

# UC Berkeley

## Working Papers

### Title

Symbolic Mobilization? The Impact of Candidate Sex in American Elections

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2qp5d81k>

### Author

Dolan, Kathleen

### Publication Date

2006-06-01

Symbolic Mobilization? The Impact of Candidate Sex in American Elections

Kathleen Dolan

Department of Political Science

University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

3210 N. Maryland Avenue

Milwaukee, WI 53211

414-229-3892 (voice)

414-229-5021 (fax)

414-967-9496 (home)

[kdolan@uwm.edu](mailto:kdolan@uwm.edu)

An earlier version of this research was presented at the 2005 American Political Science Association meeting. The author thanks Kathryn Pearson, Tom Holbrook, Jim Gimpel, and the reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

## Abstract

The increase in the number of women candidates in American politics has raised questions about whether the presence of these women has an impact on the public by mobilizing attitudes and behaviors. Employing National Election Study data from 1990-2004, this work examines whether women candidates influence levels of voter attitudes and behaviors and considers the role of political party and electoral competitiveness in this symbolic mobilization. The results indicate that there is little empirical analysis to support the assumption that the presence of women candidates translates into any widespread increase in political attitudes and behaviors.

The increase in the number of women who run for and are elected to office in the United States has been accompanied by an expanding literature that examines the impact these women have on our political system. This literature often focuses on questions of representation and the “benefits” that an increasing number of women candidates can bring to the political system, particularly to women citizens. Of course, representation is a complex term, encompassing many different elements of the roles political leaders play in our system. Much has been written about the impact of women on *substantive* representation, resulting in our understanding that having more women in office tends to lead to different policy outcomes and different procedural pathways. There is clear evidence that women and women’s issues receive greater representation in law-making bodies as the number of women officeholders increases (Swers 2002; Dodson 1998; Burrell 1998; Kathlene 1995; Thomas 1994; Saint-Germain 1989). Too, scholars find evidence that women elected officials pursue their positions in more open, collegial, and inclusive ways than do men officials, representing a different style of “doing politics” (Norton 2002; Rosenthal 1998; Kathlene 1995)

However, a second aspect of representation, one that is more relevant at the candidacy stage, is that of *symbolic* representation. While the direct benefits of symbolic representation may not be as easily quantified as those of substantive representation, from the perspective of the political community and its citizens, they are no less important. Given the historical exclusion of women from candidacy and elective office, the presence of women candidates can signal a greater openness in the system and more widely dispersed access to political opportunities for all (Burns, Scholzman, Verba 2001; Reingold 2000; Thomas 1998; Carroll 1994). Women candidates can also serve as role

models or symbolic mentors to women in the public, sending the signal that politics is no longer an exclusive man's world and that female participation is an important and valued act (Burrell 1998; Tolleson Rinehart 1992; Sapiro 1981). Mansbridge (1999) suggests that the increased representation of marginalized identity groups also affirms that members of these groups are capable of governing and can serve to more strongly connect group members to the polity. Finally, women candidates are more likely to campaign on issues of interest to women, which may catch the attention of women voters (Dabelko and Herrnson 1997; Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2001; Larson 2001).

The signals of openness, legitimacy, and identity sent by the presence of women candidates can, in turn, stimulate activity and engagement on the part of those members of the public heartened by an increasingly democratic and representative candidate pool. While men may be moved to increase their participation as they see a more open system, it is to women that the benefits of symbolic representation are assumed to accrue. Indeed, according to Lawless (2004), we can think about symbolic representation as “the attitudinal and behavioral effects that women's presence in positions of political power might confer to women citizens (p. 81).

Despite the theoretical notion that women candidates could provide tangible political benefits to citizens, particularly women, the empirical evidence of this is still somewhat limited. Most of the work that examines how people respond to the presence of women candidates has focused on a single election or a small number of elections (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Sapiro and Conover 1997; Koch 1997) or a limited number of attitudes or behaviors (Atkeson 2003; Hansen 1997). And none of this work has focused on the primary method of citizen involvement in elections, namely voting.

The work presented here examines some of the unanswered questions about whether and how women candidates can mobilize public interest and participation in elections. Specifically, I employ pooled National Election Study data from 1990 to 2004 to examine whether the attitudes and behaviors of those people who lived in states and congressional districts with a woman candidate for U.S. House or Senate are different from those who experience elections with no women candidates.

