

Do Women Representatives Regender Legislative Bureaucracy? Assessing the Effect of Representative Sex on Women's Presence among US Congressional Staff

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Achieving greater female presence in influential positions is a commonly discussed strategy for gender reform in institutions such as the US Congress. Using theory adapted from research on gender in the workplace, this study examines whether women representatives, as 'managers' of congressional offices, alter patterns of gender representation in Congress by hiring and promoting more women staffers compared with men representatives. Cross-sectional logistic regression analyses of staffer sex during the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–10) reveal a positive relationship between women representatives and female presence on congressional staffs. However, the relationship does not hold with respect to the most influential staff positions. These findings provide only limited support for theories that women representatives act as 'change agents' by directly facilitating opportunities for women, and highlight the importance of exploring alternative strategies for empowering women and regendering legislative institutions.

Keywords: *women and politics; descriptive representation; congressional staff; gender.*

Introduction

Many speculate that fundamentally transforming gendered processes and practices in institutions such as the US Congress requires greater female presence in positions of institutional power and influence (Reingold, 2008, pp. 140–141; Rosenthal & Bell, 2002, p. 447). Not surprisingly, how women run for and win elective office interests an increasing number of researchers. A related, and perhaps more pertinent, question is whether women who achieve elective office in turn act as a transformative force within legislative institutions by promoting opportunities for women among the ranks of legislative staff. The importance of the latter question is underscored by the fact that, despite electing record numbers of women to the House of Representatives in 2008 (75 including non-voting delegates), just 17 per cent of US Representatives were women. In a system where 'women are confronted with sets of interlocking institutions and practices that are only modestly democratic, that exclude them, and that are difficult to regender in ways that will encourage women's electoral success and

garner representation for women's interests' (Beckwith, 2008, p. 186), it is important to ask whether descriptive representation of women in elected positions offers a route to greater female presence in the bureaucracies that staff legislative institutions.

The notion that descriptive representation of women will affect female presence among legislative staff is consistent with scholarship that contends the leadership styles of women and men differ, and that women and men behave differently as representatives. Research often portrays women leaders in the workplace as more likely to espouse management styles that are collaborative and that delegate responsibility (Maume, 2011). Feminine management styles are frequently seen as supportive of subordinates, especially the career development of women (Catalyst, 2007; Claes, 1999; Fagenson, 1993; Helgeson, 1990). Gendered leadership theories are common in legislative research. Numerous scholars argue that women in legislative leadership positions tend to practise feminine leadership styles that build consensus, and emphasise cooperation, empowerment and inclusion, in contrast to masculine approaches to leadership that emphasise hierarchy, authority, competition, conflict and coercion (Duerst-Lahti, 2002; Reingold, 2008; Rosenthal, 1998; Thomas, 1994). The development of gendered theories of institutional leadership stimulates increasing debate over whether women leaders act as 'change agents' who enhance opportunities for women subordinates, or as 'cogs in the machine' who perpetuate conventional patterns of gender bias favouring men (Cohen & Huffman, 2007; Maume, 2011). While theory about the effect of sex on leadership styles in legislatures appears broadly consistent with scholarship in related disciplines, opportunities of women subordinates on legislative staffs have received little attention as an implication of these arguments. Whether women legislators act as change agents who promote opportunities for women in the congressional staff bureaucracy remains an open question.

The following article examines the effect of representative sex on the sex characteristics of congressional staff during the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–10) by position type in order to explore whether representative sex is associated with female presence in the congressional staff bureaucracy. The findings of this analysis reveal that women enjoy greater presence in the offices of women representatives than men representatives, but fail to demonstrate that representative sex affects female presence in staff positions with substantial influence. These findings provide only limited confirmation of theories that these women leaders provide enhanced opportunity to women subordinates. As women representatives are not major agents of change with regard to the presence of women among the upper ranks of congressional staff, these findings highlight the need to explore alternative strategies to empower women staffers.

Sex, Leadership, and Women's Representation in Congress

Substantial research demonstrates that women legislators behave in ways that differentiate them from their male colleagues. Scholars focus most often on

behaviour that contributes to women's representation by enhancing, or increasing the representation of women's interests and perspectives in legislative and deliberative processes. Descriptive representatives, representatives who share politically salient physical characteristics such as sex with constituent groups, are specially positioned and more likely to act for marginalised constituents by virtue of the life experiences and social positioning they share with these constituent groups (Mansbridge, 1999; Williams, 1998; Young, 2000). Shared experiences and shared social perspectives give women representatives greater ability to understand how issues and policies affect women, and, as a result, to act effectively on behalf of women (Mansbridge, 1999).

