


2015

Exploring the Leadership Strategies of Women of the 111th Congress

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Walden University

COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

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Nathalie Vertus

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2015

Abstract

Exploring the Leadership Strategies of Women of the 111th Congress

by

Nathalie Vertus

MS, Walden University, 2011

BS, Florida Atlantic University, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December, 2015

Abstract

Men dominated the Senate and the House of Representatives for the first 128 years of the United States history until Jeannette Rankin became the first female congresswoman in 1917. This phenomenological study included in-depth interviews with 20 women of the 111th United States Congress. The critical mass theory and the token status theory are 2 theories to explore the negative environment and stereotyping that undermine a woman's performance and leadership. The participants were selected through a snowballing technique. A modified Van Kaam method was used to analyze the data by grouping similar ideas, identifying key points, and relating concepts and developing themes and constructs. Four themes emerged from the study: perseverance, mentorship, teamwork, and leadership. Perseverance was a strategy to bill passage. Being labeled as the gender minority encouraged the congresswomen to persevere not only for their success but also for their country and the multitude of women depending on them. Women in leadership positions facilitated and encouraged their political parties to prioritize issues related to women such as childcare, gender equality, and equal pay. Teamwork was quintessential to the passage of legislation. Members of the United States congress were able to form alliances and develop sustainable relationship through bill sponsorship. Social implications include the ability to provide guidance to women who aspire to engage in leadership roles and to provide organizations with information to create leadership development programs that focus on career paths for women seeking leadership positions in industries in which women are underrepresented.

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Dedication

The study is dedicated to my mother, who made me who I am today, and to my husband, and my son Nathen, who made my life complete.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my chair Dr. Gene Fusch for guiding and supporting me throughout the doctoral process. A special acknowledgment goes out to Dr. Freda Turner, who never gave up on me. Dr. Turner's tenacity and support served as constant reminders of a light at the end of the tunnel.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The presence of women in the Senate and in the House of Representatives increased from 1999 to 2009 at the beginning of the 111th Congress (Caress & Kunioka, 2012). The factors influencing the leadership of women in Congress have been the subject of research for scholars and paramount in the debate of female representation in top-level positions (Bush, 2011; Cheng & Tavits, 2011). Researchers revealed few of the successful achievements of women in leadership roles in politics, government institutions, and corporations (Derks, Ellemers, Van Laar, & De Groot, 2011a, b). Given this trend for female representation in senior level positions, I explored the leadership strategies of women of the 111th Congress by emphasizing how they became successful leaders in the United States Congress where women were greatly outnumbered by men.

Volden, Wiseman, and Wittmer (2013) determined leadership and legislative qualities by tapping into several dimensions of activities. Women exerted leadership in Congress in the following areas: (a) bill sponsorships, (b) seniority, (c) prior legislative experience, (d) party influence and ideology, (e) party leadership, and (f) social resources (Rocca, Sanchez, & Morin, 2011). There was no systematic analysis of leadership strategies of women in Congress (Carnes, 2012). Griffin and Keane (2011) focused on past congresses and looked at a broader picture instead of focusing on one congress to narrow the problem.

Researchers could provide a better understanding of how women broke the glass ceiling and became influential leaders in a male dominated institution (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011). Organizations such as the United States Congress could

increase performance and leadership once members understand the strategies adopted by women in executive positions. This study could make a noteworthy contribution to the literature by exploring the lived experiences of women of the 111th Congress as well as the leadership strategies employed by women in historically male-dominated institutions.

Background of the Problem

More than 50% of the world's population are women, yet they only represent 19% of the world's legislative leaders (Hogarth, Karelaiab, & Trujillo, 2011). In 2012, the Congressional Research Service identified a record number of 93 women serving in the 111th Congress, 76 in the House (voting and non-voting members) and 17 in the Senate, representing 17.2% of the total membership (Manning, 2012). Volden et al. (2013) suggested the presence of more women in Congress would influence policy outcomes and lead to gender diversity in the workplace.

Female representation in Congress increased from 17 to 73 members between 1977 and 2009 (Pearson & Dancey, 2011). Despite the increase of women in leadership position, Hughes, Krook and Paxton (2015) found that a significant dearth of women in elite leadership positions existed in government even when these leadership roles were more accessible to women. Women's trust in government strengthened as the presence of women legislators increased (Hughes, 2011). Beckwith (2011) noted that female citizens believed women in U.S. politics were attentive to issues pertaining to women. Female politicians were perceived as more caring, understanding, and better suited to handle women's needs (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). The leadership exerted by women in Congress promoted the advancement of women's policies and interests (Cowell-Meyers

& Langbein, 2013). Female representation and a demonstration of leadership abilities could encourage other women to become more involved in politics and more engaged in policy making. The lived experience of women in Congress could provide some insights into the challenges faced by women in high-ranking corporate positions and the strategies they employed to overcome the status quo.

Problem Statement

Women represent just over half the U.S. population, yet they constitute 5.1% of high-ranking executive positions in the corporate sphere (Teigen, 2012). By comparison, women represented 51% of the employees in lower level management, professional, and related occupations (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011). Four hundred forty one members comprised the 111th Congress of which 17% were women (Ryan, Haslam, & Kulich, 2010). The general business problem was that limited knowledge was available about how women in Congress lead in a male-dominated institution and how female leadership abilities affect and contribute to business practices (Pearson & Dancey, 2011; Volden et al., 2013). The specific business problem was that women congressional leaders often lack strategies to pass legislation in a male dominated Congress.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore strategies that women congressional leaders used to pass legislation in a male dominated Congress. A snowball sample of twenty congresswomen from the U.S. 111th Congress participated in semistructured interviews to share their perceptions and individual lived experiences. Business institutions can adopt some of the leadership strategies used by women in

prestigious institutions such as the U.S. Congress to diversify leadership practices in the workplace. Burnet (2011) noted the significant advances in the literature exploring leadership and gender, including an increase in attention to women's issues. The present study could further contribute to this phenomenon.

The findings of the study may provide insights into challenges women face and preparatory strategies for women leaders on lobbying, balancing the United States federal budget, and advocacy for issues related to women. Beaman, Duflo, Pande, and Petia (2012) asserted that the presence of women legislators encouraged other women to become more engaged in leadership roles and more attuned to women's issues. The findings from this study may have a social impact by encouraging women to increase involvement in policy making and leadership roles.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research is a method in which researchers can use open-ended interviews and probing questions about the human experience (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). By using qualitative data, this study should help enable future researchers to gain a better perspective of the leadership strategies and the ideology of women of the 111th Congress. The result of a quantitative study could lead to evaluating the legislative effectiveness of women based on the number of bills they sponsored rather than exploring their challenges, abilities, and capabilities to become successful leaders as lawmakers. A mixed method approach combines the attributes of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Stentz, Plano Clark, & Matkin, 2012). I did not use surveys to determine the effectiveness of the legislators but rather interviews that disclose the lived

experiences and preparatory strategies of the congressional women. Therefore, I rejected a mixed method research design. Qualitative phenomenological research, however, involves the exploration of lived experiences and perceptions of research subjects (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Thus, a qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study.

Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012) defined phenomenology as a qualitative research design aiming to explore the meaning of a phenomenon by understanding the unique lived experience of individuals. In the study, I employed a phenomenological design by exploring the lived experiences of 20 U.S. Congresswomen. The participants of the study served in the 111th Congress and exerted leadership in an environment where women were the minority.

Research Question

Krook, Celis, Childs, and Kantola (2014) discovered that the issues of women in politics raised several questions. Addressing the role of gender in leadership and public policy was the principal research question of the study, which was: What strategies do women congressional leaders need to pass legislation in a male dominated Congress?

Interview Questions

The open-ended interview questions covered the participants' work behaviors and attitudes, sociocultural and personal backgrounds, leadership styles, support systems, self-worth, and the conditions that led to their particular career choice of politics. These questions were:

1. What challenges have you faced as a female in the U.S. Congress?

2. What are the leadership attributes you gained to prepare for your tenure as congresswoman?
3. What are the leadership attributes you learned during your tenure as a congresswoman?
4. How did you prepare yourself to work in a traditionally male-dominated institution?
5. What career and preparatory advice would you give to women aspiring to be leaders in today's political or business environs?
6. What are the current barriers women face today as political leaders? As business leaders?
7. What are the legislative effects women have on the lawmaking process?
8. What are the successful strategies you used to attain your desired level of career success?
9. What strategies were less useful or even unsuccessful in helping you attain your desired level of career success?
10. What information would you like to add that I have missed?

Conceptual Framework

Dahlerup (1978) and Kanter (1977) introduced and developed the critical mass and the token status theories. The critical mass theory and the token status theory are two theories exploring the negative environment and stereotyping undermining a woman's performance and leadership (Torchia, Calabrò, & Huse, 2011). The work of Dahlerup and Kanter provided an understanding of gender in the workplace and the effect of gender

and policy outcome. The authors explored the experiences of underrepresented women in politics and their progress as the number of women legislators increased.

Critical Mass Theory

Dahlerup (1978) and Kanter (1977) explained how the experiences of women, as minorities in the corporate and political spheres, could change as the number of women increased. Duguid, Loyd, and Tolbert (2012) used the critical mass theory to understand how the presence of women related to an increase or decrease in women-friendly policies. These scholars found that a critical mass of women legislators could lead to strong collaboration within the corporate and political spheres and influence others to accept and promote congressional bills related to women's issues. The critical mass theory could result in different outcomes whereby an increase in the presence of female legislators could translate into an increase in policies related to women's issues. This theoretical domain could provide an insight on the lack of women's leadership in Congress and how that lack affected policy outcomes.

Token Status Theory

Through the token status theory, Kanter (1977) explained how the environment and negative stereotypes could undermine and affect a woman's performance and leadership. According to the token status theory, women form a 15% threshold, which categorizes them as token in the workplace (Hogarth et al., 2011). Women were tokens among Republicans in both the Senate and the House. Congresswomen represented fewer than the critical mass of 15% needed to empower women and to have meaningful influence and representation within their political party (Torchia, Calabrò, & Huse 2011).

Cowell-Meyers and Langbein (2013) defined tokenism as a threshold percentage preventing women from being influential in policy making and interacting effectively with their peers. The token status theory was applicable because the study explored the experiences of underrepresented women in organizations.

Definition of Terms

Agentic: An agentic individual is a person who displays confidence, assertiveness, and aggressive leadership behaviors and qualities (Matland & Tezcur, 2011).

Critical actors: A critical actor is an individual who initiated and pursued specific pieces of legislation in any given situation (Childs & Krook, 2009).

Critical mass: In the context of this study, critical mass is the relationship between the percentage of female legislators and the passage of legislation beneficial to women as a group (Krook, 2011).

Earmark: An earmark is the distribution of federal funding to be spent toward specific projects (Doyle, 2011).

Epoche: Epoche is a process used in phenomenological research studies that allow researchers to set aside prejudices and biases (Husserl, 1931).

Glass ceiling: The glass ceiling represents barriers and challenges encountered by women and minorities that limit their ability to attain senior leadership positions (Hoobler et al., 2011).

Success/successful: In the context of this study, success is achieving planned business results by ensuring client satisfaction and meeting a project's performance goals (Teigen, 2012).

Tokenism: In the context of this study, tokenism is a threshold percentage preventing women from being influential in policymaking and interacting effectively with their peers (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The study was conducted based on assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, which are a series of circumstances that can affect the analysis of the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The main assumptions of the study were that participants would be: (a) honest and accurate with minimal or no margin of error, and (b) forthcoming throughout the interviews. The limitations of the study included the reliance on women who served only in the U.S. Congress and that the findings could not be generalized to the overall population as a result. The study was delimited to interviewing congresswomen who served in the United States Congress from January 3, 2009 to January 3, 2011.