### **The Impact of Candidate Sex on the Public**

Much of the work on the symbolic impact of women candidates finds some support for the notion that their presence stimulates great attentiveness to politics, particularly among women. In examining the elections of 1992, Sapiro and Conover (1997) found that women who lived in areas with a woman candidate for governor or U.S. Congress were more attentive to the campaign and more politically active than women who lived in areas with male-only races. That they found no impact on men's attitudes or behaviors supports the expectation that women candidates should affect women and men differently.

Other work also identified 1992 as a year in which women candidates had an impact on the public. Koch (1997) found that women respondents in states with women Senate candidates in 1992 exhibited higher levels of political interest and a greater ability to recall the names of the Senate candidates than those living in states without women candidates. However, he found no impact of women Senate candidates in 1990. Hansen (1997) examined the impact of women candidates for Congress or governor in elections from 1990-1994 on people's political attitudes. She found a consistent impact of women

candidates on proselytizing, efficacy, and media use among women in 1992 and no impact in 1990 and 1994.

In the most extensive work on women candidates and their impact on the public, Atkeson (2003) examines gubernatorial and Senate races from the 1990s and finds that women who lived in states with women candidates were more likely to discuss politics and had higher levels of efficacy and knowledge than people who experienced male-only races, although this effect was conditioned by competition. Atkeson found that the impact of women candidates was only present when the woman was engaged in a competitive election. This would suggest that the mere presence of women candidates is not necessarily enough to provide symbolic representation, but that the context of the race must allow them to be known to the public.

### **Gaps in our Knowledge**

To date, while some research has demonstrated that women candidates can influence the public, particularly women, there is little evidence of a consistent, general effect. Women candidates do appear to affect the attitudes and behaviors of people, but, apparently, only in limited situations, such as in an election year in which gendered issues are particularly salient (such as 1992) or when women candidates are very competitive. At the same time, most of the past research addressing symbolic representation has confined itself to a limited number of offices and/or election years and has not accounted for other important variables such as political party. In an effort to contribute to our understanding of how and when women candidates can provide symbolic representation, this research provides a more comprehensive analysis of the impact of women candidates on public attitudes and behaviors by expanding on current knowledge in several ways.

First, I expand the offices and time frame under analysis by examining elections for the U.S. House and Senate from 1990 to 2004. Including all elections since 1990 allows me to capture the time period during which the number of women candidates has steadily increased and provides a chance to see whether any influence of women candidates is more than an idiosyncratic event. Also, including House and Senate races allows for a consideration of whether the level and visibility of the office has any impact on whether women candidates can mobilize public attitudes and behaviors.

Second, I consider the influence of women candidates on a broad range of political attitudes and behaviors by including political efficacy, interest, influencing others, participating in politics, and voting as dependent variables. Examining the potential of impact of symbolic representation on voter turnout is a particularly important addition for a couple of reasons. Voting is still the political activity most highly valued by our system and any examination of whether women candidates influence people's participation is incomplete without it. Too, if symbolic representation is demonstrated to have an impact on political attitudes and non-voting behaviors, then it should be a logical extension of the same argument that the presence of women candidates should excite voter turnout as well. Indeed, an impact on voter turnout would actually be the most tangible sign of an influence. While higher levels of interest and efficacy are certainly positive, an increase in voter turnout would bring a more concrete increase in engagement to the political system. Also, past work on symbolic representation has tended to focus on attitudes and behaviors on which women tend to score lower than men – efficacy, interest, knowledge. The assumption of much of these works is that the presence of women candidates somehow boosts women's attitudes and behaviors to levels equivalent



to men (Sapiro and Conover 1997). Yet, because these works employ dependent variables on which there is a “gender deficit,” we don’t know whether the impact of women candidates is a generalized effect of representation that can excite engagement in any realm or whether it is more of a “compensatory boost” that is limited in its reach. Including voter turnout, an activity on which the gender gap favors women, allows for a test of how the potential mobilizing impact of women candidates operates.

Finally, while the assumption here is that women candidates influence women in the public, it is probably overly simplistic to think that any and all women candidates provide the same signals and benefits to the public. So this research also considers two important contextual variables – political party and the competitiveness of the election. A central aspect of the symbolic representation hypothesis is that women are invigorated by the presence of women candidates because they see someone like themselves on the political stage. Yet, women are no less likely than men to see themselves as partisan and there is little empirical evidence that women’s affinity for women candidates crosses party lines (Dolan 2004, but see Briens 2005). Too, women candidates, like women in the general public, are more likely to be Democrats than Republicans. Among women candidates for Congress in the past two decades, approximately 65 percent have run as Democrats (Center for the American Woman and Politics 2005). This, coupled with the gender gap in party identification among the general public, could suggest that women would be more likely to be invigorated by the presence of *Democratic* women candidates more so than Republican women. Including party considerations will allow for a test of whether any impact of women candidates is a general phenomenon related to their sex or

whether important political variables like partisanship influence how people interact with these women (Dolan 2004).

