

Which Women, Exactly? Examining Gender Gaps in Legislative Responsiveness to Women’s Issue Advocacy through an Intersectional Lens

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Abstract

Recent scholarship on women’s issue lobbying shows that female state legislators are more responsive than their male counterparts to women’s issue organizations seeking influence. Explanations for the significant gender gaps in access provision and inclusion are rooted in theories of descriptive representation, asserting that shared gendered life experiences of marginalization shape imbalanced prioritization of women’s issues (broadly defined). Experiences of social and political marginalization shape both political interest, ambition, and behavior— among voters as well as among elected officials. But scholars are also keen to note that experiences of marginalization cannot exist on single dimensions of identity alone. Just as the experiences of intersectional marginalization lead to, in Crenshaw’s words, “injustice squared,” they may also lead to distinctive impacts on political and legislative behavior. Paying particular attention to concepts of intersectionality, this paper takes a closer look at the relationship between descriptive representation, legislative access, and group inclusion in state-level policymaking. Drawing on data collected in Wiener’s (2020) field experiment, I consider the following questions: *Which* women were most responsive to a group advocating on issues of violence against women? I find female legislators identifying as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color are most responsive to a substantial and significant degree, especially when compared to their White female counterparts.

1 Introduction

Black women did this—but this isn’t just “Black Girl Magic.” This is the result of pure organizing, labor, and love that Black women have poured into GA.

Gratitude to every one of my sisters who willed the possibilities of this moment into existence. We see you and we love you.

Tweet on 1/6/2021 at 7:07 AM by Rep. Cori Bush (D-MO), Missouri’s first woman of color elected to the House of Representatives

In the hours after the 2021 Georgia Senate run-off elections were decided in the Democratic party’s favor, political commentators and public officials alike drew attention to the organizational efforts of women of color. Led by civil rights activists such as Bernice King and Brittany Packnett, the public rallied behind the power of Black female organizers and their capacity to mobilize electoral victories. However, a key unanswered question remained: would the power to win elections translate into the power to influence policy? A group’s influence in policymaking is contingent on their capacity to gain access and attention to decision-makers in office. When advocacy organizations representing marginalized groups seek the ear of legislators, who is most likely to listen?

Recent scholarship has begun to explore this critical question, specifically through the lens of gender. More specifically, in her recently published paper, *Political Research Quarterly* published a paper titled, “*Getting a High Heel in the Door: An Experiment on State Legislator Responsiveness to Women’s Issue Lobbying*”, Wiener (2020) shows that female state legislators are more responsive than their male counterparts to women’s issue organizations seeking access (2020). Explanations for the significant gender gaps in access provision and inclusion are rooted in theories linking descriptive representation to substantive representation for marginalized groups (Mansbridge 1999, Phillips 1998, Sapiro 1981, Williams 1998). While institutional context can condition the observed strength of these links (Bratton and Haynie 1999, Swers 2002, e.g.), elected officials at both the state and federal level tend to be more active on issues that are important to their own salient group identities, marking important progress in the substantive representation of groups historically excluded from politics (Bratton and Haynie 1999, Canon and Posner 1999, Casellas 2010, Griffin and Newman 2008, Grose 2011, Haynie 2001, Minta 2011, Osborn 2012, Reingold 2000, Rouse 2013, Swers 2002; 2013, Thomas 1994, Wilson 2017). Shared experiences of marginalization and senses of

commonality foster a group consciousness that can influence the behavior of political elites (de la Garza and Vaughan 1984, Morin 2014, Rocca and Sanchez 2008).

