

**The Impact of Gender and Race on Legislation:
A Study of How Legislators' Gender Influence their Support of Women's-Interest Policies**

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Abstract

This project looked at how race and gender impact people's views and actions on certain legislation. It attempted to answer the question, "Do female legislators advocate more for policies that aid women than male legislators?" It considered the opinions of the public, state legislators, and federal legislators on legislation supporting women's policies, demonstrating actions that show how legislators support women's policies through legislation. The paper also evaluated the intersection of race and gender on legislators' views. One segment includes the attitude of people towards sex crime legislation. Finally, the scholars in this paper examine other factors that influence legislators.

Key terms: women's interest, critical mass theory, SORN, gendered institutions, TVPA, substantive representation, symbolic representation, descriptive representation, intersectionality, domestic/intimate partner violence, generation

Introduction

Do female legislators advocate more for policies that aid women than male legislators?

This project examined how race and gender play a role in peoples' and legislators' views on legislators and policies, specifically women's-interest policies. The research was motivated by "Do Female Legislators Do It Differently? Sex Offender Lawmaking at the State Level" by M. L. Meloy. Most of the scholars examined in this project studied many types of women's-interest legislation.

This project investigated the connections between race/gender and opinions/actions on legislation, aiming to describe the characteristics of legislators who sponsored women-related bills. This paper used qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources. The research identified individual behaviors in legislative bodies. This project reviewed existing literature, reporting on previously conducted research. All studies were objectively considered as the author had no intention for this paper except to review all research relating to the topic and learn from the findings. Databases used in this research project were evaluated for reliability and to ensure that they were peer reviewed.

Meloy (2015) & Orey and Larimer (2008) determined that an individual's race and gender can impact the way they view and support. These factors and other factors influence people's perspective on legislation commonly viewed as associated with women, such as legislation dealing with sex crimes and sentencing of these crimes.

The project evaluated public perceptions on underrepresented groups in legislative bodies and public perceptions on current sex crime legislation. It then covered the pertinent historical background, including topics like the effects of the Women's Rights movements, how women's issues became relevant to lawmakers, and the rise in underrepresented groups in legislatures

(Barrett, 1997). The next topic looked at the categories that influence legislators, such as location, gender, race, political party, individual background, age, and newness (Walker, 2012). Researchers included in this project looked at states and the federal government and considered how women's interests are pushed in legislative bodies (Barnello and Bratton, 2011). The project defined relevant terms such as women's issues, types of representation, and theories like Critical Mass theory (Walker, 2012). Then, the paper looked at sex crime legislation and legislators' perceptions and actions on it, and how gender and other states influenced those views and actions (Bouché and Wittmer, 2015).

Another important factor is the importance of gender and legislators' chosen gender identity. When examining male and female legislators, this project looked at legislators who identify as male and legislators who identify as female. A relevant term is "gender relations," which, in this context, is "the social organization of the relationship between the sexes" (qtd. in Schumacher 2011, p. 59). Orey and Larimer (2008) examined progressive bill sponsorship, which focused on "social, political, and economic inequalities along such lines as race, class and gender" (p. 22). Schumacher (2011), Barrett (1997), and Walker (2012) evaluated the development of legislative bills or laws that were developed in the interest of protecting women's rights. Similarly, Bouche & Witmer (2015) and Meloy (2015) focused on human trafficking policies as the issue has been framed as women's-interest policy.

Literature review

Public perception

One of the biggest impacts on legislators is their district, including people's perception/opinions of legislators and policies. This section will focus on the public's perception of legislators who identify as female and/or belong to racial-ethnic minority groups. Scholars

also studied the public's preference of representatives' gender, the public's views on descriptive representation, and the public's opinions on sex crime statutes. For the public's opinions on sex crime legislation, scholars ask criminal justice professionals for their opinions, because they may influence people and legislators.

Public Opinion of Female Legislators and Legislators of Minority Racial-Ethnic Groups

Barrett (1997) surveyed respondents on government representatives who are female and/or black. Barrett (1997) reported that women respondents are more likely than men to believe that women bring unique assets to legislatures. Barrett also reported that legislators who are female and/or black believe they must work harder than white men. This study shows that constituents' race and gender affect their perceptions of legislators' advantages. Lawless' (2004) and Cone (2017) determined that "women are more likely to give their members of Congress higher approval ratings when they are women" (Cone, 2017, p. 4). They were unable to locate any findings showing that female citizens feel any more trust towards their female representatives.

Many studies show that a percentage of the public is prejudiced against women in high government positions. Fox & Smith (1998) and Anzia & Berry (2011) determined that historically, men were selected over women for positions in the House of Representatives. A Pew (2008) survey established that about one-fifth of adults in the U.S. think men lead better than women (Anzia & Berry, 2011). Sears & Henry (2005) and Anzia & Berry (2011) noted that over one percent of the population would include a candidate's race / ethnicity / sex as a factor when they decided on whom to vote for.

Push for Legislators Representing the Public

In addition to the existing public perceptions of current female legislators, another public perception is that more female representatives should serve in legislative bodies. Pushing for female political representation are “large international and transnational organizations such as the United Nations, European Union, Summit of Americas, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations... [because it] would lead to a truly representative democracy and greater economic and social progress” (qtd. In Schumacher, 2011, p. 3). Schumacher (2011) noted that at the time of their study, the U.S. had significantly fewer female representatives than other comparable nations. These findings are important as they relate to the later discussion of descriptive representation.

Public Perception of SORN

Many people have strong opinions about sex crime statutes. Call and Gordon (2016) noted that legislators have written sex crime statutes after public outcry from people seeing horrific incidents reported in the media. States increased their legislative statutes on the required conduct for released offenders. All states require individuals previously convicted of sex crimes to add themselves to the sex offender registry. This system is called SORN (Sex Offender Registration Notification). When convicted offenders are on the sex offender registry, they may be negatively impacted through “loss of housing, difficulty finding employment, social isolation, emotional suffering, and harassment by other community members” (Call and Gordon, 2016, p. 835). Call and Gordon (2016) noted that states vary with their different requirements for SORN, but legislators created SORN to protect communities.

Connor and Tewksbury (2017) referenced several studies on states that concluded SORN laws are not effective in protecting communities. Many states did not predict if individuals

complying with SORN laws would repeat the same crime. Individuals and groups could have influenced states to keep these statutes (Connor and Tewksbury, 2017).

Call and Gordon (2016) found that the public supports SORN. A research study by Kernsmith, Craun, and Foster (2009) utilizing phone interviews found a large majority of the 733-person sample believed states were justified in forcing sex offenders to comply with SORN requirements. In a 1000-person study group by Harris and Socia (2016), over half of participants in the experimental and control group believed the government should put sex offender information online for the public (Connor and Tewksbury, 2017, p. 2). Investigating specific members of the public who supported SORN, Call and Gordon (2016) learned parental status influences perceptions for current policies, and parents support sex offender policies more than non-parents.

Perception of SORN by Experts

While public perception greatly impacts legislators' actions on sex crime policies, another factor is the professional opinion of experts in the criminal justice field. Even though the public supports SORN laws, criminal justice professionals, supervisors, mental health experts, and legislators have mixed reactions to SORN. Mustaine et al. (2015) demonstrated that prosecutors and correctional officers find SORN effective, but law enforcement does not (Call and Gordon, 2016). Small-sample studies of law enforcement officers by Finn (1997) and Gaines (2006) found over half believe SORN is vital for community protection, yet in a larger-sample study by Tewksbury and Mustaine (2013), a majority thought requirements did not deter offenders on the list or those yet to commit crimes, yet a majority thought sex offenders should follow SORN requirements (Connor and Tewksbury, 2017). Call and Gordon (2016) concluded mental health professionals have low levels of confidence that SORN can protect the community.

Connor and Tewksbury (2017) also cited many studies demonstrating professionals did not support SORN policies. These studies show the mixed feelings/responses for professionals' confidence in sex offender management policies (Call and Gordon, 2016).

Relevant History and Background for the United States

Analyzing the reasons that legislators support women's-interest policies, specifically female and BIPOC legislators, and the history from the past seventy years is essential. Before that time, few females and BIPOC campaigned for legislative seats. This section will cover the growing number of female and BIPOC people in legislative positions.

The Women's-Rights Movement

Social Movements and Feminism Waves. Social movements are “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society” (qtd. in Schumacher, 2011, p. 49). The feminist movement in the United States was a social movement that sought to create change for social structures for women in American society. The increase of women in legislatures in the mid to late twentieth century correlated with the second wave of feminism. Beckwith and Cowell-Meyers (2008) noted that the feminist movement may have caused more females to be part of legislatures. The feminist movement was influential in the twentieth century as it led to increased women in the workforce, new political awareness, and women-oriented social groups.

Schumacher (2011) provided some background of the feminist movement of the 1960s. There was a split in the movement, leading to two branches. The one called the reform movement focused on quality. The other was the liberations movement that focused on social change and a new ideal. Though these groups were focused on creating change in different ways, both movements agreed on “equality for all” (Schumacher 2011, p. 56).

The women's movement correlated with an increase in divorce rates and more independent women in the workforce. Issues that became more known at this time because women were entering the workforce were "childcare, equal pay, and sexual harassment (Schumacher 2011, p. 62). When women worked, they dealt with these issues, and these issues became more known to women and the public. This is important in the discussion of women's-issue legislation because as women called attention to these issues, many wanted legislators to listen to and work towards change on social problems.

New Women in the Workforce and New Political Awareness. Schumacher (2011) included that women's status has changed over time, affecting how women could finally work outside the home and run for government positions. Many United States women first worked after World War II. This phenomenon led to women's "opinions and world views expand[ing]... and... [women gaining] leadership and managerial skills, ...enhanc[ing]... their ability to become politically active" (Schumacher, 2011, p. 60). The new influx of women into political positions in the mid-1900s correlated with this phenomenon of the new working women. Matland and Montgomery (2003) and Salmond (2006) argued that the new large numbers of women working caused more women to work in political positions (Schumacher 2011).

Walker (2012) & Stivers (2002) noted that women faced more difficulties in entering the workforce than men. Women dealt with things like hiring/workplace discrimination, caring for families while working full-time, and breaking stereotypes placed upon them. Walker (2012) noted that "one of the first agencies at the federal level was the Women's Bureau, established in 1920... to address some of the inequity issues in wages and job segregation that women faced as well as a place where women's point of view could be voiced" (p. 22). The Women's Bureau gave support to working women before waves of women began entering the workforce during

World War II. One of the early projects of the bureau was taking the findings from governments, the National Consumers League, and Women's Trade Union League to learn about women working in the industrial industry and gain knowledge on "poor workers who struggled to escape difficult, dangerous, and low-paying occupations" (486). Hendrickson (2008) found that the Women's Bureau supported women's role as workers and later pushed for the rights of all workers. The existence of the Women's Bureau meant that the government created an agency to aid women. However, Hendrickson (2008) found that while the bureau's purpose was to analyze female workers and their job conditions, the agency instead "transformed that institution into an important vehicle for deliberation on the larger labor question" (p. 487). Furthermore, Hendrickson (2008) added that the female leaders of the bureau are now seen as experienced and educated workers who were successful in creating their own roles in the federal government.

Government officials today push for policies to help working women. Soule and King (2006) researched the Equal Rights Amendment, a proposed amendment seeking to eliminate discrimination based on sex so men and women were legally equal. They found social movements were influential in the beginning phases of introducing a bill (Schumacher 2011).

How Women's-Issues Became Prominent for Legislators

Walker (2012) noted that in the past, legislators did not prioritize women's-interest policies. Because women's issues were private issues, much of society believed those issues should stay in the home and not the public. Research shows prevalent issues affected women—workplaces placed women in lower positions, paid them less, and allowed harassment of women. Women challenged these issues when they demanded protection, especially low-earning workers, through policies like sick and family leave. Though these issues might not seem relevant to everyone, they are pertinent to the public because better policies for businesses

positively impact the economy. Walker (2012) showed that women's-interest policies not only help women but help businesses and the workforce by creating more stable environments and fewer disruptive turnovers. Thus, addressing women's issues can benefit society.

Increased Numbers of Female and POC Legislators. The number of female legislators grew in the 1970s: "eight percent of state legislators were women in 1974, by 1994 the numbers had nearly tripled to 21 percent" (Barrett, 1997, para. 2). The growth of black legislators was not as substantial. Barrett (1997) identified that as the number of women and people of color in legislators rose, the public's perceptions changed because women and minority candidates campaigned they had unique perspectives as representatives.

Atkinson & Windett (2019) stated that women legislators in the 1960s-80s faced more difficulties than men; people viewed female legislators in Congress as ill-equipped to handle tough issues, and women were more strongly challenged in races. However, women were as likely to win elections as men were because women had more experience and brought more aid to their district. Female legislators likely cultivated better reputations in their districts and with coworkers due to this.