Another important contextual issue, as Atkeson (2003) suggests, is the competitiveness of the woman candidate. Certainly, for a woman candidate to influence the public, she must be visible enough to enter the political consciousness of the average person. Too, a long-shot or sacrificial lamb candidacy may actually work to dampen efficacy or excitement: having one of “your own” going down to defeat in a lopsided contest is not necessarily a recipe for engagement. A consideration of the competitiveness of the woman candidate will allow for a test of whether any influence of women candidates is dependent on her viability.

### **Hypotheses and Methods**

If past work suggests that the presence of women candidates can influence women’s attitudes and behaviors, we might expect to see this impact in two different ways. First, since the presence of women candidates should provide positive psychological benefits to women, we should expect that women who live in a state or congressional district with a woman candidate for Congress should have higher levels of political efficacy, political interest, and engagement in attempts to influence the votes of others than those who experience male-only races. Too, since women candidates can be an empowering symbol of women’s place in the political system, we should expect that women who live in a state or congressional district with a woman congressional candidate would have higher levels of political participation, particularly voting, than those who experience elections with only male candidates.

Given the present day realities of gender gaps in the partisanship of women candidates and women in the public, this research will also test the expectation that any influence of women candidates on attitudes or behaviors will be strongest when the woman candidate is a Democrat. Finally, the analysis will also test the assumption that women candidates have a stronger impact when they are in more competitive races.

The data employed here from the National Election Study for all House and Senate elections from 1990-2004. The data are pooled separately for House and Senate races to allow for a test of whether the level of office is relevant to the influence that women candidates can have. NES data are well-suited to such an investigation since they comprise the only nationally-representative, large-scale data set that evaluates the attitudes and behaviors of citizens who live in election districts that include women candidates. Readers will, of course, note that the NES is not a representative sample of congressional districts and does not include respondents from every state or congressional district. However, since this research examines the attitudes and behaviors of the public in the presence of women candidates, it is the NES respondents who are most important, not the districts themselves. Further, from 1990-2004, there were 999 major-party women candidates for the House and Senate and fully 500 of them ran in states and districts included in the NES sample.<sup>1</sup> For these reasons, I believe that the NES offers the most appropriate source of data to test the questions considered here.

There are five dependent variables employed in the analysis – political efficacy, interest, trying to influence how someone else will vote, general participation such as working for a campaign or donating money, and voting. (See Appendix for all variable constructions) This will allow for an examination of the impact of women candidates on

a variety of attitudes and behaviors. Depending on the dependent variable, I estimate either ordinary least squares or logistic regression equations.

The primary independent variables are those measuring the presence of a woman candidate. Because of the notion that the party of the woman candidate may influence her ability to mobilize the public, I include a variable that accounts for the presence of a woman Democratic candidate and a woman Republican candidate. Also, since past literature finds that the mobilizing influence of women candidates is strongest for women in the public, I interact the presence of a woman candidate of each party with the sex of the respondent. Finally, since women candidates may well be most likely to excite and motivate voters with whom they share a political party, I include a variable that measures party congruence between women candidates and respondents.

The bulk of the variables in the models are those that the literature has long associated with more positive attitudes towards politics and higher levels of participation (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Teixeira 1992). These include variables measuring strength of partisanship (from independent to strong partisan), how often respondents follow government and politics, levels of political knowledge and efficacy and standard measures of sex, age, education, and race.<sup>2</sup> Models estimating House elections include a variable that controls for the impact of a Senate race happening in that state simultaneously. Finally, I include a series of dummy variables to account for the individual election years included in the pooled data set.

All regression models are estimated separately for House and Senate elections for the years under examination to allow me to test whether the level of office has an impact on the influence of women candidates. Further, to test the hypothesis that the

competitiveness of the candidate may make a difference, each sample is divided into competitive and noncompetitive races and the models are estimated for each subsample.<sup>3</sup>

### **Analysis**

The symbolic representation literature posits that the public, particularly women members, will be excited and mobilized by the presence of women candidates to higher levels of political attitudes and participation. However, this analysis offers only limited support for this assumption. Tables 1-4 present the analysis for House and Senate races by level of competitiveness. The variables of greatest interest, measuring whether there was a Democratic or Republican woman candidate for office and the interaction of the presence of a woman candidate and the sex of the respondent, are highlighted at the top of each table. With five dependent variables, there are 80 coefficients that represent the impact of women candidates on symbolic representation. Across elections for the two chambers and the two conditions of competitiveness, there are only 10 instances in which the main variables of interest achieve statistical significance with increased political attitudes or behaviors. This would suggest the presence of a limited effect for women candidates to mobilize the public, but in no way supports an interpretation of a generalized influence.