But scholars are also keen to note that experiences of marginalization cannot exist on single dimensions of identity alone. Just as the experiences of intersectional marginalization lead to, in Crenshaw's words, "injustice squared," they may also lead to distinctive impacts on political and legislative behavior. Researchers are increasingly answering the call to think more critically about the race-gender complexities of links between descriptive and substantive representation (Brown 2014, Fraga et al. 2008, Hawkesworth 2003, Reingold 2008, Smooth 2006). For instance, in their recently released book, Reingold, Haynie, and Widner (2020) take comprehensive steps towards illuminating how gender and race interact to affect the legislative behavior "of all individuals- raced women and gendered minorities alike" (Reingold, Haynie and Widner 2020, 3). In its emphasis on intersectionality as a critical research paradigm (Else-Quest and Hyde 2016, Hancock 2007*a*, Reingold, Haynie and Widner 2020), their work exemplifies the standard to which scholars of identity politics must strive.

While Wiener (2020) does well highlighting the connections between descriptive representation and organized advocacy, she uses the "single-axis" analysis the authors above critique. This short article applies an intersectional lens to her experimental analysis, uncovering compelling new insight. By investigating how responsiveness to organizations advocating on behalf marginalized groups is raced, gendered, and race-gendered simultaneously, I pose the following questions: *Which* women were most responsive to a group advocating on issues of violence against women? *Which* men were most responsive to constituent mobilization on a women's issue? Do these distinctions matter? I find that they do. In particular, female legislators identifying as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color are most responsive to a substantial and significant degree, especially when compared to their White female counterparts.

The short paper that follows conducts a natural extension to an existing analysis and is therefore highly focused in this regard. Nonetheless, the results presented have substantial implications for future research on the hurdles and opportunities faced by women, racial minorities, and low income individuals seeking increased representation in policymaking. Despite a widespread consensus that organized advocacy matters in marginalized group representation (Berry 2010, Berry and Wilcox 2015, Pinderhughes 1995, Schlozman 1984, e.g.), little is currently understood about how inter-

sectionality shapes the linkages between descriptive representation and marginalized group access and influence. This short paper opens the door to that line of research, underlining its potential consequence and importance.

2 A Brief Review of 2020 Experimental Design and Results

To set a foundation for the analysis that follows, I begin by providing a brief review of Wiener’s (2020) experimental motivation, design, and findings. Wiener considers two broad questions. First, do men and women in state legislatures respond differently to a women’s issue advocacy group? If women and men legislate differently on behalf of women, do they respond differently to women’s issue groups as well? Second, can different strategic lobbying tactics change male legislative responsiveness specifically, closing gender gaps while increasing legislative access for women’s issue groups overall. Wiener explores the effects of different lobbying strategies, arguing that their effects are heterogeneous based on gender.

Within the experiment, a fictitious women’s advocacy group called Women Against Violence and Exploitation (WAVE) emailed a meeting request to state legislators, manipulating signals of different tactics for strategic lobbying within the email text. WAVE presented itself as a group dedicated to supporting female victims of sex trafficking. The study thus uses a legislator’s willingness to schedule a meeting with a women’s issue advocacy organization as its observed outcome of interest. Legislators were randomly assigned into four treatment groups, wherein each received email text that was experimentally manipulated to signal varying lobbying tactics: one treatment signalling the gathering of district-relevant expertise; one treatment signalling grassroots mobilization efforts; one treatment signalling these two efforts combined; and a control group wherein the text was limited to a simple meeting request and signalled no specific lobbying tactics at all.¹

By observing and analyzing legislator responses, Wiener’s (2020) study produces compelling results. The findings uncover substantial gender gaps in state-level legislative responsiveness to women’s issue advocacy, such that female state-legislators are twice as likely provide a women’s group access when the group extends a simple meeting request absent of any additional tactics for

¹The varying lobbying tactics were signaled in each meeting request with descriptions of the fictitious group’s “work.” Group “work” changed depending on the intended signal for lobbying tactics. For instance, to signal grassroots mobilization activity, a working petition with signatures with .05% of a legislator’s constituency was referenced in the email. Text of the original email texts can be found in the Supporting Materials for the original publication.

persuasion. Grassroots mobilization lobbying tactics doubled the response rate of male legislators specifically while having no measurable impact on the female legislative response rates. Wiener's (2020) study thus represents a substantial contribution to the literature, providing knowledge about who within office exists as a legislative ally for women's group advocacy, as well as shedding light on how a women's group can maximize its chances of access, inclusion, and ultimately potential influence with *less-likely* allies.