The number of women in legislatures has been growing recently. The national average of women in state legislatures in Meloy's (2015) study was around 24.2 percent, while some of the states averaged about 35 percent. Meloy (2015) pointed out that many women legislators are white women and there are few BIPOC women. Meloy (2015) used other sources showing specific statistics on the percentage of nonwhite women in state legislatures: "Women of color comprise only 21% of the 1,789 female state legislators nationwide and only about 5% of the 7,383 overall total... 241 of 1,789 female state legislators serving nationwide are Black (13%), 87 are Latina (4.8%), 34 are Asian (0.002%), and 13 are Native American (0.007%)" (qtd. in

Meloy, 2015, p. 304-305). Meloy (2015) demonstrated the low number of women, particularly women of color, in state legislatures compared to men. Women are usually the minority in those bodies, and “the role of incumbency and exclusion by political elites” played a role in shaping how small the minority population is in those bodies (Meloy, 2015, p. 304).

Minta’s and Brown’s (2014) background on underrepresented groups in legislatures found that countries like the U.S. have tried to increase underrepresented groups in legislative bodies through quotas and redistricting. Women have been advocating for more representation since the second wave of feminism. This has increased the number of female state senators and state representatives. Schumacher (2011) explained that the number of females in office has increased since the 1970s; the percentage was about 9% but has grown to over 25%. Still, the U.S. female representation is not proportionate compared to other similar countries (Schumacher, 2011).

Women’s caucus. In governmental bodies, legislators create caucuses so they can meet up and mobilize with other legislators who share similar characteristics and agendas. Women’s caucuses in state legislations meet “regularly to define policy goals and to create a political strategy in reaching those goals” (Schumacher, 2011, p. 40). Maryland created the first women’s state caucus in the late 1960s, most likely in response to the majority-male legislature and also so women legislators could be free from harassment. Scholars began studying women’s caucuses when they studied women in legislatures. Women’s caucuses are a way for women to come together in unity. Schumacher (2011) said these caucuses are “a clear indication that the concerns and interests of women are distinct from those of men, and that gender is a politically relevant category” (Schumacher, 2011, p. 41). To understand how women’s caucuses factor into the support of female-interest legislation, Thomas (1991) looked at states that had these caucuses and determined that states that passed the most women’s-interest legislation had women’s

caucuses (Schumacher, 2011). Reingold (1992) determined that women were excited to be part of caucuses (Schumacher, 2011). In contrast, Reingold's and Schneider's (2001) study found that for abortion policies, "women were found to be more effective in either passing or blocking legislation in their roles as committee members, rather than as a united women's caucus" (Schumacher, 2011, p. 42). Thus, they concluded that women's caucuses have not been as effective as other methods.

Women Candidates Refraining from Campaigning

Anzia and Berry (2011) described women who run for legislative positions and public perceptions of women in power. When women and men have equal qualifications to run, women are less likely to run, according to Lawless and Fox's (2005) study. Women believe they will have a more difficult time raising campaign finances and getting elected because of people's prejudices for male leaders over female leaders. Burrell (1994), Fox (2006) Newman (1994), Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton (1997), Uhlaner and Schlozman (1986), and Smith and Fox (2001) discredited that these circumstances happen in the current day (Anzia & Berry, 2011).

How gender and race impact legislators' support of policies

Barrett (1997) noted that gender and race affect the legislative experience. MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) highlighted that there is difficulty in determining specific gender influences on legislation.

Defining Women's-Interest Policies

The relationship between women's-interest policies and legislators interest scholars. As the term "women's-interest" has a different meaning to different people, scholars must describe how they interpret this term and what types of policies they believe are in women's interest. While researchers look at different policies when examining women's-interest policies, all the

policies have in common that their purpose is to help women in some way. These policies do not necessarily aid only women. One example is childcare, which benefits children and fathers.

Another example is workplace discrimination, which benefits companies and the public.

Schumacher (2011) noted that female interest policies involved female discrimination, biological or social constructs, and women's behavior from gender roles. Examples of policies are

“reproductive policy, policies concerning violence against women, and family leave policies”

(Schumacher, 2011, p. 21).

One difference between Walker (2012) and other scholars in this project is the term that Walker used to refer to bills that aid women. While most call bills that help women “women's-interest bills,” Walker referred to these bills as “women-friendly.” However, Walker (2012) conducted similar research, since she considered women's-interest bills similar to other scholars' visions of women's-interest bills. These policies include areas regarding “childcare, domestic violence, gender-based pay inequity, and reproductive rights” (Walker, 2012, p. 1). Like other scholars, these bills are geared toward gender equality, giving rights to women, and helping women (Walker, 2012). The following lists the various areas researchers have studied:

Childcare, domestic violence, gender-based pay inequity, and reproductive rights...items that unequivocally enhance women's budgetary, societal, and political positions... enhance independence, health, and individual preferences... rape, prostitution, childcare, public health, marriage, reproductive rights, domestic violence, pornography, children, and educating children... [and] birth control. (Walker p. 20)

Some of these issues have been at the front of other researcher's projects in this literature review, like childcare and policies that enhance women's budgetary position. However, these researchers

expanded the definition of women's-interest legislation so that, all combined, one could look at legislation that impacted women in all aspects of life.

Political Representation Theories and Types of Representation

When studying the impact of female representatives on legislation, terms that regularly come up in studies on the impact of race and gender on legislation include Critical Mass Theory and Descriptive, Substantive, Formal, Symbolic representation.

Critical Mass Theory. Walker (2012) described the essence of critical mass theory as “the belief that the percentage of an underrepresented group in relation to the majority group appears to be essential to promote change in their circumstances and they may feel isolated and become unable or unwilling to fight against the majority” (p. 8). The specific focus in critical mass studies according to Walker (2012) is representation under 20 percent.

Scholars like Childs and Krook in 2009 and Dahlerup in 2006 have studied critical mass theory in government bodies and found critical actors are more important in critical mass theories (Walker, 2012). Walker (2012) defined critical actors as those “who take the initiative on policies, regardless of the amount of people they represent...[and] sponsor legislation with the byproduct of inspiring others to behave in the same manner” (p. 10). Critical actors are essential in legislative bodies because they push the interests of other people and sometimes the interest of a very small group of people.

Barrett (1997) recounted the work of researcher Kanter, summarizing Kant's findings after looking at the percentage of women and people of color in a legislature; defining “tokens” as a group that makes up less than fifteen percent of the legislative body, Kant found at the time of their study since the women made up twenty percent of the legislative body, they were not tokens; however, the low number of black legislators made them “tokens” in the legislature. Kant

raised the point that if a legislature followed critical mass theory, that could lower the number of legislative bills pushed to protect women and people of color that are sponsored by legislators who are women or people of color.

Thomas (1991) studied the female bill sponsorship of twelve states, concluding that female legislators sponsor women's and children's interest bills more than men. However, Thomas found "a critical mass of 30% - 35% was often not sufficient enough to impact the policy process" (Schumacher, 2011, p. 32). In contrast, Bratton's (2002) study found the same results about women sponsoring more women's bills. In their study, as more women and black people joined the legislature, (i.e. the higher the percentage) there was no change or a decrease in the number of proposed bills relating to women or minority interests (Schumacher 2011, p. 34).

Berkman's & O'Connor's (1993) study "determined that the presence of women, or lack thereof, impacts passage of legislation of direct concern to women" (Schumacher, 2011, p. 24). Michelle Saint-Germain (1989) came up with hypotheses for this. One hypothesis was that legislatures were less likely to pass women-sponsored bills than men-sponsored bills. Viewed through critical mass theory, the cause of this is due to the low numbers of women in state representation which causes women to not be taken as seriously. The case study of this was Arizona from 1969 to 1986. If more than 15% of the legislation was female, more bills were likely to get passed (Michelle Saint-Germain, 1989). Minta and Brown (2014) reported on studies in the '90s and '00s that if more female legislators start making up a larger percentage of a legislative body, male legislators may become "hostile" to those female lawmakers.

Gendered Institutions. Meloy (2015) emphasized "political institutions are gendered institutions" and explained the implications of this statement (p. 307). Gendered institutions are when "gender is present in the processes, practices, images, and ideologies, and distributions of

power in the various sectors of social life” (Meloy, 2015, p. 307-308). The implications of this are seen in the way that legislators act. For example, according to critical mass theory, if the legislative body consists of fifteen percent or fewer female legislators, the women do not overcome the male way of doing things and instead observe it. Meloy (2015) defined critical mass theory and framed it as male-oriented, stating critical mass was a theory which “posits that women's performance in male-dominated institutions and the perceptions that their male colleagues have of them are directly impacted by their numerical representation” (p. 308). Some studies support critical mass theory, including the studies of Michelle Saint-Germain (1989) and Sue Thomas (1991, 1994), and some studies find no support for critical mass theory, such as the studies of Bratton in 2002 and 2005, Ford and Dolan in 1995, and Welch and Thomas in 1991 (Meloy, 2015, p. 308).

International Study. Kittilson’s (2008) study added to the literature that the more represented women are in positions of policymaking, the more legislatures pass laws on women’s issues. Kittilson (2008) looked at nineteen nations and observed this increase in laws on parental leave. This also meant that political ideology was not as important a factor as the gender of the legislator. (Cone, 2017).

Descriptive, Substantive, Formal, and Symbolic representation. The types of representation are significant because legislators’ actions reflect the representation in legislative bodies. Descriptive representation occurs when representatives belonging to groups represent the same percent population in the legislative body as they do in the general population (Schumacher, 2011). An example is if women made up 50% of the population and 50% of the legislative body. Descriptive representation can be when a representative resembles the district that elected them (Schumacher, 2011). Schumacher (2011) then defined substantive

representation, which is when representatives act in the interest of someone else. Schumacher (2011) explained that formal representation “is the process in which one becomes a representative” (p. 11). Lastly, symbolic representation “is the extent to which a representative is a symbol of the constituency” (p. 12). Schumacher (2011) gave an example of this representation—heads of state are symbolic representatives.

Just like previously mentioned scholars, Walker (2012) looked at descriptive representation and defined key terms that appear when researching this topic, including critical actors, critical mass, descriptive representation, support, and substantive representation. (p. 10-11). Walker’s definitions are mostly like other scholars’ definitions, with few changes, like the definition of women’s issues that is described above.

Cone (2017) established the definition of descriptive representation as “the idea that one’s characteristics, such as race, place of birth, socio-economic class, or gender are politically relevant and so the representatives of a population should reflect the descriptive characteristics of the population they serve” (Cone, 2017, p. 3). This is more specific than Schumacher’s (2011) definition and shows clear traits that representatives can share with their legislative district.

Schumacher (2011) looked at the relationship of descriptive and substantive relationship, finding that “an increase in the number of women in office doesn't always directly relate to an increase in the number of bills and acts related to women’s-interest legislation” (qtd. in Schumacher, 2011, p. 15). Furthermore, Schumacher noted that the effectual way to pass legislation relating to women’s issues is to have few female legislators. If there are more female legislators, Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers (2007), Bratton (2002), and Childs & Krook (2007) theorized women have less support to sponsor these bills (Schumacher, 2011).

Schumacher (2011) investigated how substantive relationship works in reality and its connection to women's-interest bills. Other researchers pointed out that women in the public and office have different perspectives and views on the types of legislation that can benefit women. In this context, women have different socio-demographic characteristics like "race and ethnicity, sexuality, political and spiritual affiliation, and economic status" (Schumacher, 2011, p. 22). These socio-demographic characteristics can result in only certain groups of women being assisted through the legislation (Schumacher, 2011).

Because women have been prohibited from being involved in the legislative process, women's issues have been handled by men, even though women have different perspectives on the way to handle these issues. Scholars hoped the public could create more substantive representation to improve women's issues (Schumacher, 2011).

Limitations in All Studies

MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) brought up the issues of past studies on female legislative behavior, such as studies analyzing individual states, which cannot fully conclude the behavior of legislators nationwide because legislators represent different districts. Studies focusing on particular years and periods of high legislative amounts of female representatives or women-interest legislation cannot account for other periods and may not fully detail the actions of representatives. Finally, the researchers chose issues they believed were in women's interest, though the public might have varying beliefs on what issues help women.

International Male support

International studies are beneficial as they study the relationship between gender and gender-related support of legislation. Cone (2017) found studies of other nations showed that the rate of passing women-related legislation was not just related to female legislators. Wang's

(2013) study showed that men in Uganda were supportive of women's-related policies (Cone, 2017).

Different Legislator Techniques Based on Gender

Schumacher (2011) explored legislators' different techniques, styles of legislating, and processes for their duties depending on their gender. Jewell & Whicker in 1994 found this difference when legislators led committees because "women [would] lead committees with a leadership style focused on consensus and participation, whereas men [would] lead using a command and direct style" (Schumacher 2011, p. 23-24). These gender differences between legislators must be examined because they may explain why women and men support women's-interest legislation.

Schumacher (2011) also looked at other studies that found differences in legislators' communication based on gender. Kathleens' (1994) research uncovered that in committees, "men use aggressive communication through higher rates of interruption along with talking for longer periods" (Schumacher 2011, p. 24). If men talk longer than women, female legislators have less time to propose their women's-interest legislation.

Women Legislators Voting for Women-Interest Bills

While bill sponsorship is examined in this project below because it is a way to determine legislators' focus on certain policies, another process that shows women representatives supporting women-interest legislation is voting on bills. A 1998 study by Dolan found that in the 103rd Congress, female legislators voted for more of these bills than men (Schumacher 2011).