Taking Table 1 first, we see that women candidates in competitive House races can have some impact on the political characteristics of the public. First, we should note that here, as in the other tables, the control variables assumed to be related to higher levels of political attitudes and behaviors perform as expected, such as political knowledge and tendency to follow government leading to higher levels of political attitudes and behaviors. Second, since the models account for party congruence between

the woman candidate and respondents, any influence on political characteristics exerted by women candidates is over and above the impact of mobilization based on a shared party identity. Column 2 presents the model estimating political efficacy. Here we see that the presence of a Republican woman candidate actually decreases the efficacy of men and increases the efficacy of women relative to men. This would fit the general assumption that the presence of a woman candidate would make women in the public more likely to think that political leaders care about them. But this result also suggests that the presence of a women candidate may actively suppress the efficacy of men. Too, it is interesting to note that the impact on efficacy is only in the presence of a woman Republican candidate. Democratic women candidates in competitive House races have no significant impact on the public's levels of efficacy. Continuing on to Column 2, we also see that Republican woman candidates, but only Republican women candidates, increase the likelihood that respondents will try to influence someone's vote. This increase is experienced by both women and men, counter to the assumption of the symbolic representation hypothesis. Finally (Column 5), with regard to participation beyond voting, the presence of a woman Republican mobilizes both men and women to increase their participation. Additionally, women Democratic candidates mobilize women respondents to higher levels of participation.

Table 2 presents the findings for noncompetitive House races, where we see only two significant results. In these races, the presence of Democratic women candidates increases attempts to influence the votes of others and general participation beyond voting among all respondents (Columns 4-5). However, there is no influence exerted by these women candidates on voter turnout, efficacy, or political interest, nor do

Republican women candidates have any impact on any of the political attitudes or behaviors. Too, it is interesting to note that the influence Democratic women have on increased influencing and participation is experienced by both women and men, again, something that is counter to the symbolic representation hypothesis. Readers should note that, while women candidates in House races were slightly more likely to mobilize respondents than women candidates in noncompetitive races, competitiveness of the race itself does not seem to be the central variable driving the circumstances under which this influence appears.

Interestingly, women Senate candidates have fewer instances in which they can stimulate the public on political variables. Table 3 offers the findings for competitive Senate races. Here we see the only time in which women candidates have an impact is on voter turnout (Column 1). Democratic women Senate candidates in competitive races stimulate voter turnout among women, but not among men. With regard to political efficacy (Column 2), the analysis suggests that Republican women candidates actually drive down the efficacy of women respondents, but have no impact on men. This lowering of feelings of efficacy among women is exactly the opposite of the finding in Table 1 that showed competitive Republican women House candidates actually increasing women's efficacy levels. Without a clear theoretical explanation for why Republican women candidates would increase women's efficacy in one set of elections and suppress it in another, we might conclude that these counterintuitive findings are a result of the particular mix of candidates running in the years under consideration. Finally, Table 4 demonstrates that there are no circumstances under which women

candidates in noncompetitive Senate races influence the political characteristics of the public.

### **Conclusion**

This project began as a test of the assumption that the increased presence of women candidates in the U.S. has a symbolic importance that is manifested in higher levels of political involvement by the public. This hypothesis is intuitively appealing, since we would expect underrepresented groups to be heartened by the potential for representation by one of their own. In attempting to investigate this relationship, this project expands on past research by evaluating several important considerations at once: different levels of office, differing conditions of competitiveness, different political party conditions, and a longer time frame of elections. The results show, overall, that there is little empirical analysis to support the assumption that symbolic representation is provided by women candidates, or at least there is little support for the idea that their symbolic presence translates into any widespread increase in political attitudes and behaviors.

While the analysis indicates limited influence for women candidates on political variables, there are some general conclusions to make. First, while there are some instances in which the presence of women candidates can influence the political attitudes and behaviors of the public, there is no general or clear pattern to the influence, whether across level of office, political party, condition of competitiveness. We cannot say that women of a particular party influence the public, or only those women in competitive races, or even women running for one or the other chamber. Additionally, there is no clear pattern to the attitudes and behaviors that are open to influence. Depending on the



chamber, party of the candidate, and condition of competitiveness, voter turnout, efficacy, influencing others, and general participation could be influenced by the presence of a woman candidate. But not each of these variables in all, or even most, circumstances. Too, it is interesting to note that women candidates did not excite greater political interest in any circumstance at all.

