

ARTICLE

Gender and Party Polarization in the US Congress: Hypervisibility and Invisibility

Rosalyn Cooperman 

University of Mary Washington
Email: rcooperm@umw.edu

Abstract

The history and practice of party polarization in Congress is a gendered concept. Men have comprised the overwhelming majority of legislators from both parties, served as their party's leaders, and dominated the party caucuses. As women and women of color have increased their presence in the institution, particularly among Democrats, gender and race have emerged as important themes in understanding party polarization in contemporary congresses. In an analysis of legislative activity of members in the 104th to the 117th Congresses, I find the two most distinct groups of partisans, Democratic women and Republican men, are prominently featured in the opposing party's negative messaging to constituents and voters. The prominence of Democratic women as the focal point of negative messaging from the opposition has significant consequences for this group of officeholders. This study enhances our understanding of how gender dynamics inform party polarization in legislatures.

Keywords: US gendered party polarization; political parties; Nancy Pelosi

“When you are effective, you are a target... . For over 200 years we had a pecking order up here of what man was going to do what next and how they would do musical chairs among those positions ... and so now you're saying we're going to break the marble ceiling and do things differently and that is resisted.”¹

—US Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA),
first female Speaker of the House (2007–11; 2019–23)

The presence of political parties in legislative institutions means that there has always been an organizing mechanism by which members could differentiate themselves. In the United States, aggregate differences between members as

© The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press in association with Donald Critchlow. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

determined by their party affiliation have widened and narrowed over successive decades. Contemporary congresses are marked by polarized Democratic and Republican parties. Here not only do party members take opposing positions on recorded chamber votes; their respective party structures highlight those differences to voters ahead of elections in an attempt to demonstrate their party's superiority and the opposing party's inferiority with respect to holding a majority. Party polarization in Congress is an area of research that has received significant scholarly attention from those seeking to identify its origins, measurement, and consequences. Although we have learned much about Congress and its members from these efforts, their focus of inquiry is incomplete. The history and practice of party polarization in Congress is a story that—until recently—is really about men in the institution as they have comprised the overwhelming majority of legislators from both parties, served as their party's leaders, and dominated their party caucuses. Research on women's representation in Congress has also reinforced the idea of party polarization as it pertains to the men because women members of Congress (MCs) were typically identified as more collegial and therefore more willing to work across the aisle, often with women of the opposing party, to support shared policy goals. Moreover, women's underrepresentation in the chambers and their relative absence from party leadership positions significantly limited their visibility and clout. However, as more women, particularly Democratic women, have been elected to Congress, secured leadership positions, and increased their presence in their party's caucus, they have also challenged rules and norms of behavior created by the men who have traditionally dominated the institution. Women's increased presence and clout in Congress draws attention to a departure from the status quo. And, as parties in contemporary US politics gain points from their fellow members by drawing attention to how they are distinct, we should expect both parties to increasingly use gender to highlight those differences.

In this article I ask an important question: Does women's increased presence and clout in the institution—particularly among Democrats—affect party polarization in Congress? To answer this question, I examine gender dynamics in the 104th to 117th Congresses to determine how gender has emerged as an important theme in party polarization. Given the importance of party affiliation in organizing and managing its members, I focus on party polarization in the US House. I consider the influence of women's presence in the chamber and party caucuses, their service in leadership roles, gender and party differences in MCs' ideology as measured by DW NOMINATE scores, and party messaging, particularly messaging from one party directed to the opposing party. I expect that both parties will seek to emphasize gender as a central way to demonstrate how the Democratic and Republican parties differ in both composition and policy preferences. Through this inquiry, I find that party polarization in Congress is gendered. Essentially, the idea that party polarization is gendered means that both parties believe they gain an advantage by laying bare the differences between the two most dissimilar groups of partisans—Democratic women and Republican men. They identify these groups as proxies for the opposing parties and those responsible for driving the party's extreme policies. Furthermore, I find that these differences between partisan groups are both gendered and raced, as Republican men are not just men but *White* Republican men and Democratic

women are not just women but often Democratic *women of color*. To be sure, parties are not just composed of Republican men and women Democrats; men constitute the majority of Democratic MCs, and Republican women are present in the institution, albeit in significantly smaller numbers than the rest of the aforementioned groups. However, it is recognizing that party polarization in Congress, which traditionally has referred to the behavior of a relatively homogenous membership body, now encompasses a more diverse group of members. And, although Congress remains a male-dominated institution, the presence of women in the membership body—particularly as Democrats—has changed what party polarization in the institution looks like and how it is manifested.

What do we gain from considering party polarization in Congress from a gendered lens, particularly as many scholars already identify legislatures as gendered organizations?² At a minimum, we gain an understanding of the degree to which women members are truly a part of the institution—that is, whether or how much women “sound, act, and look” like the men with whom they share a party label. As more women get elected to Congress, they also increase their numbers within their respective party’s caucus and presumably strengthen their collective voices during intraparty deliberations about strategy and messaging. More women members may also mean more opportunities for them to speak for the party or chamber in leadership positions, particularly if their party serves in the majority. Finally, as more women get elected to Congress, we can see how fellow party members and members of the opposing party view them or even how women members view themselves. In a time of party polarization when parties seek to amplify their differences, parties may believe they benefit by drawing attention to those differences. Indeed, I find examples of invisibility and hypervisibility for women Democratic and Republican members, respectively. Republican women MCs remain on the periphery of their party, its caucus, and party messaging, which renders them essentially invisible—or at least largely indistinguishable—from the men in their party. In contrast, Democratic women MCs are more visible within their party and its caucus. Although they are also featured more prominently in party messaging, Democratic women and Democratic women of color MCs are also the focus of highly negative messaging from the Republican Party to demonstrate that Democrats are out of touch with average Americans and “too woke and liberal” to adequately represent their interests. At the same time, the Democratic Party relies on women MCs to reinforce the message of a hyper-masculine Republican Party that is too old, too White, too rich, and too male to adequately represent an increasingly diverse populace. In summary, applying a gendered lens to the study of party polarization in Congress provides a more complete picture of how members and their parties operate in the institution, why the perceived and real distance between Democrats and Republicans will persist moving forward, and why the animus between party members has distinct consequences for women candidates and officeholders.