Researchers find important differences based on representative sex in behaviour such as voting, sponsoring and co-sponsoring legislation, participatory activities in committees, and speech patterns (Gerrity, Osborn, & Morehouse Mendez, 2007; Norton, 2002; Osborn & Morehouse Mendez, 2010; Swers, 2002; Tamerius, 1995; Thomas, 1994; Walsh, 2002; Wolbrecht, 2002). Support for women's interests in roll call votes on issues that have an impact on women disproportionately is greater among women representatives than their male counterparts, although this distinction is sometimes clearer among Republicans (Burrell, 1994; Swers, 2002). Similarly, women representatives are more active than men representatives in sponsoring and co-sponsoring women's issue bills (Gerrity et al., 2007; Swers, 2002; Tamerius, 1995). Women bring content to debate that focuses deliberation on women's issues (Osborn & Morehouse Mendez, 2010) and represents women's perspectives. For example, women representatives frame discussions to emphasise aspects of issues that are particularly important to women, discuss the impacts of policies on women, and speak from personal experience as women more reliably than men (Walsh, 2002). Women also influence the content of legislation affecting women's representation through their participation on committees (Norton, 2002). In sum, research shows that the interests and perspectives of women receive greater attention and support from women representatives.

A related strand of enquiry examines the effect of sex on leadership styles in legislative institutions. Not unlike women leaders in other types of institution, a number of commonly attributed sex-gender differences are applied in gendered theories of legislative leadership (Duerst-Lahti, 2002; Reingold, 2008; Rosenthal, 1998; Thomas, 1994). Women committee chairs, for example, more often adopt leadership styles that are 'integrating', and contrast with 'aggregating' styles preferred by male committee chairs (Rosenthal, 1998). Evidence suggests women committee chairs may use their positions to facilitate open discussion among stakeholders rather than to control proceedings (Kathlene, 1994); and women, more than men, prefer non-hierarchical collaboration and consensus building, especially in state legislatures (Dodson & Carroll, 1991; Jewell & Whicker, 1994; Rosenthal, 1998, 2005). Although some question whether gender differences in the styles of men and women legislators are as great in more professionalised legislatures (Rosenthal, 1998), or among the leadership approaches of

rank-and-file legislators (Blair & Stanley, 1991; Dodson & Carroll, 1991; Reingold, 2000), gendered theories of leadership are increasingly popular in legislative analysis.

One question about the effect of female leadership in Congress that has not yet been addressed is whether the sex of representatives affects opportunities for women in the congressional bureaucracy. Some arguments from research on gender and management suggest that women leaders act as 'change agents' by having a positive impact on opportunities for women subordinates. Some speculate that manager gender affects women's opportunities at an environmental level, and that under female leadership subordinates receive greater support and opportunity. Such environments appear advantageous for the career advancement of under-represented groups, especially women (Claes, 1999; Helgeson, 1990; Maume, 2011). Other researchers argue sex plays a more direct role in management styles that facilitate opportunities for women. As members of a marginalised group, women superiors' own experiences with sex discrimination may lead them to manage subordinates more empathetically (Halpert, Wilson, & Hickman, 1993). Because women managers understand the barriers to career advancement faced by women, their management styles reflect less rigidity and exclusivity, and women in turn enjoy greater success in the workplace.

The argument that women managers practise homo-social reproduction in the workplace also characterises women leaders as active catalysts for female opportunity. Under this formulation, which empirical evidence supports, managers prefer to hire and promote subordinates who are like themselves (Carrington & Troske, 1995). This preference is based on bonds of common interest and understanding related to salient characteristics, such as gender, which facilitate communication, trust, stable relationships and reciprocity (Ibarra, 1992; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Historically, homo-social reproduction perpetuated the domination of institutions by males (Kanter, 1977), but as women achieve more leadership positions, scholars increasingly ask whether women managers facilitate the career advancement of females (Elliot & Smith, 2004; Ibarra, 1992).

Research shows women leaders act as change agents for female opportunity in numerous settings. Women managers appear more supportive of and less biased against workplace equality initiatives, suggesting 'the presence of female managers should (if they have the power) promote gender equality' (Cohen & Huffman, 2007, p. 682). Promotions by superiors are associated with shared demographic characteristics such as race, gender, or ethnicity (Elliot & Smith, 2004). Greater female management presence is associated with less gender segregation in state agencies (Baron, Mittman, & Newman, 1991). Greater female representation in management positions is associated with greater wage equality between male and female workers (Cohen & Huffman, 2007). The number of female committee directorship positions is positively associated with female presence on congressional committee staff, suggesting 'women in managerial ranks improve opportunities for more equitable

treatment of women' (Rosenthal & Bell, 2002, p. 353). In municipalities with strong mayors, parity between female representation in local governmental positions and public sector positions is significantly related to whether the mayor is a woman (Saltzstein, 1986).¹ Gender congruence in supervisor–subordinate dyads predicts both job satisfaction and turnover among schoolteachers (Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Keiser, 2012). Collectively, these studies indicate that manager gender affects the experiences and opportunities of female workers, and raise the possibility that women members of Congress facilitate opportunities for women in the congressional bureaucracy.