However, critical questions remain. Because her experiment was designed to measure the impact of gender, Wiener was unable to provide insight into how gender and race interact in shaping outcomes. Roughly 50% of female legislators responded to a simple meeting request extended by the group, but it remains unclear how those women who were responsive (and those who were not) were distributed across raced-gendered identities. The original research design's choice of "women's issue" is also worth careful re-examination: Should an organization lobbying on domestic issues of sex trafficking be considered a raced-gendered issue group rather than simply a gendered-issue group alone? In the section that follows, I unpack these critical questions, laying the foundation for an additional analysis that adds valuable nuance to Wiener's original findings.

3 Unresolved Questions and Testable Expectations

Applying an intersectional paradigm to the "women's issue" central to Wiener's original study's design, it becomes clear that Wiener (2020) might not have been examining a single-axis issue. The organization WAVE explicitly claimed to be "advocating on behalf of female victims of sex trafficking." While Wiener (2020) underlines the problematic conceptual frameworks for defining "women's issues," she asserts that human trafficking in the U.S. can and should be considered a women's issue due both to the issue's connections with sexual abuse as well as its disproportionate impact on women overall. Indeed, data collected by the Human Trafficking Reporting System (HTRS) indicates that 80% of the suspected human trafficking incidents can be classified as sex trafficking specifically, compared to the approximate 10% of incidents classified as labor trafficking (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011, Godoy, Sadwick and Baca 2016). HTRS also reports that victims of sex trafficking are overwhelmingly female (94%) (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011).

But sex trafficking survivors are also disproportionately women of color. In addition to being 94% female, 40% of sex trafficking victims between 2008 and 2010 were Black and 24% were Latinx. State to state, the statistics consistently demonstrate similar racial disparities (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). For instance, in Nebraska, 50% of sex trade survivors are Black despite Black individuals comprising only 5% of the general population (Clark and Price 2017). What's more, despite national efforts to reframe the issue, law enforcement often misidentifies victims of sexual exploitation as criminals; Black children account for approximately 53% of all prostitution arrests in the juvenile justice system— more than any other racial or ethnic group overall (Parsons et al. 2016).

It can therefore be argued that sex trafficking is a “cross-cutting,” intersectional issue, to use Cohen's (1999) terminology, rather than a single-axis women's issue. As such, Wiener's (2020) experiment measured responsiveness to an intersectional women's issue group, or a women's group advocating on behalf of women with intersectionally marginalized identities. Issues of sex trafficking should be considered, in Hancock's (2007*b*, 65) terms, one of many “policy problems [that] are more than the sum of mutually exclusive parts; they create an interlocking prison from which there is little escape.” With this in hand, could it therefore be the case that the driving force behind Wiener's (2020) findings on gender gaps in responses to women's advocacy is activism by women of color?

Such a conclusion would be well in line with the existing literature. For instance, the electoral gains for marginalized groups (considered with a single-axis approach) including women, Black Americans, Latinxs, and Asian Americans can be attributed to women of color candidates in particular (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013, Hardy-Fanta et al. 2016, Reingold 2014, Smooth 2006). Once in office, women of color consistently either match or exceed their White female or minority male colleagues in bill sponsorship on issues related to race and gender, and play a substantive leadership role on issues impacting multiply disadvantaged groups in particular (Reingold, Haynie and Widner 2020). While women of color are by no means a monolith, Black women specifically are in fact more unified than both their White female and Black male counterparts in advancing progressive policy initiatives (Barrett 1995, Orey et al. 2007).