While the level of office was not a determining factor, the presence of women candidates in House races does appear to have a greater impact on the public than that of women candidates in Senate races. While at first this may seem counterintuitive when we consider the increased visibility of candidates for the Senate, it makes more sense when we recognize that there may be more room to mobilize voters in House races. Senate races, as statewide elections, have more built-in forces that can mobilize the public separate from the characteristics of the candidates themselves. In House races, on the other hand, there is less noise and fewer external forces to mobilize political activities. House elections are generally local, low-visibility races. It may be that it is in these circumstances that the impact of women candidates can break through and influence the public's political lives.

Another conclusion to draw is that the competitiveness of the election does not appear to be a central condition for influence, as has been suggested by other work (Atkeson 2003). In this analysis, the difference between competitive and noncompetitive House races was not significant, with women candidates having a limited influence on the public in each condition. However, we should note that noncompetitive Senate races were the only group of races for which there was no mobilization by the women candidates.

The symbolic representation hypothesis suggests that any influence of women candidates will be greatest for women. But these data demonstrate that there are actually more circumstances in which an increase in some attitude or behavior is experienced equally by women and men. It is the case that the presence of women candidates does seem to suppress the efficacy of men experiencing competitive House races. But it is also the case that we see an increase in general participation and influencing behaviors among both men and women. This result is unanticipated by the symbolic representation hypothesis and points us in an area in need of future research.

In the end, the findings here indicate that, over 16 elections for two different offices, the ability of women candidates to mobilize the public to higher levels of political activity is rather limited. In the absence of clear or general patterns, we are left to conclude that the influence of women candidates is, at some level, a function of idiosyncratic circumstances of particular elections – such things as the mix of candidates, their positions, the issues of the day, media coverage, and public awareness. Indeed, this finding is supported by past work that showed that the impact of women candidates depended on the election year and also work that demonstrates that support for women candidates at the ballot box is structured by specific electoral environments (Dolan 2004; Hansen 1997; Koch 1997).

These findings, while compelling, are not definitive, and point us toward avenues for future research. For example, in finding little evidence of a symbolic impact of women members of Congress on the attitudes of their constituents, Lawless (2004) suggests that we make a mistake in assuming that any influence of symbolic representation is a one-on-one relationship. She suggests that a woman does not have to

be directly represented by Hillary Clinton or Mary Landrieu to experience the symbolic benefits of an increase in the number of women in elected office. The same may be true for people observing women candidates. Media attention to women candidates nationally or in other specific races may well demonstrate more openness and diversity to the public, even if they don't have first-hand experience with women candidates. Figuring out a way to measure this more general symbolic representation may help us better identify how the presence of women candidates works. Too, we should strive for more and better data that might allow us to capture the characteristics of women candidates and the contexts of the races in which they do have an impact on the public. Women candidates who stimulate public attitudes and behaviors may take certain positions or highlight certain issues, or run in certain areas of the country or particular election years, or even experience certain kinds of opponents. Without knowing more about these sorts of circumstances, our understanding of the dynamic of when and how women candidates can influence political attitudes and behaviors will remain limited. And since the evidence of a directly symbolic form of representation is weak, we should work to more fully examine the impact that women candidates have on men. Men in this sample increased their involvement in influencing others and general participation in the presence of women candidates. We would do well to understand the context in which the responses of men, as well as women, can be shaped by an increase in women's political candidacies. As women candidates continue to be more fully integrated into our system of government and politics, our research agenda should strive to understand the potential impact of this integration in all its complexity.