The Importance of Female Presence in the Congressional Staff Bureaucracy

Members of Congress are typically supported by a staff of at least 15 individuals who work in a variety of capacities associated with clerical duties, policy research, advice and formulation, and constituency service. Some staffers exercise substantial power in congressional offices. For example, research suggests that congressional staffers are sometimes central figures in negotiating the details of important legislation (Fox & Hammond, 1977), and occasionally even become legislative 'leaders in their own right' (Degregorio & Snider, 1995, p. 494), although staff influence is more often exercised from behind the scenes (Romzek, 2000). Our own observations as former congressional staffers suggest that staffers who exercise the greatest power often work their way up within individual offices or seek progressively more prestigious positions in multiple offices when opportunities become available, usually within offices of a single political party. Whether or not they attain influential positions, the vast majority of congressional staffers work in Congress only briefly. According to a 2004 study, average tenure in Congress for congressional staffers was less than five-and-a-half years. Within the personal offices of US Representatives, average staff tenure was four years. A majority of congressional staffers had less than two years' experience in their positions for every position except chief of staff (Congressional Management Foundation [CMF], 2004). The congressional work environment appears quite volatile, with substantial personnel movement into, within, and out of the institution.

There are a number of reasons to expect that the representation of women among congressional staffers matters substantively, especially in more influential positions, and therefore constitutes a compelling measure for assessing the legislative impact of women representatives. First, diversity among staff is likely to broaden representatives' perspectives. Because responsiveness to constituents often occurs indirectly through staffers, staff diversity may increase the abilities of representatives to reach out to, build trust with, and otherwise act for more constituents (Grose, Mangum, & Martin, 2007). In other words, diversity is a resource that allows staff to operate with greater sensitivity to a larger number of interests and concerns (Grose et al., 2007, p. 458). Evidence that connections between black constituents and representatives are strengthened when

representatives are black (Gay, 2001; Tate, 2002), and that constituents feel more comfortable confiding in a 'staffer who shares their background and perhaps their experiences' (Canon, 1999, p. 206), reinforces the argument that staff diversity facilitates broader responsiveness. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women similarly view gender as relevant to women's representation. Mansbridge (1999) argues that male congressional leadership on the issue of an equal rights amendment resulted in mistrust between activists and the male senator and male staffer spearheading the issue. The presence of women leaders in Congress, she speculates, would have been preferable to activists and would have led to a more productive working relationship between congressional advocates of the equal rights amendment and women's groups (1999, p. 642).

Passive representation of women among congressional staff may also lead to active representation of women's interests. Active representation of women by congressional staffers appears especially likely to occur as policy or service responsiveness. Policy responsiveness refers to actions by representatives that advance policy goals consistent with constituent preferences or interests (Eulau & Karps, 1977; Miller & Stokes, 1963). Service responsiveness 'involves the efforts of the representative to secure particularized benefits for individuals or groups in [their] constituency' (Eulau & Karps, 1977, p. 241). The opportunities of staffers to pursue policy and service responsiveness are shaped and constrained by their positions. Generally, staff positions associated with policy responsiveness are located in legislative offices at the Capitol. Most representatives employ several legislative assistants and a legislative director to research and formulate policy and positions. Staffers in district offices, on the other hand, typically provide service responsiveness through outreach and casework.

In their study of the relationship between passive and active representation of women in congressional committees, Rosenthal and Bell (2002, 2003) argue that the passive representation of women translates to active representation only under optimal conditions: 'when interest groups hold expectations for passive representation on an issue and then in turn effectively demand some level of active representation; when a staff member possesses the necessary resources of interest, expertise, and status; and when the opportunity structure of member-staff relations, staff autonomy, and political salience coincide' (Rosenthal & Bell, 2003, p. 69). The first and third of these conditions are primarily situational, and emphasise women's representation as policy responsiveness. The second condition, which is critical to the present study, refers to the 'resources' possessed by staffers. Presumably, senior staffers most frequently possess the requisite resources of interest, expertise and status, to become active representatives. These 'inner circle' staffers typically include chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and may occasionally include press secretaries, legislative assistants and district directors (Romzek & Utter, 1996, p. 420). As the preceding discussion illustrates, distinguishing among staffers by position is necessary to identify the substantive importance of factors associated with female presence because staff positions vary in terms of influence, resources

for active representation, and with regard to the type of responsiveness towards which they are oriented.

Although research on passive and active representation by women congressional staff is limited to analysis of committees (Rosenthal & Bell, 2002, 2003), the literature on representative bureaucracy provides substantial evidence that passive representation leads to active representation in the form of policy outcomes. Scholars have explored the representation of a number of demographic characteristics of bureaucracies, including income, education, sex and race (Kellough, 1990; Kranz, 1976; Lewis, 1994; Meier, 1975; Meier & Nigro, 1976; Nachmias & Rosenbloom, 1973; Selden, 1997), and established a variety of evidence that passive representation enhances active representation (Dolan, 2001, 2002; Meier, 1984, 1993; Selden, 1997; Selden, Brudney, & Kellough, 1998).