Nevertheless, the under-representation of women of color is well-documented (Htun 2004, Hughes 2011, Minta 2011, Reingold and Smith 2012, Strolovitch 2008). Research shows that when it comes

to policy concerns and preferences of others who are “multiply burdened” (Crenshaw 1989) or “multiply marginalized” (Brown and Banks 2014) women of color are also unique in their interest and presentation as active group representatives (Brown and Gershon 2016, Hawkesworth 2003). In turn, compelling evidence also indicates that minority advocacy organizations and women’s advocacy organizations alike spend more time on policies benefiting middle-class White women and minority men than on welfare policies affecting lower-income and intersectionally disadvantaged women of color (Cohen et al. 1999, Hancock et al. 2004, Strolovitch 2006). When an organization representing multiply marginalized subpopulations of women *does* seek access to state legislative processes, then, who listens?

The question taps into what must be a key point of emphasis in this paper, especially as it relates to linkages between descriptive and substantive representation. My interest here is not only driven by the fact that sex trafficking is a raced-gendered issue, but also by an interest in the extent to which different legislators *perceive it to be* as such. At least with respect to gender identity, we might bring to bear the seminal work of Jane Mansbridge on the feminist identity and accountability in representation, as she argues, “accountability through identity... requires thinking of the collective as a worthy entity and oneself as part of that entity” (Mansbridge 1995, 29). Carroll (2003), in her discussion of feminism in legislatures, interprets Mansbridge to mean that “identity plays an important role in accountability and that most feminists feel ‘internally accountable’ to the women’s movement” (2003, 4). Does “internal accountability” guide BIPOC women in fostering stronger perceived connections to women’s groups advocating on raced-gendered issues? In turn, what can we expect with regards to white women in office, or BIPOC men? The analysis that follows investigates these critical questions.

4 Analysis and Discussion

The analysis that follows must be approached with due consideration. Wiener’s (2020) experiment was not designed specifically to isolate the influence minority group membership or to investigate the intersectional relationship between minority status and gender. In turn, Wiener (2020) explicitly specifies that the sample size was restricted to a minimum in order to limit the necessary levels of deception in the experimental design. Therefore, sample sizes of minority status legislators in

the larger study as well as across treatment groups are limited, especially when making additional comparisons within and between genders. This gives rise both to concerns about statistical power as well as accurate parameter estimation in regression analyses. Despite these limitations, there is still value in examining the data through an intersectional lens. In the forthcoming analyses, I conduct t-tests to compare response rates, which require no minimum sample size. For regression analyses, I rely on 95% confidence intervals in assessing parameter estimations rather than on specific estimates, simultaneously anticipating the threat of Type II error given low statistical power.

The data is publicly available on Wiener's personal website² and includes officeholders in the following eight state legislatures: California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Wisconsin. The states selected maintain an advantageous balance across legislative professionalism, partisan composition, and the proportion of women in office. In addition to all 300 women serving in the states listed, an additional 300 male legislators were randomly selected blocked by party and state for inclusion in the study. Using a 2x2 factorial experimental design, all 600 legislators were randomly assigned into the four treatment groups described above. The randomization scheme ensures that legislators are evenly distributed across treatment groups with respect to race, gender, and raced-gendered identities.

To build upon the original experimental data, I did online research on each of the 600 participants to add the racial and ethnic minority status of each legislator. Legislators either self-identifying or publicly identified as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color were coded as BIPOC identifying; for the analysis that follows, BIPOC signifies racial or ethnic American minority group membership. I first analyze the differences in the average response rates to the experimental stimuli across legislators' raced-gendered intersectional identities. Table 1 presents the breakdown of response rates for each raced-gendered group across experimental treatment as well.

Immediately, a number of response rates stand out in Table 1. At first glance, it would appear as if the issue of women's sexual violence and exploitation is important to BIPOC women serving in state legislatures. Overall, BIPOC women show the highest average response rate (59.3%) of all raced-gendered groups in the sample. Additionally, the average response rate among BIPOC women in the control group is notably high at 80.0%. With respect to sample size, 20 of the total