## Bibliography

- Atkeson, L.R. 2003. "Not All Cues are Created Equal: The Conditional Impact of Female Candidates on Political Engagement." *Journal of Politics* 65: 1040-1061.
- Brians, C.L. 2005. "Women for Women? Gender and Party Bias in Voting for Female Candidates." *American Politics Research* 33: 357-375.
- Burns, N., K. Scholzman, and S. Verba. 2001. *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Burrell, B. 1998. *A Woman's Place is in the House: Campaigning for Congress in the Feminist Era*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Carroll, S. 1994. *Women as Candidates in American Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press.
- Center for the American Woman and Politics. 2005. "Record Number of Women Seek Seats in U.S. House; Candidate Numbers at Other Levels Don't Match Record Highs." Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.
- Dabelko, K.L. and P. Herrnson. 1997. "Women's and Men's Campaigns for the U.S. House of Representatives." *Political Research Quarterly* 50: 121-35.
- Dodson, D. 1998. "Representing Women's Interests in the U.S. House of Representatives." in *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*. ed. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. New York: Oxford University Press
- Dolan, K. 2004. *Voting for Women: How the Public Evaluates Women Candidates*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- Hansen, S. 1997. "Talking About Politics: Gender and Contextual Effects on Political Proselytizing." *Journal of Politics* 59: 73-103.
- Herrnson, P., J. C. Lay, and A.K. Stokes. 2003. "Women Running 'as Women': Candidate Gender, Campaign Issues, and Voter-Targeting Strategies." *Journal of Politics* 65: 244-255.
- Kathlene, L. 1995. "Alternative Views of Crime: Legislative Policymaking in Gendered Terms." *Journal of Politics* 57:696-723.
- Koch, J. 1997. "Candidate Gender and Women's Psychological Engagement in Politics." *American Politics Quarterly* 25: 118-133.
- Larson, S. G. 2001. "Running as Women? A Comparison of Female and Male Pennsylvania Assembly Candidates' Campaign Brochures." *Women and Politics* 22: 107-24.
- Lawless, J. 2004. "Politics of Presence? Congresswomen and Symbolic Representation." *Political Research Quarterly* 57: 81-99.
- Mansbridge, J. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes." *Journal of Politics* 61: 628-657.
- Norton, N. 2002. "Transforming Congress from the Inside: Women in Committee." in *Women Transforming Congress*. Cindy Simon Rosenthal (ed.) Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Reingold, B. 2000. *Representing Women: Sex, Gender, and Legislative Behavior in Arizona and California*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Rosenstone, S. and J. M. Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan.

- Rosenthal, C. S. 1998. *When Women Lead*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Saint-Germain, M. 1989. "Does Their Difference Make a Difference? The Impact of Women on Public Policy in the Arizona State Legislature." *Social Science Quarterly* 70: 956-968.
- Sapiro, V. and P. Conover. 1997. "The Variable Gender Basis of Electoral Politics: Gender and Context in the 1992 US Election." *British Journal of Political Science* 27: 497-523.
- Sapiro, V. 1981. "When are Interests Interesting? The Problem of the Representation of Women." *American Political Science Review* 75: 701-716.
- Swers, M. 2002. *The Difference Women Make*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Teixeira, R. 1992. *The Disappearing American Voter*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.
- Thomas, S. 1998. "Introduction: Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future." in S. Thomas and C. Wilcox, eds. *Women and Elective Office*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thomas, S. 1994. *How Women Legislate*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tolleson-Rinehart, S. 1992. *Gender Consciousness and Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Verba, S., K. L. Schlozman, and H. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Volunteerism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## Appendix – Variable Construction

### Dependent Variables

*Voter Turnout* – Indicates whether respondent voted in the House and Senate elections in his/her state and congressional district. (0,1)

*Political Efficacy* – Indicates agreement or disagreement with the statement “Public officials don’t care much what people like me think. (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree)

*Political Interest* – Indicates amount of attention paid to political campaigns. (1=not much interested, 3=very much interested)

*Influence Others* – Indicates whether respondent talked to others and tried to show them why they should vote for or against a particular party or candidate. (0,1)

*Participation* – Indicates whether respondent took part in any of six political activities beyond voting. (0-6)

### Independent Variables

*Woman Democratic Candidate* – Indicates the presence of a Democratic woman candidate. (0,1)

*Woman Republican Candidate* – Indicates the presence of a Republican woman candidate. (0,1)

*Senate Race in State* – Employed in models for House races to indicate whether there was also a Senate race in respondent’s state that year. (0,1)

*Party Congruence* – Indicates whether respondent and woman candidate are of the same political party. (0,1)

*Strength of Partisanship* – Indicates strength of respondent partisanship. (0=independent, 3=strong partisan)

*Follow Government* – Indicates how often respondent follows government and public affairs. (1=hardly at all, 4=most of the time)

*Political Knowledge* – Indicates respondent score on a six-point scale that included identifying political leaders and congressional majorities. (0=no correct answers, 6=6 correct answers)

*Political Efficacy* – Indicates agreement or disagreement with the statement “Public officials don’t care much what people like me think. (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree)

*Sex* – Indicates sex of respondent. (0=male, 1=female)

*Race* – Indicates race of respondent (0=nonwhite, 1=white)

*Education* – Indicates respondent level of education. (1=8 years or less, 7=advanced degree)

*Age* – Indicates respondent age in years.

*Year dummies* – Indicates the individual election years included in the pooled data set.