As the life experiences of females differ from those of males in substantive ways, and decision-making and discretion may be conditioned by these experiences, women bureaucrats are arguably more likely to make decisions, or use discretion in ways that benefit women (Dolan, 2000, 2002). Some scholars argue that the attitudes and perspectives of women bureaucrats differ from those of their male counterparts (Bullard & Wright, 1993; Carroll, 1986, 1987; Dolan, 2000, 2002). Their observations suggest 'female appointees, as a group, respond to the distinct concerns and preferences of the female citizenry' (Dolan, 2001, p. 214). Differences in attitudes of male and female bureaucrats may relate to differences observed in substantive representative behaviour. Evidence demonstrates female appointees facilitate women's presence by hiring female staffers (Carroll & Geiger-Parker, 1983a, 1983b). Female supervisors in Missouri Child Support offices spent more time pursuing activities related to paying benefits to women (Wilkins, 2007), and passive representation of women in those child support offices was positively associated with child support enforcement when outputs directly benefited women (Wilkins & Keiser, 2006). Research also demonstrates a positive relationship between the percentage of female police officers and the number of reports and arrests related to sexual assault (Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006). In sum, there is good reason to speculate that the passive representation of women among congressional staff is related to the active representation of women's interests.

Finally, hiring women staffers may have effects on Congress at the institutional level. Many argue that achieving fundamental sex equality in terms of institutional norms, traditions, and practices requires a 'critical mass' of women (Reingold, 2008, pp. 140–141; Rosenthal & Bell, 2002, p. 447). If women representatives facilitate female presence in the congressional staff bureaucracy, and women achieve more equitable representation in positions of influence as a result, such actions may contribute to institutional regendering in Congress. The fact that congressional staff experience is one of the most common attributes of members of Congress underscores the importance of women's presence among congressional staff as a stepping-stone to influence (Manning, 2010). More than one in five members of the 111th Congress was a former congressional staffer, possibly

making the congressional staff bureaucracy the single largest recruitment pool for future members of Congress. To sum up, women's presence among congressional staff may affect women's representation by enabling greater responsiveness to women, promoting active representation of women's interests, and ultimately through institutional regendering. The following analysis examines whether women representatives significantly affect such presence.

Data

To assess the relationship between women representatives and women's presence in the congressional staff bureaucracy, this study considers the population of congressional staffers in personal offices of US Representatives during the 110th and 111th Congresses. The decision to employ pooled data, rather than data from just one of these relatively similar congresses, reflects a modest effort to increase the generalisability of the findings. Data were obtained from spring 2007 and spring 2009 US House of Representatives telephone directories, which list staffers according to the offices in which they served and the staff positions they occupied. Observations of 6930 congressional staff positions in 2007, and 7118 congressional staff positions in 2009 from the 435 personal offices of US Representatives, were considered.

Female staffers were identified by their first names. Using first names poses an obvious potential to attribute falsely sex characteristics to staffers observed in the data. Some indeterminate cases were encountered in connection with gender-neutral names. In such cases, a Google search identifying the individuals by their full names and the office in which they worked was employed. Typically, search results revealed adequate information to make concrete determinations about the sex of staffers. In *very* rare indeterminate cases, the staffer was coded as male. Members of Congress are typically supported by staff of at least 15 individuals who work in a variety of capacities associated with clerical duties, policy research, advice and formulation, and constituency service. In addition to the sex of staffers, each observation was coded dichotomously into one of the following staff position categories: Chief of Staff, Legislative Director, Press Secretary, Legislative Assistant, District Director, Clerical Staff in Washington, DC offices, and District Staff.

Figure 1 illustrates the sex characteristics of staff in personal offices by position.² Consistent with earlier surveys of congressional staff, women comprised a majority (54 per cent) of staffers working in the personal offices of Members of the 110th and 111th Congresses (CMF, 2004; Schultz, 1992), and 57 per cent of staffers in offices of women representatives. But women occupied disproportionately few senior staff positions: only 35 per cent of chiefs of staff and only 38 per cent of legislative directors were women. In offices of women representatives the representation of women among the most senior staff was slightly higher: 43 per cent of chiefs of staff and 38 per cent of legislative directors were women. Women also occupied larger percentages of legislative assistant, district director,

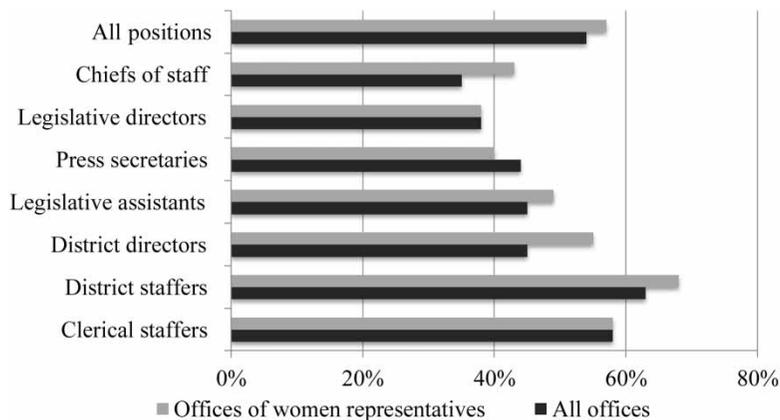


Figure 1: Per Cent Women Staffers, 110th and 111th Congresses

and district staff positions in the offices of women representatives, although the continued over-representation of women in district-based positions makes the final statistic less compelling than the differences observed in the former categories (Johannes, 1984).