²See here: <https://www.elizabethcwienner.com/research>

Table 1: Response Rates by Race-Gender and Treatment Group

	BIPOC Women	White women	BIPOC Men	White Men
Overall	59.3% N = 59	45.6% N = 241	24.0% N = 50	38.8% N = 250
Control Group	80.0% N = 20	40.0% N = 45	25.0% N = 12	23.3% N = 73
Mobilization Treatment	66.7% N = 12	51.4% N = 72	44.5% N = 9	54.5% N = 57
Expertise Treatment	33.3% N = 15	42.6% N = 61	23.5% N = 17	31.6% N = 57
Combined Treatment	50.0% N = 12	46.0% N = 63	8.3% N = 12	49.2% N = 63

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

59 BIPOC female legislators fall within this control group, a non-negligible portion of the total sample of BIPOC female legislators overall. Especially given that legislators in the experimental control group were contacted with a simple meeting request alone and thus without *any* signalling of additional lobbying tactics, the descriptive statistics support the conclusion that BIPOC women are unique in their attention to intersectional women’s issue advocacy. BIPOC women appear to prioritize connections with intersectional groups more so than their colleagues.

Examining the differences in response rates within minority status across gender as well as the within-gender differences across minority status lends more concrete insight. Table 2 evaluates the differences between: BIPOC women and White women (column 1); BIPOC women and BIPOC men (column 2); BIPOC men and white men (column 3); and White women and white men (column 4). Utilizing Walsh Two Sample t-tests to evaluate whether the true differences in group means is unequal to zero, Table 2 presents the p-value for each t statistic below the observed difference in mean response rates.

We again see in Table 2 evidence of exceptionalism among BIPOC female legislators. Overall, BIPOC women respond at a rate significantly greater than their White female counterparts. It does

Table 2: Raced-Gendered Differences in Response Rates by Treatment Group

	BIPOC Women - White women	BIPOC Women - BIPOC Men	BIPOC Men - White Men	White women - White Men
Overall	13.7%* (p = 0.06)	35.3%*** (p = 0.00)	-14.8%** (p = 0.03)	6.8% (p = 0.13)
Control Group	40.0%*** (p = 0.00)	55.0%*** (p = 0.00)	1.7% (p = 0.90)	16.7%* (p = 0.06)
Mobilization Treatment	15.3% (p = 0.34)	22.2% (p = 0.34)	-1.0% (p = 0.61)	-3.0% (p = 0.74)
Expertise Treatment	-9.3% (p = 0.52)	9.8% (p = 0.56)	-8.1% (p = 0.52)	11.0% (p = 0.22)
Combined Treatment	4.0% (p = 0.81)	41.7%** (p = 0.03)	-40.9%*** (p = 0.00)	-3.2% (p = 0.72)

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

appear, however, that this significant positive difference can in large part be attributed to the high baseline responsiveness from BIPOC women in the control group, who exceeded White women in their average response rate by 40% (p = 0.00). Considering Wiener’s (2020) empirical conclusion that significant gender gaps exist within this control group in particular, this observation is crucial; it seems possible that this gender gap can be attributed to female legislators of color specifically.

Significant differences also emerge when comparing control group response rates across gender within both BIPOC legislators and white legislators. White women in the control group were significantly more responsive than their white male colleagues, echoing Wiener’s original experimental findings, and substantial gender gaps in responsiveness are clear among BIPOC legislators as well. These findings thus lend additional support for the conclusion that there is, in fact, a link between gender identity and legislative responsiveness to women’s issue group seeking access. That said, the observed gaps are once again the largest across BIPOC legislators; whereas BIPOC women show a response rate greater than BIPOC men by 55.0% (p = 0.00), the gender gap between White women

and white men in the control group is far more narrow (16.7%) and does not reach significance at $\alpha = .05$. In other words, gender gaps are most meaningful among BIPOC legislators specifically.

Finally, BIPOC male legislators show a significantly smaller average response rate than their white male counterparts. We see this in the overall response rate, but the significant difference of 14.8% seems primarily driven by the major gap across BIPOC men and white men in the combined treatment group specifically. Also noting the substantive and significant difference between BIPOC women and BIPOC men in the combined treatment group, the key factor underlying this difference can be traced back to the extraordinarily low response rate of BIPOC men in this treatment group: 8.5%. It is unclear why the legislators in this group responded at such a low rate, but it is nonetheless important to remember that the sample might not be sufficiently representative given the small sample size ($N = 15$). Any conclusions made about this comparison between male legislators should possibly be taken with a pinch of salt.