Impact of Gender, Race, and Political Party on Sponsorship in State Legislators

Studies must focus on proposers of legislation, and not just legislators who voted for it, according to Meloy (2015), because proposing legislation is the best indicator of the "priorities

and legislative agenda” of a legislator (p. 305). Sponsorship affected by gender, race, and political party varies over different states. Orey’s and Larimer’s (2008) study came up with numerous results about legislators at the time of the study, including that in Mississippi and North Carolina “a women's interest bill is more than 20 times more likely to be introduced when a female Democrat (black or white) serves as the primary sponsor, than when a white male Democrat introduces a bill” (p. 27). This result was predictable because of previous research. Political party affiliation plays a role in the types of policies state representatives sponsor, but more prominent in determining if legislators sponsor legislation specific to women and minorities is if the legislators are women or minorities themselves. This was seen when Oren and Larimer (2008) determined in the two states, Mississippi and North Carolina, that progressive bills are more probable when a black woman sponsors them. Also, Orey and Larimer (2008) found that white female Republicans are more likely to sponsor progressive bills than white male Democrats. Orey’s & Larimer’s (2008) study concluded that more black male Democrats sponsor women’s-interest bills compared to white female Republicans (Orey & Larimer, 2008). Party affiliation matters, along with race and gender, in determining whether legislators sponsor progressive bills. Thomas (1991) and others found that state legislatures with more female legislators sponsored more bills, not only focused on women’s interests, but also family and kids, than states with fewer female legislators (Cone, 2017).

Barnello and Bratton’s Research on State Legislators. Barnello and Bratton (2011) conducted their own research on the topic of women’s-interest bill sponsorship. They analyzed 15 state legislatures, specifically bicameral ones. Barnello and Bratton (2011) examined men’s side of the issue to determine what made male-identifying legislators sponsor female-related legislation. Barnello and Bratton (2011) mentioned that women legislators may be compelled to

sponsor women's related bills because of shared experiences, but men do not have those shared experiences. However, male legislators could learn about those experiences in the legislature and be compelled to sponsor bills concerning women.

When conducting their own research on factors that influence sponsorship of women's-related bills, Barnello and Bratton (2011) looked at the characteristics and roles of the state legislators, gathering evidence from "state legislative directories and manuals, newspaper searches, and credible websites (such as Vote-Smart or a legislator's own official legislative or campaign website). Data regarding constituency variables came from the "Almanac of State Legislatures" (p. 459). Just like past scholars, Barnello and Bratton (2011) chose sponsorship as their focus, arguing it was the best method for determining which legislators push for women's-interest bills. Barnello and Bratton (2011) examined bills that attempted to "decrease discrimination or counter the effects of discrimination, or... improve the social, economic, or political status of women" (p. 460). They also included bills that regarded children's interests because of women's traditional position as caregivers. For their findings, Barnello and Bratton (2011) discovered in the fifteen states that less than a quarter were sponsors for bills related to women's interests, and less than a tenth of lawmakers would sponsor bills that were distinctly focused on women's health. A factor impacting women's sponsorship of health bills related to women's health was the background of the legislator. If they had been in the field of medicine, they were more likely to sponsor this legislation. Also, if female legislators had a propensity for health-related bills, they were more likely to care about women's health-related bills (Barnello & Bratton, 2011).

Barnello and Bratton (2011) did find that legislators who are men and black propose more women's-related bills than men of other races. Barnello and Bratton (2011) did not find

any evidence to support the claim that black male legislators from urban and diverse districts sponsor more legislation related to children's issues. They did find, however, that "men with more formal education, younger men, and men with children are all more likely than other men to focus on children's policy" (Barnello & Bratton, 2011, p. 467). These results show that for this topic, personal characteristics had more of an impact on legislators' focus than district characteristics.

Also, the characteristics of children-related bill sponsors were different from women's-interest bill sponsors. According to Barnello and Bratton (2011), the gender and political party of the legislator proposing child-related policies were less of a determinant than "age, education, [and] the number of children a legislator has" (p. 468). Barnello & Bratton (2011) found no evidence in their study that there was not much of a distinction between female and male legislators' experience regarding "education, health, welfare, or children [that] would increase the likelihood of a legislator focusing on children's policy" (p. 468). They did find that legislators' serving on committees regarding child-related policies proposed more child-related policies than those not on those committees.

Barnello and Bratton (2011) explained why younger men sponsor more legislation related to kids than older men. As these legislators were growing up in the 1960s and 70s, children's issues were becoming more of an issue for both genders concerning policy. Another explanation is that children's issues are becoming more of an issue for both genders because of the transforming family unit, where men are more involved in child-raising. One more hypothesis is that criminal justice issues became more prevalent as young male legislators grew up over time. Nonetheless, on this last hypothesis, Barnello & Bratton (2011) argued that the issue of children as victims can overcome gender and party confines in state legislations.

Factors Barnello & Bratton (2011) investigated that had little to no impact to directly affect a legislator's likelihood to sponsor legislation included the legislators' district, the legislative body characteristics, and their past jobs (even though job experience can affect committees).

General Sponsorship Differences in Gender

Researchers discovered differences in men and women sponsoring bills. Women are more represented in the early steps of the bill process (Schumacher 2011). Minta and Brown (2014) cited studies by “Bratton (2005), Bratton and Haynie (1999), Childs and Krook (2008) Swers (2002) Thomas (1991, 1994)” that found female legislators are more likely to sponsor women's-interest bills (p. 254). Anzia and Berry (2011) cited discoveries by Norton (1999), Thomas (1991), and Swers (2002) where women legislators sponsor more female-related legislation. Anzia and Berry (2011) found that women have the potential to be better legislators due to these factors. Anzia and Berry (2011) found “that women introduce more bills, on average, than men do” (Atkinson & Windett, 2019, p. 772). Walker (2012) emphasized that researchers, including Kathlene in 1989 and Kelly, Saint-Germain, and Horn in 1991, have found women sponsor more women's-related legislation.

Impact of Gender, Race, and Political Party on Sponsorship by US Congresspersons

Scholars also looked not only at state legislatures, but also at the impact that gender, race, and political party have on the federal government's legislative body. Barnello and Bratton (2011) quoted Schiller's (1995) study of U.S. Senators that found representatives sponsor bills because of their reputation. They sponsor policies based on what they want voters or their coworkers to think of them. From this, Barnello and Bratton (2011) stated that “sponsorship is an

important way in which legislators can meet a variety of goals relating to their electoral fortunes, party standing, and personal policy interests and preferences” (p. 452).

Atkinson & Windett (2019) found that congresswomen were likely to sponsor more bills in general and more diverse bills than men. In the 103rd and 104th Congress, more women sponsored women’s-interest legislation than men (Schumacher 2011). Cone (2017) analyzed bill sponsors of the House of Representatives from 1987 to 1993 and established that women significantly introduced women’s-interest bills as primary sponsors, and women were not significantly more likely to co-sponsor women’s-interest bills. After Atkinson and Windett (2019) conducted their study of Congress from 1963 to 2009, they reported that women were more likely to introduce women’s-interest legislation than men. The women’s-interest legislation that Atkinson & Windett (2019) looked at were “‘civil rights and liberties,’ ‘education,’ ‘health,’ ‘law, crime, and family issues,’ and ‘social welfare’” (p. 784). In Walker’s (2012) literature review, they cited Swers’s (2002) study which found that in the 103rd Congress, non-committee women sponsored five of seven bills that affected “domestic violence, welfare, contraception, and reproductive rights” (p. 22). In the House of Representatives, Congresswomen sponsored more women’s bills than men did. In the 113th Congress, this legislation regarded “health, education, and civil rights legislation and defense legislation” (Atkinson & Windett, 2019, p. 773). Thus, these studies show how women more than men push for women’s-interest policies.

Exploring party influences, Dolan’s (1998) study contrasts previous findings because men part of the Democratic party supported women’s-interest policies more than women in the Republican party, and those women supported women’s-interest policies more than men from the Republican party (Cone, 2017). This study shows legislators’ party is more influential than their gender.

Atkison and Windett (2019) found that women sponsored bills related to the stereotype of “men’s expertise.” However, men were more likely to introduce certain issues that fell under the stereotype of “men’s-concerns.” These bills sponsored more by men were related to “energy,’ ‘macroeconomics,’ and ‘public lands and water management’” (Atkinson & Windett, 2019, p. 784). However, other issues that used to be considered men’s concerns were sponsored by men and women with not much discrepancy. These issues were “‘agriculture,’ ‘banking,’ ‘community development and housing,’ ‘defense,’ ‘environment,’ ‘foreign trade,’ ‘government operations,’ ‘international affairs,’ ‘labor,’ ‘space, science and technology,’ or ‘transportation’” (Atkinson & Windett, 2019, p. 784). These discoveries aid in understanding the different legislative concerns of men and women outside of state governments.

Cone (2017) conducted a study on the sponsorship of Congressional bills from 1987 to 2013. Cone (2017) chose the first years to see how a significant increase in the record for women representatives affected bills since female legislators in 1992 made up ten percent of the House. Cone (2017) chose 2013 because around seventeen percent of the House was female and after this, the House was ineffective, making the years after 2013 deviate too much. Cone (2017) looked at feminist and social welfare proposals, including discrimination, family matters, child abuse, and childcare. Cone (2017) analyzed three models, finding that women sponsorship correlated with high numbers of women-related legislation sponsorship. Cone (2017) found a relationship between party affiliation and sponsorship of women’s bills.

MacDonald and O’Brien’s Study. MacDonald and O’Brien (2011) studied Congressional female representatives from the 1970s to the 1990s from districts that previously had male representatives. They looked for sponsorship of social welfare and feminist issues by 103 female representatives and 103 male representatives of Congress. MacDonald and O’Brien

(2013) understood that their study included valuable research because they could look at men and women's impact as "coefficient estimates of the effect of gender on the number of 'feminist' and 'social welfare' bills will not be biased by correlation with constituency factors unaccounted for in the models and therefore residing in the error terms" (p. 475). Their research methods had other advantages such as controlling for a small, studied sample of female legislators and protecting against generalizations.

Out of the eligible representatives, or female representatives who replaced male representatives, MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) had a large sample: "88 of the 122, or 72.13 percent, of women who served in the House during the 1973-2002 period" (p. 475). A majority of the participants associated themselves with the Democratic Party. MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) disclosed that they could not study all of the eligible representatives elected during 1992, known as "The Year of the Woman," since male representatives were elected into their positions after they served.

To conduct their research on bills sponsored by these female representatives that were related to social welfare and feminism, MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) analyzed "the legislative record made available at Thomas, the Library of Congress's legislative information page" (p. 476). MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) studied social welfare and feminist bills using descriptions by Swers (2002). Social welfare bills were supposed to be about "liberal and conservative proposals concerning issues with which women have historically been concerned in their role as caregiver" (qtd. in MacDonald & O'Brien, 2011, p. 476). Examples of these bills in MacDonald and O'Brien's (2011) sample dealt with health care, childcare, and policies on improving the lives and wellbeing of people. The feminist bills they looked at focused on "role equity and/or role change for women" (qtd. in MacDonald & O'Brien, 2011, p. 476). An example of a feminist

bill MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) discovered was H.R. 103, which pushed telecommunicators to buy from women-owned businesses and included other female equity policies.

After analyzing their sample, MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) reported that "female legislators advance women's interests more frequently than the male congressional colleagues" (482). However, they expressed that this finding is more complicated because just stating that the gender of a legislator influences specific legislation does not fully explain the circumstances in those decisions. Further, female legislators sponsored more women's-interest bills than men regardless of larger percentages or smaller percentages of women in the legislative body. MacDonald and O'Brien (2011) found that "as the percentage of women in Congress increases, female representatives are more likely to place women's interests on the agenda" (p. 482). For bills relating to social welfare, gender did not play a large factor in the sponsors of those policies.

Gender and Political Party Congressional Bill Sponsorship Differences for Non-Women's Issues. Researchers looked at bill-sponsorship of non-women's issues by women to see if it affected their sponsorship on women's issues. Atkinson & Windett (2019) found that after 9/11, women affiliated with the Democrat party "sponsored more homeland security related legislation in the 108th Congress than did co-partisan men or Republicans of either sex" (p. 773). Women belonging to the other party, the Republican party, sponsored other different "defense bills (those extending benefits to veterans and military personnel) in both the 107th and the 108th Congress" (Atkinson & Windett, 2019, p. 773). Because women wanted to look as equipped to handle all issues that men could handle, they spent time in Congress sponsoring bills unrelated to women-specific issues.

Political Party Impact

Political party impacts legislators' actions. Schumacher (2011) argued that left-leaning parties are more likely to focus on women's-interest legislation than other parties. To Schumacher (2011), left-wing parties align their platform with women's goals. Beckwith and Cowell-Meyers even said some of the issues they support are "liberalizing divorce, extending abortion rights, criminalizing violence against women, expanding employment opportunities, providing women's healthcare innovations, and advancing social welfare issues" (qtd. in Schumacher 2011, p. 37). Regarding why these parties support and sponsor this type of legislation, Wright and Schaffner argued it was for political gain (Schumacher 2011). Schumacher (2011) wrote about Beckwith and Cowell-Meyers' (2007) work that found "liberal or leftwing political agendas typically coincide with advancing women's issues" (p. 19). Schumacher highlighted that "polls and research show that the women's rights movement is currently aligned with the US Democratic Party" (Schumacher 2011, p. 39). More women than men identify as a Democrat. However, this varies when you add in other characteristics like age, race, and education. (Schumacher 2011).

