While a gender gap in legislative institutions is well-documented, research has tended to focus on specific stages of the legislative process such as roll call voting and bill introduction. In this study our focus is the bill. Do women differ in the interests and approaches they bring to drafting bills? Are gender differences apparent in bill quality and success? Specifically, we ask whether enrolled bills exhibit differences between male and female authors on a variety of measures: the policy areas addressed, the language used within the bill to justify the policy change, the technical quality, and voting outcome. We bring a mixed methods approach to explore bills’ contents qualitatively while controlling for important confounders (e.g. bill issue, technical quality, and author characteristics), yielding findings that shed further light into gender’s role in bill formulation.

Our observations come from a model legislature in which high school students act as legislators. This perspective sheds light on whether adolescents engage in the types of behaviors that are often seen in legislative settings. Thus, where dependent variables are comparable, we can see whether it is likely that the next generation of legislators behaves as previous generations have.

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