Women’s Representation in Congress in an Era of Party Polarization

There are two streams of research that inform our understanding of how women approach their roles as legislators and as party members. I briefly consider

research on gender and representation, even as women remain underrepresented as candidates and officeholders. I also examine research on party polarization, specifically how legislators behave as partisans in legislative institutions, and how the parties behave collectively, especially as polarization over time has been identified as asymmetrical with Republicans moving farther to the right than Democrats moving farther to the left. Together, this research sheds light on how gender and party exert influence over legislators.

Research on gender and representation affirms the importance of women's presence in legislative institutions despite their underrepresentation. As officeholders, women are more likely to talk about and legislate on women's issues.³ Women legislators draw attention to women's issues with bill sponsorship, floor debate, and roll-call votes.⁴ Research on gender, identity, and representation further affirms that women of color officeholders approach their representational and legislative responsibilities with an emphasis on themes of lived experience, shared identity, and community and civic duty.⁵ Historically, many women officeholders have approached their duties feeling responsible to act on behalf of women, which has provided opportunities for women to work across party lines on issues, particularly those pertaining to women.⁶ A central theme of research on gender and representation is the belief that women's presence in legislative institutions is valuable to all aspects of the body's work and its members' responsibilities to constituents and the public as a whole.

Although research on gender and representation was originally focused on evaluating the difference between men and women legislators and a "special responsibility" to represent women, it is evident that members' party affiliation, not necessarily gender, more urgently shapes their behavior.⁷ Stated another way, in their representational and legislative activities, women officeholders represent women as partisans.⁸ Partisanship influences which women run for office⁹ and also their position on specific policy issues, such as abortion and reproductive rights.¹⁰ Given the increased importance of partisanship in informing congressional duties and relationships, it is instructive to consider women's presence and participation in the institution as women and as partisans.

Identifying research on the ways in which parties exert influence over officeholders in legislative institutions is also informative. When looking at Congress and its members, Poole and Rosenthal noted that beginning in the mid-1970s, Democratic and Republican legislators consistently voted with their own party on roll-call votes in their respective chambers. They identified this behavior as a "spatial theory" of party polarization with the parties "far apart on policy issues and party members tightly clustered around the party mean."¹¹ They created a measurement of ideology, DW NOMINATE scores, that ranges from -1 (extremely liberal) to 1 (extremely conservative). As initially created, DW NOMINATE scores have two dimensions, votes on the role of government in the economy and votes on race and civil rights. However, Poole and Rosenthal note that race-related roll-call votes post-Civil Rights Movement are fundamentally about economic redistribution and thus the first dimension of DW NOMINATE scores effectively captures the ideological space between individual members. At present, the gap between the two parties is wide and ongoing. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal calculated that the Democrats and Republicans in Congress were

as far apart as they had been since the US Civil War.¹² Binder also finds evidence of persistent gaps over multiple decades between Democratic and Republican Members of Congress.¹³

Further research on the phenomenon makes it plain that parties and their members did not simply and evenly split. Poole and Rosenthal and others more recently have noted that the gap between the parties is asymmetrical, with Republican members moving more to the right in their voting than Democratic members moving more to the left.¹⁴ In terms of DW-NOMINATE scores, this means that Republican and Democratic members can be grouped more closely to one another and closer to the maximum or minimum values of the scores (1 and -1). DW-NOMINATE scores have been used by researchers to make both within and across Congress comparisons about individual members and about the Democratic and Republican party caucuses over time.

Finally, not all scholars are convinced that the gulf between the parties is a measure of ideology. Instead, Lee asserts that members' willingness to vote consistently with their own party and against the opposing party may instead be a function of fidelity to the party's team that is also compatible with pursuing individual members' goals, particularly in gaining clout within their party. Using this logic, party members will stick with fellow partisans to increase the likelihood of a "win" for their side or at least make it harder for the opposing side to win, especially if the other side needs support beyond their own party to prevail. Lee writes,

[Members] impeach one another's motives and accuse one another of incompetence and corruption, not always on strong evidence. They exploit the floor agenda for public relations, touting their successes, embarrassing their opponents, and generally propagandizing for their own party's benefit. They actively seek out policy disagreements that can be political useful in distinguishing themselves from their partisan opponents.¹⁵

Party polarization—asymmetrical or otherwise—and party brinksmanship are clearly at play in contemporary Congresses. The very fact that the membership body in Congress has diversified over the last few decades to include more women and other previously underrepresented groups suggests that gender is increasingly relevant when observing party polarization in the institution. This inquiry considers how party polarization affects women members, whether polarization affects women partisans similarly, and how gender affects party messaging when the parties are polarized. I list my formal hypotheses below:

H1: If women MCs represent their districts as partisans, then the ideological scores of men and women partisans should be similar.

H2: An increase in the number of women MCs should provide opportunities for them to exert influence in party caucus deliberations and gain leadership positions within the party.

H3: An increase in the number of women MCs makes them more visible in the institution and will lead parties to use gendered messages to highlight differences between the parties.

For the first hypothesis, I examine a basic but useful measure of DW-NOMINATE scores by gender and party to determine any differences in ideological scores between men and women partisans. The fact that women members represent women and the rest of their constituency as partisans suggests that the DW NOMINATE scores for men and women partisans should be similar. For the second hypothesis, I consider women's membership in the House and the presence that they exert in their party's caucuses and as party leaders. As more women are elected to Congress, they should have more influence in party caucus deliberations because they comprise a larger portion of that caucus. For the third hypothesis, I consider how the Democratic and Republican parties often use negative, gendered, and raced messages to cast the opposing party as inferior and out of touch. As affective partisanship, hostile feelings of partisan out-groups, characterize contemporary elite and mass attitudes about political parties, candidates, and officeholders,¹⁶ gendered and raced negative messages are an effective tool for parties to use that are unlikely to diminish in the future. Together, these findings support the assertion that party polarization in contemporary Congresses is gendered and often raced.

