

welcoming of gender and politics research. For example, a search of *Political Research Quarterly* (PRQ) with the same terms in the same period returned 748 results. Yes, PRQ reflects a bigger outlet and a broader research scope, but the numbers are startling.

Searches of the APSA panels reveal a similar pattern. Looking at the titles for panels in the last four APSA programs (2015–2018), LSS has sponsored only two panels that included the term “gender” or “women.” Six panels were cosponsored with the Women and Politics Section and one with the Race, Ethnicity, and Politics Section. I acknowledge that the creation of panels

the audience. Nonetheless, the program was skewed toward senior male scholars and less populated by presentations of emerging scholars. To remedy this problem, I recommend the model that we used at the Women Transforming Congress conference, which invested funding in graduate students who have returned that investment many times over.

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is a complicated matter, but my point is that LSS would not be a scholar’s first choice to place a paper on gender and women in legislative studies.

The pattern is not the result of a lack of interesting and provocative research. When the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center hosted the Women Transforming Congress Conference in 1999, we welcomed an incredibly rich group of research projects by senior scholars. We also funded travel for a talented group of a dozen or so graduate students who have gone on to distinguished research careers. (Incidentally, the edited volume resulting from that conference needs to be updated to reflect the impact of women in the US Congress almost two decades later.)

### **Mentoring to the Profession**

Women scholars often have found mentors outside of the field of legislative studies, turning instead to senior scholars in other sections that support research efforts on gender and politics; comparative politics; and race, ethnicity, and sexuality.

Clearly, the section membership has changed, numbering more women as senior scholars for junior women scholars to follow. For many of us in the field, however, we turned elsewhere for professional mentoring and social connections. I am forever grateful to Rita Mae Kelly for placing me on that first research panel at the WPSA meeting in 1993 in Pasadena.

In contrast to a typical LSS business meeting, I recall many times in a room of predominantly women and politics scholars, where graduate students and new assistant professors were routinely introduced during a reception or business meeting to jumpstart their networking and connecting with potential mentors.

### **What the Future Holds?**

Talent will go where it is most valued and nurtured. The LSS will thrive if it meets the challenge of attracting and mentoring the rising generation of women scholars. In 2016, the Carl Albert Center hosted the annual Congress and History Conference at the University of Oklahoma. My colleague and successor, Mike Crespin, developed an excellent program, and one important takeaway for me was the presence of many young women in

### **DOES THE LEGISLATIVE STUDIES SECTION HAVE A “WOMAN” PROBLEM?**

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Does the Legislative Studies Section (LSS) have a “woman” problem? Some statistics suggest that women have not participated in section panels, attended LSS meetings, or published in *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (LSQ) at the rates we might expect in 2018. Other data indicate that women have served regularly as chairs of the section, as section program and panel chairs at major conferences, and as editors of the section journal and its newsletter. If women feel unwelcome in our subfield, it is not because they have been shut out of visible leadership roles.

Before assuming that the LSS is at fault for not being as inclusive as it could be, there are several things I would want to know. First, how many women have finished the PhD in legislative politics as a percentage of all PhDs in our field? It may be that the pool of female legislative scholars narrows during graduate school. Perhaps women have gravitated away from American politics toward other political science fields or other American politics subfields. Perhaps they have lacked mentors or have not forged bonds with their departmental peers that later developed into professional networks. This would be a recruitment problem for the section that shows up in lower rates of engagement compared to other political science sections.

Second, how many of the female scholars who entered the academy have joined departments with graduate programs or liberal arts colleges with high expectations for publication? Conference participation is expensive, and many institutions have experienced budget cuts from state legislatures or battered endowments after the Great Recession. I remember discussions when I was on the APSA Council several years ago about the rising cost of conference attendance, which has become an issue for scholars of both sexes. Perhaps women have tended to find work in departments with fewer resources for travel, or perhaps they have allocated fewer days for meetings to save money in their research budgets. Or perhaps they

belong to multiple sections and present multiple papers at a meeting, as men do, and have little time for anything else. This would be a resource problem that limits female participation in LSS activities.

Third, how many women submit papers to *LSQ*? The publication rate suggests that women are far less likely than men to gain acceptance to the journal: 18% solo female authors compared to 59% solo male authors and 23% authors of both sexes. Stated another way, female authors are present in 41% of articles and male authors in 82%. It seems unlikely that the women who have served as recent editors of the journal have actively discriminated against female authors or that a blind review process has winnowed out women in favor of men. However, I am guessing that the majority of reviewers for *LSQ* are male. If the acceptance rate for women is lower than for men, perhaps it arises from an epistemological problem in which the dominant group in our field applies criteria about scholarly merit that inadvertently disadvantages women.