Assumptions

Assumptions are foreseeable circumstances that are self-evident truths and that can affect the findings of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). As the researcher, I strived to be objective and identify biased, incomplete, and compromised data. The schedule of Congresswomen in general was a hindrance to the progress of the study. Certain participants cancelled or interrupted the scheduled interviews because of unforeseen circumstances such as congressional emergency meetings in the U.S. Capitol (i.e., members called into votes, confidential leadership meetings, and caucus meetings). In the event of such occurrence, the participants chose another interview date or time.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are the weaknesses and boundaries of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The findings were limited to the selected group of women of the 111th U.S. Congress. Participants had to be sincere, reliable, and honest. Another limitation was that the participants who agreed to be interviewed would share a different point of view depending on political party affiliation. The results of the study were limited to congresswomen in the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

Delimitations

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stated that elements that are not part of a research study should be clearly stated; in so doing, the researcher could narrow the scope of the study. A delimitation of the study was that congressmen would not participate in the research. The scope of this qualitative study encompassed the leadership strategies employed by women in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Significance of the Study

Institutional forces such as business development, societal development, technology, and physical infrastructure influenced women's participation in legislative leadership roles (Bullough, Kroeck, Newburry, Kundu, & Lowe, 2012). The development of business institutions, societal institutions, and technological capabilities as well as the physical infrastructure within a country aligned with women's participation in political leadership. Women's representation correlated with institutional and cultural factors (Burnet, 2011). The presence of women in executive positions had a positive influence on

an organization's financial performance (Teigen, 2012).

Bush (2011) noted that leadership diversity positively influenced organizational success. The inclusion of cultural, racial, and ethnic differences created a positive environment in which employees contributed to the advancement of the organization. The study may provide a more complete understanding of how congresswomen could lead in a diverse environment and how their leadership strategies could affect the performance of the institution.

Understanding the career path of women in Congress could provide an insight for women interested in leadership roles. The findings of the study may bring value to the role of gender in the legislative agenda and could establish a platform to explore gender disparity in women's leadership careers. In response to this growing trend, the results of the study may serve as a guide for gender equality and equity in the workplace leading to the development of special programs focused on helping women achieve more senior positions.

By role modeling expected behaviors, leaders could influence followers and be effective (Yaffe & Kark, 2011). Women's political participation can be better understood through the discovery of legislative challenges that could encourage women's followers to participate in leadership roles (Cheng & Tavits, 2011). The presence of women in leadership positions could serve as inspiration and empowerment to other women (Bowles, 2012; Hersby, Jetten, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2011). Although women appeared to be less interested and less engaged in politics and leadership roles than men, evidence suggested that the presence of women as candidates and office holders helped stimulate

political engagement and career development for other women (Barnes & Burchard, 2012).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The study included an extensive literature review exploring the leadership strategies of women who achieved career success in prestigious institutions such as the U.S. Congress. The information presented in this review included the factors contributing to the success of congresswomen and how they could lead as the gender minority. The purpose of the study was to address the leadership strategies employed by women in Congress through the legislative activities identified by Volden et al. (2013) and Rocca, Sanchez, and Morin (2011) in the following manner: (a) bill sponsorships, (b) seniority, (c) prior legislative experience, (d) party influence and ideology, (e) party leadership, and (f) social resources.

Scholars can understand a problem through a conceptual framework. Krook (2010) used several theories to explain ideologies, policy preferences, representation, gender, race, and ethnicity. In designing the study, I used the token status theory and the critical mass theory to identify the leadership strategies used by women in the United States Congress and to conceptually understand how they were able to lead in an institution where women were significantly outnumbered by men.

History of Women in Congress

In 1917, Jeanette Rankin became the first women elected to Congress (Nyhan, McGhee, Sides, Masket, & Greene, 2012). Prior to her ascendance to power, prohibitions

kept women from participating in public life, confined them to family roles centered on childcare, and denied them full citizenship rights (Jacobs et al., 2013). The historical genesis of women engaging in legislative leadership was a notable milestone in politics (Lawless, 2011). In 1922, Rebecca Latimer Felton became the first female senator in Congress (Women in Congress, 2012). The interest of women in U.S. politics gained momentum during the 1970s, when women began to make their mark in public office (Krook & Norris, 2014).

In 1992, also known as the *Year of the Women*, voters elected an unprecedented number of women to Congress (Fox & Lawless, 2011). Hughes (2011) noted that 48 women in the House and six in the Senate were elected during that cycle, increasing women's representation in Congress from 6.4% to 11%. The influx affected all levels of government, particularly state legislatures, where the proportion of female state legislators increased from 18.4% to 20.4% (Hughes, 2013).

Tolleson-Rinehart (2011) attempted to explain the 1992 surge in women's representation by looking at various aspects of the election, including the manner in which women ran, but also in view of the salient issues dominating the 1990s. In the Year of the Women, gender salience dominated the political agenda (Fox & Lawless, 2011). An unprecedented number of women ran for office and women placed a strong emphasis on the importance of gender in politics during and after their political campaigns (Smooth, 2011). During the U.S. Supreme Court confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas, the testimony of Anita Hill fueled the desire of women in society to have a stronger presence in Congress and brought women's under-representation in politics to

the forefront of national attention (Paxton et al., 2013).

Women running for office, among other strategies, raised awareness on gender issues and on the politicization of women's under-representation, which led some female voters to prefer female candidates (Rocca, Sanchez, & Morin, 2011). The popularity of women in Congress increased when congresswomen were responsible for domestic issues and decreased when they dealt with international issues (Hughes, 2011). After the 1990 election, the U.S. House's membership was 6.4% female. Between 1999 and 2004, the number of female congressional members rose from 12.9% to 15.6%. In 2009, during the 111th Congress, 16.8% of the members in the U.S. House were women (Caress & Kunioka, 2012).

Women of the 111th Congress

The 111th Congress brought a record number of 78 women into the House of Representatives and 18 women into the Senate (Library of Congress, 2012). The representation of women in politics had a symbolic value and influence on policy outcome (Krook, 2014). The final passage of the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which promoted fair and equal pay for male and female workers, represented a stepping-stone for the value of female contributions to the workplace (Lips, 2013).

Several factors hindered or facilitated women's representation during the law making process. Bratton and Rouses (2011) elaborated on the representation of women in Congress and identified 10 different factors influencing the legislative effectiveness (LES) of women in Congress: (a) seniority, (b) previous legislative experience, (c) party influence, (d) legislative influence, (e) committee influence, (f) ideological

considerations, (g) race, gender, and ethnicity considerations, (h) leadership, (i) natural coalition partners, and (j) electoral connections. The aforementioned scholars investigated the legislative effectiveness of female lawmakers through a quantitative analysis of bills sponsored by a series of women from various congresses, including the 111th Congress.

Garnering more women in a legislature meant more advocacies for women-friendly agendas (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013). The Year of the Women served as a launching point as women made a substantial push into American politics and produced a growing female presence in various branches of government (Paxton et al., 2013). In 1992, according to the Women Under Forty Political Action Committee (WUFPAC), issues such as family well-being, maternal leave, and breast cancer research and funding dominated the political agenda for the first time in U.S. politics (WUFPAC, 2013). Women politicians emphasized their message on stereotypical topics such as children, welfare, and the elderly (Celis, 2012).

Women's Issues

Women members of Congress viewed themselves as surrogates for women's interests and this perspective on representation influenced action in the policy-making process (Smith, 2014). Miller (2008) recognized that women in Congress placed a higher emphasis on women-friendly policies more often than did their male colleagues. Members of Congress representing women were more likely to support and advance legislation explicitly or implicitly related to the progress and advancement of women (Cheng & Tavits, 2011).

Women advocated and lobbied for issues related to children, military, family, and education (Cheng & Tavits, 2011). Childs and Krook (2009) attempted to characterize women's policies as issues influencing the advocacy of female needs, such as (a) childcare, (b) divorce, (c) abortion rights, (d) domestic violence, (e) equal pay, (f) equal rights, (g) family issues, (h) parental leave, (i) pensions, (j) rape, (k) reproductive rights, (l) sexual harassment, (m) suffrage, (n) social welfare, (o) education, (p) wage labor, and (q) widows' benefits. The aforementioned issues had significance to women because these issues represented an important economic and social value in their daily lives (Smith, 2014). A higher representation of women in government increased the awareness of women's issues and concerns in politics (Smooth, 2011). Women legislators handled policies suited to female citizens better than their male counterparts (Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011). The presence of women in governance resulted in policies that were gender sensitive and receptive to women.

Members of the 111th Congress elected the first female Speaker of the House, Representative Nancy Pelosi, who presided over an unprecedented legislative agenda in a divisive Congress (Day, LaFrance, & Fuller, 2012). The presence of Speaker Pelosi increased the supply of women interested in public office (Peters & Rosenthal, 2012). The advocacy of women's issues correlated with female representation in Congress (Krook, 2014). An increasing number of females in both the Senate and the House of Representatives led to policy outcomes related to the autonomy and equality of women (Smith, 2014). Sexual harassment, abortion rights, and childcare were of greater importance to women voters (Beckwith, 2011). Constituents were aware of the issues

before the legislature and the actions of their representatives on these issues (Smooth, 2011).

The presence of women in politics had an indirect influence and created a supportive legislative environment on bills related to women's issues (Beckwith, 2011). Female candidates were uniquely suited to deal with women's issues compared to their male counterparts (Matland & Tezcur, 2011). The well being and welfare of others concerned women, differentiating themselves from men (Smooth, 2011). Women representation also encouraged other members of congress to contribute their efforts to the process and to increase attention to policies that involved women and children (Celis, 2012).

Descriptive versus Substantive Representation

Women legislators advanced women's policy preferences and interests by acting as and for women (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013). Despite the different views and definitions attributed to women's interests, congresswomen advocated for women and represented female citizens in both the House of Representatives and the Senate (Celis, & Childs, 2012). Tyson (2011) stated that members of Congress represented constituents in various ways. Congresswomen were notorious for adopting two very distinct forms of representation that became widely criticized and explored by several congressional scholars (Celis, 2012; Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013). These methods were substantive representation and descriptive representation (Celis & Childs, 2012). The scrutiny of descriptive representation was more intense than that of substantive representation because constituents considered substantive representation more valuable

and favorable to them (Severs, 2012).

Descriptive representation was evidenced mainly in gender quotas (Murray, Krook, & Opello, 2012). A gender quota is a requirement to include or to nominate a certain percentage of women in a company's organization or membership (Hughes, 2013). Ryan et al. (2010) found that some party leaders responded to the quotas by identifying women for difficult-to-win seats precisely because they were difficult to win. The implementation of quotas therefore resulted in either a decrease in female representation (Krook & Messing-Mathie, 2013) or an increase in women in leadership positions, depending on the initiatives and practices set forth by the particular political party (Htun & Ossa, 2013).

Celis and Childs (2012) explained substantive representation as a method of action and descriptive representation as the face of the represented. Women's interests were important to the representation process (Barnes & Burchard, 2012). Women in congress initiated various pieces of substantive policy legislation reflecting the needs of constituents (Smith, 2014). Female legislators often submitted legislation related to women, which according to Severs (2012), was an act of substantive representation. The substantive representation of women addressed female needs, interests, and demands, but also involved the different views and perspectives of women (Celis, 2012). Women's participation in congressional debates and votes affected the distribution of federal funding and earmarks to their districts or those of other female colleagues (Doyle, 2011). Female members of Congress thus performed substantive representation in government of women (Krook & Messing-Mathie, 2013).