The first step is to consider whether party polarization requires confirmation of difference in ideology scores between men and women partisans. A highly useful feature of DW NOMINATE scores is that they are available for every person who has ever served in Congress. Therefore, it is possible to calculate party means and disaggregate DW NOMINATE scores with other demographic features, including sex. Figure 1 below plots the mean House DW NOMINATE scores (First

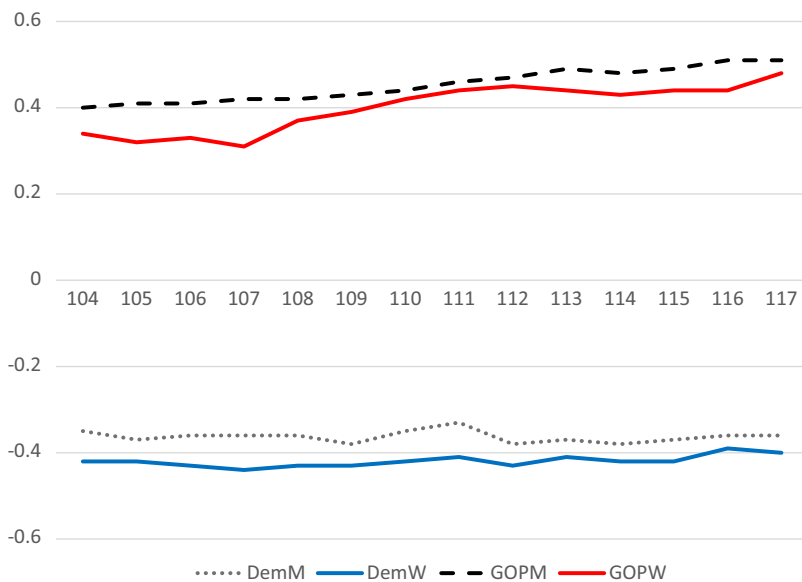


Figure 1. Mean House DW Nominat Scores (First Dimension) by Gender and Party, 104th–117th Congress

Source: [Voteview.com](https://www.voteview.com); averages compiled by author.

Dimension) by gender and party from the 104th to 117th Congresses.¹⁷ Average DW NOMINATE scores for men and women in each party appear below, with Republican partisans registering positive scores, as 1 is identified as extremely conservative, and Democratic partisans registering negative scores, as -1 is identified as extremely liberal. The four lines below show narrow gaps between men and women members of the same party and much wider gaps between men and women of opposing parties.

Unsurprisingly, Democratic and Republican members' DW NOMINATE scores are very distinct. What is more interesting, and not immediately obvious from Figure 1, is whether men and women partisans have significantly different ideology scores. Looking at Democrats, the trend line for both Democratic women and men House members is essentially flat, with very little change in DW nominate scores over the identified period. Stated differently, Democratic members remain about as liberal from the beginning of the period in question through its finish. However, despite the stability in mean DW NOMINATE scores for men and women Democrats, their DW NOMINATE scores are distinct. In nearly every specified Congress, a means test shows that Democratic women MCs' DW NOMINATE scores are significantly different ($p < .05$) and more liberal than those of their male partisans.¹⁸ Women Democrats' DW nominate scores change very little, as values stay around -0.4. Scores for Democratic men also change little, but they are consistently "higher" than those of the women in their party at around -0.35, meaning they still liberal but a bit less so. Stated differently, when looking at ideological measures for men and women Democratic House members from the 104th to the 117th Congress, Democratic MCs are liberal but the women are significantly more ideologically liberal than the men.

Mean DW NOMINATE scores for men and women Republican MCs show different results. The trend line for both Republican women and men MCs slopes slightly upward such that their DW NOMINATE scores finish higher in the 117th Congress from where they began in the 104th Congress. Thus, in keeping with the premise of asymmetric polarization, DW NOMINATE scores for this period confirm that Republican MCs moved more to the right than Democrats moved to the left. However, for most congresses in the specified period, the mean DW NOMINATE scores for men and women Republican House members are not significantly different from each other. In the 107th, 115th, and 116th Congresses, Republican women MCs have a significantly lower DW NOMINATE score than the men, which means that Republican women MCs were less conservative than the men in their party, at least as measured by DW NOMINATE scores.¹⁹ Otherwise, for the majority of congresses during this period of polarized parties, Republican women MCs did not compile voting records that were significantly distinct from those of the men in their party. In plain terms, Republican women MCs generally vote the same as Republican men MCs. This finding is in keeping with aforementioned research indicating that parties exert a significant influence over a MCs' roll-call votes and that when women legislators represent constituents, they do so as partisans. Thus, the first hypothesis that expected the ideological scores of men and women partisans to be similar is confirmed but perhaps with an asterisk for additional clarification. The significant interparty differences between men and women Democrats and their Republican counterparts

affirms deep divides between partisans. When looking more closely at intraparty differences, however, Democratic women MCs are more liberal than the men in their party and Republican women MCs are essentially as conservative as the men in their party.

Having demonstrated that Democratic women House members have more liberal DW NOMINATE scores than Democratic men and that Republican women House members typically have the same conservative DW NOMINATE scores as Republican men, it is important to consider women's presence in the institution and in their respective party's caucuses. Women's representation increased substantially from the 104th to the 117th Congress. As posited in the second hypothesis, it should follow that as more women get elected to Congress and stay in the institution, they will have more opportunities to seek leadership positions, strengthen their voices in party caucus business, and exert power as a group.

Women's historical underrepresentation in the institution and absence from leadership positions within the parties provide the obvious practical reason why party polarization has been understood as a nongendered concept. After all, women cannot be a part of the polarization narrative if they are invisible in the chamber and as party leaders. From the mid-1970s when Poole and Rosenthal identify party polarization and the two decades that followed, women's representation ranged from a low of 3% in the 93rd Congress to a high of 10% in the 103rd Congress, as redistricting and a spate of retirements ahead of the 1992 congressional elections created a significant number of open seats that women candidates, mostly Democratic women, won.²⁰ Even as women have increased their numbers as candidates and officeholders, men remain the electoral and officeholding default. Stated plainly, men run for and hold elected office with greater frequency than women. Women candidates continue to run primarily as challengers, not incumbents, for Congress, even though men and women candidates are equally likely to win elections based on their candidacy status. Women candidates are also significantly more likely to run as Democrats than as Republicans, which creates a party gap in both political candidacy and representation within the institution.