While the descriptive analysis above sheds light on the extent to which differences across and within raced-gendered identity groups are significant, I also conduct a series of regression analyses to better understand the independent influence each raced-gendered identity has on responsiveness. Figure 1 presents a coefficient plot of a regression analysis predicting legislator response across raced-gendered identity, controlling for experimental treatment group and state fixed effects. To estimate predicted differences in legislator responsiveness across raced-gendered identity, I include dummy variables for BIPOC female legislator, BIPOC male legislator, and White female legislator, excluding white male legislators as the reference group.

Again, the relatively small and unbalanced number of cases for each raced-gendered dummy variable limits my statistical power and leads to less precise coefficient estimates. Nonetheless, in spite of these limitations, the results do lead to some telling conclusions. First, even controlling for experimental treatment group, BIPOC women in state legislators are particularly responsive to a women's issue group overall. As discussed above, this notable and statistically significant relationship might be a function of the issue itself, as many women of color themselves might recognize the issue as one of raced-gendered importance. That said, the results with respect to White women are also suggestive. Whereas the original (2020) paper argued that women as a

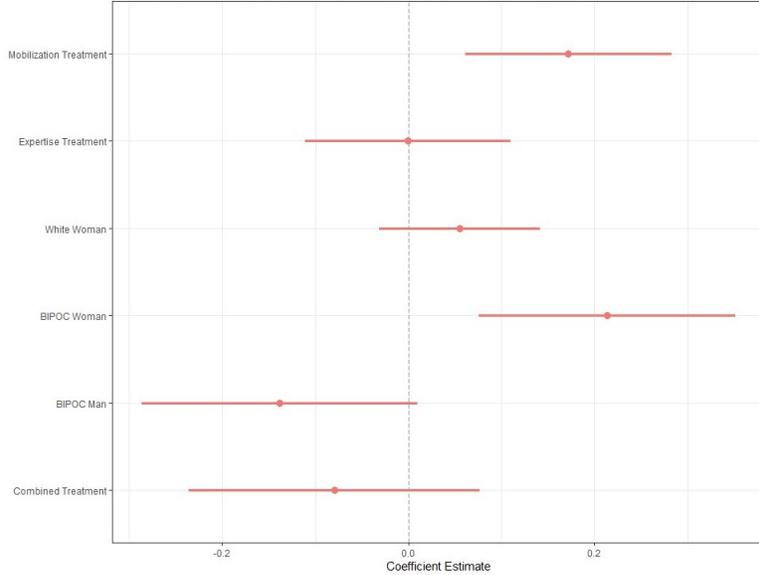


Figure 1: Predicting Legislator Responsiveness by Raced-Gendered Identity

larger group are more likely than their male counterparts to respond to a women’s issue advocacy organization, there is clearly insight to be gained from an intersectional lens that can distinguish between advantaged and disadvantaged subpopulations. All in all, women’s groups seeking access to the state legislative process appear to have the highest likelihood of success when they reach out to BIPOC women specifically.

5 Conclusion

This short paper provides a natural extension of Wiener’s (2020) auditing experiment, offering a critical reexamination of the original findings through the lens of intersectionality. The original study found significant gender gaps in responsiveness to a women’s issue advocacy group among state legislators, but it’s uniform treatment of women as a group left meaningful dynamics unexplored. Despite analytic limitations with respect to sample size and the original experiment’s design, the results discussed above suggest that the gender gaps evident in Wiener’s study are in fact unevenly distributed across legislator raced-gendered identity and should potentially be attributed to women of color specifically. BIPOC women serving at the state level show the highest levels of responsiveness to women’s issue advocacy—specifically, to an organization seeking increased representation for female victims of sex trafficking. One critical takeaway is therefore that when it

comes to organized advocacy on behalf of groups facing multiple dimensions of marginalization and histories of political exclusion, descriptive representation matters for access and potential influence.