Descriptive representation involved identifying similarities between legislators and constituents as it related to racial background, gender, and sexual orientation (Volden et al., 2013). Barnes and Burchard (2012) further explained the importance and validity of descriptive representation as the number of female legislators necessary to construct the legislative agenda. Descriptive representation correlated with substantive representation through advocacy for or on behalf of women (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013). Since their male colleagues widely contested the presence, authority, and leadership of female lawmakers in Congress, women's issue bills often failed to receive the attention and advantaged treatment necessary to move through the legislative process (Volden et al., 2013).

Electing more women had meaningful consequences for legislative representation in the U.S. Congress (Celis, Krook, & Meier, 2011). Women leaders advocated for more women in office (Celis, Childs, & Kantola, 2014). Financial contributions allowed other women to have the resources needed to raise public awareness and to overcome the considerable disadvantages of women in office (Doyle, 2011). Rocca, Sanchez, and Morin (2011) examined congressional voting in an effort to explain the different stages of the legislative process. The downside of this strategy was that it did not take into consideration the sponsorship of bills indicating commitment to legislation (Woon, 2008).

Bills Sponsorship

Legislators constructed different policy proposals through the sponsorship stage of lawmaking (Kerevel & Atkeson, 2013). Bill sponsorship was a tool members of

Congress used to respond to issues requiring government intervention that enabled them to cultivate reputations as problem-solvers (Griffin & Keane, 2011). Given the high level of failure of the majority of bills introduced in Congress, bill sponsorship was an inefficient mechanism for shaping policy outcome (Woon, 2008). Despite this fact, members of Congress continued to sponsor bills in large numbers and the number of groups interested in legislative bills grew exponentially over several years (Lazarus, 2013).

Bill sponsorship increased the chances of a member of Congress' reelection. This type of legislative activity led to legislative success because of the cost and benefits associated with sponsoring or cosponsoring a bill (Clark & Caro, 2013). Legislators effectively influenced policy outcomes when the bills they sponsored passed the Chamber (Lazarus, 2013). Members of Congress were encouraged by other members to sponsor legislation in the House or Senate (Kirkland, 2011), and high sponsorship activity was associated with influential legislators, such as majority party members, committee chairs, and relatively senior legislators (Bratton & Rouses, 2011).

Female representation in Congress grew over the past 90 years. During the past decade in particular, women legislators expressed their views through the bills they sponsored (Zahradnik, 2010). Sponsorship behavior in Congress identified which members of Congress were placing women's interests on the national agenda (MacDonald & O'Brien, 2011). Members of Congress introduced and passed more bills on women's issues when the legislature contained a relatively high proportion of women, as in the 111th Congress (Smooth, 2011).

The rate and number of women-sponsored bills introduced, passed, and enacted were contingent upon the number of women in Congress (Bjarnegard & Zetterberg, 2011). Gender had a direct effect on representative roles, institutional influence, and bill sponsorship. Forty one of the total number of women in Congress introduced congressional bills (Library of Congress, 2012), which strengthened Osborn's (2014) finding that having a woman Speaker of the House was not sufficient to influence the lawmaking process on women's issues when there was still a scarcity of females in Congress. Furthermore, the limited influence of women resulted in bills that were sponsored by congresswomen being less likely become law (Rocca, Sanchez, & Morin, 2011).

Darhour and Dahlerup (2013) analyzed the experiences of women who formed small minorities in the corporate and political spheres and found women as dominant figures. Park (2013) noticed a change in the workplace when the number of women increased. The leadership and presence of women in Congress enabled a better collaboration with other female members by differentiating themselves from minority members and influencing male colleagues to accept and approve bills related to women's concerns (Reingold & Swers, 2011).

Legislative effectiveness was reflected in the number of bills introduced by a legislator and passed by Congress as well as the ability of a policy maker to pass a sponsored bill (Griffin & Keane, 2011). Effective legislators moved bills through the legislative process and obtained support from fellow legislators (Bratton & Rouses, 2011). Certain legislators were more active than others in sponsoring bills, convincing

colleagues to cosponsor them, and advancing the bills to passage (Clark & Caro, 2013).

Women of the United States Congress gathered support around their sponsored bills through cosponsorship (Osborn, 2014). Legislators who were most active in cosponsorships were generally less powerful (Kerevel & Atkeson, 2013). Nonetheless, the cost of cosponsoring was low and allowed members of Congress to build and develop strong relationships across and within party lines (Griffin & Keane, 2011). Well-connected legislators were more successful at amending legislation and gaining support in floor votes (Fowler, Heaney, Nickerson, Padgett, & Sinclair, 2011). Through cosponsorships, members of Congress shared common interests and attributes (Clark & Caro, 2013)

Seniority

Historically, Congress was a seniority-based institution. A legislator acquired knowledge and experience through time spent in Congress (Kirkland, 2011). The lower level of seniority of women in Congress resulted from the newly rising numbers of congresswomen (Lawless & Fox, 2011).

Because members with greater experience had more knowledge on policy issues than members with less experience, senior members sponsored more bills (MacDonald & O'Brien, 2011). Senior members of Congress were given deference by fellow members and received a higher priority for consideration of legislation (Osborn, 2014). Seniority allowed bill sponsors to determine when it was best to propose legislation to improve the odds of success (Miller, 2011).

Female lawmakers were capable of earning seniority and were as legislatively

effective as their male colleagues (Hall & Shepsle, 2014). Men generally had longer tenures in Congress, which enabled them to become better and more effective at lawmaking (Lawless & Fox, 2012). Some women in Congress were more effective than their male colleagues, some were less effective, and some were equally as effective (Anzia & Berry, 2011). Congresswomen were more prepared for elected office than their male counterparts (Pearson & Dancey, 2011). The qualifications for female candidates running for a seat in the House were generally higher than male candidates based on prior legislative experience, which translated into increased effectiveness upon election (Bowles, 2012).

Prior Legislative Experience

For many women, state legislature was the primary pathway to a career in the U.S. House of Representatives (Fox & Lawless, 2011). Between 1970 and 2000, the number of women in U.S. state legislatures more than quintupled (Caress & Kunioka, 2012). In the 111th Congress, 24% of state legislators in the United States were women (Ryan et al., 2010). Women abandoned the traditional widow route to membership in Congress—that is, assuming the seat of a recently deceased husband—and were more likely to use prior legislative experience in elective office as a gateway to Congress (Osborn, 2014). Members who had previously served in state legislatures were more effective in Congress than those members lacking such experience (Bush, 2011). Female legislators experienced a higher rate of success than their male counterparts did in state legislatures (Bowles, 2012). Congresswomen generally brought extensive experience as politicians and legislators to Congress, which empowered them in both the Senate and the

House (Brescoll, 2012). Republican women were more likely than Democratic women to enter Congress through the state legislative pipeline (Reingold & Swers, 2011).

Party Influence and Ideology

Gender was a contributing factor in the success of party leadership (Crawford, Jussim, Madon, Cain, & Stevens, 2011). Political parties significantly influenced the electoral success of women (Cheng & Tavits, 2011). Political party affiliation played a pivotal role in legislative outcome and helped members decide how to vote on certain issues (Verge, 2012). Party affiliation became a brand name around which the gender of the representative determined the voting behavior (Celis & Childs, 2012). Although party affiliation and the political context conditioned women's influence on policy, women supported gender-related policies across party lines (Beckwith, 2011).

Parties exerted a significant amount of pressure on its members to vote with the party on procedural matters; therefore, political parties controlled legislative outcomes (Pearson & Dancey, 2011). Party pressure was higher on procedure votes since those votes controlled the agenda (Verge, 2012). A member voting against the party on procedures had to justify their decision to party leaders (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013). Congresswomen were known for being more loyal to their political party than men. Female legislators voted in accordance with their political party over 75% of the time (Oldmixona & Schecter, 2011). The loyalty expressed by women in Congress was evident during a period when Republicans were in power (Brescoll, 2012). In order to please male colleagues, Republican congresswomen tended to focus on welfare policy for women and ignored feminist demands (Celis, 2012).

Members of the Republican and Democratic parties never elected more than two women in leadership positions despite the ascendance of women to important roles such as the Speaker of the House (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013). The descriptive representation of women greatly influenced the support of political parties (Krook & Messing-Mathie, 2013). When democratic and republican parties won several seats in Congress, members were more likely to support women candidates (Ashe & Stewart, 2012). Whereas when members of Congress were expecting to win a few seats, support for women candidates was scarce (Lazarus, 2013)

Democratic and Republican congresswomen voted for and sponsored issues of importance to women such as (a) childcare, (b) women's health, (c) domestic violence prevention, and (d) equal pay (Pearson & Dancey, 2011). Congresswomen worked across party lines to advocate for women's issues at all stages of the policy-making process more than did male partisan colleagues (Pearson & Schickler, 2009). Volden et al. (2013) categorized the demonstration of unity as consensus building whereby women collaborated with the opposing party in an effort to reach a bipartisan vote. Political parties were governed by party rules from which party members could not choose women as their representatives (MacDonald & O'Brien, 2011). Political parties posed leadership barriers for women but supported women's candidacies (Cheng & Tavits, 2011).

For the past three decades, members of the Republican Party were less supportive of women's issues and interests (Dolan, 2011). Following the 1992 elections, a noticeable gap in the percentage of Republican and Democratic women began to emerge (Bjarnegard & Zetterberg, 2011). The disparity steadily grew throughout the rest of the

decade and during the 111th Congress with more women members from the Democratic Party than the Republican Party (Lawless, 2011)

In an attempt to explain the relative paucity of Republican women in Congress, representative Michele Bachmann (R-MN) reinforced the male breadwinner model. That model entitled the women to become stay at home mothers by dedicating themselves to their family leaving the men to be the sole providers (Aboim, 2010). Republicans were slightly underrepresented in the 111th Congress, with the under representation due in large part to fewer Republican congresswomen (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013).

Women in the United States were more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than the Republican Party, and as a result, more female candidates ran for office as Democrats than as Republicans (Ashe & Stewart, 2012). The growth of women in Congress was to an extent a Democratic phenomenon (MacDonald & O'Brien, 2011). During the 111th Congress, of the 17 women in the U.S. Senate, thirteen (76.5%) were Democrats and four (23.5%) were Republicans (Lawless, 2011). Of the 1,790 female state legislators in January 2009, Democrats accounted for 1,266 and Republicans accounted for 510. (Women in State Legislatures, 2009).

An increase in partisanship created a partisan gap that had significant and disturbing implications for women representation both substantively and descriptively (Murray, Krook, & Opello, 2012). The Republican Party withdrew support of the Equal Rights Amendment, which guaranteed equal rights for women, because of the party's reluctance to promote change in long-established gendered institutions (Jacobs et al., 2013). Since 1980, the Democratic Party was better known for supporting women's

issues than the Republican Party (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013). The Democratic Party helped extend abortion rights, criminalized violence against women, expanded employment opportunities, provided women's health care innovations, and advanced social welfare issues, whereas Republican legislators were less likely to sponsor and support feminist legislation (Reingold & Swers, 2011). The Democratic Party appeared more open than the Republican Party to the idea of electing women to office, appointing them to presidential cabinet positions, and electing them to leadership positions within the party (Ashe & Stewart, 2012)

Whereas leadership roles promoted similarities in male and female leaders, women generally had a more liberal, participative, and collaborative style of leading (Osborn, 2014). Male and female leaders expressed different ideologies based on their environments and beliefs (Bowles, 2012). Women in Congress were more liberal than their male colleagues (Brown, Diekman, & Schneider, 2011). Gender had a stronger influence on Republican legislators than Democratic legislators. The Republican Party maintained a much more conservative posture on issues related to women (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013); therefore, the assignment of a congressional seat from Republican to Democratic control, or vice versa, produced a substantial ideological shift (Reingold & Swers, 2011). The Democratic Party tended to nominate more women than the Republican Party because of their liberal views such as support for traditional gender roles as well as their willingness to engage in promoting women to top positions on electoral lists (Ashe & Stewart, 2012). Ideological similarity was associated with legislators working together with their peers and districts to reach a common goal

(Fowler, Heaney, Nickerson, Padgett, & Sinclair, 2011). In general, legislators voted with the majority ideological views of their districts (Krook, 2014). Legislative districts with Democratic Party traits composed of larger minority populations were more likely to elect women (Caress & Kunioka, 2012). Ideology and party allegiance affected women's representation in Congress and their influence in legislative deliberations (Kittilson, 2011).

