-call vote from the 103rd to 113th Congress (1993-2014).²⁴
- (2) For each of the 4,488 amendments, we identified the senator who introduced it.
- (3) We merged into the amendment data set demographics about the senators who introduced them, their institutional standing, and their states’ partisanship.

Similar to the procedural vote analysis, we uncover no evidence that women and men are different when it comes to introducing amendments. Figure 7 presents the mean number of roll-call votes from the amendments that female (purple line) and male (green line) senators introduced from the 103rd through the 113th Congress. The top panel displays the data for Democrats, and the bottom panel presents comparable data for Republicans.

²³ As quoted in Chris Casteel, “U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn’s Viagra Amendment Fails,” *NewsOK*, March 25, 2010. Accessed at: <http://newsok.com/u.s.-sen.-tom-coburns-viagra-amendment-fails/article/3449000> (March 11, 2016).

²⁴ We gathered the data from the Senate’s website directly (<http://www.senate.gov/legislative/votes.htm>).

Figure 7. Mean Number of Amendments, 1993 – 2014



Note: In no case do women offer statistically fewer amendments than men (at $p < .05$).

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, in no case – regardless of party – do women offer statistically fewer amendments that result in roll-call votes than men do. Although the mean number varies across congresses, in all 22 comparisons (11 for each party), women and men are statistically indistinguishable. To the extent that roll-call votes on amendments are a good gauge of creating problems, then female senators are just as likely as men to present legislative obstacles in the chamber.²⁵

And these null results withstand controls for a state’s partisan composition as well as a senator’s previous vote margin and legislative experience.²⁶ Table 2 presents these results.

Table 2. The Effect of Sex on Amendment Introductions in the U.S. Senate, 1993 – 2014

	Number of Roll Calls Elicited by Amendments	
	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>
Member Sex (female)	-0.607 (0.935)	-0.861 (1.448)
Republican Presidential Vote Advantage	-2.739 (2.630)	5.718 (4.360)
Vote Margin in Previous Election	0.705 (1.092)	1.618 (0.949)
Number of Terms Served	0.048 (0.041)	0.048 (0.053)
Constant	0.824 (0.709)	1.435 (0.817)
R ²	0.212	0.092
N	548	547

Note: Cell entries are GLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. All models include member random effects and fixed effects for each Congress. Level of significance: * p < .05.

²⁵ During the 113th Congress (2013-14), amending behavior in the Senate radically changed. Due to the Republicans’ persistent filibuster and death by amendment attempts, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid “filled the amendment tree,” which severely restricted the ability of other senators even to offer amendments. Because the Majority Leader has the right of first recognition, Reid was able to offer an amendment at all the possible amendment points immediately after calling up a bill for debate on the Senate floor. After invoking cloture while Reid had all possible amendment points blocked, the free flowing nature of the Senate became as rigid as the legislative process in the House.

²⁶ Here, too, each model includes congress fixed effects for each congress and random effects for each senator.

In neither model is sex a statistically significant predictor; female senators' amendment behavior does not differ from their male colleagues'. This is true for both Democrats and Republicans. As was the case with the procedural vote analysis, the notion that women are more likely than men to be "problem solvers" who are less likely to stymie the legislative process simply does not hold water.

Discussion and Conclusion: The Importance of Electing Women to Congress

Examining differences in women and men's policy preferences, bill sponsorships, and co-sponsorship activities are well-trodden territory (see, for example, Frederick 2015; 2009; Swers 2013; 2002). While subtle differences sometimes emerge, null results – largely a consequence of the pervasiveness and severity of polarization between the parties – have become more common than not. Such is also the case with the additional facets of legislative behavior we examine in this paper. Women do not vote differently from their male colleagues on the procedures that structure the legislative process in either chamber. Our data make it clear that, despite some high profile examples of female legislators' problem-solving tactics, they are systematically no more likely than their male colleagues to cast bipartisan procedural votes. Furthermore, female senators do not engage the amendment process any differently than their male colleagues. We should add that our null findings are not an artifact of a lack of systematic variation in the data. Different independent variables predict procedural votes and amendment introductions. But for both parties, across both chambers, the sex of the legislator never does.

This is not to suggest, however, that women's presence in U.S. political institutions doesn't make a difference. Recent studies have found that women in Congress deliver more federal spending to their districts and sponsor more legislation than their male colleagues (Anzia and Berry 2011). They have greater success keeping their sponsored bills alive (Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer 2013). When given an opportunity to speak about issues of their choosing during one-minute speeches,

congresswomen in both parties are more likely than men to speak and to speak about women (Pearson and Dancey 2011). And women's presence brings to Congress a greater sense of democratic legitimacy (see Mansbridge 1999; Pitkin 1967).

Beyond these benefits, we now also have systematic evidence that women are more likely than men to value and contribute to a collegial work environment. Women are more likely than men to participate in the Senate's Secret Santa and Seersucker Thursday traditions; and the gender gap in participation appears to be growing. In times of gridlock, obstructionism, and inefficiency, we shouldn't underestimate the role that such collegiality and comity can bring to the legislative process. Even if it doesn't affect legislative outcomes or procedural steps through which a bill becomes a law, it can send a strong signal to the American public – and perhaps to potential candidates – that women's presence on Capitol Hill contributes to making the political arena a somewhat more civil and pleasant place to work.

From our perspective, it's these benefits we should highlight when issuing a call for more female candidates and lauding the successes of female legislators. Given that women and men do not govern in systematically different ways – either in style or substance – we should be careful not to place heightened expectations on our female elected officials; institutional constraints make it difficult for any factors to trump party in the legislative process. The democratic legitimacy, simple justice, and sense of collegiality that more women in Congress would bring to the political arena, however, are important in their own right, even if a different legislative style will probably not ensue.

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