However, these results also present interesting findings with respect to BIPOC male legislators. While the responsiveness of BIPOC women in office is notably high, BIPOC men in office show notably *low* levels of responsiveness to a sex trafficking advocacy organization. If linkages between identity-based descriptive and substantive representation are rooted in *perceptions* of shared group interest and accountability, it would appear at first glance as if BIPOC male legislators tend not to perceive sex trafficking as a particularly raced issue. This paper thus highlights an important opportunity for future research, opening a dialogue with concepts of linked fate and posing the question: to what extent are raced-gendered policy issues perceived differently as raced or gendered by representatives across varying intersectional marginalized identities?

Still, as with Wiener's (2000) results, it is not entirely clear if female legislators and BIPOC women in office are more responsive to women's issue (or intersectional issue) groups specifically, or rather to *all* groups seeking access overall. If the latter is the true underlying story, then an equally important interpretation emerges echoing work by scholars such as Anzia and Berry (2011) and Murray (2014); increasing diversity within legislative institutions can result in greater inclusion in policymaking for all. Today, women of color make up 34% of members of Congress, 25.5% of state legislators, and 6% of statewide elected executives,³ compared to just 23%, 19%, and 2% respectively in 2010.⁴ Future studies should take a closer examination into what these positive changes mean for the inclusion and influence of marginalized group advocacy efforts.

Ultimately, this paper adds to the growing body of research asserting how raced-gendered approaches to the study of representation matters. It is clear that political scientists ought to *explicitly* create experiments to explore how race and gender interact to shape representation and inclusion in policymaking— not only for raced interests, gendered interests, and raced-gendered interests, but for the public interest at large. If interest groups can “provide an institutionalized voice for the concerns of groups that continue to lack sufficient formal representation in national

³See Center for American Women and Politics, *Women of Color in Elective Office 2021*, <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-color-elective-office-2021>.

⁴See Center for American Women and Politics, *Women of Color in Elective Office 2010*, <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/color2010.pdf>.

politics,” (Strolovitch 2006, 894), then the scientific study of the connections between marginalized group advocacy, intersectional descriptive representation, and state-level politics is crucial.

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A Split Sample Regression Analyses and Discussion

Taking a closer look at the within-group dynamics for male and female legislators separately, I split the sample by legislator gender and replicate Wiener’s original baseline and interaction models. Figures 2 and 3 present and compare the results from the split-sample regression analyses. For the baseline models in both figures, the influence of BIPOC legislator identity is estimated overall. In turn, the interaction models examine whether treatment effects are in fact heterogeneous across BIPOC legislator identification.