Table 1 - Impact of Women Candidates on Voter Attitudes and Behaviors 1990-2004: House – Competitive Races

	<u>Voter Turnout</u>	<u>Efficacy</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Influence Other</u>	<u>Participation</u>
<b>Woman Democratic Candidate</b>	<b>-.014</b>	<b>.058</b>	<b>-.042</b>	<b>.013</b>	<b>-.048</b>
<b>Woman Republican Candidate</b>	<b>.131</b>	<b>-.329*</b>	<b>-.046</b>	<b>.159*</b>	<b>.353*</b>
<b>Wm Democratic Cand*Woman R</b>	<b>.281</b>	<b>-.098</b>	<b>.106</b>	<b>.050</b>	<b>.236*</b>
<b>Wm Republican Cand*Woman R</b>	<b>-.195</b>	<b>.331*</b>	<b>.142</b>	<b>-.095</b>	<b>-.214</b>
Senate Race in State	.119	.012	-.068	-.006	-.086
Party Congruence	-.005	.093	.026	-.087*	-.187
Strength of Partisanship	.256*	.126*	.140*	.066*	.176*
Follow Government	.509*	.036	.714*	.102*	.325*
Political Knowledge	.224*	.044	.090*	.027*	.038
Efficacy	.126*	--	.016	.006	.051*
Sex	.028	.096	.085	-.046	-.056
Age	.021*	-.003	.004*	-.003*	.003
Education	.309*	.141*	.048*	.010	.072*
Race	.032*	.012*	.009	.003	.002

1990	-1 .038*	-.194	-1.012*	-.342*	-.532*
1992	-.095	.128	-.020	-.113*	-.271*
1994	-.500	-.387*	-.880*	-.274*	-.402*
1996	-.061	-.394*	-.709*	-.248*	-.443*
1998	-.562*	-.139	-.972*	-.280*	-.533*
2000	-1.527*	-.500	-.690*	-.298*	-.470
2002	-.449	.938	-.354*	-.156*	-.264
Constant	-4.056*	1.699*	.919*	.117	-.756*
N=	1546	1545	1537	1543	1534
Chi Square	330.263				
PRE	77.9				
R <sup>2</sup>		.128	.361	.125	.142

Table 2 - Impact of Women Candidates on Voter Attitudes and Behaviors 1990-2004: House – Noncompetitive Races

	<u>Voter Turnout</u>	<u>Efficacy</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Influence Other</u>	<u>Participation</u>
<b>Woman Democratic Candidate</b>	<b>-.050</b>	<b>-.095</b>	<b>-.012</b>	<b>.086*</b>	<b>.142*</b>
<b>Woman Republican Candidate</b>	<b>-.081</b>	<b>-.038</b>	<b>.043</b>	<b>.023</b>	<b>.010</b>
<b>Wm Democratic Cand*Woman R</b>	<b>.186</b>	<b>-.118</b>	<b>.106</b>	<b>-.019</b>	<b>-.066</b>
<b>Wm Republican Cand*Woman R</b>	<b>-.191</b>	<b>.014</b>	<b>-.151</b>	<b>-.061</b>	<b>-.070</b>
Senate Race in State	.219*	.047	.096*	.030*	.056*
Party Congruence	.157	.007	-.087	-.026	-.036
Strength of Partisanship	.301*	.091*	.148*	.042*	.137*
Follow Government	.405*	.077*	.661*	.124*	.299*
Political Knowledge	.236*	.036*	.083*	.019*	.052*
Efficacy	.084*	--	.026*	.002	.035*
Sex	.151*	.097*	.075*	-.014	-.067*
Age	.028*	-.003*	.004*	-.003*	-.001
Education	.245*	.142*	.043*	.012*	.075*
Race	.005	.004	-.007*	.001	.001

1990	-1 .036*	-.326*	-.796*	-.253*	-.473*
1992	-.071	.147*	.050	-.064*	-.211*
1994	-.764*	-.388*	-.660*	-.231*	-.514*
1996	-.033	-.102	-.518*	-.153*	-.293*
1998	-.978*	-.186*	-.904*	-.239*	-.577*
2000	-.273	-.264*	.211	-.111*	-.264*
2002	-.147	.675*	-.380*	-.101*	-.223*
Constant	-4.060*	1.773*	.904*	.045*	-.620*
N=	5890	5890	5881	5887	5862
Chi Square	1200.074				
PRE	66.8				
R <sup>2</sup>		.104	.321	.117	.146

Table 3 - The Impact of Women Candidates on Voter Attitudes and Behaviors 1990-2004: Senate – Competitive Races