Walker (2012) focused briefly on political parties, stating that legislators' background was a bigger determinant than anything else, citing Swers & Larson (2005) and Hogan (2008). Political parties can reward legislators with committee placement, so if legislators want those opportunities, they must support policies their party favors. If a party supports women and helps them win office, this explains why female representatives would support women's-interest policies.

Walker's (2012) Study of South Carolina and Alabama

Walker (2012) saw all the conducted research on women sponsoring women's-interest bills, and that much of the research was quantitative studies. Walker (2012) wanted to conduct a

qualitative study and interview female legislators. Walker (2012) chose South Carolina and Alabama because, at the time, no study had conducted research about this topic in “states with high levels of poverty among women and who appear not to support women-friendly policies” (p. 2). Walker (2012) also studied these states because of these states’ “large number of women who are single heads of households living in poverty” (p. 4). Walker (2012) compared this occurrence with the legislative body to see how each affected the other. Walker hoped to see the correlation between women in poverty and women unsupportive of women’s-interest bills.

In the study, Walker (2012) looked at 17 women from South Carolina and 18 women from Alabama. Walker (2012) looked at the voting records of representatives and found low numbers of women voting for women’s-interest legislation. At the time of this 2012 study, “only 17 women representatives serve in State House (14%) and no state senators serve South Carolina and only five women senators (14%) and 13 representatives (12%) serve Alabama” (Walker, 2012, p. 3). This study demonstrated one example of two states’ low number of female legislators correlating with a low number of proposed women’s-interest bills. Walker (2012) used recorded voting records and survey questions to learn that none of the bills regarded women’s concerns. (p. 9). Walker (2012) emphasized that this study has limitations. One setback is the low percentage of recorded votes.

Differences in Male and Female Reasoning and Actions

Meloy (2015) cited a researcher’s notions of the different male and female legislative perspectives. Gilligan found differences in male and female reasoning in 1982, explaining “when responding to moral dilemmas, males are more concerned with people interfering with another’s rights (“ethic of justice”), whereas women were more focused upon the acts of omission or not helping others in times of need (“ethic of care”)” (Meloy, 2015, p. 308).

Kathlene looked at a 1985 legislative committee in Colorado that was almost equal in men and women and had members who had served different lengths of time. Unlike men, “women were more apt to look at a problem from personal experience” (Walker, 2012, p. 23). They expressed more empathy for topics that dealt with women, children, and disabled people. Meanwhile, men viewed problems with people more as the responsibility of the family that raised them and would not necessarily blame the culture. Dolan in 2005 found that this difference in perspectives led to stereotyping the women (Walker, 2012).

Women’s motivation to conform to the male-majority legislative body may have affected how they wanted to appear to their coworkers. Some female legislators thought about whether to appear manly, since they wanted to look like leaders, or use more feminine-viewed traits like thoughtfulness, which they thought would make them look weak (Walker, 2012).

Women may be motivated as feminists. An interesting finding of Dolan and Ford from 1995 is “female policymakers who identified as feminists were the most likely to prioritize women's issues as their top policy priority (e.g., domestic abuse, reproductive rights, and job security)” (qtd. in Meloy, 2015, p. 306). The study added that when accounting for party, the finding that feminist identification influenced legislators was not applicable (Meloy, 2015).

Agenda setting: Support by Groups, Individuals, Media, and Political Parties

Many factors affect what types of policies legislators push for in legislative bodies, and this affects if women’s-interest issues are considered a priority. For how legislation is prioritized, the term “agenda setting” explains that legislators need to emphasize certain bills. Legislators cannot listen to all bill suggestions, so they determine which ones are the most important. Groups and individuals can be one of the most impactful influences in demanding certain policies, whether those individuals or groups are legislators or community members. One member or

numerous members of a legislature can bring a bill to the attention of all members. Groups that push legislation include special interest groups and organizations.

The media can also help pressure legislators to work on certain legislation. The media informs the public of issues and can unintentionally persuade the public to have certain perceptions on the topic they are reporting on. Media outlets are powerful because they choose which topics to report on, inform the public on issues, provide political interpretations of the topic, and either emphasize the topic or minimize the impact of the topic.

A previously mentioned topic that should be mentioned here as an influence in agenda setting is a political party. If a political party favoring women's-related legislation has little to no members on legislative committees, they face difficulty passing that legislation. Walker (2012) mentioned politics in legislatures can influence what policies are pushed. Politics in this setting are "public opinion, election results, administration changes, and changes in Congress" (Walker, 2012, p. 30). The atmosphere in and outside of the Capital building needs to be welcoming of women's-interest legislation so legislators can feel safe to bring it to the table.

Effect of Committees on Considering Women's-Interest Policies

While many researchers believed that sponsors of bills were the most important determinant of who supports women's-interest bills, other measurements should be examined to see if there are any discrepancies for supports. Committees are important for legislators, as they can be the reason a policy is prioritized or discarded. Depending on what committee they sit on, legislators might not get their desired policies prioritized in the legislative body. Barnello and Bratton (2011) looked at how committees impact sponsorship. Based on past studies, including Bratton and Haynie's (1999) study and Swers' (2002) study, committee membership is impactful on how legislators sponsor legislation. Walker (2012) showed how committees are essential

through an example; a study of the 103rd Congress found many female legislators expressed interests in policy on women's issues, but none were on the appropriate committee that could draft that legislation, nor were they on influential committees or leaders of committees.

Scholars like Hawkesworth, Casey, Jenkins, and Kleeman in 2001 and Swers (2002) researched and found that a woman's likelihood of getting legislation passed that relates to women's interests is based on "committee positions, her level of seniority, and her status as a member of the majority or minority party" (qtd. in Meloy, 2015, p. 306).

Barnello & Bratton (2011) found that committees influence legislators' probability of sponsoring women-related or child-related legislation, and this influence is greater on men and chairs of committees. Barnello and Bratton (2011) found that "committee service has a greater influence on sponsorship patterns among men than among women" (p. 465). Men may be more influenced when hearing about these topics in committees, while women concerned about these issues may be interested in passing them because they learned of the issue outside of the committee.

Also, Barnello and Bratton (2011) stated that "legislators who serve on committees focusing on education, health, welfare, or children's policy, whether male or female, introduce significantly more women's issue measures" (p. 465). These findings matched with the researchers' hypothesis.

Effect of Floor Speeches

Another measurement to see which representatives support women's-interest bills is floor speeches. Floor speeches have many purposes for legislators. Speeches can show legislators' priorities, show how they want to convey issues to their fellow members and the public, make

them look favorable to the media and their voters, and give voices to legislators who may not be on specific committees that focus on the issue.

Women U.S. representatives were advocates of women-related bills through their participation in floor speeches. Atkinson & Windett (2019) cited the findings of Osborn and Mendez (2010). These researchers found that women in the Senate were “more likely than men to address women’s issues, and defense and foreign affairs in their floor speeches” (Atkinson & Windett, 2019, p. 773). Pearson and Dancey (2011) examined U.S. House Representatives’ one-minute floor speeches from the early 90s to the late 2000s and established that more female legislators than male legislators talked about women’s issues. Shogan (2002) analyzed floor speeches of Congresswomen in 1997 and found a little over one-tenth of the speeches involved women’s issues, and while there were few differences on how much women spoke from the different parties, Republican congresswomen spoke about women and the economy while Democrat congresswomen spoke about women and welfare (Pearson & Dancey, 2011, p. 500).

Pearson and Dancey (2011) cited a different study by them which found women spoke more on the floor than men. However, Gerrity, Osborn, and Mendez (2007) found that there was no difference in the amount of speaking in the House from 1997 to 2003 (Pearson & Dancey, 2011). Similarly, in the Senate Osborn and Mendez (2010) researched and found that men and women spoke the same amount of time on women’s-interest bills, but women spoke more about health and family.

Pearson (2011) showed that women representatives were more likely to focus on women’s issues, and they also spoke more on the floor than men (Cone, 2017). Pearson & Dancey (2011) conducted their own study on one-minute Congressional floor speeches from 1993 to 2008. In the 30,000 speeches they analyzed, they found women legislators spoke more

than men legislators. They argued that this result comes from women's underrepresentation and institutional struggles. Also, Pearson & Dancey (2011) learned that women legislators were more likely to talk about women and women's issues than were men legislators. Other interesting findings included women from both parties had an interest in breast cancer research, and that gender was more of a determination of topic of women's issues than a political party. Regarding how men and women spoke about women's-interest policies, Levy, Tien, and Aved (2001) found that in floor speeches about "abortion coverage for women insured by Medicaid, for example, congresswomen are significantly more likely to discuss women's health and women's rights, while congressmen are more likely to discuss legal and moral issues" (Pearson & Dancey, 2011, p. 500).

In looking at one specific topic that affects the population of women with jobs, Pearson and Dancey (2011) cited Shogan's (2002) study that showed women who were elected as part of the Republican party spoke more about tax impacts for these women than women from other parties. Because the topic of taxes doesn't specifically concern women, findings on tax support for women or by women legislators were less likely to be found in scholarly literature.

Factors Affecting Legislators' Support of Women's- Interest Issues

Since some women disregard women's-interest legislation and some men support that legislation, scholars looked at other characteristics that determine what policies legislators support. Tremblay (2006) examined how "race, social standing, cultural grouping, and life experiences impact women's decisions (Walker, 2012, p. 9). These changed how women legislators viewed women's-interest legislation. Other factors influencing legislators are discussed below.

Age of Legislator. Walker (2012) looked at the ages of legislators as a characteristic that might vary their opinions on bills related to women. According to Walker (2102), younger legislators were more aware of women's issues and the women's movement. They experienced first-hand the changing of legislatures to include more women and the changing of women's roles—from being stay-at-home women to working women.

The Newness of Legislators. Another aspect affecting legislators' sponsorship was the amount of time legislators had been in office. The newer legislators would more likely to adapt themselves to fit in (Walker, 2012).

Districts. Because legislators have incentives to follow the interests of their districts, researchers looked at how districts influenced legislators to sponsor women's-interest bills. Barnello and Bratton (2011) considered legislators' districts and how legislators from racially diverse districts sponsored more women's-interest bills. One study by Bratton and Haynie (1999) concluded that "representatives from racially diverse, urban districts are more likely than their colleagues to focus on women's interests" (Barnello & Bratton, 2011, p. 453). In contrast, Orey and Larimer (2008) discovered the population that makes up the elected legislator's district does not influence the representative to sponsor bills specific to women's interests. So, the characteristics of the residents in the territory and the area itself, such as race, city or rural, and income, do not have a part in guiding the statesperson to sponsor progressive bills. (Orey & Larimer, 2008).

Researcher Poggione noted that (2004) "the omission of constituency characteristics from these models leaves open the possibility that 'systematic differences in men and women's constituencies explain the relationship between gender and legislators' preferences, rather than gender itself" (qtd. in p. 473). If this is true, legislators' districts might be more impactful than

legislators' gender. According to Palmer and Simon (2008), some female candidates come from districts that are more likely to elect women than other districts and are advantageous to female candidates. The female candidates in these districts have different priorities that are based on what their districts want, and not necessarily because the legislators are females.

Northern vs. Southern US states. Barrett (1997) pointed out the difference between the experiences of legislators who are people of color in northern legislatures versus southern legislatures, since southern states have a history of not handling race issues well. Legislators who are people of color, including female legislators, may be affected by racism and racist attitudes.

Intersectionality and Differences in Race for Female Legislators

In discussing how female legislators sponsor women's-related bills, one must include intersectionality because of the way that female legislators who are people of color look at legislation. Intersectionality includes how people's different experiences, perspectives, and characteristics overlap to impact discrimination or privilege. Brown (2013) discussed the term intersectionality and how it applies to the legislators they are studying. Intersectionality in this setting brings up the issue that black women have to deal with the two dimensions of discrimination—race and sexism—and led to the term identity politics, which the Combahee River Collective defined as “a politics that grew out of our objective material experiences as black women” (qtd. in Brown, 2013, p. 51). Scholars have said that “Black women have been doubly excluded from the political arena” and there is a “‘double minority’ or ‘double disadvantage’ status associated with being Black and being female” (qtd. in Meloy, 2015, p. 306-307). Minta and Brown (2014) highlighted that other scholars found that many studies analyzing the sponsorship of women's-interest bills have focused too much on white female legislators and have not researched enough on female legislators belonging to minority groups. Some scholars

conducted intersectional research on female minority legislators. Now, academics discuss contexts through intersectionality. So, when looking at female legislators' actions, one must account for how women's race and gender both impact them.