Legislative Influence

Beyond party influence, legislative influence was important to the underrepresentation of women in policy making (Krook & O'Brien, 2012). Prior to 1992, female legislators in the U.S. House of Representatives were not in a position of power, which affected their ability to become effective leaders (Celis, 2012). The inability of women to gain leadership positions relative to their male colleagues resulted in the incapability of women representatives to influence legislation (Lockhart, 2012). The rise of women in leadership position solidified in 1967 and women represented part of the top echelons of politics with the election of Senator Margaret Chase Smith (R-ME) who became the first woman elected by her peers as the Senate Republican Conference Chair and again in 2001 with the election of Representative Nancy Pelosi as House Democratic Whip (Borshuk, 2013). Consequently, Meeks (2013) began to explore the leadership styles of women in politics compared to their male counterparts as well as how these differences influenced public policy.

In January 2007 the interest in women in leadership position escalated when Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) became the first female Speaker of the House and presided over a

chamber that was predominantly male (Peters & Rosenthal, 2012). During the 111th Congress, Speaker Pelosi was reelected by her peers and became the only woman in history to hold that position (Borshuk, 2013). The Speaker's bills were less likely to advance than other bills introduced in the House because of the often-controversial nature of the subject (Day, LaFrance, & Fuller, 2012). Despite this fact, Representative Pelosi enabled the national health care initiative plan to pass (Nolan, 2011). By contrast to Nancy Pelosi, Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) wielded considerable power in her position as the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship during the 111th Congress. The defiant character of one woman in high political office undermined the status quo by breaking the strong association between masculinity and leadership (Murray, Krook, & Opello, 2012).

Committee Influence

Women in high ranking posts in legislative committees were a rare occurrence, deviated from the norm, and were often subject to challenges resulting from gendered norms of power (Rocca, Sanchez, & Morin, 2011). Women legislators were more likely to advance to important chamber and committee leadership positions because of the ability to demonstrate legislative effectiveness (Volden et al., 2013) When legislators appointed a woman to committee chairman, who was a vital component in legislative success, the newly appointed chairman was highly influential; the chair had the power to prevent legislators from submitting legislation for committee debate (Schickler & Pearson, 2009). The presence of a female chair on the committee was indicative of their ability to affect the legislative process (Kirkland, 2011). Consequently, legislators were

more likely to support legislation sponsored by a committee chair (Lawless & Fox, 2012).

Although some women legislators received Congressional nomination to chair certain committees, the lack of legislative experience in the field hindered their ability to influence policy (Park, 2013). Representatives received higher levels of political action and committee contributions when their proposed bills passed the congressional vote (MacDonald & O'Brien, 2011). The committee system enabled leaders to rise to leadership roles (Kirkland, 2011). Congresswomen rising from the House Republican conference were unsuccessful in securing committee posts (Volden et al.2013). Albeit, during the 111th Congress Louise Slaughter served as the Chair of the House Rules committee, which was among the prestige committees, a position often held by a man (Library of Congress, 2012). The lack of seniority and experience of women members of Congress enabled men to be in charge of elite committees such as Appropriations, Ways and Means, Commerce, or Budget (Park, 2013). Valuable institutional positions such as committee chairmanship increased the legislative effectiveness of lawmakers and offered unprecedented institutional possibilities particularly in congressional agenda setting (Jenkins & Nokken, 2011). The disparity existing among members of the U.S. Congress, created an unbalanced setting in which effective leaders were found in some groups but not in others (Griffin & Keane, 2011).

Party Leadership

The definition of leadership was done in a multitude of ways and the most commonly used definitions involved the leader as a person, the behavior of the leader, the

effects of the leader, and the interaction process between the leader and followers (Meeks, 2013). Judge, Piccolo, and Kosalka (2009) introduced the bright and dark sides of leadership traits and how they affected the character of leaders and their ability to perform in top positions.

In politics, leadership positions included floor leader, whip, conference chair and conference vice chair, conference secretary, research committee chair, policy committee chair, and National Republican Congressional Committee chair (Griffin & Keane, 2011). Regardless of the growth and progress of women in top-level positions, perceptions and views on performance and gender remained unchanged (Ellermers, Kingma, Van den Burgt, & Barreto, 2011). Consequently, gendered based leadership beliefs continued to challenge women in leadership positions and affect performance evaluations and opportunities within the workplace (Teigen, 2012). Women in leadership positions in countries with a high female representation could sustain conflict situations (Ryan et al., 2010). These women tended to adopt a relational leadership style (Simon & Hoyt, 2013).

Women leaders demonstrated a strong sense of conviction and self-worth (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Femininity and leadership were no longer considered incompatible (Zetterberg & Krook, 2014). Women contributed to society by being of service to men and women, which influenced their leadership style (Rink & Ellemers, 2010).

Women leaders were particularly conscious of their role in promoting gender equality in their organizations (Jacobs et al., 2013). This type of leadership style is associated with transformational leadership whereby women provided others with

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and a higher purpose in life (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). Women tended to use transformational styles of leadership to a greater extent than men did (Simon & Hoyt, 2013).

Women, who were not transformational leaders, experienced criticism from their peers and followers (Jacobs et al., 2013). In contrast, agentic female leaders displayed aggressive, assertive, and confident behaviors (Matland & Tezcur, 2011). The behavior of women influenced promotion opportunities, salary negotiations and work performance (Ellemers et al., 2012). The prejudice resulted in attitudes that were less favorable toward female leaders, which made it difficult for women to reach elite leadership positions (Hogartha, Karelaib, & Trujillo, 2011).

Female representation varied substantially in the House and the Senate because the U.S. Senate was dominated by male members and limited by the presence of women (Celis, 2012). Once in a position of power, successful women made it easier for other women, including mothers, to attain leadership positions in both the House and the Senate (Krook, Celis, Childs, & Kantola, 2014). As leaders and policymakers, women in Congress were professionals who overtly demonstrated concerns for employees and constituents (Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011). They created a model of leadership embodying both the traditional roles of leader and mother (Zetterberg & Krook, 2014).

Gender Gap

According to Fox and Lawless (2011), men comprised 83% of the U.S. Congress at the beginning of the 111th Congressional session. Gender stereotypes played an

important role in women's representation and leadership (Smooth, 2011). Gender stereotypes are people's perceptions and beliefs about men and women and the manner in which they differed in society (Hoyt & Simmons, 2011). Gender stereotypes were damaging and had negative consequences for women in leadership roles, particularly when masculine attributes were considered essential (Gartzia, Ryan, Balluerka & Aritzeta, 2012). To this effect, Bowles (2012) provided arguments for gender equality and an explanation of women's underrepresentation by examining the differences between men and women in the workplace.

In general, in advanced modern societies, and when compared to women, men were less supportive of equal roles (Fox & Lawless, 2011). A major argument in interpreting gender inequality concerns a common fact: the rise of women's social and financial independence (Doyle, 2011). Women became more independent disengaging themselves from the dominant masculine gender system (Aboim, 2010). Women differentiated themselves from men by revealing different attitudes and behavior (Diekman, Johnston, & Loescher, 2013).

Men and women shared different worldviews and different social groups and they confronted leadership style and experience differently (Gartzia et al., 2012). Men possessed characteristics of authority, assertiveness, independence, confidence, and decisiveness, all of which were associated with agentic qualities (Diekman, Johnston, & Loescher, 2013). In contrast, women possessed communal leadership strengths by being nurturing, helpful, and comforting (Matland & Tezcur, 2011). Consequently, the policies supported by congresswomen differed from those supported by their male counterparts

(Fox and Lawless, 2011). Men dealt with issues fitting their strengths, such as crime and the economy, whereas women were proficient with issues related to education, health, poverty, and the environment (Simmons & Hoyt, 2013).

Men, being better prepared, faced the challenges associated with being a leader more easily (Hoobler, Lemmon & Wayne, 2011). 51% of voters favored men over women to handle issues related to crime, defense, and threats (Dolan, 2011). Congresswomen were reluctant and in some cases avoided endorsing bills related to prison and criminal sentences; instead they focused on issues such as health care and education (Lavanty, 2009). Conversely, women were at a disadvantage when these issues were salient to voters because voters preferred male candidates (Kerevel & Atkeson, 2013).

Brown, Diekman, and Schneider (2011) reintroduced a few common stereotypes associated with women in the workplace that affected the ability to fulfill leadership positions. The stereotypes were the ability to seduce others by behavior and tone of voice, caring and nurturing attitudes, and the naiveté or ill preparedness to execute (Hoyt & Simmons, 2011). Peers ridiculed women who exhibited too many masculine traits; the women lost trust because they were going against type or played into male political stereotypes that voters rejected (Gartzia, Ryan, Balluerka, & Aritzeta, 2012). Women in positions of power tended to display male leadership characteristics as a way to downplay their gender identity (Pagliaro, Ellemers, & Bareto, 2011). The strategy of women in leadership positions discouraged other women in the organization by stating that women were attempting to adapt their behavior to the most common model of leadership at the

time (Duguid, 2011). The presence and success of other women in leadership position intimidated women and they preferred to have men at the top management level (Elsesser, 2011; Hersby et al., 2011).

Gender stereotypes were paramount to the advancement and appointment of women leaders (Gartzia, Ryan, Balluerka, & Aritzeta, 2012). Although the presence of women leaders was increasing in Congress, treatment of men and women was not equal (Krook & True, 2012). The increase in female representation in top-level management and in politics encouraged men to create a threatening environment for women (Hughes, 2013). Women stayed in office for shorter periods of time than their male counterparts (Caress & Kunioka, 2012). Promotions for women occurred more often than males (Hogarta et al., 2011).

Gender equality grew steadily in organizations from several factors including displaying a fair representation to stakeholders and constituents and a demonstration of group diversity within the organization (Krook & True, 2012). The collaboration between men and women led to team effectiveness and benefited a successful performance in a gender diverse environment (Ryan, Haslam, Herby, & Bongiorno, 2011). Gender diversity in leadership benefited the organization and strengthened the notion that men and women collaborated as a team regardless of their different leadership approaches and leadership styles (Stroebe, Dovidio, Barreto, Ellemers, & John, 2011). Some men and women firmly believed in gender equality in the workplace (Derks et al., 2011b).

Social Resources and Electoral Connections.

Women in Congress formed a social network enabling members to move

sponsored bills through the legislative pipeline with the help of coalition partners, also known as social resources (Fowler, et al., 2011). A social resource is the support received from colleagues within the larger organizational network allowing leaders to function effectively (Rink, Ryan, & Stoker, 2012). When evaluating leadership opportunities, men and women relied heavily on the availability of social resources (Cheng & Tavits, 2011).

Social networks contributed to the effectiveness of women legislators especially when they were working collaboratively through cosponsorship activities (Bratton & Rouses, 2011). Social resources enabled women gatekeepers to recruit other qualified women for leadership positions (Cheng & Tavits, 2011). Mutual support and potential coalition formation was necessary and important when disadvantaged groups, in a position of weakness, were competing with other groups in political and policy processes (Fine & Avery, 2014).

