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Author(s): Kathleen Dolan

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Voting for Women in the "Year of the Woman"*

Kathleen Dolan, *University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh*

Theory: Group identity and issue salience theories are used to explore the impact of candidate gender on voting behavior in congressional elections.

Hypotheses: Support for women congressional candidates will be higher among voters who share certain demographic and attitudinal characteristics.

Methods: Logistic analysis of the 1992 American National Election Study data is conducted.

Results: Women voters are more likely to support women House candidates than are men and are also more likely to use gender-related issue positions in determining their vote choice when there is a woman candidate. In Senate elections, issues are much more important to determining vote choice than in House elections. Here women again exhibit distinctly different issue concerns than men and employ a greater number of gender-related issue concerns in their evaluations.

Nineteen ninety-two was heralded as the "Year of the Woman" in American politics, especially for women who ran for Congress. For a number of reasons, gender was thought to play a particularly important role in that election. That November, a record 119 women stood for election as major party candidates for the House and Senate and 53 of them were victorious, bringing the female members of Congress to an all-time high of 10% (Center for the American Woman and Politics 1993). And while the record number of women candidates alone would be enough to mark 1992 as a significant election, gender was also relevant because many of these women ran "as women," seeking to capitalize on their differences from men and their outsider status. Candidate gender was also important because of the more central place gender-related issues held in that campaign. The Hill-Thomas hearings focused attention on sexual harassment, a series of Supreme Court decisions brought abortion to the fore once again, and the debate over the Family and Medical Leave Act increased the attention given to issues related to women's work and home lives. What all of these issues did collectively was highlight the underrepresentation of women, and perhaps women's issues, in Congress (Wilcox 1994). As a result of these forces, along with

others like the increase in open seats after the decennial Census, 1992, the third so-called "Year of the Woman" in as many decades, turned out to be the charm for women seeking election to Congress.

While the forces surrounding the 1992 election generated a record number of women candidates, they also played a role in the voting calculus. Here again, gender was relevant because the large number of women candidates in 1992 and the gendered appeals many of them made were thought to have a significant impact on voters, particularly women voters. Evidence from a number of sources suggests that women voters are more likely to support women candidates than are men (Burrell 1994; Ferree 1973; Hershey 1977; Studlar and Welch 1986). Preliminary data from the 1992 election indicate that this trend continues: exit surveys of voters reveal that there was a gender gap in 10 of the 11 Senate races and three gubernatorial races in which there was a woman candidate (Burrell 1994; Cook 1994).

Explanations for this persistent gender gap in support of women candidates focus on a number of possible sources. First, partisanship may provide part of the answer. Since women voters are more likely to vote for Democratic candidates than men and 81 of the 119 women who ran for Congress in 1992 were Democrats, the gender gap in support for women candidates may just be a reflection of the partisan gender gap. Indeed, exit surveys of voters in the 1992 Senate races reveal that the lone Republican women candidate, Charlene Haar of South Dakota, was the only woman Senate candidate who was not more likely to receive votes from women than from men (Cook 1994).

Other researchers have examined the gender gap in support of women candidates in 1992 by moving beyond partisanship. In their examination of 14 U.S. Senate and gubernatorial races in which there was a woman candidate, Plutzer and Zipp (1996) hypothesize that "identity politics" plays an important role in driving this gender gap. They suggest that women may vote for women candidates based on the strength of social group membership and a shared "gender identity." Their analysis indicates a positive relationship between gender and support for women candidates in nine of the fourteen races they studied; this effect is present for identifiers of both parties but is strongest among Independents. They also find that the relationship is amplified when women candidates run "as women," and are easily identified as feminists.

Paolino (1995) also examines the importance of social group identification in his analysis of NES data on 10 Senate races in 1992 with a woman candidate (all Democrats), but he expands his consideration to include the influence of what he refers to as "group-salient issues." Paolino hypothesizes that women voters are drawn to women candidates because these candidates address issues that are uniquely important to women, such as sexual

harassment or abortion, and are deemed by women voters to be more competent at handling them. This hypothesis is supported by work that shows that many voters have stereotyped views about the ideologies and competencies of men and women candidates, particularly in low-information elections (Brown, Heighberger, and Shocket 1993; Burrell 1994; McDermott 1997). Paolino concludes that women voters in 1992 did not vote for women Senate candidates simply because of their gender, but because women voters sought greater representation of their gender and gender-related issues in Congress. The evidence here is somewhat mixed, however, with some gender-related variables being associated with support for both women and men candidates and others influencing vote choice in contradictory directions.