Barett (1995) deduced that black women who serve as state legislators have a more unified perspective and process of what policies they want to pass into law than other groups in state legislatures. Other scholars like Bratton et al. (2006), Orey et al. (2006), and Smooth (2001) also found that black female state legislators are unified. Studies by “Canon (1999) Casellas (2010) Lublin (1997) Rouse (2013), Tate (2003), Whitby (1997), (Grose 2011), Gamble (2007), [and] Minta (2011)” found legislators who were part of minority groups are more likely to sponsor bills that are in the interest of minorities (p. 253). As seen by previous studies, many characteristics and factors in addition to legislators' gender influence the policies that legislators pursue. Simien (2009) recorded that “African American women's race is also likely to influence their political attitudes for welfare spending, affirmative action, and busing for integration” (Brown, 2013, p. 48). These policies would be helpful to women and minorities.

In one finding from Orey's and Larimer's (2008) study, race plays a big part. In their study, Orey and Larimer (2008) found “a bill is roughly nine times more likely to be a welfare bill when a black female Democrat introduces a bill, and five-times more likely when a white female Democrat introduces a bill” (p. 29). There is this gap here that shows that, at the time, black women were more supportive of progressive bills in their state than white women. Looking at race and party affiliation, Orey and Larimer found studies that show progressive bill sponsorship came from female and black legislators associated with the Democrat party.

Earlier literature reviewed by Orey and Larimer (2008) found bills concerning the interests of women and black people are sponsored more by black women. Scholars stated that

“African Americans and women serving in state legislatures are significantly more likely to introduce ‘black interest’ and ‘women interest’ legislation, respectively” (qtd. in Orey & Larimer, 2008, p. 23). Nonetheless, black male legislators in the Democrat party and white female legislators in the Republican party fell significantly behind female legislators in the Democrat party in sponsoring progressive bills. (Orey & Larimer, 2008).

Generation is another component that affected the sponsored bills of female black legislators. Brown (2013) studied black female legislators born before 1960 and born after 1960 as two separate groups because of the differences in these generations. These black women lived during the Civil Rights Era and the Women’s Movement or were born during it. This created differences in the two generations of women, including differences in how people viewed and treated them in society, the education they received and where, how they viewed themselves/the movement/their community, and what opportunities they had.

Williams’ (2001) study gave insight into the differences in supported policies by black female legislators born in different generations. The group of women who were over the age of 65 was called the women of the New Deal and the group of women who were 40-64 was referred to as women of the civil rights generation (Brown, 2013, p. 49). Williams (2001) learned that the women of the New Deal were more likely to “report a strong commitment to civil rights and redistributive programs” than women of the civil rights generation (Brown, 2013, p. 49). The study was conducted to see if, over time, younger legislators viewed those policies as less significant in the current period.

In response, Brown’s (2013) hypothesis was that the “third wave black women state legislators are committed to racial and gendered issues, as evidenced by their attention to anti-domestic violence legislation” (p. 49). These race and gender issues are important to these

legislators, but these policies were not the legislators' main focus when they ran their campaigns or passed bills. Morgan (1990) wrote about these third-wave black women legislators, characterizing them as women who respect former feminist female activists and are more privileged than past generations but aware of struggles and facing challenges still as they are black people and women.

Black Female State Legislators on Anti-Domestic Violence Legislation

Brown (2013) was interested in black female legislators' perspective and legislative actions, so they analyzed the likelihood that black female representatives from Maryland would sponsor bills related to domestic violence. Domestic violence is an important issue because of the increasing concern that it is a matter of public concern and no longer just a private issue for family or friends to deal with. Brown (2013) explained domestic violence or intimate partner violence "as a pattern of abusive behaviors by one or both partners in an intimate relationship including marriage, dating, family, friendship, or cohabitation" (p. 47). Brown (2013) highlighted that domestic violence was pushed to the forefront in the 1990s, and activists played a part in stressing the problem of domestic violence. Scholars like Hampton et al. (1998), Websdale (1999), and West (2005) have determined that black women are subjected to domestic violence more than white women, which brought the problem of domestic violence to the attention of black female legislators (Brown, 2013).

Domestic violence as it affects more black women is a challenging issue since people must address how sexism and racism are related to domestic violence. Since scholars like Brown (2013) found when black women are abused by black men, those women struggled with speaking about it since black people have wanted to create a united front against racism. This led black women to speak out less about the issue of intimate partner violence. Researchers have

looked at how black female state legislators and their identity as a woman and a black person influenced their views and support of bills focusing on intimate partner violence.

Brown (2013) studied black women legislators' actions on bills relating to intimate partner violence, and the analysis "centered on the Denial or Dismissal of Domestic Violence Petitions: Expungement of Records bill that was introduced in the 2009 session in the Maryland state legislature, because it is particularly instructive in showing how generational identity impacts black women's legislative priorities" (p. 48). Brown (2013) concluded that black women were the only group of legislators that claimed their identity affected them and made them advocate for this policy.

Brown (2013) cited scholars that have said domestic violence as an issue has been stereotyped and pushed forward by white, middle-class feminists, but poor black women have suffered as the feminist movement has pushed that all women experience the same oppression. Brown (2013) called for an intersectional analysis of systemic oppression of "racism, economic exploitation, patriarchy, and heterosexism" (p. 51). Crenshaw (1991) decided that to explore intersectionality, scholars could look at violence, which is a gender, race, and class issue (Brown, 2013). Looking at issues only through one perspective leaves out the crossing of sections for people affected by different areas of mistreatment (Brown, 2013).

Brown's (2013) study examined specific legislators, analyzing lawmakers from Maryland's 2009 term because there were twenty black representatives out of one hundred eighty-eight representatives working part-time and ninety days out of the year to pass policy. Brown (2013) noted that the speaker pro tempore and the deputy during the year they conducted the study were black women. Brown (2013) interviewed all the black female legislators, who were of the same political party, and then analyzed the interviews they conducted to draw

conclusions. Brown (2013) kept the legislators anonymous to ensure they could speak with impunity. The legislators could give more information than covered by the questions. The legislators spoke about their “district characteristics, legislative history, institutional influence, policy preferences, perception of identity and politics, and two specific bills: Religious Freedom and Protection of Civil Marriage and Financial Exploitation of the Elderly” (Brown, 2013, p. 53). Brown (2013) also asked the participants about identity and their perspectives of themselves and their district.

Generation was an important component of this study because “educational and socialization differences among age cohorts of African American women legislators” described why there were disparities in the policy-pushing of areas that negatively affected African American females (Brown, 2013, p. 49). Kopperschmidt (2000) stated that “a generation is defined as an identifiable group that shares birth years, location and experiences similar significant life events at critical developmental stages” (qtd. In Brown, 2013, p. 48). Because this important component of generation and time was an important factor, Brown (2013) analyzed the state legislators by looking at those that were “born in or prior to 1960 and those born after 1960” (p. 47). Brown’s (2013) objective was to note how different generations considered domestic violence and other policies.

One contentious bill related to domestic violence that Brown (2013) questioned the legislators about and analyzed their characteristics and motives was “HB 1181–Denial or Dismissal of Domestic Violence Petitions: Expungement of Records” (Brown, 2013, p. 55). This bill regarded the expunging of records of those accused of domestic violence, and the controversial part of the bill would eliminate names from the public database (accessible to all people on the website) of people who had a domestic violence claim denied or dismissed.

Women's position in the Maryland state legislature varied as some opposed and some supported the bill. Legislators who did not want the bill to pass claimed that victims who struggled in an abusive relationship may be scared of their attacker, so the state should not get rid of the record. Legislators proposing the bill stated that unsubstantiated claims hurt the accused, allowing the public to know who they are. If the public knew the people accused of domestic violence, they would deny them housing or employment or even hurt the accused. Supporters of the bill find this problematic because these claims have not even been proved. Critics included the majority of the older black women born before 1960 and proponents were a majority of the younger black women.

Brown (2013) shared that the legislators who pushed for the bill, including five younger black women and three older black women, reflected on their identity and intersectionality. They thought that this bill would hurt black men and allow people to discriminate against them based on unsupported or false claims. A supporter stated "black men just like white men can abuse their wives or girlfriends. And... black men can also be unfairly accused. So in the interest of fairness it was important to vote in favor of the bill" (Brown, 2013, p. 57). Another legislator stated that she believed if the state did not pass the bill, both women and the community could be hurt:

What does it mean... if a black man can't get a job to support his family? It adds extra pressure on the black woman to make ends meet and take care of the family. What does that do for the community? A large number of black men without jobs is not good for the community. (Brown, 2013, p. 57)

Still, the younger black women arguing for the bill understood that if the bill did not pass, it could help women and black women suffering from domestic violence but would allow the

public to treat innocent black men unequally. These legislators have seen how stereotypes of black men as violent and “wife-beaters” hurt the community. In addition, these black women legislators stated that, while the public would not be able to access the records, law enforcement and judges would know.

Brown (2013) talked to one white female legislator who was shocked that young black women supported the bill, saying they fought against the bill because they believed that it would help with domestic violence. This legislator spoke on how she wanted to speak with legislators who favored the bill and talk about how they each viewed this legislation. Brown (2013) observed that the lawmaker’s feminist approach that excluded intersectionality led the legislator to be closed off to other women’s views of the bill. Brown (2013) did add that the white female legislator’s comments showed that legislators may be willing to learn and pay attention to how people’s race and gender affect their decisions.

This bill ended up failing in the state. The Women’s Caucus played a part in ensuring it did not pass, since many white women worked to ensure the bill did not pass, and older black women joined. Brown (2013) quoted a woman who stated the bill was a bad bill (p. 61).

Examining the demographics of the legislators who voted for and against bill 1181, Brown (2013) found the supporters were “eight black women (five of whom were born after 1960 — all of the third wave black women legislators), six black men, five white women, and forty-five white men” and the opponents were “five ‘second wave’/civil rights era black women, ten black men, twenty white women, and thirty-four white men” (p. 62). Brown (2013) added that the black women legislators under forty-five years of age who voted for the bill were from urban areas and that more of the black men who were born before 1960 voted for the bill. The

older black women who voted for the bill had not been former lawyers, though one was an educator, and one was the president of a union.

Brown (2013) explained the backgrounds of the young black female representatives who supported HB 1181. These women received different education than the older black representatives, all of them going to majority white universities to get bachelor's degrees and four of them obtaining legal degrees. Of the older generation of black female legislators, some had no degrees past high school, a couple of them went to community college, six of them went to HBCUs, some of them had higher degrees (one has a Ph.D.), one had a medical field background, and they were more likely than the newer generation of representatives to have educator backgrounds. Brown (2013) brought up the difficulties these older generations faced, including school segregation and racial-ethnic and gender discrimination, yet they overcame these obstacles and were still able to succeed and win their races to become state representatives. Brown (2013) also claimed that an explanation for the differences in the backgrounds of the two generations is that these older representatives had fewer opportunities to obtain legal degrees and more likely to be steered towards education.

Regarding how the two different generations looked at the anti-domestic violence bill, Brown (2013) stated “unlike their predecessors, these young black women legislators have law degrees, which enable them to use their legal skills coupled with their race-gender identity and cultural experiences to understand the determinants of HB 1181” (p. 65). Generational differences lead to different views on legislation and explain the behavior of legislators with similar characteristics.

Analyzing the men, Brown (2013) stated that the black male legislators remained quiet about anti-domestic violence legislation. Partisanship also mattered in how legislators identifying

as men and women voted. Most of the white women and men who voted for the bill identified as Republican party members. Also, Brown (2013) mentioned that they could not measure party differences for black representatives because all the black legislators were part of the Democrat party.

Brown (2013) ended by mentioning the increase of female legislators has led to more legislators speaking on and calling for action on the issue of domestic violence. This is true especially in Maryland since, at the time of the study, almost one-third of the legislature was women, allowing it to be one of the states in the nation with the most female legislators. Brown (2013) found that “Cynthia Lifson, legislative counsel for the Maryland Network against Domestic Violence” supported the cause for more women to be elected to legislatures (p. 65). Lifson cared about the descriptive representation as women, saying “it’s always helpful to have women in elected positions. Their life experiences are different than men in elected office” (qtd. in Brown, 2013, p. 65). Brown (2013) found that lobbyists of anti-domestic violence bills appeal to female representatives.

Brown (2013) established that the female legislators are expected to rally around anti-domestic violence legislation because they are women, even though people must consider “partisanship, race, political ideology, or constituency” that gives women different perspectives on anti-domestic violence legislation (p. 65). The president of the Women Caucus stated that she realized women argue and question legislation that the public and their colleagues expect them to support unwaveringly if women believe these policies cause other issues. For this Maryland bill, while white women and the older black women expected all female legislators to support anti-domestic violence policies, young black female representatives who wanted to support anti-racist and feminist legislation disagreed with white women and black men. This led the majority of

them to vote the same way as white men because of their view this legislation would be better for black communities. Brown (2013) pointed out that there should be more research into the differences between legislators' backgrounds and how that influences policy makers' views. Some of the characteristics that may be a part of this include "geographic region, sexual orientation, generation, or parental status" (Brown, 2013, p. 65). Finally, scholars should look into groups and subgroups in legislatures and investigate the reasons for their actions.

