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Education

Brown University, Providence, RI
PhD, Political Science

June 2023

Dissertation: “*Representing a Movement: An Entrepreneurial Exchange of #MeToo Rhetoric and Legislation*”

Committee: Wendy Schiller (chair), Margaret Weir, & Katherine Tate

Abstract: Following the 2017 #MeToo movement, did political elites in Congress, especially women, represent the policy goals of the #MeToo movement within their legislative agendas and professional profiles? Based on previous theories, the #MeToo movement should have been too weak to force representatives to participate in an electoral exchange. Yet, the increased number of women elected to Congress in 2018 and 2020 suggest #MeToo had the capacity to produce an exchange. To answer this question, I create an entrepreneurial exchange model, where political elites incur risk to appeal to a movement. This risk is mitigated by several personal factors for the politician, including gender and other intersecting identities. I additionally contribute a novel typology for classifying how a movement’s policy goals are represented within the text of legislation. I utilize multiple methods to test my theory, including a survey experiment, large-n regressions, and text analysis. I find that the sponsorship and introduction of movement legislation increased from 2015-2020. Women and legislators of color were most likely to support #MeToo legislation but had to contend with partisanship within Congress and their districts to make the legislation into law.

Brown University, Providence, RI
M.A., Political Science

May 2020

University of Maryland, College Park, MD
B.A., Government and Politics
B.A., History

May 2015

Publications and Current Research

Rouse, Stella, Charles Hunt, and Kristen Essel. 2022. Growing Tea With Subnational Roots: Tea Party Affiliation, Factionalism, and GOP Politics in State Legislatures. *American Politics Research*, 50(2), 242-254.

Shenk, Marie, Kristen Essel, and Cory Manento. (R&R). “Running on Rage: Feminist Messaging and Voter Response in Primary Campaigns.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.

Essel, Kristen. (Under Review). "The Effect of Dobbs on Women's Voting Behavior in the 2022 Midterm Election."

Essel, Kristen. (Under Review). "Representing a Movement: Congressional Sponsorship of #MeToo Legislation from 2015 to 2020."

Schenk, Marie, Paul Testa, and Kristen Essel. (Under Review). "The Personal is Political: Assessing the Effects of Personal Narratives on Public Opinion."

2021-2024 Graduate Research Assistant, Dr. Wendy Schiller, Taubman Center, Brown University

2018-2020 Graduate Research Assistant, Dr. Susan Moffitt, Brown University

2014-2015 Undergraduate Research Assistant, Dr. Stella Rouse, University of Maryland Center for American Politics and Citizenship

Fellowships and Grants

2024-2025 Congressional Fellowship Program, American Political Science Association, \$62,000

2024-2025 Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program, Harvard University, \$65,000 (denied)

2023-2024 Dean's Faculty Fellowship, Brown University, \$35,000

2021-2022 Brown University Graduate School Internal Fellowship, \$35,000

2020 Congressional Research Grant, The Dirksen Congressional Center, \$2,600, with Cory Manento and Marie Schenk.

Teaching Experience

Spring 2024 The Legislative Process, Visiting Assistant Professor, Brown University

Fall 2023 Women and Politics, Visiting Assistant Professor, Brown University

Spring 2023 Senior Seminar: US Social Movements, Adjunct Instructor, Connecticut College
Introduction to American Politics, Adjunct Instructor, Connecticut College

Spring 2022 Introduction to American Politics, Adjunct Instructor, Connecticut College

Teaching Assistant

Spring 2023 The US Presidency; Teaching Assistant, Brown University

Fall 2022 Introduction to American Politics; Teaching Assistant, Brown University

Fall 2022 Introduction to Graduate Level Quantitative Research Methods; Teaching Assistant, Brown University

Summer 2021 American Congress and Public Policy, Teaching Assistant, Brown University (virtual)

Spring 2021 Polarized Politics, Teaching Assistant, Brown University (virtual)

Fall 2020 American Constitutional Law, Teaching Assistant, Brown University (virtual)

Spring 2020 City Politics, Teaching Assistant, Brown University (on-campus and virtual)