Figure 2 shows women's representation in the House as a percentage of their respective party's caucus from the 104th to the 117th Congress.²¹ Even as party caucus deliberations are generally conducted in private, when groups comprise a critical mass they are better positioned to exert power within the decision-making body.²² During this time, Democratic women increased their share as a percentage of their party's caucus from 15% to 40%, whereas Republican women's representation in their party's caucus increased from 7% to 15%. It is also worth noting that when each party held a legislative majority, an increase in partisan women elected to the chamber may not correspond with an increased presence in their party's caucus if the party was in the majority (and representing a larger total number overall). Party majorities are also important to discern because the majority party determines who serves as Speaker of the House, who serves as committee chairs, and whose legislative agenda will likely prevail. There are 14 congresses included in the specified period of inquiry (104th—117th Congresses). Democrats served as the majority party in the House for only four of those congresses (110th, 111th, 116th, and 117th), and Republicans held

the majority in the House for the other 10 congresses. When Democrats held the majority, Democratic women accounted for about 22% of their party's caucus in the 110th and 111th Congresses. They greatly increased their presence in the 116th and 117th Congresses, accounting for 37% and 40% of their party's caucuses, respectively. In the two most recent congresses under consideration, Democratic women House members accounted for more than one third to 40% of Democratic members in the chamber and appeared in numbers that would have made it difficult for them to be ignored in caucus deliberations. This would be particularly true in cases of intraparty differences where the majority would need to find a consensus with its membership to prevail in Committee or on a floor vote. And, as will be discussed shortly, the presence of Democratic women members in key party leadership positions has elevated their profile as critical actors and ensured that their fellow women members' voices would be heard.²³

The presence of Republican women House members in their party's caucus tells a different story. For nearly all the 10 congresses in which Republicans held a party majority in the House, Republican women members accounted for 10% or less of their party's caucus. Republican women members accounted for 15% of their party's caucus in the 117th Congress, but their party was in the minority. At just 10%—and often less—of their party's caucuses in any given Congress during this time, Republican women House members remained on the periphery of their party's caucus and its deliberations. Moreover, with indistinguishable DW NOMINATE scores, Republican women House members would have voted much like the men in their party.

Thus far I have established that in terms of DW NOMINATE scores collected from the 104th to the 117th Congresses, Democratic women and Republican men are the main two most distinct partisan groups in the House. I have also established that Democratic women have increased their presence in their party's caucus and strengthened their collective voice in party debates about strategy and policy. A further way to demonstrate women's presence in the chamber is by examining whether women MCs have served as party or chamber leaders. Leadership positions are especially important on the House side because the membership body is more than four times that of the Senate and there are simply more people to organize, particularly rank and file members. Party leaders must advance a legislative agenda, including that of the president who is the *de facto* leader of their party. They must manage intraparty competition and conflict and retain and build, if not expand, chamber majorities.²⁴

The Speaker of the House, a leadership position with constitutional, chamber, and party responsibilities over the membership body, is the most visible and powerful role in role in the chamber. Aside from the Speaker, the remainder of the leadership team on the majority side include the House Majority Leader, Majority Whip, and Party Conference or Caucus Chair. The leadership team on the minority side includes the Minority Leader, Minority Whip, and Party Conference or Caucus Chair.²⁵ In addition, the Chairs of the Democratic and Republican Congressional Committees (DCCC and NRCC, respectively) who are tasked with recruiting candidates and protecting vulnerable incumbents in congressional elections are also included in party congressional leadership teams. Finally, committee chairs, particularly those who preside over the three

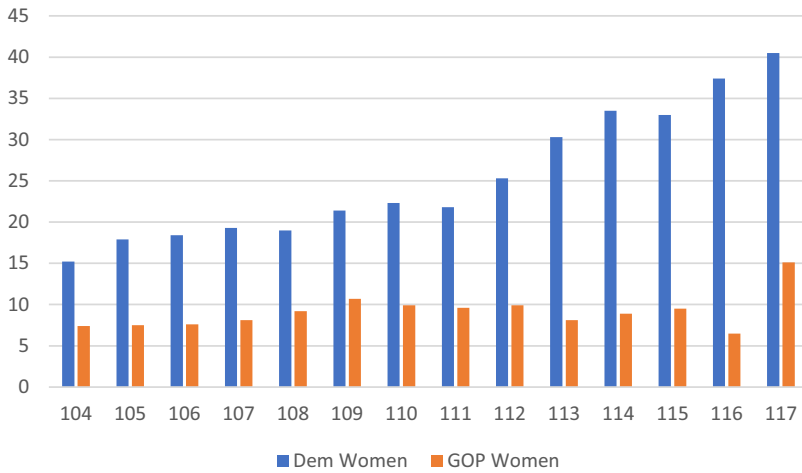


Figure 2. Percentage of Women Members in House Party Caucuses, 104th–117th Congresses

Source: US House of Representatives, Congressional Research Service; Percentages compiled by author.

most powerful committees in the House—Appropriations, Rules, and Ways & Means—are also considered part of the majority party's leadership team.

Just as men have been the officeholding default in Congress from a historical perspective, they have also served as default congressional leaders. Indeed, on the Senate side no woman has ever served as Majority or Minority Leader or Majority or Minority Whip, although in her stead as vice president, Kamala Harris presided over the Senate as its president in the 117th and 118th Congresses. During the period of inquiry, a few women have served in party leadership roles on the House side. Former House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich (R-GA) was elected Speaker of the House in the 104th Congress after Republicans gained majority control of both the House and Senate in the 1994 congressional midterm elections. Gingrich and his all-male leadership team made good on their promise to bring all 10 items of their “Contract with America” to the House floor for votes.²⁶ Included in the Contract with America were several measures designed to upend institutional norms devised under decades of Democratic majority party rule, including privileging seniority over party loyalty for leadership and committee chair positions. Even so, very few women Republicans have served in party leadership positions in the House. Women House Democrats have fared slightly better but remain underrepresented as party leaders. Instead, when women partisans have served as leaders, they have most frequently done so in a supporting role (e.g., vice chair, deputy, or assistant titles). Table 1 below lists women Democratic and Republican House members who have served in party leadership positions during the 104th to 117th Congresses.²⁷