Non-Female Supporters—Male Minority Support of Women's-Interest Policies

Black female legislators have their own unique perspectives, and so while looking at supporters of female-interest policies, scholars must consider support given by male legislators who are people of color. Minta and Brown (2014) found that not enough scholars study minority male legislators' impact on female-interest legislation. Minta and Brown (2014) argued that minority male legislators have played a part in supporting women's-interest bills. In particular, the House of Representatives more than the Senate "is attentive to women's interests not solely due to the greater ideological liberalization of the membership, or presence of women, but particularly because of the presence of minority men in the chamber" (p. 255). While other researchers discussed above in this project speak on legislative bodies as gendered institutions, scholars like "Brown 2014; Hancock 2004; Hawkesworth 2003; Reingold and Smith, 2012; and Smooth 2001" argued that these bodies are also race-gendered institutions (Minta and Brown, 2014, p. 255). Because legislatures like Congress have these predispositions, female legislators work with other women, pushing aside party and gender differences.

Minta and Brown (2014) relayed that while individual studies show that women legislators of all different races represent women's interests better than male legislators, individual studies fail to account for the fact that the majority of legislators who represent the

vast majority of districts across the nation are men. Looking at other studies, scholars find that men belonging to minority groups support women's interests. Barrett (2001) concluded that black male legislators encourage women's-interest bills as much as white female legislators, and Luis Ricardo Fraga et al. (2006) found that Latino legislators supported women's-interest bills the same amount, regardless of gender (Minta & Brown, 2014).

Studies from the 1990s and 2000s by Dodson and Carroll, Orey et al., Philpot and Walton, Simien, and Smooth show that legislators who are minorities have joined specific organizations in legislative bodies like caucuses that are exclusive to distinct minority groups, and the minority women in these groups could have influenced minority men and their views on different policies (Minta & Brown, 2014). Minta and Sinclair-Chapman (2013) found that the female minority legislators could influence the male minority legislators through "sharing resources across legislative offices, enhancing communication and information sharing, and providing for the coordination of agendas and messages" (Minta & Brown, 2014, p. 257). This shows how vital cooperation and communication are for legislators to influence other legislators to support their policies.

Minta's and Brown's (2014) Study: Hearings on Direct Women's Issues, Direct Joint Issues, and Indirect Joint Issues. Minta's and Brown's (2014) methods consisted of analyzing Congressional hearings in both chambers from the second half of the twentieth century. They found all these hearings through the "Policy Agendas Project database" (Minta & Brown, 2014, p. 258). This database categorizes the topics of hearings, so Minta and Brown (2014) looked at hearings regarding the topic of the study—including any hearings that dealt with "direct women's issues, direct joint issues, and indirect joint issues" (p. 258). Minta and Brown (2014) took two approaches in their analysis—one that focused on gender and another

that considered the overlapping racial-ethnic, gender, and class categories that allow for an intersectional analysis hypothesized by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Minta and Brown (2014) explained that their “methodological approach provides a more nuanced understanding of gender, race/ethnicity, and political representation by disaggregating by race/ethnicity and gender” (p. 259). This intersectional aspect allowed Minta and Brown (2014) to gain insight into specific groups of legislators.

Minta and Brown (2014) described the three categories they looked at and what topics those entailed. For the topic of direct women’s issues, Minta and Brown (2014) considered hearings that were “coded under the major topic ‘Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties’...[and] ‘Gender and Sexual Orientation Discrimination’” (p. 259). These categories have more detailed topics within them. Minta and Brown (2014) also looked at other topics that were specific to women’s interests that did not have to do with these civil rights topics. Minta and Brown (2014) found that the percent of Congressional hearings that spoke on women’s interests was about one percent.

The topic of direct joint issues “directly and concurrently impact both women and racial minorities” (Minta & Brown, 2014, p. 259). Minta and Brown (2014) looked at the hearings that were coded under the same categories as the direct women’s issues topics. For direct joint issues to be such, the hearing had to mention both women and minorities (Minta & Brown, 2014). Direct joint issues made up a small percentage of hearings, with less than one percent of hearings discussing things relating to direct issues that impact women and minorities.

The topic of indirect joint issues is described by Minta and Brown (2014) as “hearings that do not pertain specifically to one race, ethnicity, or gender, but have a disproportionate impact on both women and racial minorities” (p. 260). Examples of categories that fall under

indirect joint issues on women and minorities are programs for those in need of monetary aid, like food stamps and childcare, which come from hearings about “social welfare.” Indirect issues made up more hearings than direct women’s issues and direct joint issues, with the percentage of them overall about 2.8 percent of the hearings.

Minta and Brown (2014) also considered political parties, stating that because the study looked into Congress and began in the 1950s, they could look at the Democrat party, which was aligned at the time with civil rights issues, and look at the switches of congressmen from the Democrat party to the Republican party. Minta and Brown (2014) added that while they looked at white women, BIPOC men, and BIPOC women, there was only one BIPOC female representative that served in the Senate throughout the entire study of the second half of the twentieth century. Further, if there was a majority of representatives in one chamber that was associated with the same political party, that impacted hearings because that party had more control over choosing which policies should be heard.

Of the results for Minta’s and Brown’s (2014), one finding from a model was more BIPOC men in the House of Representatives led to more women’s issues being heard. An example of this finding was that “when there were no minority men in the House, the chamber held only three hearings, but when the percentage of minority men increased to 12%, the House held fourteen hearings” (Minta and Brown, 2014, p. 262). Minta and Brown (2014) concluded that minority men are just as important as women in getting women’s interests heard. Minta and Brown (2014) found that out of the three topics of direct women’s issues, direct joint issues, and indirect joint issues, the BIPOC male legislators had much influence, but the most influence was on indirect. As the minority male legislators made up a larger part of the legislature, the number of hearings in the House of Representatives increased by one hundred and six hearings. Also,

when the percentage of minority female legislators increased, an additional twenty-seven hearings occurred.

In the Senate, the more minority legislators and women legislators, the more hearings were held on the topics. However, the Senate had less diversity in the characteristics of district representatives than the House of Representatives, so while the number of female legislators increased significantly over the years, there was not as significant an increase in minority legislators. The increase in white women correlated with an increase in hearings on the topic of direct women's issues, and there was an increase with another ten hearings on the topic as the percentage of female legislators went from zero to 14 percent. Yet, Minta and Brown (2014) learned that the increase of white female legislators did not much influence an increase in indirect joint issues hearings, and that it was when the legislative body grew in "racial or ethnic minorities" that this topic was more spoken on in hearings (p. 264). An example of this is that "aid to families for childcare and reauthorization of the Head Start program is closely associated as liberal policy issues that are supported mainly by Black, Latino, and liberal Democrats" (Minta & Brown, 2014, p. 264). Added is the fact that political party plays a role in direct joint issues, and that this explains why women as a gender do not have as much of an impact, because female representatives are divided into different political parties.

Relating to the difference between the House of Representatives and the Senate in the U.S. Congress, the House of Representatives has greater diversity, especially in racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, and this increase in diversity has led to more hearings on topics that effect minority groups. An example of this is the finding that "when the House had a membership of 12% minority men, the chamber held on average 110 hearings on indirect joint issues, while ... the Senate, at its maximum of 4% minority men and women, held twenty-two hearings" (Minta

& Brown, 2014, p. 265). Minta and Brown (2014) looked at hearings that dealt with domestic welfare and discovered that as it related to women and minorities, the Senate had more hearings than the House of Representatives. Regarding issues affecting women and minorities, Minta and Brown (2014) concluded that during their study, the Senate was likely to have hearings about issues that directly impacted women, and less likely to have hearings about direct joint and indirect joint issues. The House of Representatives was likely to hold hearings on all those issues.

Minta and Brown (2014) did not uncover much evidence that political parties and the majority party in the Senate versus the House of Representatives affected these issues. Other scholars, like “Michael Minta and Valeria Sinclair-Chapman (2013) [,] found that the GOP control of the House and Senate reduced the total number of hearings devoted to explicitly racial and social welfare issues” (qtd. in Minta & and Brown, 2014, p. 266).

Minta’s and Brown’s (2014) results show that diversity is important, and not because every legislator who is a minority will push for the interests of minorities more than non-minority legislators, but because minority men and women legislators take a part in representing others’ interests. Having more women representatives in the House of Representatives is not by itself the reason that women’s interests are driven so much. The working together of minority men and women to fight for the others’ policies is significant. Women of all races and ethnicities and BIPOC men have played a significant role in fighting for women’s-interest legislation in both chambers of Congress. Minority legislators and the growth of their representation have allowed for more hearings on issues that affect minorities. A compelling quote by Minta and Brown (2014) is that “diversity should be viewed as marginalized groups that come together, some with overlapping interests and some with competing interests that have formed a crucial

mix that is necessary to increase congressional attention to a variety of issues” (p. 268). The intersectional method of studying legislators’ actions has shown that scholars must take into consideration that underrepresented legislators work with each other and are important together as they call attention to underrepresented groups in the national population.

Female Legislators and Sex Legislation

History and Background on Sex Crime Legislation

Meloy (2015) gave some of the history and background of sex crime legislation brought up by researchers. One researcher studied how the media affected the public reaction to sex crimes and the resulting sex crime legislation in the 1930s and 40s. This researcher, Sutherland, claimed in 1950 that because of the way that the media showed how children were being mistreated, sexually abused, and murdered, people became very concerned and pushed for sex crime and sex offender legislation. One note for this study is that Meloy (2015) thought because of the time period, female legislators likely were not involved in the resulting legislation.

Another similar, more recent study showing the history of sex crime legislation was a study conducted by Jenkins in 2004 which found that the public’s reaction to a specific sex crime, a murder of a young child in the 90s, directly influenced sex crime legislation, specifically sexual predator legislation in the state of Washington. Meloy (2015) also noted that there was no specific reference in Jenkin’s study about the influence of female legislators on this legislation (p. 309-310). Burchfield et al. (2014) found that when the media covers stories on sex offenders, it impacts the way the public views the issue; however, when people have that set opinion and the media changes their own interest or judgement, that does not do much to sway the public’s opinion.

Legislators’ Backgrounds Impact Views and Action on Sex Legislation

Meloy (2015) reported on findings of the impact that legislators' backgrounds have on the type of legislation they propose. Sample and Kadleck (2008) investigated to see how the backgrounds of legislators influenced their likelihood of proposing sex crime legislation, finding that the likelihood for different types of sex offender legislation is based on "personal ideology and perceptions of sex offenders" (Meloy, 2015, p. 310). Sample and Kadleck (2008) studied Illinois state legislators and learned that one motivation behind sex offender legislation came from the need to protect children from being attacked by strangers.

Study on Legislators' Relation to Sex Crime Penalty Statutes

The purpose of Meloy's 2015 study on female legislators was to see how race, gender, and political affiliation affected the type of sex crime legislation proposed by state legislators. Meloy stated that quantitative data do not show much of a difference across these qualifications, but qualitative studies show differences; women were more likely to focus on broad legislation that would positively affect women victims, while men were more likely to focus on legislation that protected children.

Meloy (2015) listed the limitations of the study, like the disproportionate number of men and women participants, the smaller amount of diversity in race and political party than the ideal amount, and the concern about if the information found about female and male legislators could apply to larger amounts of legislative groups. No matter these limitations, this study is valuable because it informed people about state legislators' views on sex legislation.

Meloy (2015) mentioned that sex crimes are gendered crimes, so that is why the study focused on how gender plays a role in the legislators submitting sex crime-related bills to pass into law. Meloy (2015) described the type of study, which was an open-ended survey of state legislators' views on sex offender bills. Meloy (2015) also laid out the characteristics of the

legislators that participated in the study. The legislators came from every state. The legislators were all sponsors of some sex crime bill. The identity of the legislators remained anonymous to ensure that legislators could speak freely without political repercussions. Meloy (2015) detailed the legislator respondents' race, gender, and political party, marital status, and age. Meloy (2015) studied 40 male and 21 female participants. The majority of the participants belonged to the Republican party. A large majority of the legislators were white and not Hispanic. For the legislators' marital status and race, most were married, with more males being married than females, and the mean age for men was 59 while for women it was 56.

In the sample of legislators, the top type of bill sponsorship was "sex offender registration and notification (SORN) laws [which] require convicted sex offenders to notify authorities of their presence in the community and the location of their primary residence" (Meloy, 2015, p. 312). Next in the sample, the biggest sponsorship the legislators supported was sentencing enhancements. After that was sex offender restrictions. The main reason legislators in this study sponsored sex crime bills was because of the stories of real stories, especially child victims.

An important component that Meloy (2015) included in the results was the quotes from the legislators that came in their responses to posed questions. Three legislators' quotes, one by a female legislator in the Midwest, one by a female in the South, and one male in the west, showed that specific cases in the media about child assaults have led legislators to pass sex legislation. In the male's response, he mentioned that they tightened regulations for sex offenders because a registered sex offender had abducted children. Further, when Meloy (2015) asked one woman and a male legislator about public safety, the man talked about the public and how they could be informed, and the woman mentioned domestic violence as an issue and how their state was

combating this problem. A majority of female legislators who ran for both political parties brought up domestic violence in the discussion, but this was not the case for the male legislators.