	<u>Voter Turnout</u>	<u>Efficacy</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Influence Other</u>	<u>Participation</u>
<b>Woman Democratic Candidate</b>	<b>-.564*</b>	<b>.039</b>	<b>.062</b>	<b>.002</b>	<b>.045</b>
<b>Woman Republican Candidate</b>	<b>-.314</b>	<b>.065</b>	<b>-.192</b>	<b>-.032</b>	<b>-.331</b>
<b>Wm Democratic Cand*Woman R</b>	<b>.333*</b>	<b>-.093</b>	<b>.012</b>	<b>.041</b>	<b>.121</b>
<b>Wm Republican Cand*Woman R</b>	<b>-.858</b>	<b>-.963*</b>	<b>-.061</b>	<b>.013</b>	<b>.304</b>
Strength of Partisanship	.240*	.104*	.170*	.051*	.137*
Party Congruence	.124	.003	-.010	-.045	-.178*
Follow Government	.413*	.076*	.688*	.107*	.344*
Political Knowledge	.173*	.031	.109*	.035*	.061*
Efficacy	.169*	--	.015	.012	.051*
Sex	.079	.107	.108	-.036	-.130*
Age	.017*	-.001	.003*	-.003*	.001
Education	.230*	.152*	.026*	.009	.072*
Race	.010	-.001	-.004	.001	-.004
1990	-.944*	-.347*	-.684*	-.303*	-.442*

1992	.993*	.126	-.104	-.114*	-.307*
1994	-.486*	-.359*	-.826*	-.271*	-.563*
1996	-1.761*	-.286*	-.763*	-.178*	-.368*
1998	-.667*	-.219	-1.018*	-.227*	-.632*
2000	-.520	.001	-.062	-.114	-.084
2002	-.425	.764*	-.313*	-.082*	-.169
Constant	-2.930*	1.646*	1.020*	.090	-.714*
N=	2408	2438	2434	2437	2425
Chi Square	371.866				
PRE	73.5				
R <sup>2</sup>		.108	.336	.106	.148

Table 4 - The Impact of Women Candidates on Voter Attitudes and Behaviors 1990-2004: Senate – Noncompetitive Races

	<u>Voter Turnout</u>	<u>Efficacy</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Influence Other</u>	<u>Participation</u>
<b>Woman Democratic Candidate</b>	<b>-.164</b>	<b>.009</b>	<b>.004</b>	<b>.025</b>	<b>-.023</b>
<b>Woman Republican Candidate</b>	<b>-.364</b>	<b>.140</b>	<b>-.027</b>	<b>.034</b>	<b>-.005</b>
<b>Wm Democratic Cand*Woman R</b>	<b>.155</b>	<b>.114</b>	<b>.047</b>	<b>-.005</b>	<b>.053</b>
<b>Wm Republican Cand*Woman R</b>	<b>.388</b>	<b>-.158</b>	<b>.126</b>	<b>.018</b>	<b>.001</b>
Strength of Partisanship	.365*	.069*	.126*	.035*	.149*
Party Congruence	.058	-.078	-.031	-.024	.025
Follow Government	.425*	.048	.650*	.140*	.314*
Political Knowledge	.243*	.050*	.090*	.017*	.034*
Efficacy	.080*	--	.031	.013	.047*
Sex	.077	.115*	.016	-.022	-.038
Age	.028*	-.003*	.005*	-.003*	-.001
Education	.242*	.144*	.048*	.006	.074*
Race	.011	.010*	-.007*	.002	.005
1990	-1.327*	-.189*	-1.000*	-.234*	-.420*

1992	-.048	.276*	.054	-.088*	-.205*
1994	-.668*	-.329*	-.847*	-.211*	-.423*
1996	-.847	-.619*	-.544	-.078	-.159
1998	-.868*	-.152	-.931*	-.244*	-.476*
2000	-.621	-.396*	.129	-.189*	-.526*
2002	.091	.757*	-.436*	-.132*	-.257*
Constant	-3.911*	1.745*	1.028*	.054	-.604*
N=	2655	2702	2691	2702	2688
Chi Square	616.894				
PRE	74.7				
R <sup>2</sup>		.099	.341	.122	.148





## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> The 500 women candidates included in the NES samples from 1990-2004 are very representative of the total 999 women candidates on characteristics such as political party and incumbency status, offering further assurances about the appropriateness of the data.

<sup>2</sup> The variable measuring efficacy is, of course, not included in the model estimating political efficacy.

<sup>3</sup> Competitive races are defined as those races with a 15 point or less margin of victory.

---

Kathleen Dolan is a professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. Her primary research areas are women candidates, elections and voting behavior, public opinion, and gender politics.