Unresolved Questions

While these analyses offer significant evidence of gender-based voting for women candidates in 1992, they present a somewhat incomplete picture. To understand more fully the dynamics of gender-based voting, we would like to be able to determine *why* and *how* this influence operates. One way to do this is to consider the work on the role of information in the development of public opinion conducted by John Zaller (1992). One of Zaller's main points is that public opinion is a function of the information to which people are exposed. This information, in combination with individual biases to accept some messages while rejecting others, forms the basis of people's opinions. Opinion change, Zaller continues, is a result of the changes "in the mix of ideas to which individuals are exposed" (1992, 266). Vote choice operates in much the same fashion, with individual voters developing their attitudes "in response to competing flows of political information" (1992, 216). Zaller's work is instructive if we think about "gender" and gender-related issues as pieces of information being communicated to voters in 1992. If voters develop opinions based on the flow of information, and we acknowledge the central place of "gender" in the information flow of the 1992 campaigns, we could suggest that voters relied on gender-related considerations in that election precisely *because* of the amount of gender-based information available to them. For example, this might help explain Plutzer and Zipp's finding that gender voting was strongest in 1992 for women Senate and gubernatorial candidates who were most easily identified as feminists: voters had easier access to that information and acted upon it.

If information is important to attitude development, then the "amount" of information becomes important. For this reason, work to date on gender voting is incomplete because it has tended to focus on "high" information races like U.S. Senate and gubernatorial contests. The exclusion of "low" information races like those for the House of Representatives is particularly problematic when examining 1992. In 1992, the vast majority of women

candidates for Congress ran for, and won, election to the House.[1] Whether gender-based voting occurred in House races as well as in the more highly visible Senate contests is not known. Given the different information contexts of House and Senate elections, we might expect gender to operate differently in House elections.

A second concern with the research to date is that, while it concentrates on the voting tendencies of women and men, the focus is exclusively on the influence of gender-related issues such as feminism and sexual harassment on support for women candidates. While gender was an extremely important variable in 1992, we cannot discount the role of other issues. The literature on voter stereotypes of women and men candidates would suggest that for every voter drawn to a woman candidate because of her credibility on abortion or harassment, there are others who withdraw their support because of her perceived lack of credibility on military, or economic, or other non-gendered issues. Also, the work on support for women candidates in 1992 spotlights voter gender largely to the exclusion of other potentially important explanatory variables like age, race, religion, and political attitudes.

Finally, we must consider the role of partisanship in previous work. In the past, the majority of women candidates have run as Democrats, making it difficult to determine if support for women candidates is related to their gender or if it is simply reflecting support for Democratic candidates. Paolino (1995), in focusing on the Senate races in 1992 included in the NES, examines voter support for 10 Democratic women candidates. Plutzer and Zipp (1996) focus on races for the U.S. Senate and governorship in 1992, giving them 12 Democratic and two Republican women in their analysis. While 10 of the 11 women candidates for the Senate in 1992 were Democrats, there were 37 Republican women candidates for the House. Focusing on House elections, then, offers an opportunity to disentangle the effects of gender and partisanship.

The purpose of this article is to draw a more complete picture of the sources of electoral support for women candidates for Congress in 1992 by looking at support for women candidates for the House of Representatives. First, the analysis will be broadened to identify the demographic and attitudinal determinants of voting for women, moving beyond the standard "gender" variables. Second, I will analyze the models separately for women and men to test for the interactive effects of gender. Finally, I will attempt to sort out the overlap of gender and partisanship by comparing models that illustrate determinants of support for women candidates for the House with those that do the same for Democratic candidates, regardless of gender.

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[1] One hundred eight of the 119 women candidates for Congress in 1992 sought election to the House of Representatives. Forty-eight of the 53 successful women were elected to the House.

