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### Following the Leaders: Issue Attention and Agenda Dynamics in Women's Health Care Policy

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#### Abstract

This dissertation focuses on shifts in issue attention in the policy process and examines policy changes. Describing agenda setting is important not only for understanding congressional behavior in general but also for understanding the institutional context of other political behavior. I focus on the processes of positive feedback to explain periods of dramatic policy changes observed over a long period of time.

The purpose of this study is to examine the changes in the politics of health policy which opened the door to women's health care as an important feature of health politics. Thus, my research is motivated by three questions: (1) How do women's health concerns get on the agenda? (2) Does positive feedback through legislative entrepreneurship and composition of Congress shift attention? (3) How has women's health care policy evolved over time? The results of this study not only contribute to the agenda setting literature but also have important implications for practitioners, professional organizations and associations, researchers, patients, and others who contribute to the policy community.

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