Critical Mass Theory

The concept of critical mass represents the relationship between the percentage of female legislators and the passage of legislation beneficial to women as a group (Krook, 2011). Dahlerup (1978) introduced the concept of critical mass to the study of women and politics and explained the concept that the critical mass entailed the presence of a minority of women in all elected minorities. Achieving a critical mass of women was not the most important factor in advancing women's interests and equality (Kittilson, 2011). Critical acts and critical actors were also paramount in policymaking and leadership (Kittilson, 2011). Similarly, Krook, Celis, Childs, and Kantola (2014) argued for increased attention to critical actors defined by the authors as an individual in any given

situation who initiated and pursued specific pieces of legislation.

Women leaders were not influential until they grew from a few token status into a considerable minority of all legislators (Duguid, Loyd, & Tolbert, 2012). The token status referred to a 15% threshold in female representation, when during the 111th Congress, women were a minority in legislatures (MacDonald & O'Brien, 2011). Tokenism was the state in which a social group represented less than 15% of a total group's population (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011).

Celis (2012) used the critical mass theory to promote women's representation at the legislative level and the degree to which this theory served to advocate women's issues and awareness among legislators. The presence of women did not translate into positive legislative outcomes because of their token status (Reingold & Swers, 2011). The presence of women led to changes in legislative debates and outcomes (Barnes & Burchard, 2012). A critical mass of women changed the climate for women in the legislative body, especially with the increase in female representation over the past decades, creating a more positive environment for women (Celis & Childs, 2012).

A substantial number of women in the legislative body, often referred to as critical mass, encouraged women in Congress to devote their time and legislative resources in order for women to have a strong representation in the Chamber (Celis & Childs, 2012). Society tended to attribute more power and social status to men (Hogarta et al., 2011). Unlike women, men were not exposed to the consequences of being a token (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2013). Women in leadership positions could not support other women in lower level position (Reingold & Swers, 2011). As a result, women

leaders could not identify with their gender group (Duguid, Loyd, & Tolbert, 2012).

Successful women were part of a small population of successful token representatives in the organization, both powerful and prestigious, faced with insurmountable challenges (Duguid, 2011).

Transition and Summary

Women in general, with an egalitarian outlook on life, bear the double burden of trying to balance family and occupational success and as the gender minority women managed to succeed at the top of their professions (Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

Stereotypes related to gender and leadership in organizations continues to be an ongoing debate and challenge for women in leadership positions (Derks et al., 2012). Politics, among several other professions, has been a traditionally male-dominated industry with a systemic issue of poor representation of women (Celis, 2012).

Section 1 encompassed the purpose of the study and identified the research method and design as a qualitative phenomenological study. Section 2 included an in-depth discussion of the role of the researcher as well as the research design and method. Section 2 encompassed the population and sampling for the study and the data collection tools and techniques. Section 3 was an overview of the findings related to the study and its applications to professional practice. Section 3 addressed the implications for social change and recommendation for future research.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 provides a description of the applicability of a qualitative research method. The purpose of Section 2 was to outline the methodology of the qualitative phenomenological study. Section 2 includes information related to the research design and method, the role of the researcher, the participants, and the data collection. The findings of the study could contribute to the limited body of current knowledge regarding the effectiveness of female leaders in prestigious institutions such as the U.S. Congress.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore strategies that women congressional leaders used to pass legislation in a male dominated congress. A snowball sample of twenty congresswomen from the U.S. 111th Congress participated in semistructured interviews to share their perceptions and individual lived experiences about passing legislation. Business institutions could adopt some of the leadership strategies used by women in prestigious institutions such as the U.S. Congress to diversify leadership practices in the workplace. Burnet (2011) noted the significant advances in the leadership and gender literature. The present study could further contribute to aspects of this phenomenon.

The findings of the study may provide insights into challenges women face and preparatory strategies they may employ as leaders in such areas as lobbying, balancing the United States federal budget, and advocacy for issues related to women. Beaman, Duflo, Pande, and Petia (2012) asserted that the presence of these legislators encouraged

other women to become more engaged in leadership roles and more attuned to women's issues. The findings from this study may have a social impact by encouraging women to increase involvement in policy making and leadership roles.

Role of the Researcher

A qualitative researcher examines both the structure of the participants' responses and the manner in which they respond, such as observing emotions, tone, attitude, non-verbal communication, and expressions (Firmin & Injeti, 2013). Researchers should listen attentively and develop rapport with the participant (Bolderson, 2012). My role as researcher was to uncover the lived experiences of females in the 111th Congress.

According to Marsh-McDonald and Schroeder (2012), a qualitative research involves the lived experiences of the participants and the analysis of the researcher.

In phenomenological studies, the researcher remains objective by avoiding suppositions, stays focused, develops a research question or problem that becomes the driving force of the study, and arrives at a conclusion which leads to further research and reflection (Moustakas, 1994). The process known as epoché allows a researcher to gather data as objectively as possible by setting aside prejudices and biases. My personal preconceived opinions had no precedence over the participants' interpretation of the phenomenon. The use of semistructured interviews allowed the participants to respond to particular aspects of their careers using their own interpretation of facts (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). I used semistructured and in-depth interviews to address the leadership strategies used by women of the 111th Congress. Adhering to the Belmont report directive to do no harm to the research participants, I explained the informed consent

form and asked the participants to sign the document. I will keep the signed consent forms, the audio files, and all data related to the study secure in a locked safe, and I will destroy them after a period of 5 years.

Participants

In qualitative research, it is imperative to select appropriate participants for the study (Bolderston, 2012). Therefore, the selection process for the study involved the participation of a snowball sample of 20 Democratic and Republican congresswomen who served between January 3, 2009 and January 3, 2011 in the U.S. House of Representatives or the Senate. The research participants arose from the population size of 94 women members of the 111th U.S. Congress who used leadership strategies for bill passage.

Studies involving women in leadership positions were not representative of the norm, and locating these unique targets involved relying on personal networks and snowball techniques. The snowball techniques facilitated access to the congresswomen. In an effort to ensure redundancy and replication, O'Reilly and Parker (2013) suggested adding new participants to the study until the data was complete, a process used in qualitative study and known as *saturation*. Saturation in qualitative research is a period during data collection when no more data needs to be collected (Elo et al., 2014). Although Folta, Seguin, Ackerman, and Nelson (2012) noted a maximum of 10 interviewees as sufficient for a sample size of lived experiences in a qualitative phenomenological study, I used the snowball sampling technique until I identified and interviewed 20 participants. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) stated that a sample size is

complete when the study reaches a point of saturation at which no new information is found.

The geographic location of the research participants was the United States of America. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. In an effort to accommodate participants' schedules, I scheduled face-to-face and remote interviews through Skype, as needed. The participants signed a consent form, which ensured their confidentiality. I secured all interview data in a locked safe for 5 years

Research Method and Design

Petty et al. (2012) argued that method and methodology were related to research design. Method explores how data is collected and methodology considers why to collect data in a particular way. The study of leadership involves a multitude of research methods that provide an understanding of the complexity of leader performance and the manner in which leaders affect various functions in the world (Mumford, 2011). The research methods include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Factors influencing whether a study should be qualitative or quantitative are objectivity, ethical diligence, and rigor (Fisher & Stenner, 2011). In an effort to gain an adequate perspective of the lived experiences of women in the U.S. Congress, qualitative research was the method of choice. According to Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2012), the use of a qualitative research is appropriate when the purpose of the study is to explore individuals' lives. The qualitative method considered for the study included a phenomenological research design.

Method

The study included a qualitative method of analysis to explore the lived experiences of women of the 111th U.S Congress. Understanding human beings' experience is paramount in a qualitative study (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Qualitative research involves the usage and description of human experience and the limited knowledge of the variables of the participants' lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative research was more appropriate for answering why and how social experience was accorded meaning (Harrison, 2012). Therefore, the qualitative method was mostly useful for exploratory research. The focus of the study was to gather shared experiences of women in Congress concerning the leadership strategies they employed during their tenure as lawmakers in a male-dominated institution. This process involved a series of semistructured, open-ended, and in-depth interview questions, which according to Leko (2014) would be conducive to qualitative inquiry.

A qualitative research method was appropriate for this study because the focus was to provide an in-depth understanding of the experience of congresswomen and their influence on policy making. A qualitative study is a research methodology that seeks to provide understanding of an individual worldview and to study individual lived experiences in a natural setting (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). According to Dierckx de Casterle, Gastmans, Bryon, and Denier (2012), qualitative inquiry involved an emphasis on processes and meanings that were not measured in terms of quantity. Qualitative studies imply the collection of analyzed and interpreted data that cannot be

easily quantifiable (Firmin & Injeti, 2013).

The goal of the qualitative study is to understand various aspects as well as the how and why of the phenomenon (Fisher & Stenner, 2011). Harrison (2012) emphasized that the voices of individuals who are quantitatively examined are silenced when the meaning concerning what goes on around them is lost, whereas Leko (2014) argued that a qualitative study using open-ended questions, gives participants an opportunity for self-expression. Quantitative data could not explain the phenomenon described in the study because the goal of the study was to explore lived experiences rather than to test hypotheses. A quantitative analysis was not appropriate for the nature of the study because Denzin and Lincoln (2011) agreed that a quantitative research method aimed to provide mathematical analysis.

Stentz et al. (2012) defined a mixed methods design as a combination of qualitative and quantitative study used to explain and explore specific research questions. Combs and Onwuegbuzie (2011) referred to the process as mixed analysis, a type of research method in which a researcher combined qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, and analysis technique. A mixed method inquiry was not suitable for the study because previous leadership studies focusing on a mixed method approach did not include qualitative analysis and results (Wang, Tsui, & Xin, 2011). Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013) demonstrated the use of mixed method for business research and leadership studies and found that the application of the mixed methodological approach by business scholars was a rare occurrence. A mixed method approach was beyond the scope of one researcher in a doctoral study and therefore was not appropriate for the

study.

Research Design

A research design indicates the full research process from conceptualization of the research problem, generation of data, analysis, interpretation of findings, and dissemination of results (Magilvy & Thomas, 2011). Wang, Tsui, and Xin, (2011) noted the use of several research designs in leadership studies. Ethnography, case study, and phenomenology are all valid research designs used in leadership studies (Fisher and Stenner, 2011).

Ethnography involves the definition of a particular group in relations to its cultural behavior (Petty et al., 2012). The objective of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of women of the 111th Congress. The intent of this research was to gather data regarding the perspectives of successful, powerful, and influential women in gendered institution such as the U.S. Congress.

Case studies restrict the analysis to a small number of cases in a more holistic fashion. Case studies limit the degree in which the study could shed light on dynamics at work within a particular setting (Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K., 2015). In the study, I explored the leadership strategies of women of the U.S. Congress by focusing on a large population of women who achieved career success as opposed to analyzing one particular case or individual.

Husserl (1931) defined phenomenology as the use of available data involving ideas and essences in which knowledge can be discovered through actual experience and intuition. This qualitative study involved the exploration of the phenomenon of leadership

associated with women members of the 111th Congress as well as their personal experiences in relation to their political careers. Phenomenology constituted the adequate method of inquiry, which was the reason that I chose a phenomenological design as the research design for the study. Firmin and Injeti (2013) further demonstrated the appropriateness of a qualitative study by stating that a phenomenological research design involved the exploration of detailed and in depth data. Interviews were based on semistructured questions allowing the participant to be engaged in the research. Phenomenological research is based on the assumption that an experience is best described and interpreted by the participants in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The face-to-face interaction allowed both the interviewer and the interviewee to engage in an open colloquy based on the participants lived experiences.