These patterns of gender representation illustrate that women enjoy more than proportional passive representation among congressional staffers, but that women are under-represented in positions with the greatest resources for active representation and in positions associated with policy responsiveness. Under-representation of women in these positions may mean that responsiveness to the policy concerns of women, and action on their behalf by the congressional staff bureaucracy, is less than proportional. More broadly, these statistics suggest that the over-representation of women among congressional staffers generally is a poor indicator of their relative institutional influence. Such patterns underscore the importance of identifying conditions that foster greater women's presence among congressional staff – especially in influential senior positions.

Modelling the Association between Women Representatives and Women's Staff Presence

The relationship between women representatives and women's presence in the congressional staff bureaucracy is assessed using cross-sectional logistic regression analyses of congressional staffer sex in the 110th and 111th Congresses. Individual staff positions constitute the unit of analysis, and the dependent variable indicates whether a woman staffer occupied each staff position. The presence of women is modelled for all positions jointly, and for chief of staff, legislative director, press secretary, legislative assistant, district director, district staff, and clerical staff positions in separate analyses.

The key independent variable in each regression analysis indicates whether staff positions were located in the office of a *Woman Representative*. Based on arguments that women subordinates receive more favourable treatment when working for women managers, the coefficient for *Woman Representative* should be positive. Control variables denote the *Seniority*³ of representatives measured in years, whether a *Democrat Representative*,⁴ *Black Representative*, or *Latino Representative* headed the office in which each staff position was located,⁵ and the conservatism of congressional districts measured using the *2008 Obama Vote*⁶ for president. Finally, in order to ensure patterns were not affected by the two distinct time periods in question, a dichotomous control variable distinguishes the *111th Congress* from the *110th Congress*.⁷

Seniority is included based on observations that representatives' career orientations change and mature over time, and that their decision calculus with regard to hiring may change as well. The likelihood a position was occupied by a woman may also relate to the party of representatives, or to whether representatives were members of a racial or ethnic minority group. For example, research illustrating that Democrats are more supportive of feminist positions in their voting behaviour suggests that other behaviour related to women's representation, such as facilitating opportunities for women, may be shaped by party (Gertzog, 2004; Wolbrecht, 2000). Based on this argument, the coefficient for *Democrat* should be positive. Given experiences with discrimination, it also seems plausible that minority representatives would be more likely to prioritise diversity in their staff and thus empower more women staffers. If such an association exists, coefficients for *Black Representative* and *Latino Representative* should also be positive. Representatives who serve more liberal constituencies may be more likely to empower women in their congressional staff, given that more liberal constituencies may prioritise gender equity to a greater extent than conservative constituencies. The coefficients for *2008 Obama Vote* should therefore be positive. Finally, assuming that factors associated with women's presence among congressional staff do not change substantially across time, the *111th Congress* should not be significantly related to outcome variables.

Results of the analysis are given in Table 1. The general weakness of representative gender, party, seniority, race, and ethnicity as correlates to women's empowerment in the congressional staff bureaucracy is striking. While women occupied significantly more staff positions in offices of women representatives, in addition to more district staff positions in the offices of women representatives, these models are largely indeterminate, and suggest that characteristics of congressional representatives make only a minor difference with regard to women's presence in the congressional staff bureaucracy.

The marginal effect of *Woman Representative* increased the probability that a given staff position was occupied by a woman by 0.03, from 0.54 to 0.57, and the probability that a district staff position was occupied by a woman by 0.07, from 0.61 to 0.68. Representative *Seniority* was related to the presence of women on congressional staff, although the effect was substantively small. The marginal

Table 1: Explaining the Presence of Women Congressional Staffers, 110th and 111th Congresses