Legislators' Opinions on Sex Crime Statutes. Meloy (2015) asked the legislators if they believed the sex offender legislation had been performing well, and the legislators responded on the impacts of this legislation on sex offenders and the communities. Many of the legislators, "more than half of the male (55%) and female (57%) legislators" said that the legislation was protecting kids and the community from sex offenders while

twenty-five percent of male legislators and about 15% of female legislators stated that they did not believe that their sex offender laws were working... 15% of male policymakers and nearly 30% of female policymakers... said there was insufficient data to know whether the sex offender laws were working or not. (Meloy, 2015, p. 317)

Some legislators found that the sex offender laws did not meet state goals and hurt sex offenders. One male legislator said that this legislation was an overreach of the government because there was confusion over who should be placed on the sex offender registry. He believed that because a teenager dating another teenager who is a couple of years younger may not necessarily be a sexual predator, that individuals should not necessarily have to follow SORN requirements. He also argued that these laws as written went against legislators' purpose for wanting these laws, which was to help the community. A female legislator said that the government was overreaching with these sex offender laws because these laws created high costs to the state with none of the goals being met. A good number of legislators, fifteen percent of the males and seventeen percent of the female legislators, said that the overreach came from the living requirements; because sex offender laws put strict requirements on where they can live, it can be extremely difficult for sex offenders to find a residence.

Legislators' Motivations on Sex Crime Statutes. Meloy (2015) announced that both genders of the legislators in the study were motivated by protecting kids, but women legislators were also motivated to protect women and family abuse. (The women in the study represented a minority in their legislative bodies, so researchers should study how critical mass theory applied to this situation.) The legislators also cared about public safety and more than half believed their laws were effective. There was a trend on legislators speaking on family abuse among the studied female legislators but not the males.

Sex legislation in the military

Congresswomen's Political Push for Military Sex Crime Legislation Addressing Sexual Assault. The main point of Whitlock & O'Keefe's (2013) *Washington Post* article was to show that women lawmakers are the majority in working to reduce the number of sex crimes that occur in the military. The article quoted a former senator from North Carolina about the issue of sexual assault in the military—Kay Hagan stated it “is an issue many of us have dealt with for years, and we find it unbelievably alarming that it is happening at the level it is in the military” (qtd. in Whitlock & O'Keefe, 2013, para. 3). The female lawmakers in Congress questioned military leaders, many of whom were men. At the time of publishing, many of the Congresswomen were pushing for certain military sex crime bills. Senator Gillibrand and other congresspersons were working on a bill that gave authority to prosecutors over commanders to handle sexual assault cases, including the choice of if an allegation should be looked into (Whitlock & O'Keefe, 2013). Whitlock & O'Keefe (2013) highlighted that the female lawmakers wanted people to know that sexual assault goes beyond gender and these crimes are committed by and against all genders.

Sex Trafficking Statutes

“Women’s Issue” Framing of Sex Trafficking. Human trafficking is a critical issue to the public because of the tens of millions of people trafficked nationwide. Human trafficking affects women as “estimates suggest that a minimum of 50 percent and upward of 80 percent of human trafficking victims worldwide are women” (Perdue et al., 2011, p. 4). A theme that Bouché and Wittmer (2015) noted while studying human trafficking is that nationwide, people are aware of sex trafficking more than other forms of human trafficking. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) attributed this to the media and anti-trafficking organizations raising their voices, especially in the 1990s and 2000s, and prioritizing sex trafficking as an issue.

Farrell and Fahy (2009) found that “by the mid-1990s...human trafficking was largely framed as a women’s rights problem” (qtd. in Bouché and Wittmer, 2015, p. 6). Bouché and Wittmer (2015) thought that because the media and social organizations framed sex trafficking, it creates problems in people’s perceptions of human trafficking. Human trafficking affects all genders and should be considered a human issue. Yet, because of the way human trafficking has been framed, researchers can study legislators’ actions on this policy as to how they support women’s-interest policies.

The Federal Level. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) studied sex trafficking policy in the U.S. federal government and in United States state governments to analyze the differences between the government entities’ focus on sex trafficking and how characteristics of legislators changed the outcomes of sex trafficking bills.

TVPA. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) first emphasized that the sex trafficking policies of the U.S. federal government in the twenty-first century should include the study of one particular bill, “The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, which was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2013” (p. 1). The TVPA bill focused on specific

techniques to fight sex trafficking: “prosecution, prevention and protection” (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 1). Bouché and Wittmer (2015) stated that the TVPA defined human trafficking as:

a. sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or b. the recruitment, harbouring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labour or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery. (p. 3)

Bouché and Wittmer (2015) stated that according to the Department of Justice, people bring into the country about 20,000 trafficked individuals.

The State Level. In states, legislators passing sex trafficking bills took a couple more years than the federal government. Three years after the TVPA passed, all states had at least one type of legislative statute that addressed sex trafficking. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) argued that many states’ sex trafficking bills are lacking, and these states are not doing enough to address this problem.

To test their hypothesis that sex trafficking policies are affected by individual representatives and legislators’ gender, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) studied “every state human trafficking law passed between 2003 and 2008 according to three distinct policy areas – criminalisation, state investment and civil remedies” (p. 2). The laws were important and overrode any legislative resolutions.

However, before Bouché and Wittmer (2015) conducted their own study, they looked at past studies and shared those results. This means that people can examine the differences between previous studies and the study from Bouché and Wittmer (2015). Bouché and Wittmer (2015) found that many previous researchers did not closely enough examine the impact that

female legislators have had on sex trafficking policies, and further, that looking at single individuals in one government legislature has overlooked the effect that women legislators have had on different states.

Bouché and Wittmer (2015) admitted that their study had limitations for its conclusions, like that the results about female legislators and the cooperation of groups can only explain behavior on one single topic and not all women's-interest policies, but perhaps researchers can make conclusions about women's-interest bills since they are in the same category.

From the time the federal human trafficking bill was passed to seven years afterwards, over two hundred cases of human trafficking were prosecuted with a small majority dealing with compelled labor and a small minority dealing with compelled sex labor. In the next two years, there were over two thousand federal investigations, and over three hundred were trafficking instances. These instances found 527 victims, and different victims based on the forced acts: "labour trafficking victims tend to be over 25 years old, either Hispanic or Asian and undocumented... Sex trafficking victims are generally younger, white or black, and US citizens" (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 4). In these years, a large majority of suspected incidents were thought to deal with sex trafficking, but the investigators focused more on forced labor incidents. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) claimed from this that human traffickers can take all types of victims.

As mentioned above, U.S. state legislatures began to act and many states passed bills from 2003 to 2007. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) stated that it was influential that state legislatures moved to create legislation on sex trafficking because it places less burden on federal agencies to fix this problem alone, and because it allows local law enforcement to get involved in anti-sex trafficking actions. However, state sex trafficking legislation is found to vary

significantly between different states and is not fully encompassing. One unnamed study discovered that many federal prosecutors highly praised the federal statutes as an advantage because of their thorough wording. A sharp difference in this study came from state prosecutors who were unaware whether there were anti-sex trafficking laws in place in their state.

Human Trafficking Hypotheses on State Adaptation. As states adopted human trafficking legislation after other states did, researchers can theorize that when states have success on statutes, other states follow. On broad policies, researchers like Brandeis (1932) found that “states serve as laboratories of democracy, whereby one state’s successful policy adoption may be replicated by other states ...[or] innovative policies tend to spread from one state to another” (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 6). This occurred when states were passing human trafficking statutes. Walker (1969) theorized that the reasons for this could be that states compete against each other or they learn from the other states. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) introduced five hypotheses on how states come to adopt human trafficking legislation.

Hypothesis 1: Competition Between States for Statutes. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) cited many past studies from the last century that showed competition and policy diffusion between states on many civil issues though questioned how this applied to criminal issues and criminal legislation. When jurisdictions adopt certain criminal statutes relating to criminal “businesses,” those businesses may move to another jurisdiction where those actions are legal. Businesses may even move to different states or countries that have less severe criminal penalties for their crimes. For human trafficking in U.S. states, it is permissible to assume that states could adopt the same criminal policies as neighboring states so that criminals do not come to their state once the first state passes those criminal statutes. Kara (2009) argued that the most effective way to deal with human trafficking is to make the cost of business too high—to create such severe

criminal penalties which makes it difficult for criminals to continue the practice. Bouché's and Wittmer's (2015) first hypothesis on human trafficking condenses this explanation, calling it the competition hypotheses: "The higher the proportion of neighbouring states that criminalise human trafficking, the more likely a state is to pass comprehensive human trafficking legislation" (p. 7). Bouché and Wittmer (2015) conducted their study and then reported their results in four tables that tested their four hypotheses. For the first hypothesis where states compete with similar legislation, the researchers found the hypothesis was supported, where if a state passed sex trafficking statutes, its neighboring states would likely pass statutes that are more thorough than that first state.

Hypothesis 2: Learning hypothesis. The next hypothesis from Bouché and Wittmer (2015) is the learning hypothesis that posits: "as more of the country is covered by human trafficking criminalisation legislation, later-adopting states are more likely to pass comprehensive legislation" (p. 8). Bouché and Wittmer (2015) thoroughly explained the learning hypothesis. If the same problems are facing different states, and one state acts, other states may pay attention to how their actions improved the condition. If the issue is salient, this occurs, but controversial issues may not lead states to wish to learn from other states. Scholars' studies in the 90s, like Glick and Hays (1991), Mooney and Lee (1995), and Hays (1996), found that states who learn from states that passed legislation relating to shared problems may go even farther and write legislation that is better because it is thorough and more encompassing (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015). Taking this policy and relating it to human trafficking, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) find that this is a possibility for what happened as the media made these problems known to other states and the issue is salient, so it would not have been controversial for states to follow

others. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) could see that later states made legislation better and more thorough, so the learning hypothesis could apply.

Learning theory explains legislators' actions in all categories of policy. Literature from Glick and Hays (1991), Weimer (1993), Schneider and Ingram (1988), and Rose (1993) conclude that "social learning theory provides the theoretical basis for the literature on policy diffusion" (Mooney, 2001, p. 104). This makes it applicable to test on human trafficking policies. Testing their second hypothesis, the learning hypothesis, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) learned that, much like the above hypothesis, states learning from others played a significant role in human trafficking statutes, whereby if a great number of states passed that legislation, other states would later also focus on criminal statutes but also add civil components and include money for state measures to deal with human trafficking.

Hypothesis 3: Descriptive representation. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) touched on how female legislators reacted to human trafficking since the media framed sex trafficking as a "women's issue." They focused on how female legislators represented general women's issues, summarizing that those female representatives correlated with women's-interest bills, and gave two reasons for this. The first is female legislators may have had experiences with inequality or issues specific to women and want to deal with it, or they may feel that since women are underrepresented, they should speak for those who have had those experiences. The second explanation is that as more women are elected, women's issues matter because of that descriptive representation, plus the pressure from women legislators on men to support those causes. On this latter idea, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) cited a study by Boyd et al. (2010) that reported that when judges were males, they were "significantly more likely to rule in favour of sexual discrimination litigants when a female judge is on their panel" (p. 10). Because here they show

that female legislators have a bigger impact on women's issues and sex trafficking has been framed as a women's issue, it leads Bouché and Wittmer (2015) to their third overall hypothesis, which deals with descriptive representation, and where they pose that "the greater percentage of female legislators in the House and Senate, the more likely a state is to have comprehensive human trafficking legislation" (p. 10).

The third hypothesis on descriptive representation is found to have "mixed results," according to the table. The results do not necessarily prove or disprove the hypothesis. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) stated that:

the predicted probabilities reveal that, when females in the House are set at their lowest (8%), the likelihood of passing comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation is only 8%.

When set at their maximum of 40%, the probability of... legislation that criminalises, invests state resources and includes civil remedies increases to 18%. (p. 23)

To understand how female representatives influence human trafficking legislation, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) showed the results of their last hypothesis about female diffusion networks. They found that "after controlling for learning-based diffusion and female representation, competition-based diffusion is no longer significant in predicting whether a state adopts the most comprehensive legislation," thereby supporting that hypothesis (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 23). The reasons for this are many, and Bouché and Wittmer (2015) gave some examples for why this could be and stated that researchers should conduct more studies on policies regarding sex crimes besides human trafficking.

Hypothesis 4: Female Diffusion Network Hypothesis. The last hypothesis from Bouché and Wittmer (2015) focused on creating a relationship between policy diffusion and descriptive representation; because people pressure female legislators to enact women's-interest bills, and

because states form coalitions, women representatives likely engaged in policy diffusion for sex trafficking. Some women's networks that cross between states are "the Women's Legislative Network of the National Conference of State Legislatures[,]... the Contract with Women of the USA State Legislators Initiative[,] and the Foreign Policy Institute for State Legislators" (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 11). This last center was found to have a specific interest in human trafficking, where "graduates of this programme 'have sponsored most of the anti-trafficking legislation that states have enacted'" (qtd. in Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 11). Also, women legislators may work together with their own women groups in the state. From these findings, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) concluded their last hypothesis: "the impact of female representation in the legislature on comprehensive human trafficking legislation will increase after controlling for learning-based diffusion" (p. 11).