The research was focused on human experience and data collected relied on the participation of a few individuals. According to Marnocha, Bergstrom, and Dempsey (2011), qualitative studies focus on diverse opinions and views of participants. Qualitative studies allow participants to express themselves in subjects that are relatable to them (Moustakas, 1994). The research design of this phenomenological study included in-depth interviews with 20 women of the 111th Congress, which provided insights to understanding their lived experiences. In qualitative research, the purpose of the study is to explore individuals' lives (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2012). Participants elaborated on their leadership style, career paths, personal, and professional challenges during their tenure in Congress.

Population and Sampling

The focus of the study was to seek the perceptions of women members of the U.S. Congress to determine the leadership strategies used in Congress. A snowball sample of 20 congresswomen of the 111th Congress participated in a 20-30 minute interview. Although the population size of 20 participants did not cover the population of the U.S. Congress, this number represented an acceptable size because it adhered to Folta et al. (2012) indication that 20 participants was suitable for a qualitative study. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) stated that a sample size is complete when the study reaches saturation in which no new information is found. I used a sample size of 20 participants to reach data saturation because more data did not translate into more information.

The sample selected for the study included a snowball technique, which was a suitable method for qualitative research. Marnocha et al. (2011) defined snowballing as a type of purposive sampling in which initial participants refer additional qualified participants. Each participant was a female member of the 111th Congress. The congresswomen meeting the criteria voluntarily participated in the research. In an effort to protect the identity of the participants, I used a coding process linked to each participant. This coding process involved assigning letters and numbers to each participant, starting from CW1 to CW20.

The participants in the study responded to interview questions based on reflections of their experiences as members of the United States Congress. The participants also chose not to answer certain questions or to withdraw at any time during the interview. The interview questions followed the phenomenological design by

allowing the participants to discuss their personal experiences as it related to their participation in the law making process.

Ethical Research

Following approval of the study from the Walden University IRB (#07-21-14-0084422), I contacted the participants to begin data collection. Researchers have the responsibility of conducting meaningful and trustworthy research with as much ethical diligence as possible (Bolderston, 2012; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2012). A study is both non-scientific and unethical when data is fabricated and fraudulent (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Prior to the beginning of the research, participants received written information about the nature and consequences of the study. Strict measures ensured the confidentiality of all interview participants. Upon choosing to participate in the study, each participant completed and signed an informed consent form (see Appendix A), which indicated the privacy and confidentiality of the interviews as well as the intent of the study.

Participants were also given the option to consent to the interview being audio-recorded. When the participant chose not to be recorded, I conducted the interview accordingly by taking extensive notes in lieu of the audio-recorded device. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2012) stated that participation in qualitative research was almost always voluntary. The participants willingly participated in the study with the option to withdraw voluntarily at any time during the research process. When the participant elected to withdraw, I stopped the interview and destroyed all data including respective notes and

interviews.

The participants did not receive an incentive for participating in the study. The identity of the participants remained confidential during and after the study. I will keep the signed consent forms, the audio files, and all data related to the study in a locked safe, secured and I will destroy them after a period of 5 years.

Data Collection

Part of Moustakas' (1994) data collection technique involved the epoché process, which played an important role in the validation of the instruments. The epoché process set the mood for interviewing by creating a climate in which the participant felt comfortable to answer each question truthfully and openly. The instrument of research in a qualitative study is the researcher (Magilvy & Thomas, 2011). Data included transcripts gathered through semistructured interviews with the participants and notes from observations (participants' attitudes, feelings, vocal and facial expressions). I explored the phenomenon of leadership from the participants' perspectives as well as their personal experiences in relation to their political careers.

Instruments

Interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials are instruments used in a qualitative study. In an effort to describe the full experience of the study and to have a better understanding of the perception of each participant, Moustakas (1994) suggested observing the research subjects; therefore I observed non-verbal cues while conducting face-to-face interviews. Qualitative researchers are the primary research instrument because they observe and interpret the data (Kaczynski, Salmona & Smith, 2014). I was

the primary research instrument in this study and I used semistructured and in depth interviews to address the leadership strategies used by women of the 111th Congress. Semistructured interviews are a series of interview questions that are written with the intent to guide the conversation (Petty et al., 2012). Marshall and Rossman (2016) found that semistructured and in-depth interviews provided an objective insight to understanding of the lived experience of each participant.

Data Collection Technique

When Congress was in session, I interviewed 20 women members of the United States Congress, who served from 2009 to 2011. The interview process facilitated the schedule and availability of the participants. I contacted the congresswomen by telephone and followed up with a visit to their office to obtain a written confirmation. I started with representatives from my district since they were closer in distance.

The selection process of the study involved a snowball technique, in which initial participants referred additional qualified participants whether the participants were active or inactive members of Congress. Marnocha et al. (2011) defined snowballing as a type of purposive sampling in which initial participants refer additional qualified participants. My first participant was able to refer additional participants based on her contacts and her network. The snowball technique allows the researcher to reach out to other participants through their internal network (Cohen, N. & Arieli, T., 2011). The snowball techniques facilitated the access to the congresswomen since some of them were part of the same congressional committees and political parties and thus were more accessible through this method. Participants are able to refer other participants until the study reaches data

saturation (Handcock, M., & Gile, 2011). I used the snowball sampling method to gain access to additional congresswomen until I identified and interviewed the 20 participants.

Participants signed a consent form confirming their willingness to participate voluntarily in the study. Magilvy and Thomas (2011) argued that qualitative data referred to narratives and experiences revealed by subjects that researchers recorded digitally on tape or in notes. When the participant granted permission to record the interview, I used an audio recording device to facilitate the data collection. To ensure privacy and confidentiality of the participants, a separate digital file stored all recorded interviews with participant codes of CW1, CW2, and so forth assigned to all telephone, face-to-face or audio-recorded interviews. According to Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) one of the main methods for collecting data involves individual interviews. To ensure validity, the participants had the opportunity to review the interview notes followed by member checking. Member checking allows the participants to correct errors and address misinterpretations (Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. 2013). Baillie (2015) stated that member validation occurs when a researcher submits a short report of his findings to participants for checking. Member checking occurs when the researcher shares the interpretation of the findings with the research participant to ensure that the information is correct (Petty, N. J., Thomson, O. P., & Stew, G. 2012). Once completed and published, the study will be available to the participants and the public at large, especially those interested in the underrepresentation and leadership of women in the workplace.

Data Organization Techniques

I scheduled face-to-face semistructured interviews with each congresswoman, and I conducted the interviews based on a set of questions related to the study (Appendix A). Participants' information remained confidential before, during, and after the study by using a code assigned to each participant (CW1 to CW20). The letter CW referred to *Congress Women* followed by a number. The coding strategy ensured complete confidentiality of the participants since I did not reveal their names at any point during or after the study.

The focus of the study was the lived experience of a group of women of the 111th Congress and how they influenced the law making process. At the beginning of each interview, I clearly explained to each participant the purpose of the study and the minimal risk they could experience by participating in the study as well as their option to withdraw at any time. The participants did not experience any risks greater than what they experienced in their daily lives. I reviewed all data, including interview transcripts, notes, audio recordings, and observations and I extracted all unnecessary information.

The data organization included 20 separate folders labeled with the corresponding code (CW1, CW2, CW3, etc....) assigned to each participant. Individual folders housed the information of each participant and all the data pertinent to the study. I kept the information of each participant in individual folders and I stored all data pertinent to the study in a locked safe for a period of 5 years. After 5 years, I will shred and destroy the data and all files related to the study.

Data Analysis Technique

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe the personal and professional perceptions of women in the United States Congress. To identify specific themes, I manually grouped similar ideas and identified key points and relating concepts. The revision and organization of categories into common topics resulted in themes. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2012) analyzed several qualitative research articles and found that qualitative studies resulted in data analysis in the more conventional, manual fashion rather than via computer-based analytical program. Dierckx de Casterle et al. (2012) found that qualitative software was incapable to interpret the meaning of data and to segment the data.

I used Moustakas' (1994) seven steps modified Van Kaam method to analyze the data by grouping similar ideas, identifying key points and relating concepts and developing themes and constructs. The modified Van Kaam facilitated a structured analysis of the data through several steps: First, I analyzed actual written and verbal communications by sorting information provided by each participant. Second, I identified patterns by grouping similar answers on a spreadsheet. I sorted keywords and patterns into different categories to construct themes by identifying differences and similarities between the participants lived experiences. The most common theme derived from similar categories or words grouped into a single theme. The thematic categories was possible through a manual coding process based on the modified Van Kamm method of data analysis (De Soir, Knarren, Zech, Mylle, Kleber, & Van der Hart, 2012).

The seven-step modified Van Kaam method used in the study provided insights to

the lived experience and perceptions of women in the 111th United States Congress. In qualitative research, experiences described as lived through the data analysis identifies similarities and differences in the data as well as categories, patterns, and themes (Folta, Seguin, Ackerman, & Nelson, 2012). Fisher and Stenner (2011) further stated that data analysis was an important process in qualitative studies, designed to provide various types of information and diverse perspectives.

Reliability and Validity

Research methods are legitimate when establishing reliability in a qualitative research (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). The research process has to be clearly defined to facilitate other researchers to repeat the study (Moustakas, 1994). In a phenomenological study, honesty and accuracy from the research participants are the quintessential factors determining the validity of the study (Cushon et al., 2010). Reliability and validity are paramount to gaining accurate insight to the lived experiences of the women in Congress.

Reliability

Ellis and Levy (2008) stated that steps should be taken by the researcher to derive reliable questions. I ensured that the participants' responses were consistent, and I kept them focused on the research topic in order to show that the findings were consistent and could be repeated. Dependability refers to the stability and the consistency of the data (Elo et al., 2014). Baillie (2015) suggested two factors of reliability that included repeatability and consistency. To ensure reliability I provided the participants the opportunity to review my interpretation of the data through member checking. According

to Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) member checking allows the participants to correct errors and address misinterpretations because through quality control, member checking assures the accuracy and credibility of the study. Participants should be able to comment on the interview transcript and ascertain whether the final themes and concepts correspond to the research (Noble & Smith, 2015). Once published, the study will be available to the participants and the public at large, especially those interested in the underrepresentation and leadership of women in the workplace.

Validity

To establish validity and scientific rigor in the phenomenological research I revised the interpretation of the data several times with the participants. Member checking is a validity strategy used by many qualitative researchers to guarantee the relevance or accuracy of decisions and descriptions made about individuals, groups, or institutions (Petty et al., 2012). Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2015) posits that member checking is an accurate technique for establishing credibility. I used member checking to establish trustworthiness of the data in the study because it ensured accuracy by allowing the participants to validate interpretations, findings, and conclusions. Member checking gives the participants the opportunity to correct errors and to volunteer additional information (Houghton et al., 2013).

Transferability of the findings is possible when a qualitative researcher understands the context of the research and is able to provide a contextualized description of the phenomenon of interest that may be used for future research (Houghton et al., 2015). The findings of the study are applicable in other contexts, situations and

populations. Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, and Kyngäs (2014) found that transferability involves a detailed description of the data, sampling method, and participants and the transfer of the findings to other settings. The participants and the public will be able to review in detail the findings of the research and compare them with situations within the same context. The responsibility for determining transferability will depend on the readers' interpretations of the findings and the decision to apply the findings to their own setting (Petty et al., 2012).