Logistic Regression	All Positions	Chief of Staff	Legislative Director	Press Secretary	Legislative Assistant	District Director	District Staff	Clerical Staff
<i>Woman Representative</i>	0.138** (0.050)	0.315 (0.226)	0.006 (0.227)	-0.273 (0.227)	0.047 (0.127)	0.428 (0.240)	0.308** (0.098)	-0.010 (0.106)
<i>Democrat Representative</i>	0.042 (0.052)	0.553* (0.234)	0.0241 (0.214)	0.308 (0.225)	-0.014 (0.127)	-0.176 (0.229)	-0.058 (0.091)	0.023 (0.101)
<i>Seniority</i>	0.008** (0.002)	0.021* (0.011)	0.012 (0.010)	0.006 (0.010)	0.002 (0.006)	0.013 (0.011)	0.005 (0.004)	0.008 (0.004)
<i>Latino Representative</i>	0.215** (0.076)	0.318 (0.358)	0.299 (0.356)	0.243 (0.326)	0.217 (0.178)	0.167 (0.350)	0.148 (0.128)	0.327 (0.210)
<i>Black Representative</i>	0.060 (0.071)	0.408 (0.335)	-0.100 (0.341)	0.403 (0.359)	0.075 (0.213)	-0.336 (0.359)	-0.004 (0.123)	0.006 (0.150)
<i>2008 Obama Vote</i>	0.001 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.010)	0.004 (0.009)	-0.002 (0.009)	0.012* (0.005)	0.016 (0.009)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.000 (0.004)
<i>111th Congress</i>	-0.038 (0.023)	-0.096 (0.100)	-0.096 (0.124)	0.042 (0.116)	0.065 (0.071)	0.178 (0.107)	-0.045 (0.040)	-0.106 (0.066)
Constant	0.006 (0.088)	-1.092** (0.400)	-0.785 (0.422)	-0.397 (0.386)	-0.921*** (0.223)	-1.197** (0.426)	0.646*** (0.152)	0.306 (0.188)
Number of observations	14,048	881	793	824	2166	760	5945	2757
Number of clusters	503	497	463	462	499	452	499	499
Pseudo R-square	0.002	0.027	0.005	0.009	0.008	0.016	0.003	0.002
Wald chi-square	42.28	20.49	3.693	6.912	21.65	13.19	15.16	8.414

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; observations clustered by representative.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed tests.

effect of each additional year served by representatives was to increase the probability that a woman occupied an average position by 0.002, and the probability that a woman occupied a chief of staff position by 0.005. *Latino Representative* had a small but significant marginal effect on female presence, increasing the probability of a woman occupying a given staff position by 0.05, from 0.54 to 0.59. Being a *Democrat* had a narrow effect on female presence. While the probability of a woman occupying the chief of staff position was 0.4 in offices of Democrats, it was only 0.28 in Republican offices. Party mattered little otherwise. *African American* legislators had no significant effect on women's empowerment in any of the categories examined. Finally, the ideology of congressional districts had little to do with women's empowerment, with the exception of legislative assistant positions, where women's presence was positively associated with support for President Obama during the 2008 election.

Critics may wonder whether the intersection of representative gender with seniority, party, race, or ethnicity is important in explaining women's empowerment. To address these questions, a second set of analyses was conducted, including interaction terms that multiplied *Woman Representative* by *Democrat Representative*, *Black Representative*, *Latino Representative*, and *Seniority*, respectively. The results of these analyses, which appear in Table A1 in the Appendix, showed that the addition of these interaction terms failed to improve the overall performance of the model. Rather, their inclusion largely confirms the general weakness of the root variables examined here for understanding women's empowerment among congressional staff. In sum, the analysis presents some evidence that women representatives hired more women staffers, but no evidence that women representatives made a substantial difference for women's presence in influential positions.

Discussion and Implications

The preceding analysis is couched in terms of a larger debate over whether women managers act as 'change agents' by promoting opportunities for women, or as 'cogs in the machine' that perpetuate patterns of gender inequity. Its findings fail to endorse either view fully. While a significant relationship between women representatives and women's presence is evident at the most aggregate level, this relationship is likely to empower women only at the margins, rather than in positions with substantial influence. The difference that women representatives make is small, and generally insignificant with respect to the positions of greatest importance. So, while findings confirm expectations that women representatives, as managers, hire more women staffers, they cast doubt upon whether women representatives truly act as 'change agents'. Women representatives do not appear to offer a compelling direct route to women's presence in the congressional bureaucracy – at least in the positions where passive representation of women might be most important.

Before speculating about the implications of this analysis for future research on women's representation, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Researchers may wonder, for example, whether staffing patterns in the 110th and 111th Congresses can be generalised. The 110th and 111th Congresses were both controlled by Democratic majorities, and were immediately preceded and succeeded by Republican control. So an obvious question is whether changes in party control, and a failure to examine staffing patterns under Republican control, bias the findings presented. Although possible, there is little reason to suspect such bias. First, given the insignificance of party as a predictor of staffing patterns, it appears that individual partisans themselves have little effect on the dependent variables in question. Second, there is little, if any, theoretical reason to suspect that changes in partisan control substantially alter representatives' staffing preferences with regard to sex.

Another limitation of this analysis is its inability to assess the relationship between women representatives and women staffers *over time*. Observations from more congresses are needed to explore such questions. Some may argue that the true measure of empowerment rests in the promotion of staffers to successively higher and more influential positions. While a time series analysis would be beneficial in assessing this possibility, the general lack of a relationship observed in this cross-sectional analysis suggests it would be unlikely to produce substantially different findings. If women representatives groom women staffers to advance through the ranks of congressional staff, they do not appear to do so in a broad or systematic way.

A final limitation is the inability of the data examined here to speak to other explanations of women's empowerment among congressional staff. Without considering staffer characteristics such as experience or education, for example, models may be underspecified. This critique, however, does not damage the usefulness of the analysis for discussing the association between women representatives and women's presence in the congressional staff bureaucracy. At most, the data may be criticised for indicating the importance of searching elsewhere for factors associated with women's presence without explicitly pointing the way.