Three Categories: Criminalization, State Investment, Civil Remedies. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) explained that a thorough human trafficking statute will cover "criminalisation, state investment and civil remedies" (p. 12). In each of these three groups for covered legislation, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) reiterated that states have varying levels and thoroughness. They looked at the 39 states that criminalized human trafficking between 2003 and 2008. About criminalization, they found the severity of punishment varies, where some of the states made different serving times based on who they were trafficking; it was more severe to traffick a child. For time served, the states continued to differ, "with minimum sentences ranging from 0 to 15 years, and maximum sentences ranging from 8 to 100 years" (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 12). Bouché & Wittmer (2015) indicated four types of ways that the state can invest in tackling human trafficking: "victim assistance, task force, training and reporting," and some states have invested in all while many have invested in none of these (p. 12). For the number of states that

support these investments in human trafficking issues, thirteen invested in victim assistance, five in training programs, and sixteen in mandatory reporting. In victim assistance, Wisconsin had funding for two months for a victim and California victims had options for victims to be funded for a year. For civil remedies for trafficking cases, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) clarified that these fall under “restitution, asset forfeiture, civil action and affirmative defense” (p. 13). Civil action means that the trafficker could face civil consequences, and affirmative defense provides a defense for victims when they committed crimes because they were being trafficked, regardless of whether their trafficker faced any criminal prosecution. Five states allow this defense (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015).

Bouché’s and Wittmer’s (2015) view of comprehensive legislation on human trafficking must include the three classifications. To determine how well they did, they gave numbers for what categories a state had. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) concluded that at the end of 2008, 14 had legislation addressing criminalization, state investment, and civil remedies. For states that had less comprehensive legislation, “15 states have made provisions in two areas, 14 states have made provisions in one area[,] and, as of 2008, seven states” had no laws addressing any issues (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 14).

Effect of Gender, Political Party, and Legislature Type on Human Trafficking Laws. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) also found that “per cent of females in the legislature has a substantively larger impact on states passing comprehensive human trafficking legislation than learning-based policy diffusion” (p. 24). Other findings from Bouché and Wittmer (2015) irrelevant to their hypotheses but relevant to the study of human trafficking related to party involvement and type of legislature. Across the four models, there was not much party impact if there was a majority in a state body; however, there was a negative effect in one of the models

that meant that when there were more legislators from the Democratic party, there was a smaller likelihood of thorough legislation on trafficking. The researchers found this at first ironic since they said that party focuses on human and women's rights, but it can be explained that the policies are bipartisan, where the Republican legislators push for more criminalization policies and Democrat legislators care more about investments and remedies. For the type of legislature, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) learned that because a professional legislature can meet more often with a bigger staff and budget, it is more likely to pass thorough human trafficking bills.

Bouché and Wittmer (2015) began their discussion by reiterating that states are different with their legislation, and the purpose of the study was to see why states varied on human trafficking legislation. In reporting on their hypotheses, they find "overall support for our hypotheses concerning policy diffusion, female representation and gendered diffusion" (Bouché & Wittmer, 2015, p. 27). Proceeding to more discussion, there was a greater chance states would pass thorough legislation if there were more female legislators in the House, showing that legislators have different behavior based on their gender, and that having more female legislators in a legislative body means more of a chance that the legislature would pass these bills and pass comprehensive bills. Regarding policy diffusion and political networks, interstate and intrastate networks were impactful.

Bouché and Wittmer (2015) brought up the issue of such a small, represented number of women in legislators and how it might be problematic if women are the majority who support women's issues since identity politics is more important than all legislators pushing for important issues. While a diverse legislature is good for passing comprehensive policy, Bouché and Wittmer (2015) asked questions like "Might this further entrench traditional gender stereotypes in legislative and societal contexts?... [and] does this indirectly exonerate male

legislators and publics from advancing these causes?” (p. 28). If this is so, identity politics may lead to representatives feeling they only need to represent issues from their own identity, meaning this may affect religion, class, and race (p. 28).

Future Research. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) projected three areas researchers can test in the future. One assumption they made in the study is that a thorough piece of legislation is high quality, but that assumption should be proved, meaning that future studies should look at those laws and see if it has good implementations and is effective. The second area that future studies should address is the impact of issue gendering and how framing trafficking as a women’s issue has impacted society. The last area should have researchers look at gendered diffusion, looking at issues besides trafficking, party involvement, and the relationships in the networks. Bouché and Wittmer (2015) conclude by stating: “Despite all of the questions that remain, our hope is that... this paper has presented a novel way to think about the creation of public policy” (p. 29). As Bouché and Wittmer (2015) touched on the importance of future research, this brings the project to the next sections: recommendations and conclusion, which will give suggestions for future research on the topic of legislators and policy.

Recommendations

Women’s-Interest Policies

The many scholars and researchers diligently worked on testing hypotheses and reviewing existing data to test how gender, race, party, age, newness, media, districts, and legislators influencing other legislators through organizations/committees/floor speeches impact legislation, specifically women’s-interest legislation and sex legislation. In finding that many of these factors play a part in influencing legislation, one might think that electing female legislators may lead to more female-related legislation being sponsored and passed.

While the findings from scholars support electing more women and minorities to office, one essential method for passing women's-interest bills is to use the power of influence that legislators have on one another. While many female legislators gave floor speeches on women's issues and grouped with other women to support women's-interest bills, this shows that on this issue of women's-interest bills, and possibly on issues of other political intrigue, a vital component is the support of other legislators to approve and pass that legislation. Over and over, scholars saw a majority of female representatives sponsor women's-interest bills, yet they need the support of colleagues to pass that legislation.

A descriptive representation has been upholding the interests of smaller groups, yet the public should encourage and work towards achieving symbolic representation in legislative bodies. As groups push for legislation that aids them, they should appeal to their representatives. Individuals, groups, and organizations should also consider how the media can portray their policy and how they can get representatives to appeal to other representatives through committees and floor speeches. However, the research shows that descriptive representation and party lines have been successful, where female legislators and representatives who are minorities are supporting legislation that affects women.

Sex Crime Legislation

The type of sex crime legislation the public wants legislators to pass depends on legislators as individuals and groups. The recommendations for how to get people's desired policies passed depends on what the public wants and what legislators push for. Some people want more sex offender statutes, and some people want the restrictions to be reduced. Criminal justice experts and the public are divided on this, and so below are recommendations for both increasing and decreasing sex crime legislation.

To Pass All-Inclusive Policies to Protect Communities. As seen in Meloy's (2015) study, stories that the media portray to the public will lead legislators to sponsor thorough sex crime legislation. Specifically, the media should show stories that make legislators believe sex crime legislation could prevent that from happening to others. If this happens, legislators will likely act and pass legislation quickly.

Because male and female legislators have different motivations for supporting legislation, people who support legislation protecting women, families, and children should consider using these motivations to appeal to representatives. Female legislators are more likely to push for legislation relating to sex crimes involving women and family, and male legislators for sex crime statutes helping children.

Finally, using the findings from Bouché and Wittmer (2015), for states to pass comprehensive legislation, it will be more likely if neighboring states pass legislation, if many states pass legislation, and/or if there are a great number of female legislators in the state legislature.

To Reduce Overly Reaching Restrictions on Convicted to Protect Individuals. Should legislators fix their sex crime offender statutes? As seen through the scholars' findings, many scholars think sex crime legislation, specifically SORN laws, do not meet goals and negatively affects many nonviolent offenders who have already served their sentence. As these individuals face a tough time securing housing and employment, legislators have considered how these individuals are hurt by strict laws. Probably the most important way for legislators to start reducing these restrictions is to hear individual stories about those convicted. For example, Meloy (2015) found a legislator who believed that these restrictions hurt an individual who was convicted for dating someone a couple of years younger. Another argument is the cost of these

laws, which was pointed out by a female legislator who was concerned about the high prices for the state with no goals met.

Legislators consider whom they are helping and hurting in their community, and they should prioritize whom they believe it will be better for. They should consider the community, and they should consider individuals. These are some of the relevant recommendations for the topic of influences on legislation and public policy.

Conclusion

Scholars' Findings

So, are female legislators more likely than male legislators to push for women's-interest policies? The scholars above have found female legislators are greatly pushing women's-interest policies. Female legislators supporting women's-interest bills more than male legislators through voting, sponsorship, co-sponsorship, and floor speeches was found in studies by Kittilson (2008), Dolan (1998), Orey and Larimer (2008), Thomas (1991), Kathlene (1989), Saint-Germain (1989), and Thomas (1994), Bratton (2005), Bratton and Haynie (1999), Childs and Krook (2008) Swers (2002), Norton (1999), Thomas (1991), and Swers (2002), Atkinson & Windett (2019), Cone (2017), MacDonald and O'Brien (2011), Osborn and Mendez (2010), and Pearson and Dancey (2011).

Contradicting the argument that women more than men support women's-interest policies, Dolan (1998) found party mattered more where more male Democrats supported women's-interest policies than female Republican representatives (Cone, 2017). Another aspect is legislators' race. Black male legislators supporting more women's-interest bills were found in studies by Barnello and Bratton (2011), Minta and Brown (2014), Barrett (2001).

Different actors and factors play a part in influencing legislators. In the public, people may have different opinions on female legislators, women's-interest legislation, and sex crime legislation based on parental status, gender, and occupation. Legislators may have different opinions on women's-interest legislation and sex crime legislation based on their location, gender, race, political party, individual background, age, and newness.

The Women's Movement and the rise in the population of females in legislative bodies began a new era where legislators discussed and passed women's-interest policies. Today, more women and minorities serve the public as representatives, with some calling for more diverse legislative bodies.

Finally, in examining who pushes legislation on women's-interest policies, one must consider motivations for their actions to understand how more legislation can be passed to push for equity among gender, race, and social position. Scholars must account for intersectionality and how women of color legislators have their identity as women and people of color affect their motivations and decisions (Brown 2013).

The Future of Women's-Interest Policies

That female legislators push for more women's-interest policies is not a finding that will necessarily be true in the future. Many of these studies were conducted in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. As values and societal standards change, perhaps more male-identifying lawmakers will push for policies that call for equality in the public and workplaces. For example, male legislators may consider policies like paid parental leave, which can positively effect men in the public. Further, if the number of minority legislators grows, they may lead charges on policies that level the playing field for those who are disadvantaged in the world (Barrett, 1997).

Call for More Research

Many researchers argue that more research should be done in various areas to expand on findings and the body of knowledge for the public. More research needs to be conducted to look at women's relationship with the legislative process. Cammisa and Reingold (2004) in their research wrote about this need for more research on legislative representation: "much less work has made systematic state-level comparison of legislative gender dynamics, and even less attention has been paid to the actual impact of women on state legislative outcomes and processes" (qtd. in Schumacher 2011, p. 66). Schumacher (2011) also stated that researchers have not focused enough on what influences legislators and how these influences change based on the district the legislator is representing. Cammisa and Reingold (2004) found that scholars can research women legislator's proposed bills, but more difficult to discover is the effect of this legislation and the differences depending on where the legislative body works. (Schumacher 2011).

Another area for researchers to consider studying in future research is how legislators support causes and policies. When scholars conducted their studies, they looked at organizations, committees, floor speeches, bill sponsors, co-sponsors, and voting as determinants of legislators' determination in passing women's-interest policies. Are these the best measures for support? What if a legislature supports women's interests but could not pass anything for a couple of sessions because of more pressing concerns or because women in their district are satisfied with their way of life? Future scholars should take into consideration the context behind support for policies and if there are better methods for legislators to support certain policies.

Moreover, more researchers should study the public and their perception of female legislators, women's-interest legislation, and sex crime legislation, and why they have those

perceptions. The research of the general population is essential as legislators are supposed to reflect the public's interest. The research could also look into people whose perceptions have changed and why their views have changed. As society evolves, maybe scholars find that the public thinks that these policies are no longer needed in the present day. Going into the future, scholars should consider future research of a diverse nature that concludes with more certainty the motivations behind the public and legislators' actions.

One final aspect this project left out is sexual orientation and how that impacts legislators' behavior towards women's-interest bills. For example, how does the impact of legislators identifying as males who are married to people identifying as female change the way they sponsor, speak on, or vote for female-interest policies? Researchers should look at how legislators who identify themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community contribute to women's-interest policies and policies that address inequality. More future research should look at disadvantaged groups in society and how government representatives respond to imbalances in society.

To conclude, this project gave a brief understanding of the factors influencing legislators supporting policies, specifically women's-interest policies. Understanding these factors is vital for interest groups so they can appeal to legislators who can focus on issues that the public thinks are a problem. This study not only highlighted the impacts of gender and race that make a difference for legislators, but it also made conclusions about representatives and the public in general. While different members of the public have different beliefs on societal problems and the legislative duty of representatives to address those problems, researchers need to stay up to date on the influences of public servants, as they are the main group in society that can make changes without disrupting societal order. Knowing why legislators adopt certain policies, like

women's-interest policies, should be a priority for many reasons, including how legislative bodies oversee numerous public programs. Future researchers should study the current period, looking at legislators and their policies. These study results could change the way the public supports policies and change the functions of legislators.

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