Recall that during this period, Republicans held the chamber majority for 10 of those congresses and Democrats held the chamber majority for the remaining four congresses. During that time (and to date), no Republican woman has ever served as House Majority or Minority Leader, or Majority or Minority

Table 1. Women House Members as Party Leaders, 104th—117th Congress

| Congress | Party | Name | Leadership Position |
|----------|-------|-------------------------------|--|
| 107th | Dem | Nita Lowey (D-NY) | Chair, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee |
| | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) | Democratic Whip |
| 108th | GOP | Deborah Pryce (R-OH) | Chair, House Republican Conference |
| | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) | Democratic Leader |
| 109th | GOP | Deborah Pryce (R-OH) | Chair, House Republican Conference |
| | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) | Democratic Leader |
| 110th | Dem | Louise Slaughter (D-NY) | Chair, Committee on Rules |
| 111th | Dem | Louise Slaughter (D-NY) | Chair, Committee on Rules |
| | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) | Speaker of the House |
| 112th | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) | House Democratic Leader |
| 113th | GOP | Cathy McMorris-Rodgers (R-WA) | Co-chair, House Republican Conference |
| | GOP | Lynn Jenkins (R-KS) | Co-chair, House Republican Conference |
| | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) | House Democratic Leader |
| 114th | GOP | Cathy McMorris-Rodgers (R-WA) | Chair, House Republican Conference |
| 115th | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) | House Democratic Leader |
| 116th | Dem | Nita Lowey (D-NY) | Chair, Appropriations Committee |
| | Dem | Cheri Bustos (D-IL) | Chair, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee |
| | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-NY) | Speaker of the House |
| | GOP | Liz Cheney (D-WY) | Chair, House Republican Conference |
| 117th | Dem | Rosa DeLauro (D-NY) | Chair, Appropriations Committee |
| | Dem | Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) | Speaker of the House |
| | GOP | Elise Stefanik (R-NY) | Chair, House Republican Conference |

Source: Center for American Women in Politics.

Whip. Instead, when Republicans served in the majority, several women have served as the Republican Conference Chair, a leadership role that requires the member to direct day-to-day operations for the party. To date, no Republican woman has ever served as chair of the three most prestigious standing committees in the House.

A few more Democratic women House members have served in party leadership positions, most notably Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), who served as Speaker of the

House during the four congresses in which Democrats were in the majority during the specified period. In her role as Speaker of the House, scholars identified Pelosi as an effective Speaker “willing to apply the levers of power when necessary in order to achieve her objectives, primary among which are to maintain and enlarge the Democratic majority while passing legislation that furthers policy objectives on which most Democrats can agree.”²⁸ Indeed, Pelosi served as Speaker in the 110th Congress that passed several important pieces of legislation, including the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. In addition to Pelosi’s service as Speaker, women Democrats have served as Chair of their party’s congressional campaign committee and as chairs of two of the three most prestigious committees—Appropriations and Rules. It is in these prominent, visible leadership positions that Democratic women have exerted clout over their party’s caucus and the membership body as a whole. By these measures, the second hypothesis about women’s increased presence and clout is partially affirmed, because the outcome was one-sided. Women did increase their numbers in Congress. However, the growth was uneven between the parties with significantly more Democratic than Republican women getting elected and therefore Democratic women were better situated to strengthen their position with their party caucus and in the chamber as a whole.

In the case of Nancy Pelosi, her service as Speaker made her a prime target for negative Republican Party messaging about the deficiencies of the Democratic Party. Even in the minority, Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi remained a tangible example for Republicans in their messaging about how different and lacking House Democrats were compared to House Republicans. In 2018, Democrats flipped party control in both houses of Congress and the incoming first-year class of Democrats who served in the 116th Congress included the largest percentage of women of color to serve in the institution’s history at that time.²⁹ Several of these women would join Pelosi as the target of negative Republican party messaging.

Noting the frequency with which certain party members feature in negative messaging from the opposing party is the final way to consider how gender is now a prominent theme in party polarization in Congress. Specifically, Republican men are the primary target of Democrats who have accused Republicans of waging a “war on women” with the reactionary candidates they support for office and the pro-life and anti-woman policies they embrace. In contrast, Democratic women and Democratic women of color are the primary targets of Republicans who have accused Democrats of supporting “socialist” candidates and “woke” policies. These negative messages from both parties target the groups of partisans across the aisle they believe they least resemble—white Republican men for the Democratic Party and women/women of color Democrats for the Republican Party.

In this last section, I focus on two examples of negative party messaging to evaluate the third hypothesis. In the 112th Congress that featured a Republican House majority and Democratic Senate majority, Democratic women accused Republicans of waging a “war on women” by advancing several pro-life initiatives and refusing to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). In the 116th Congress that featured a Democratic House majority, Republican

Senate majority, and the most ethnically and racially diverse membership elected to the body to date, Republicans accused Democrats of embracing anarchy. These tactics of calling out members of the opposing party with their own actions and words, coupled with affective partisanship, appears to be a successful strategy to reinforce differences between the parties and maintain the animus party members—and their voters—hold against the opposition. It further disincentivizes officeholders from finding common ground and working collaboratively to address complicated policy issues. And, of most concern, this strategy may be interpreted by some as a permission structure to verbally harass or threaten violence against officeholders, particularly women.