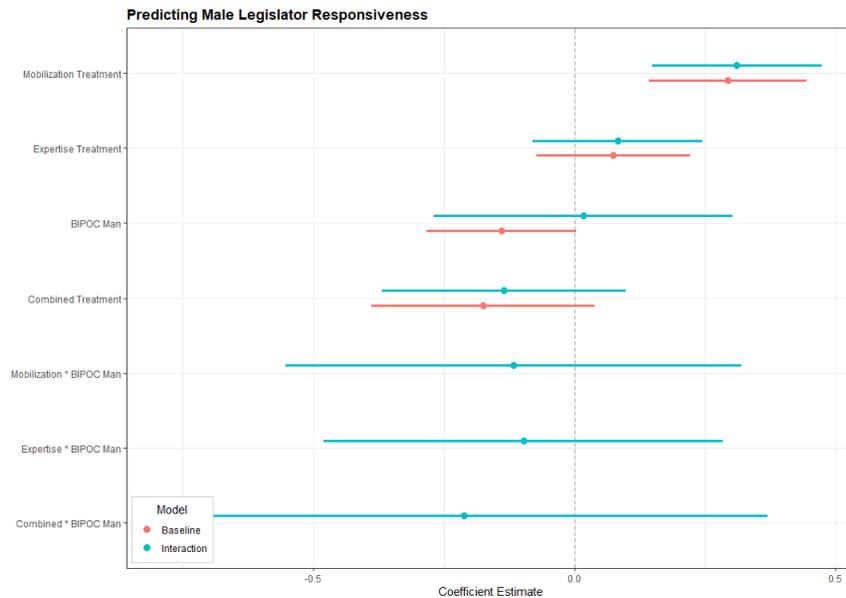


Figure 2: Predicting Male Legislative Responsiveness

For male legislators, the results are largely null with respect to any impact of BIPOC legislator identification. Building off of the analysis of average response rates by groups in Tables 1 and

2, an estimated negative relationship between BIPOC male legislator identity and responsiveness to an intersectional women’s issue group with does emerge in this regression, though it is not statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$. With the low level of statistical power, this is not surprising. However, consistent with Wiener’s earlier (2020) results, the constituent mobilization treatment clearly increases male legislator responsiveness, across both the baseline and interaction models and now even controlling for BIPOC legislator identity.

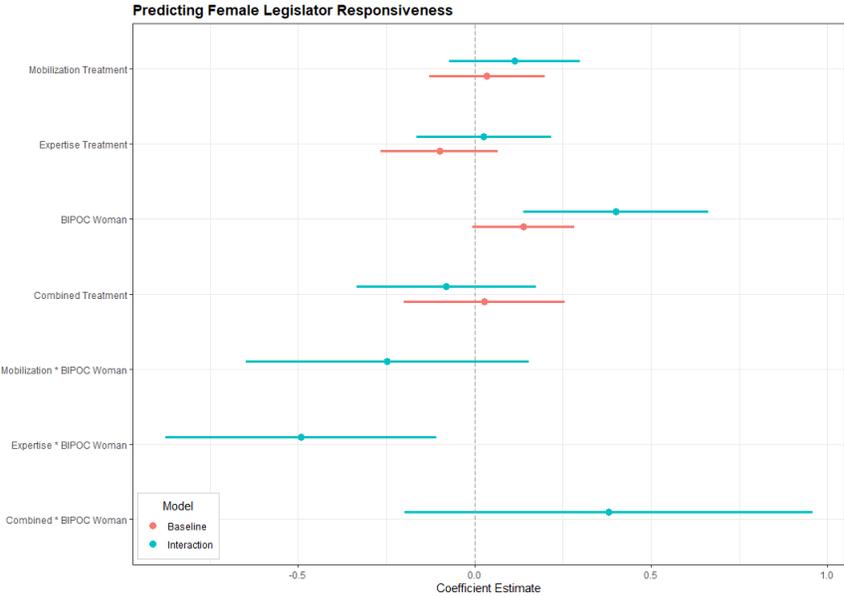


Figure 3: Predicting Female Legislator Responsiveness

Incorporating BIPOC legislator identification into the analysis for female legislators also provides additional insight. First, there is no observable influence of grassroots mobilization tactics by the intersectional women’s issue group on female legislators (in contrast to male legislators), independent of BIPOC legislator identification. Once again, though, women who identify as BIPOC emerge more responsive to the intersectional women’s issue group request for access to the legislative process. We see this trend holds across both the baseline as well as the interaction model.

That said, the experimental treatment condition is estimated as negative and statistically significant for BIPOC identifying women. This result also echoes Wiener’s 2020 findings, wherein female legislators overall were negatively impacted by the expertise treatment condition specifically. It

was proposed that this unexpected result might be rooted in issues with external validity; female legislators might be surprised to hear about ambiguously-sourced “expertise” regarding women in their district, a constituency group with whom they are likely to have a relatively strong relationship, all else equal (Reingold 2008). One can imagine this is especially true for the intersectionally descriptive representatives and constituent sub-populations of BIPOC-identifying women, given the group’s smaller size and the potential community-based local connections. As such, one could argue that Wiener’s original findings with respect to the influence of the expertise treatment on female legislators are once again driven predominately by BIPOC identifying female legislators in particular.