If women members of Congress perceive themselves as representatives of women, as has been demonstrated (Carroll, 2002), direct empowerment of women would seem a logical method for acting on those perceptions. Why would women representatives fail to promote opportunities for women staffers when the lack of gender equity in positions of influence is evident? One possibility is that the relationship between representatives and staff is not analogous to other manager-subordinate relationships in which women managers are observed to act as 'change agents'. Some may wonder whether the incentives of the average representative are consistent with those of 'managers' generally, or whether representatives typically involve themselves directly in hiring staff. Assuming women members of Congress are motivated by standard legislator incentives that include re-election, the achievement of power within Congress as an institution, and the passage of good public policy (Fenno, 1978), their

incentives would seem broadly analogous to those of most managers, if a bit more complicated. Most managers, after all, are interested in job security, promotion, and the good performance often associated with the former goals. Furthermore, motives to empower women staffers, who are presumably just as capable as men in assisting in the achievement of congressional goals, do not appear inconsistent with congressional incentives. In short, there is little reason to believe that women representatives, who evidently find prioritising women's interests consistent with their goals by other measures, should not find empowering women directly through their hiring decisions similarly consistent.

Another argument is that women representatives may not involve themselves sufficiently in staff hiring to empower women. But this critique is also questionable. First, additional analyses (not shown) exploring whether female presence on congressional staffs was associated with the presence of female chiefs of staff, and vice versa, did not turn up any significant relationships. Second, while senior staffers, like the chief of staff, probably take the lead in advertising positions and interviewing applicants, representatives exercise final judgement on hiring. Finally, representatives probably hire senior staffers who are reliable agents when it comes to identifying candidates with characteristics desired by the representative. If representatives prioritise hiring women, staffers involved in hiring will be cognisant of such preferences.

Although explaining the limited relationship between women representatives and women's empowerment requires further research, it seems fair to conclude that women representatives are not major agents of change when it comes to female presence in the congressional staff bureaucracy. This conclusion raises important questions about the mechanisms, such as gendered leadership styles, gender differences in empathetic management, and homo-social reproduction, theorised to shape the dynamics of superior-subordinate relationships in the workplace. In the relationships between US Representatives and their personal staff, these mechanisms appear to function only at the most aggregate level, and with regard to relatively low-level positions.

Although evidence from this study will undoubtedly disappoint those seeking ways to empower women and regenerate Congress, from a practical perspective, the conclusion is useful for directing reformist energies towards alternative 'demand'- or 'supply'-side strategies (Saltzstein, 1986). Demand-side strategies emphasise the use of institutional mechanisms that could open up opportunities for women. Supply-side strategies emphasise mechanisms that alleviate conditions that make women less competitive or give women the tools to be competitive with men, and thus break down pre-market patterns of discrimination.

For those unwilling to abandon women members of Congress as change agents, these findings indicate the value of investigating whether informal institutions shape demand for women staffers. In Congress, for example, legislative service organisations, in which many members participate, could motivate representatives – particularly women representatives – to act as change agents. As scholars have noted, organisations such as the now defunct

Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues (CCWI) have played key roles in facilitating policy success (Dodson, 1998; Hawkesworth, Kathleen, Jenkins, & Kleeman, 2001; Reingold, 2008, p. 142). Although the CCWI and many other member organisations are moribund at the moment, a question worth asking is whether they have played a role in promoting opportunities for women staffers in the past, and whether resurrecting such organisations could facilitate such efforts in the future.

An alternative direction for future research is the exploration of 'grass-roots' strategies for providing opportunities for women. The establishment of the congressional women's staff association in 2008, and proliferation of numerous other groups oriented towards women's empowerment in government, illustrate a surge in efforts to change the aggregate sex profile of legislatures and other institutions from the bottom up. They also offer increasingly fertile ground for exploring supply-side strategies to empower women. Analysing the effects of such groups could prove valuable to understanding which strategies are most effective, and offer important insight into efforts to increase female presence and regender legislative institutions.

The limited association between women representatives and female presence on congressional staffs fuels the conclusion that, although descriptive representation of women makes a difference, it cannot be viewed as a panacea for women's representation and empowerment. Indeed, the general weakness of representative characteristics as correlates to female presence on congressional staffing suggests that descriptive representation is only a small part of a larger debate over how to diversify and regender institutions. If empowering women in the congressional staff bureaucracy from above looks less than promising, as this analysis indicates, then scholars seeking sources of institutional transformation in Congress must increasingly focus their energies not just upon the individual representatives who hire congressional staffers, but on the institutional mechanisms both inside and outside Congress that affect opportunities for women.