House Democrats lost more than 60 seats in the 2010 congressional midterm elections, an outcome then-President Obama described as a “shellacking” of his party.³⁰ Republicans held the majority on the House side in the 112th Congress and worked to pass their own legislative agenda, the GOP “Pledge to America,” which included several pro-life measures, many targeting the recently passed Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, restricting Title X family planning initiatives and defunding Planned Parenthood. In 2011, the House passed a bill on a party line vote that barred the use of federal funds by insurance plans that covered abortion services. Speaking in opposition of the bill, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi stated, “Under this bill, when the Republicans vote for this bill today, they will be voting to say that women can die on the floor and health care providers do not have to intervene if this bill is passed. It’s just appalling. It’s a health issue, this is a health issue.”³¹ Indeed, Democrats kept score of Republicans’ activities they labeled as “anti-women.” Democratic members of the Energy and Commerce Committee, the House committee with jurisdiction over public health measures, issued a report in 2012 that detailed the “55 votes for anti-women policies that undermine women’s health, roll back women’s rights, and defund programs and institutions that provide support for women.”³² The report was supplemented by statements in a press release from Democratic women members of the Committee who offered blistering criticism of House Republicans as “anti-woman; anti-family; anti-community; and ... un-American.”³³

Congressional Democrats’ assertion of a Republican war on women in the 112th Congress was renewed when the House refused to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that included new provisions to extend protection against domestic violence for Native Americans, undocumented immigrants, and the LGBTQ community. Previous iterations of VAWA passed with bipartisan support since it was first passed in 1994, and the reauthorization bill introduced in the 112th Congress passed in the Senate with bipartisan support. Instead, House Republicans refused to allow the Senate version of the bill to come up for a floor vote and instead passed their own version of the bill that did not include protections to the aforementioned groups.³⁴ Republican women MCs were also deployed by party leaders in both chambers to refute and dismiss the idea of a “war on women.” Following the House vote on the Republican version of the VAWA reauthorization bill, congresswomen of the Tri-Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic, Black, and Asian Pacific American Caucuses, held a news conference to denounce the bill and Republicans who voted in favor of it, accusing Republicans of “creating different classes of victims ... and tip

[ping] off domestic abusers about violence reports.”³⁵ Indeed, in the 112th Congress, Democratic women, including many Democratic women of color, led the criticism of a Republican-led Congress they believed to be deliberately hostile to women’s interests.

Democrats, especially women, were not the only members who sought to draw a contrast between themselves and the opposing party. In the 2018 midterm elections, Democrats won 40 seats in the House to gain a legislative majority. A majority of those freshman Democratic representatives were non-White, and the 116th Congress was celebrated as the most diverse Congress elected to the institution to date. Not everyone was pleased by the agenda and legislative priorities pursued by the new Democratic majority. House Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) gave a speech on the House floor that was highly critical of the Democratic majority in the first 100 days of the 116th Congress. He stated,

We have been lectured countless times by Speaker Pelosi over the years... show us your budget, show us your values...unfortunately it looks like we’ll never know the true values of this majority because there is no budget. The problem goes beyond the Democrats’ lack of results. As the majority, the Democrats have focused on three principles above else—resolutions, radicalism, and resistance.³⁶

Other Republican House leaders echoed criticism of the Democratic Party as extreme and out of touch with the American public. Following President Trump’s 2019 State of the Union Address and his budget request to Congress, Republican House leaders held a news conference to criticize Democrats’ inaction on the budget. During the news conference, House Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-LA) criticized newly elected Democratic members more broadly and stated,

You saw so many of those Democrats who won elections, who flipped seats from Republican to Democrat, says they would be pro-life and saying they would be pro-gun. Now they’ve voted to take away your gun rights. They’ve voted to stand up for murdering babies who were born alive. This isn’t the old Democrat Party that people recognize. This isn’t even the Democrat Party that Nancy Pelosi was Speaker over just a few years ago. It’s much further to the left. It’s very much a socialist party now and they’re defending those policies.³⁷

Again, it is important to remember that the 116th Congress and its Democratic House majority was the most racially and ethnically diverse membership body with the highest number of women serving in the institution’s history at that time. As such, Republican Party criticism of the Democratic Party as a radical party is a thinly veiled criticism of a woman-led, ethnically and racially diverse caucus.

Republican criticism of House Democrats became more specific in the 116th Congress when the Republican National Committee (RNC) released an ad in July

2019 entitled, “Squad Goals: Anarchy.”³⁸ The ad focused on four first-year women of color Democratic House members, Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI). This group of lawmakers was the subject of significant media attention in the 2018 midterm elections. Omar and Tlaib were the first two Muslim women elected to the House, Pressley was the first Black woman elected to the House from Massachusetts, and Ocasio-Cortez defeated House Democratic Caucus Chair and incumbent Joe Crowley in a primary election.³⁹ All four women ran on a progressive legislative agenda that was highly critical of Donald Trump’s immigration policies that included the detention and separation of undocumented immigrant families. Ocasio-Cortez gave the group its name, the Squad, in an Instagram post when the newly elected members came to Washington, DC, for orientation in November 2018.⁴⁰ The RNC ad in question features clips of each of the four members speaking critically of President Trump’s immigration policy that are interspersed with media accounts of violence at US Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities. The ad closes with a black screen that reads, “Squad Goals: Anarchy” and suggests that the policy preferences of this group of first-year lawmakers is in keeping with the Democratic Party’s lack of support for law and order. And, as was the case with women-led Democratic Party criticism of the Republican Party in previous Congresses, men led the Republican Party criticism of the Democratic Party. An examination of party messaging provides partial confirmation for the third hypothesis; greater visibility of women MCs did lead parties to use gendered messages to highlight differences between the parties. However, those gendered messages were focused on Democratic women and Republican men who served as proxies for their parties and those most responsible for their party’s extreme policy positions. Moreover, many of these messages were raced with White Republican men as the target of Democrats’ messaging and women of color Democrats as the target of Republicans’ messaging.

Conclusion

Political parties have long served as an important organizing force in Congress. Candidates run under party labels to serve in the institution and advance their party’s policy goals. In turn, voters can remove or return candidates and sometimes party majorities, depending on the aggregate level of (dis)satisfaction with them and their collective efforts. As White men have dominated membership and leadership in the history of the institution, the story of parties should be generally understood as a story of divisions among a remarkably homogenous group of people. In contemporary congresses, however, the story of political parties has begun to look different. More women and people of color, especially those running as Democrats, have sought and won election to Congress. In the House, women Democrats constitute both a critical mass and serve as critical actors in their party’s caucus. Women Republicans, present in Congress, serve in numbers small enough to keep them on the periphery of their party caucus and its male leadership save for the instances when they are deemed strategically

useful for Republican messaging. Although beyond the scope of this article, the experiences of Republican women MCs is an understudied area worthy of further inquiry. Ideology measures show that Democratic women in the House are significantly more liberal than the men in their party, whereas Republican men and women are essentially indistinguishable in terms of ideology. Instead, it is Democratic women and Republican men who are the two partisan groups that differ most distinctly.