Fall 2019 Introduction to American Politics, Teaching Assistant, Brown University (on-campus)

Other Instructional Experience

Fall 2022 & 2020 Instruction Resources Content Creator, Lumina on behalf of Cengage

Summer 2015-Spring 2018 11th and 12th grade Government and Economics, High School Social Studies Teacher, Memphis, TN

Summer 2015-Spring 2018 6th and 8th grade Social Studies, Middle School Social Studies Teacher, Memphis, TN

Mentorship

2023- 2024 Capstone Project, Selene Luna. "Mental Health Policy, its Parity, and the Role of Women Legislators," Project Advisor.

2020-2021 Undergraduate Senior Thesis, Maeve Wiesen, "Red and Blue States: How Legislation in 'Safe' States Complicates the Landscape of Abortion Politics," Second Reader.

Conferences and Workshops Attended

Sept. 2024 American Political Science Association. Annual Meeting. In-Person. Accepted Paper: "Advocating for #MeToo: The Legislative Effects of Congressional Women's Caucuses."

April 2023 New England Political Science Association Annual Meeting, In-Person. Accepted Paper: "The Legislative Effects of the #MeToo Movement."

Sept. 2022 American Political Science Association. Annual Meeting, In-Person. Accepted Paper: "Voters' Responses to #MeToo Movement Congressional Representation."

- April 2022** New England Political Science Association. Annual Meeting. In-Person.
Accepted Paper: Spilt Tea: The Impact of the Tea Party on Economic Policy
- April 2022** Midwest Political Science Association. Annual Meeting. Virtual. Accepted Paper:
- “The Legislative Connection: Voter’s Responses to Congressional Representation of the #MeToo Movement”
 - “Partisan Responsiveness to Climate Change Protest (with David Herrera)”
 - “Spilt Tea: The Impact of the Tea Party on Economic Policy”
- Sept. 2021** American Political Science Association. Annual Meeting, Virtual. Accepted Paper: “Representing a Movement: Congresswomen’s Issue Uptake of the 2017 #MeToo Movement”
- Apr. 2021** New England Political Science Association Annual Meeting. Virtual. Presented: “Representing a Movement: Congresswomen’s Issue Uptake of the 2017 #MeToo Movement”
- Apr. 2021** Midwest Political Science Association. Annual Meeting, Virtual. Presented:
- “Representing a Movement: Congress Women’s Issue Uptake of the 2017 #MeToo Movement”
 - “From Enraged to Engaged? Negative Political Events and Women Officeholders”
- Apr. 2019** New England Political Science Association Annual Meeting. Portland, ME. Presented: “Denied Again: The Failed Political Assimilation of the Alt Right.”
- Jan. 2019** Southern Political Science Association. Annual Meeting. San Antonio, TX. Presented: “Growing Tea at the Grassroots: Predicting Tea Party Affiliation in State Legislatures”

Skills and Workshops

Spring 2022 “Sheridan Center Course Design Seminar (Certificate II).” Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. Brown University, virtual.

June 2021 “Introduction to Python”. Brown University, Adras Zsom and Matthew Slivinski, virtual.

Dec. 2020 “Text Analysis Using R,” *Data Matters: Data Matters Short Course Series*, University of North Carolina: The Odum Institute, Alison Blaine, virtual.

Fall 2019 “The Sheridan Center Teaching Seminar- Reflective Teaching (Certificate I).” Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. Brown University, in-person.

Proficient in R, LaTeX, and Python

Research Interests

Gender, Intersectionality, and Representation

Social Movements and Contentious Politics

Congress and State Legislatures

Research Methods

American Political Development

Academic Service and Professional Affiliations

2021-2022, Graduate American Politics Workshop, Coordinator, Brown University Political Science Department

2019-2020, Graduate American Politics Workshop, Coordinator, Brown University Political Science Department

2019-2020, Graduate Women in Political Science Workshop, Coordinator, Brown University Political Science Department

American Political Science Association

Midwest Political Science Association

New England Political Science Association

Women in Legislative Studies

Gender and Political Participation Graduate Working Group