According to Baillie (2015), researchers should keep a detailed records similar to an audit trail to facilitate independent reviews of the data collection, coding, and analysis procedures. Confirmability is achieved when steps are taken to insure the accuracy of the data and to avoid researcher bias, motivation or interest (Houghton et al., 2013). I reviewed all responses and results with the participants to ensure accuracy of the study. Once completed, I provided a 1-2 page summary of the research findings to the participants in order for each participant to confirm the accuracy of the answers. Participants received a copy of the findings and results to validate the content of their reflected perspectives. The research findings were the results of the experience of the participants. My personal preconceived opinions had no precedence over the participants' interpretation of the phenomenon. To achieve confirmability, researchers must ensure that the research findings emerged from the data and not their own predispositions (Magilvy & Thomas, 2011).

I reached data saturation at 20 participants because no new information emerged from the participants. Saturation in qualitative research is a period during data collection

when no more data need to be collected (Walker, 2014). Data collection was saturated when the collection of data did not provide any new information to the study. When saturation is not achieved, the data cannot be analyzed because it is incomplete (Elo et al., 2014). O'Reilly and Parker (2013) suggested adding new participants to the study until the data is complete, I used the snowball sampling technique until I identified and interviewed the 20 participants. O'Reilly and Parker also stated that a sample size is complete when the study reaches saturation in which no new information is found.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included the justification for choosing a qualitative research method and a phenomenological research design. I used a snowball sample of participants located in the United States of America to explore the leadership effectiveness of women of the 111th United States Congress. Section 3 represented the findings of the study and included its application to business practices. In Section 3, I correlated the findings of the study to previous leadership studies by Volden et al. (2013) and Mumford (2011) as well as Kanter (1977) and Dahrelup's (1978) critical mass theory and token status theory.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore strategies that women congressional leaders need to pass legislation in a male dominated congress. The result of the study indicated the strategies used by congresswomen to pass legislation were: (a) perseverance, (b) mentorship, (c) teamwork, and (d) leadership.

Participants provided information that could aid in the understanding of the strategies used by women in congress to pass legislation. Volden et al. (2013) indicated that congresswomen were effective lawmakers due to their motivation, collaboration across party lines, leadership in the House of Representatives and Senate, and their abilities to pass legislation in an environment where women were underrepresented. Women used strategies that enabled them to pass legislation; women in Congress were the authors of several bills taking direct action on the economy and small businesses.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question guiding the study was: what strategies do women congressional leaders need to pass legislation in a male dominated Congress? The role of gender in leadership and public policy was addressed as the principal research question of the study. The objective of the study was to set a platform for women interested in leadership positions in both the private and public sectors by exploring the lived experiences of women in Congress and understanding the personal perception of 20 female members of the 111th Congress. The presence of women in politics enabled the passage of legislation and the promotion of women's issues in an environment where

women were underrepresented. The study contributed to our understanding of gender salience in higher office and how it affects women's rate of growth in male dominated institutions such as the United States Congress.

Four common themes emerged from the 10 responses to the interview questions of the research participants about their lived experience in the U. S. Congress. Sorting the data into themes derived by interview questions was critical. The themes originating from the data were as follow: (a) perseverance, (b) mentorship, (c) teamwork, and (d) leadership.

Perseverance. The most common themes associated with the research question were the perseverance and motivation of the congresswomen. The majority of the participants expressed perseverance and motivation as a key strategy to bill passage. Most of the research participants indicated that to be labeled as the gender minority encouraged them to persevere not only for their personal success but also for their country and the multitude of women depending on them. Kaiser et al. (2012) demonstrated that diversity programs offered in business institutions encouraged individuals to believe that the business environment was just and reduced the perception of gender discrimination.

The participants revealed that the women who came before them recognized that there were significant challenges for women who wanted to lead. Unfortunately, women in government were still in the minority, which created a difficult environment for success. Participant CW5 concluded: "When I was a candidate running for Congress, I did so not because it would be easy but because when I looked at my leaders, they were

all men” (personal communication, September 15, 2014).

The participants encountered many challenges related to gender, social background, money, popularity, and political support during their tenures in Congress. The congresswomen reflected on the challenges they faced when they decided to serve their country. The participants noted the challenges of being a female leader in a male dominated environment. As women, they faced more obstacles than men during the campaign process. Women did not always have access to the same resources, money, and mentors that men had. They faced skepticism and doubt from others and from themselves. Some of the women of Congress had to balance their roles as both leaders and mothers, and thus many women came into public office only after they raised their children. Participant CW1 concluded: “The disparities will continue to be a crucial part of the conversation as women’s roles increase in a traditionally male-dominated government, until it’s no longer male-dominated” (personal communication, September 16, 2014).

The token status theory stipulated a 15% representative threshold in a mixed environment, which categorizes women in Congress as token in the workplace (Hogarth et al., 2011). A common recognition among the participants was that, during past congresses, gender inequality remained a controversial topic due to the token status. Despite the negative criticism they received, the participants indicated how they were able to persevere through the process of running for office to becoming a pivotal leader in Congress. CW10 said, “Women in office are as qualified as men to lead in Congress. They should be given the same respect when they decide to serve their country (personal

communication, September 15, 2014).

The participants elaborated on the negative environment surrounding women when they ran for public office. All participants worked in male dominated fields. As women, the lawmakers faced challenges in being accepted and respected in a workplace where men were in the majority. Participant CW4 stated, “Society has a selective amnesia when it comes to women’s fight for credibility. Society chooses to ignore a woman’s record because its ultimate goal is to feminize her rather to acknowledge her accomplishments” (personal communication, September 16, 2014).

Participant CW1 argued that perseverance was the key element that enabled her to overcome obstacles and pass legislation. The elements of success were clear leadership, determination, and commitment to hard work. When running for public office, the participants knocked on every door in their district to prove their work ethic to their constituents. Women in Congress decided to serve their country when they dedicated themselves to public life out of a desire to make a difference and to empower women in society.

During their tenure in Congress, the female lawmakers experienced tokenism since they totaled less than 15% in the House of Representatives or the Senate. Torchia, Calabrò, and Huse (2011) explained the token status theory by indicating that women members of Congress were considered as token when they formed less than the critical mass of 15% needed to have meaningful influence and representation in their political parties.

The participants’ perceptions and experiences contradicted findings by Wolak

(2014) in a study using a web based experimental design to explore the political empowerment of women. Four hundred and ten male and female participants completed that study. The findings indicated that the presence of women in politics did not encourage other women to engage in politics. Wolak revealed that a strong presence of female lawmakers did not lead to political empowerment for women. In regard to substantive representation, women in society felt empowered by how women in politics represented them; however, when considered as descriptive representation, women felt powerless regardless of who represented them in Congress.

Mentorship. The second emerging theme was mentorship. The participants acknowledged the importance of personal development as a strong enabler for success. The congresswomen expressed their gratitude towards their mentors who were sometimes men. Women in Congress view their mentors as a guide and a support throughout the lawmaking process. Participant CW11 acknowledged her mentor, in the following statement, as a key factor in her decision to become a lawmaker: “Without his support, I might not have felt confident enough to take that first step toward my career in public service” (personal communication, September 20, 2014).

Mentorship was quintessential in the lives of the participants. The majority of the participants recognized that mentorship played a significant role in their overall development and success. Participants focused on mentorship as a key factor facilitating their ascension into leadership positions. According to Torchia, Calabrò, and Huse (2011), the token status theory refers to a group of women forming a minority in an organization but influencing others through their mentorship, leadership and success.

Women in Congress were able to establish relationships with senior members by asking for advice. Mentorship allowed the participants to respect the rules of the house and senate, to become liable and to form alliances. Participant CW19 reflected: “The opportunity to run for office came when my mentor and boss, from the State legislature, encouraged me to run for the State House seat he was vacating. I was incredibly excited, but also apprehensive since I was only 25 years old and no one that young had run before me. I felt unprepared because my plan had been the traditional one – settle in to my new marriage, have my children, raise them until they could go to school, and then focus on my goals” (personal communication, September 15, 2014).

Cho et. al (2015) used a grounded theory approach to review 53 letters of recommendations written by faculty peers for faculty members who demonstrated outstanding mentorship qualities. The study argued that mentors served as role models and guide to their mentees by revealing several mentorship qualities: (a) engaging, (b) inspiring, (c) honest, (d) insightful, (e) selfless, and (f) wise. The mentors instilled these qualities in their mentees, which enabled them to become successful individuals. Tan (2015) examined a sample of young underrepresented women in Singapore and found that senior female politicians paired with young women increased awareness among other women from academic and public sectors and encouraged them to be more involved in politics.

Leadership. The participants consistently noted that leadership in the workplace influenced the passage of bills. From an early age, women in Congress understood the value of responsible leadership (Folta, Seguin, Ackerman & Nelson, 2012). The

leadership abilities displayed in the congresswomen were due to their parents who instilled in them the qualities of a leader: (a) honesty, (b) integrity, and (c) trust. The participants learned that leaders were a source of inspiration and motivation. As leaders, women in Congress had a huge responsibility towards their constituents. The participants were able to apply these leadership qualities when representing their constituents in Congress and when fighting for the rights of women in society.

As leaders and policymakers, women in Congress recognized that they were responsible to represent more than half of the population who were women. The participants demonstrated concerns for their constituents and women in general. Participant CW13 accentuated on the importance of leadership in order to pass legislation “Women need representation at the highest levels of government since 52% of the population depends on women senators to give voice to their concerns. The citizens that we represent are mothers, daughters, wives, grandmothers, and the primary caretakers of elderly parents” (personal communication, September 15, 2014).

Women in public service focused on the unique contribution they brought and the importance of having female leadership at the state capital because congresswomen were more active in issues related to women. Women’s issues involved issues related to wages, housing, day care, health care, education and public safety. These issues were crucial to the congresswomen but were neglected by lawmakers in male dominated senates and legislatures, especially when they involved matters that were gender specific- such as job equity, sexual harassment, maternity leave, and rape shield laws. Participant CW2 shared the following statement: “We need women in government to address these issues because

they have an impact on the economy and the well-being of our female citizens” (personal communication, September 15, 2014). Based on Pearson and Dancey (2011) research, an increase in the number of women in Congress lead to an increase of women’s interests related to children, military families, and education.

Brown and Diekman (2013) demonstrated, through the token status theory, that the token presence of women in leadership position reduced the belief of racial inequalities and encouraged individuals to pursue their careers. Women of Congress were leaders who inspired other women to join the process. They understood that building relationships was paramount to building support. They were transformational leaders who inspired women in society and taught them to become leaders themselves (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). Participant CW20 recalled when she sought the support of her peers by utilizing her leadership skills to pass a bill that would help thousands of women diagnosed with breast cancer. One of the moments of which she was most proud of as an elected official was in 2010 when her bill: The Early Act, helped support other young women diagnosed with breast cancer. Participant CW20 stated: “As congresswomen, we have the privilege of taking our own personal stories, which are different from our male colleagues, as well as those of our constituents and fighting for laws that support and protect the health of our families and our children” (personal communication, September 15, 2014).

Women in leadership positions facilitated and encouraged their parties to prioritize issues that affected health and education. Moita and Agustang (2014) used a case study to explore gender equality and leadership and how women were able to

promote women interests. Moita and Agustang found that presence of women in politics strengthen the voice of women in society through advocacy of female interests. Moita and Agustang argued that as more women are elected to office, an increase in policy-making reflecting the priorities of families and women emerged.

Teamwork. The last theme derived from the data was teamwork and the ability to work together for a common purpose. Relationship building through teamwork was quintessential to bill sponsorship and cosponsorship. Fowler et al. (2011) concluded that well-connected legislators were more successful at amending legislation and gaining legislative support. The participants reflected on the value of bipartisan, a word often used in Congress, which signifies two opposing political parties working together for a common goal. Democrats and Republicans worked together for bipartisan solutions to pass bills and sponsor legislation. Only about a quarter of Democratic members of the House were women; however, the participants felt that women dominated the chamber through their teamwork. Participant CW7 reflected: “In Congress, we used to work together to make our voices heard. We were not embarrassed to be labeled by society and by our male peers as “the minority party;” however, we stood as one for our rights and privileges (personal communication, September 20, 2014).