Political parties are also a mark of deep and broad divisions between members in contemporary congresses. With party polarization, Democrats and Republicans are highly distinct from one another and seek to emphasize those differences for partisan gain wherever possible. Polarized parties and a more diverse membership base means that negative partisan messages that are directed from one party to the other have increasingly featured men and women partisans criticizing one another. Specifically, Republican men are the targets of criticism by Democratic women and Democratic women and women of color are the targets of criticism by Republican men. Because political parties run candidates under a party label and compete to win, retain, or expand the majority party status, it is reasonable to expect that negative partisan messages are intended to give partisans a reason to go vote for the candidates of their preferred party. However, a real concern is that the response to these negative messages by some members of the public is an increase in threats of violence against officeholders, and especially against women officeholders and non-White officeholders.⁴¹ Even before the January 6, 2021, insurrection where a disaffected mob of citizens stormed the US Capitol in an attempt to prevent MCs from ratifying the electoral college vote of the 2020 presidential election, there was a growing acceptance among the public, particularly among those who identify as Republicans, for threatening or engaging in acts of violence against members of the opposing party.⁴² Given the central role that political parties play in US politics and that threats and acts of violence perpetrated against officeholders imperil both representative institutions and norms of democratic government, members of Congress should recognize that it serves their own self-interest to reduce party divisions and disincentivize the use of messages that may be construed to encourage violence against out-party members and candidates.

Notes

¹ "Makers: Women in Politics," in *Makers: Women Who Make America* documentary series (Kunhardt McGree Productions, Moxie Firecracker Films, 2013), <https://www.makers.com/documentaries/>

² Joan Acker, "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations," *Gender & Society* 4, no. 1 (1990): 139–58; Joni Lovenduski, *Feminizing Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook, "Analysing Women's Substantive Representation: From Critical Mass to Critical Actors," *Government & Opposition* 44, no. 2 (2009): 125–45.

³ Kathleen Bratton and Kerry Haynie, "Agenda Setting and Legislative Success in State Legislatures: The Effects of Gender and Race," *Journal of Politics* 61, no. 3 (1999): 658–79; Kimberly Cowell-Meyers and Laura Langbein, "Linking Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation in the United States," *Politics & Gender* 5, no. 4 (2009): 491–518; Kelly Dittmar, et al., *A Seat at the Table: Congresswomen's Perspectives on Why Their Presence Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Susan Carroll, *The Impact of Women in Public Office* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Volden,

Craig, et al., "Women's Issues and Their Fates in the U.S. Congress," *Political Science Research and Methods* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–18.

⁴ Tracy Osborn and Jeannette Morehouse Mendez, "Speaking as Women: Women and Floor Speeches in the Senate," *Journal of Women, Politics, & Policy* 31, no.1 (2010): 1–21; Kathryn Pearson and Logan Dancy, "Elevating Women's Voices in Congress: Speech Participation in the House of Representatives," *Political Research Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2011): 910–23; Michele Swers, *The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in Congress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Sue Thomas, *How Women Legislate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁵ Christina Bejarano, *The Latina Advantage: Gender, Race, and Political Success* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013); Kathleen Bratton, "Critical Mass Theory Revisited: The Behavior and Success of Token Women in State Legislatures," *Politics & Gender* 1, no. 1 (2005): 97–125; Nadia Brown, *Sisters in the Statehouse: Black Women and Legislative Decision Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Pearl Dowe, "Resisting Marginalization: Black Women's Political Ambition and Agency," *P.S.: Political Science & Politics* 53, no. 4 (2020): 697–702; Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent Yes," *Journal of Politics* 61, no. 3 (1999): 628–57; Michael Minta and Nadia Brown, "Intersecting Interests: Gender, Race, and Congressional Attention to Women's Issues," *Dubois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 11, no. 2 (2014): 253–72; Byron D'Andra Orey et al., "Race and Gender Matter: Refining Models of Legislative Policymaking in State Legislatures," *Journal of Women, Politics, & Policy* 28, no. 3–4 (2007): 97–119; Beth Reingold et al., "Anti-abortion Policymaking and Women's Representation," *Political Research Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (2021): 403–20; Christine Slaughter, Chaya Crowder, and Christina Greer, "Black Women: Keepers of Democracy, the Democratic Process, and the Democratic Party," *Politics & Gender* 2, no.1 (2024): 162–81; Wendy Smooth, "Standing for Women? Which Women? The Substantive Representation of Women's Interests and the Research Imperative of Intersectionality," *Politics & Gender* 7, no. 3 (2001): 436–41; Ismail White and Chyrl Laird, *Steadfast Democrats: How Social Forces Shape Black Political Behavior*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

⁶ *Women State Legislators: Past, Present, and Future* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, Center for American Women in Politics, 2001).

⁷ Kathleen Dolan, *When Does Gender Matter? Women Candidates and Gender Stereotypes in American Elections* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Dennis Simon and Barbara Palmer, "The Roll Call Behavior of Men and Women in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1937–2008," *Politics & Gender* 6, no. 2 (2010): 225–46.

⁸ Jennifer Lawless, Jennifer Theriault, and Sean Theriault, "Sex, bipartisanship, and Collaboration in the US Congress," (Cambridge MA: Political Parity Project, 2016); Tracy Osborn, *How Women Represent Women: Political Parties, Gender, and Representation in State Legislatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Kathryn Pearson, *Party Discipline in the U.S. House of Representatives* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015); Leslie Schwindt-Bayer and Renato Corbetta, "Gender Turnover and Roll-Call Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2004): 215–29; Dennis Simon and Barbara Palmer, "The Roll Call Behavior of Men and Women in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1937–2008," *Politics & Gender* 6, no. 2 (2010): 225–46.

⁹ Danielle Thomsen, *Opting out of Congress: Partisan Polarization and the Decline of Moderate Candidates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹⁰ Rebecca Kreitzer, "Politics and Morality in State Abortion Policy," *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 15, no. 1: (2015): 41–66; Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, "Public Opinion and Policymaking in the States: The Case of Post-Roe Abortion Policy," *Policy Studies Journal* 27, no. 4: (1999): 707–22; Amanda Roberti, "Women Deserve Better: The Use of the Pro-Woman Frame in Anti-Abortion Policies in the U.S. States," *Journal of Women, Politics, & Policy* 42, no. 3 (2021): 207–24.