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Notes

1. This finding echoes a key condition identified by Cohen and Huffman (2007) that must be met in order for women representatives to act as change agents by facilitating opportunities for women subordinates: they must have power to induce outcomes that affect the treatment of subordinates and address issues of inequality. Female representatives constitute 'managers' who clearly

- possess the power to influence hiring patterns within their offices. For practical purposes, representatives' employment decisions remain relatively unfettered by hiring guidelines that govern other federal hiring (Romzek & Utter, 1996, p. 416).
2. An exhaustive list of titles given to congressional staffers is not presented. Policy Advisor, Policy Assistant, Legislative Advisor, and Legislative Assistant are all listed under Legislative Assistant. Clerical Staff includes such titles as Staff Assistant, Legislative Correspondent, Scheduler, and Office Manager. District Staff includes district office staff without policy or directorship responsibilities. Press Secretary includes other titles such as Communications Director.
 3. Data on *Seniority* were obtained from the *Almanac of American politics 2007* and *2009*, edited by Barone and Cohen (2007, 2009).
 4. Unfortunately, collinearity with *DW NOMINATE* (dynamic, weighted nominal three-step estimation) scores made it impossible to include measures of both party and ideology. However, models run with *DW NOMINATE* scores as an alternative to *Democrat Representative* produced similar findings.
 5. Data on *Representatives* were obtained from the *Almanac of American politics 2007* and *2009*, edited by Barone and Cohen (2007, 2009).
 6. Data on member seniority and on the 2008 vote for President Obama at the congressional district level were obtained from the *Almanac of American politics 2007* and *2009*, edited by Barone and Cohen (2007, 2009).
 7. VIF (variance inflation factor) diagnostics reveal no collinearity problems between independent variables in the model. VIFs for all variables and for the model as a whole are below 10, and are therefore generally viewed as acceptable (Chatterjee, Hadi, & Price, 2000).

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Appendix

Table A1: Explaining the Presence of Women Congressional Staffers, 110th and 111th Congresses

Logistic Regression	All Positions	Chief of Staff	Legislative Director	Press Secretary	Legislative Assistant	District Director	District Staff	Clerical Staff
<i>Woman Representative</i>	0.0690 (0.111)	0.231 (0.486)	0.189 (0.465)	0.065 (0.427)	0.003 (0.286)	0.071 (0.467)	0.292 (0.252)	-0.236 (0.231)
<i>Woman*Democrat</i>	0.177 (0.110)	0.472 (0.538)	0.463 (0.531)	-0.573 (0.476)	0.358 (0.310)	0.303 (0.543)	0.095 (0.248)	0.319 (0.232)
<i>Woman*Seniority</i>	-0.001 (0.007)	-0.006 (0.031)	-0.038 (0.039)	0.005 (0.036)	-0.013 (0.020)	0.023 (0.039)	-0.006 (0.016)	0.003 (0.015)
<i>Woman*Latino</i>	-0.0305 (0.135)	-0.972 (0.740)	-0.392 (0.921)	0.194 (0.829)	-0.058 (0.380)	0.142 (0.837)	0.053 (0.253)	0.144 (0.500)
<i>Woman*Black</i>	-0.245 (0.132)	-0.668 (0.617)	-1.125 (0.654)	0.004 (0.650)	-0.683 (0.386)	-0.250 (0.677)	-0.030 (0.228)	-0.130 (0.285)
<i>Democrat Representative</i>	0.021 (0.055)	0.479 (0.245)	-0.058 (0.226)	0.372 (0.235)	-0.066 (0.134)	-0.204 (0.239)	-0.069 (0.094)	-0.013 (0.106)
<i>Seniority</i>	0.008** (0.003)	0.023* (0.011)	0.016 (0.010)	0.005 (0.0103)	0.003 (0.006)	0.012 (0.011)	0.005 (0.004)	0.008 (0.005)
<i>Latino Representative</i>	0.221* (0.097)	0.607 (0.441)	0.418 (0.399)	0.193 (0.366)	0.235 (0.206)	0.123 (0.405)	0.140 (0.161)	0.287 (0.226)
<i>Black Representative</i>	0.121 (0.080)	0.591 (0.398)	0.216 (0.386)	0.429 (0.421)	0.271 (0.259)	-0.263 (0.406)	-0.000 (0.143)	0.043 (0.171)
<i>2008 Obama Vote</i>	0.000 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)	-0.002 (0.009)	0.012* (0.005)	0.015 (0.009)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.004)
<i>111th Congress</i>	-0.039 (0.023)	-0.101 (0.101)	-0.088 (0.124)	0.048 (0.116)	0.065 (0.071)	0.173 (0.107)	-0.044 (0.040)	-0.109 (0.066)
Constant	0.023 (0.092)	-1.061* (0.420)	-0.838 (0.437)	-0.465 (0.394)	-0.922*** (0.230)	-1.121** (0.430)	0.645*** (0.156)	0.360 (0.195)
Number of observations	14,048	881	793	824	2166	760	5945	2757
Number of clusters	503	497	463	462	499	452	499	499
Pseudo R-square	0.002	0.030	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.017	0.003	0.003
Wald chi-square	59.47	23.31	8.825	7.926	27.50	13.67	20.94	10.17

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; observations clustered by representative.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed tests.

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