The congresswomen experienced tokenism because the token status of women in leadership position encouraged other women to work together for a common purpose (Brown & Diekman, 2013). Women in Congress promoted unity and teamwork because they believed that working together could solve problems that could not be solved individually. The participants discussed their involvement in the passing of important

bills such as the restoration of funding for student loans. The legislation passed with the support of democrats and republicans who worked together to promote a better future for students. Participant CW19 recalled when Democrats and Republicans worked across party lines: “Our amendment promoted bipartisanship, new hope; it also gave needy students in America the conviction that their government was working for them through unity” (personal communication, September 15, 2014).

The participants indicated that female members of Congress came from different political parties to contribute to the well-being of society. When the House or the Senate was in session and the lawmakers served the needs of their districts, there was little room for partisanship. Democrats and Republicans congresswomen joined forces to pass legislation aimed at restoring the United States economy such as the United States’ first paid family leave act. Prior to the passage of this bill, if a company had 50 or more workers, they could only earn 12 protected weeks of unpaid leave after childbirth, adoption, or in cases of family medical emergencies. When the congresswomen were able to pass the paid family leave act, workers had their monthly income capped at \$1,000 and the ability to collect up to 66% of their regular average earnings.

The paid family leave act affected the lives of many especially women. The paid leave helped alleviate some of these women’s financial burden after childbirth but most importantly it helped them balance work and family. Participant CW19 addressed this issue in the following statement “We fought for each other’s rights in an environment where we were outnumbered and limited” (personal communication, September 16, 2014). Participant CW1 agreed in a similar statement “We needed to pass legislation that

worked for women and the economy” (personal communication, September 16, 2014).

Teamwork was quintessential and important in Congress. A group of female senators was able to pass the Women’s Health Equity Act with the collaboration of fellow members of congress. The Women’s Health Equity Act promoted gender equality and economic equality by making it unlawful for a husband to cancel his wife’s pension without her approval.

Carson et al. (2011) examined several bills to determine coalition amongst party leaders, and found that legislation was the most common way to develop relationships. Lazarus (2013) collected data from House and Senate members of Congress by examining the content of the bills sponsored by these legislators rather than the number of sponsored bills. Lazarus found that members of congress worked together for the betterment of their constituents by sponsoring bills related to the needs and concerns of their district. Members of congress were able to form alliances and develop sustainable relationship through bill passage and sponsorships. The study coincides with Carson et al. (2011) and Lazarus (2013) who demonstrated that building relationships and forming alliances through teamwork was quintessential to legislative sponsorships and bill passage.

Applications to Professional Practice

Women in Congress were advocates for policies promoting job growth, innovation, invention, and employment opportunities. The decisions that the congresswomen made and the legislation they sponsored or cosponsored had an impact on small businesses and economic prosperity. The presence of women affected the

financial performance of organizations including debating and negotiating federal funding or earmarks for constituents and congressional districts with greater diligence than men do (Teigen, 2012; Doyle, 2011). Some of the legislations passed by congresswomen involved America's most important issues and impacted the lives of many men and women. Women legislators passed the following legislations either through a bipartisan effort or through women in congress wanting to change the way business was conducted in the United States:

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, which the United States Congress revised in February 2015, supported working families by providing paid time for working mothers during childbirth or adoption. Prior to the passage of this bill, the typical worker lost an average of \$9,316 for 12 unpaid weeks; because of the loss of salary, workers were not able to contribute to local economies (Library of Congress, 2015). The family act benefited the labor economy because it allowed women to return to the workforce and increased employee retention.

The Working Families Flexibility Act of 2015 allowed employers more flexibility in dealing with wage and hour laws. An employee received paid time off in lieu of overtime and monetary compensation. The Headwaters Agreement protected a 2,000-year old, 7500-acre forest located in California previously owned by a private firm (library of congress, 2015). Today the federal government and the state of California own and govern Headwaters Forest by the terms and conditions of the Habitat Conservation Plan preserving the ancient redwoods. Environmental policy was paramount to economic growth. Women in Congress argued that the business community and environmentalists

supported each other through legislation.

The Homemaker IRA Act of 1995 allowed a non-working spouse to make a \$2000 contribution to their IRA (library of congress, 2015). Prior to the passage of this bill, women were at a disadvantage in saving for retirement. Stay at home spouses (particularly women) could not make any contributions to their IRA. The limit per household was set at \$2,250 per working spouse. Congress authorized the Homemaker Act to allow working and nonworking spouse to make a collective IRA contribution of \$4,000.

The Deceptive Mail Prevention and Enforcement Act of 2000 protected consumers from the deceptive techniques and claims used by sweepstakes companies (library of congress, 2015). Americans especially elderly were vulnerable to buy products that they do not want or need through false or misleading advertising. The deceptive mail prevention and enforcement act also prevented companies from alerting consumers that they were winners of a prize that did not exist.

Congresswomen promoted and protected the interest of small businesses in order for businesses to have better opportunities. The participants recognized the role that small businesses played in economic recovery. Women in Congress were advocates of small businesses due to their consistent effort to lower the tax and regulatory burden on businesses and their overall commitment to create a better environment for small business owners particularly women owned businesses.

A business owned by women generates less revenue than a similar business owned by a man (Wolak, 2014). Women-owned businesses continued to increase at rates

above the national average; however, women lacked access to capital, networks, and infrastructure. Women in Congress were a reflection of women in society because they understood the plight of other women. CW 17 argued, “We need women policymakers because they understand what women in society are going through and also they promote policies that work for women (personal communication, September 16, 2014). Women generally manage the family’s finance. A strong economy and two working individuals are indicative of a stable economy (Desai et al., 2014)). Women’s first priority was the happiness and comfort of their family. A good economy improves the quality of life and allows women to better raise their children.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential to be a role model to an emerging population of young women. The role of public service is to serve the greater good and an opportunity to make a difference in the world. The women of congress were a symbol of optimism; their courage, stamina and determination were an epitome of public service. The desire to help others were cultivated in them from an early age. Congresswomen dedicated their lives to service and encouraged other women to join them by serving as guide and mentors (Bowles, 2012). Working in the community allowed the congresswomen to understand the value of public service, which leads them to the House of Representatives or the Senate.

Women in Congress were more sensitive to community concerns and more responsive to constituency needs. Women viewed government as a tool to help serve the underrepresented and the minority groups. The call for public service was always a

priority and a tangible achievement that drove the ambition of the female lawmakers. Congresswomen want to serve as guides for other women who face challenges such as gender pay gap, gender disparity and gender inequality. Women have succeeded in Congress and they want others to succeed as well.

Recommendations for Further Study

Petty et al. (2012) acknowledged that qualitative studies are not only admissible and appropriate but have added knowledge to the concept of leadership. Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) argued the importance of in depth interviews to the growing body of leadership. A recommendation for future study would be to explore the leadership barriers faced by women in Congress to pass legislation in a male dominated institution. This type of research will assist researchers in obtaining data on barriers that exist in leadership positions. Based on the findings of the study, researchers should also be given an opportunity to investigate the association between the gender and number of bills passed. The quantitative data analysis on the bill passage should focus on small businesses because women tend to support small businesses more than men (Bowles, 2012).

Reflections

The data collection in a qualitative study encompassed more than words. Attitudes, observation, and facial expressions are behaviors that researchers encounter during the interview process. The women of congress were not afraid to express themselves, to stand up for what they believed in, and to embrace opportunities with tenacity.

Congresswomen were not presented as unreachable icons; they were true role models for young women to emulate and to follow. A woman can be successful on her own; but her achievement is infinitely magnified when shared. We must invest in each other's success. We all know that one woman can make a difference, but women working together can change the world. Every shattered glass ceiling did not break easily, reaching out to predecessors for guidance and advice was a quintessential element to success. When female leaders encourage other women to step up to positions of leadership, they ensure that the barriers they break down today are not rebuilt tomorrow.

Study Conclusions

In the 80 years since women won the right to vote, the glass ceiling that stifled their political ambition has cracked but has yet to break. Gender has been the transcendent characteristic of the congresswomen personal and professional lives. The women in Congress matured and grew by overcoming crisis. Government service became a goal and a reality only as an extension of their grass roots efforts, from neighborhood watches, community childcare centers, citizen action groups and on to local school boards, city councils, county legislatures, state offices, and the Congress. Each congresswomen journey to success was a long and circuitous one. They were raised in an era where women were not encouraged to seek political office. They reached the Senate by overcoming enormous obstacles such as resistance to their dreams and ideas not because they lacked brainpower, ambition, ability or charisma but because they were women.

Women in Congress were forced to make choices not often required of male

candidates. Their successes have been sweeter because they have been gained at such a high cost. Women lawmakers overcame barriers by being the first women to be elected to both houses of a state legislature, both houses of the United States Congress, by becoming the first women elected as a congresswoman in their state, and the youngest woman ever elected to the Senate. The country needs more women from all backgrounds and experiences opening doors in every aspect of society, especially government. Participant CW 3 said, “It was our hope that by telling our individual stories, we can help make it clear to others that it was within their ability to get involved and succeed (personal communication, September 15, 2014).

The congresswomen played several roles prior to their tenure in Congress. The function held by female lawmakers varied between voters, political party members, candidates, office holders, and private citizens. Female lawmakers understood that women were urgently needed to bring their special perspective to the public debate.

Women in Congress were most active in women’s issues, (a) gender equality, (b) social and community matters, (c) family-related matters, (d) equal pay legislation, (e) paid family and medical leave, (e) expanding affordable childcare for working parents, and (f) raising the minimum wage. Due to the majority status of men in congress, female lawmakers felt powerless to pass legislation that they believed could lift women out of poverty and contribute to the betterment of women in society. Despite the low number of female politicians, women served with distinction on the senate armed services committee, the appropriations committee for defense and foreign operations, and were responsible for international terrorism and narcotics control on the judiciary committee.

During their tenure in Congress and in various important congressional committees, the congresswomen were able to prioritize small businesses by sponsoring or cosponsoring legislation having a direct impact on small businesses. Small businesses were a priority for women in Congress because they believed that small businesses were the engines driving the economy by creating employment and strengthening communities. The female lawmakers were responsible for authoring several pieces of legislation that affected some of America's foremost concerns and benefited local communities and the United States economy. The women serving in the United States Congress created a legacy through legislation that will improve the lives of Americans for the next hundred years and beyond.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	
What you will do	What you will say—script
Contact the participant's office to conduct a one on one interview.	My name is Nathalie Vertus and I am conducting research on the Leadership Strategies of Women of the 111th Congress. I would like to conduct a one on one interview with Congresswoman X.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch for non-verbal queues • Interpretation of data • Ask open ended questions to get more data from participants. • Keep the participants focused on the subject by avoiding digressions. 	1. What challenges have you faced as a female in the U.S. Congress?
	2. What are the leadership attributes you gained to prepare for your tenure as congresswoman?
	3. What are the leadership attributes you learned during your tenure as a congresswoman?
	4. How did you prepare yourself to work in a traditionally male-dominated institution?
	5. What career and preparatory advice would you give to women aspiring to be leaders in today's political or business environs?
	6. What are the current barriers women faces today as political leaders? As business leaders?
	7. What are the legislative effects women have on the lawmaking process?
	8. What are the successful strategies you used to attain your desired level of career success?
	9. What strategies were less useful or even unsuccessful in helping you attain your desired

	level of career success?
	10. What information would you like to add that I have missed?
Thank the participant for participating in the study.	Thank you