¹¹ Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Ideology and Congress: A Political Economic History of Roll Call Voting* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 105.

¹² Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches* (Boston: MIT Press, 2006).

¹³ Sarah Binder, Thomas Mann, and Molly Reynolds, *Mending the Broken Branch: Assessing the 110th Congress, Anticipating the 111th* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2009). www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/0108_broken_branch_binder_mann.aspx.

- ¹⁴ Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Off-Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Sean Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators: The Roots of Partisan Warfare in Congress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Matt Grossmann and David Hopkins, *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- ¹⁵ Frances Lee, *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4.
- ¹⁶ Lilliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Shanto Iyengar et al., "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, (2019): 129–46.
- ¹⁷ "Parties, Congress at a Glance: Major Party Ideology." VoteView (2025), <https://voteview.com/parties/all>.
- ¹⁸ Significance in means test for DW NOMINATE scores for Democratic women and men in the 114th Congress was slightly higher ($p < .06$).
- ¹⁹ Significance in means test for DW NOMINATE scores for Republican women and men in the 105th and 114th Congresses were slightly higher ($p < .07$).
- ²⁰ *History of Women in the U.S. Congress* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, Center for American Women in Politics, 2025), <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/congress/history-women-us-congress>.
- ²¹ *Party Divisions of the House of Representatives, 1789 to Present* (United States House of Representatives, 2025), <https://history.house.gov/Institution/Party-Divisions/Party-Divisions/>; "Women in Congress: Statistics and Brief Overview." Congressional Research Service, January 15, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43244/28>.
- ²² Mary Layton Atkinson, "Gender and Policy Agendas in the Post-War House," *Policy Studies Journal* 48, no. 1 (2017) 133–56; Karen Beckwith and Kimberly Cowell-Meyers "Sheer numbers: Critical Representation Thresholds and Women's Political Representation," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (2007): 555–67; Mirya Holman, *Women in Politics in the American City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014).
- ²³ Childs and Krook, "Analysing Women's Substantive Representation."
- ²⁴ Ruth Bloch Rubin, *Building the Bloc: Intraparty Organization in the US Congress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
- ²⁵ Roger Davidson et al., *Congress and Its Members*, 17th edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQ Press, 2020).
- ²⁶ Dick Armey (R-TX) served as Majority Leader, Tom DeLay (R-TX) served as Majority Whip, and John Boehner (R-IL) served as Republican Conference Chair in the 104th Congress.
- ²⁷ "Congressional Leadership Roles and Committee Chairs (Current and Past)," Center for American Women in Politics (2025).
- ²⁸ Ronald Peters and Cindy Rosenthal, *Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the New American Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 64.
- ²⁹ Kristen Bialik, "For the Fifth Time in a Row, the New Congress is the Most Racially and Ethnically Diverse Ever," Pew Research Center, February 8, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/02/08/for-the-fifth-time-in-a-row-the-new-congress-is-the-most-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-ever/>.
- ³⁰ Liz Halloran, "Obama Humbled by Election 'Shellacking,'" NPR, November 3, 2010, <https://www.npr.org/2010/11/03/131046118/obama-humbled-by-election-shellacking>.
- ³¹ John Stanton. "House Passes Abortion Funding Ban That Has No Chance of Becoming Law," *Roll Call*, October 13, 2011, <https://rollcall.com/2011/10/13/house-passes-abortion-funding-ban-that-has-no-chance-of-becoming-law/>.
- ³² "The Anti-Women Voting Record of the U.S. House of Representatives 112th Congress," Minority Staff, Committee on Energy & Commerce, September 2012.
- ³³ "The Anti-Women Voting Record of the U.S. House of Representatives 112th Congress."
- ³⁴ H.R. 4970—Violence against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012, Introduced by Rep Sandy Adams (R-FL), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/4970>.

³⁵ Congresswomen of Tri-Caucus Speak Out against House VAWA Bill. Congressional Hispanic Caucus, May 16, 2012, <https://chc.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congresswomen-of-tri-caucus-speak-out-against-house-awa-bill>.

³⁶ Minority Leader McCarthy on First 100 days of 116th Congress." C-SPAN, April 10, 2019, <https://www.c-span.org/program/us-house-of-representatives/minority-leader-mccarthy-on-first-100-days-of-116th-congress/524849>.

³⁷ U.S. Representative Steve Scalise, "Scalise: Democrats Are out of Step with the American People" (Press Release), Scalise.House, March 12, 2019, <https://scalise.house.gov/media/press-releases/scalise-democrats-are-out-step-american-people>.

³⁸ Katie Pavlich, "RNC Blasts the Squad in New Ad ...with Their Own Words and Anarchy," *Townhall*, July 17, 2019, <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/katiepavlich/2019/07/17/rnc-blasts-the-squad-in-new-adwith-their-own-words-and-anarchy-n2550188>.

³⁹ Li Zhou, "A Historic New Congress Will Be Sworn In Today," *Vox* January 3, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2018/12/6/18119733/congress-diversity-women-election-good-news>.

⁴⁰ Grace Hauck, "Why Are They Called the 'Squad'? How Four Freshman Democrats Got Their Group Nickname," *USA Today*, July 23, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/07/23/squad-congress-how-aoc-omar-tlaib-and-presley-got-name/1804557001/>.

⁴¹ Rachel Kleinfeld, "The Rise in Political Violence in the United States and Damage to Our Democracy," Testimony before the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, March 31, 2022, <https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/2022-Rachel%20Kleinfeld%20Jan%206%20Committee%20Testimony.pdf>; Mona Lena Krook and Juliana Restrepo Sanin, "The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians," *Perspectives on Politics* 18, no. 3 (2022): 740–55.

⁴² Nathan Kalmoe and Liliana Mason, *Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, Its Causes, and the Consequences for Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).

Cite this article: Cooperman, Rosalyn (2025). "Gender and Party Polarization in the US Congress: Hypervisibility and Invisibility." *Journal of Policy History* 37 (4): 284–302. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030625100407>