Fourth, legislative studies cut across a variety of subfields in American politics, as well as comparative politics. As the number of APSA sections proliferates, scholars who study congressional elections, for example, might see their intellectual home in organizations devoted to political campaigns or voting behavior, whereas those who examine policy outcomes might prefer to focus on parliamentary systems. Perhaps scholars who are interested in broad issues of representation and democratic accountability have found more fruitful terrain in other parts of the world. After all, the US Congress—which is the focus of so many legislative scholars—is highly unusual in the universe of legislative institutions. This would lead to an ethnocentric problem in which the dominance of congressional scholars in our subfield deters others from engaging in the section.

From my vantage point of 40-plus years as an LSS member, I would say that recruitment, resources, epistemology, and the bias of our subfield toward Congress are recurring problems. Moreover, legislative studies have never had the lure for budding political scientists that other subfields in American politics enjoy. Furthermore, with public approval of Congress at an historically low ebb and the institution barely able to function, we should not be surprised that our section is having difficulty attracting active members. What remains perplexing to me is why any of these factors would disproportionately affect women and what the section might do to improve. Although the numbers at this point seem troubling, I would need more context before attempting to devise a strategy to address them.

Nevertheless, I had hoped that issues of gender equity in the profession would have faded by now. My personal experience in the profession differed greatly from what women experience today. I was, for example, the only female member of my graduate-school class at the University of Rochester (Barbara Sinclair had finished and Lynda Powell was several years ahead of me); the first female tenure-track hire in my department and the first woman tenured in that department; the only female member of the founding editorial board for *LSQ*; and the first female chair of the LSS. I remember exhausting days in which I was the only woman in the elevator at APSA conventions; a lone female adrift in a sea of blue blazers and khaki trousers at the Palmer House; and a solitary individual eating in my room because I feared sending the wrong signal if I invited myself to dinner with the boys.

I also was incredibly fortunate. Dick Fenno, my mentor and friend, created a bond among his former students through their respect and affection for him. He also fostered an exceptional community among legislative scholars: if you were interested in Congress or state legislatures, then you were in. Thanks to his example and others (e.g., Pat Patterson, Chuck Jones, Mac Jewell, and Jerry Loewenberg), the study of Congress was wide open to all types of methodologies from “soaking and poking,” to formal theories of legislative bodies, to the mining of historical data to test explanations of institutional development. I had found when I was employed at the newly formed Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 that gender mattered less when there was work to be done on a brand-new agenda, and I think a similar ethos prevailed in the early days of the LSS.

Perhaps the issue today is not gender bias per se but rather the fact that our subfield is too settled. Legislative studies, in my view, has become focused on increasingly narrow questions and guarded by rigid norms about what counts as evidence. The articles in our journal look remarkably alike with the primary difference being the labels on the X and Y axes. Established people have turf to protect while good jobs in the academy are generally scarce. Such a climate does not foster acceptance for newcomers. Indeed, I have had many conversations with young male scholars in recent years who find the LSS less than welcoming.

Moreover, anyone can see that women are present at conferences and hold positions of leadership in substantial numbers. Some observers might conclude, therefore, that the LSS is doing fine. Is there parity? No. Do I still feel like an interloper at meetings? Yes. Am I surprised that some male colleagues—who have professional wives or female partners and friends and presumably should know better—still seem as clueless as Bill Riker when he queried my game-theory class by asking what value to ascribe to the certain option in a lottery between Miss Fowler and a light-bulb? You bet.

Women in legislative studies today contend with different obstacles than those I encountered. Bias is more subtle and therefore more difficult to call out. In addition, expectations among women entering our profession have changed—and rightly so. Barbara Sinclair and I sometimes joked that professional slights or outright hostility were less wounding for us than our younger colleagues because we never expected anything else. Yet, comparatively speaking, I would say the glass still seems half full rather than half empty—and I believe Barbara would probably have agreed. ■

#### HOW DO WE GET MORE WOMEN TO STUDY LEGISLATIVE POLITICS?

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As a scholar who studies women and Congress, when I was invited to write for this issue, I was struck by the fact that the proportion of women in the Legislative Studies Section (LSS), 22%, closely mirrors the proportion of women in Congress. According to the Center for American Women and Politics (2019), women constitute 23.6% of the 116th Congress (2019–2020). Thus, women’s standing in the section is comparable to other high-status fields,