Since considerable analysis of the situation facing women Senate candidates in 1992 has already been done (Paolino 1995; Plutzer and Zipp 1996), these races will not constitute a major focus of this work. But the Senate races are still an important part of the argument made here because they provide a different information context and allow for a comparison of "low" (House) and "high" (Senate) information situations. An analysis of Senate elections, then, will be offered as a test of the importance of information and as a verification of the patterns displayed in the House analysis.

Methodology

The data for this research come from the 1992 National Election Study (NES). Ideally, one would like to analyze all races involving women candidates. However, because the NES does not interview respondents in every state or congressional district, not every race with a woman candidate is included. The 1992 NES sample included respondents from 10 Senate races and 38 House races in which one of the candidates was a woman.[2] In total, there were 556 respondents from congressional districts with a woman candidate and 711 from states with a woman Senate candidate. The dependent variable in this analysis is vote choice, coded to reflect whether the respondent voted for the woman candidate (1) or her male opponent (0). (See Appendix B for all survey items employed in this research.)

Control Variables

Three models estimating support for women candidates are tested in this research. Controls in all models include the traditional measures of respondent political party identification, self-reported political ideology, and a measure of the incumbency status of the candidates. Also included in the models estimating support for women House candidates is a variable that takes into account the degree of correspondence between respondent party identification and the party identification of the woman candidate. This allows us to determine whether Democrats are more likely to support women candidates than Republicans are, while controlling for the expected influence of party identification—that people vote for the candidate of their own party. The expectation here is that neither Democrats nor Republicans will

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[2]Senate races with a woman candidate included in the NES sample are those in Arizona, California, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Washington. For the House, the races included are Arizona–6, Arkansas–1, California–4, California–8, California–35, California–39, California–44, California–45, Connecticut–3, Colorado–1, Florida–3, Florida–4, Florida–20, Florida–22, Georgia–1, Georgia–4, Illinois–7, Indiana–4, Iowa–3, Kansas–3, Maryland–2, Maryland–4, Maryland–8, Michigan–3, Michigan–4, Michigan–9, Michigan–15, Missouri–2, New Jersey–5, New Jersey–11, New York–14, Pennsylvania–13, Tennessee–3, Texas–25, Washington–1, Washington–8, Wisconsin–5, and Wisconsin–9.

be more likely to vote for women candidates; instead, all respondents will be more likely to support a candidate with whom they share a party identification, man or woman.

Model I: Demographic Characteristics

The first model examines the demographic characteristics relevant to vote choice. The primary independent variables are respondent gender, race, age, education, and strength of religiosity.[3] There are several expectations with regard to the relationship of each of these variables to supporting women candidates. Because women and racial minorities are more likely to identify with underrepresented groups in political life, these respondents are expected to be significantly more likely to support women candidates than are other respondents (Dolan 1997; Hershey 1977; Sigelman and Welch 1984). Because willingness to support women candidates is probably a function of holding less traditional gender role opinions, young people, those with more education, and those with weaker religiosity are also expected to be more likely to vote for women than are other respondents (Rinehart 1988, 1992).

Model II: General Issues

The second model examines general issue positions relevant to vote choice. As previous work has indicated, voters often see women and men having different areas of policy expertise (Brown 1994; Brown, Heighberger, and Shocket 1993). This stereotyping can be a detriment to women if they become identified solely as the candidate or representative of "women's issues" such as abortion or harassment, or social issues such as welfare and education. How voters view women candidates and their positions, as well as their credibility, on less gender specific issues like economic and military affairs may give us a hint as to broader issue concerns that determine support or opposition to women candidates. Included in this model are the control variables and a series of variables measuring respondents' attitudes towards and positions on a number of general policy issues. These variables include whether the respondent thinks defense spending and spending for social welfare and crime programs should be increased or decreased, whether the respondent thinks the economy is the most important problem facing the country, their feelings towards the U.S. military, and their general approval or disapproval of Congress. This last variable is particularly important in 1992, since public dissatisfaction with Congress was high and women candidates

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[3]The measure of religiosity employed is one that asks respondents about their frequency of personal prayer. Leege (1996) finds this measure of "devotionalism" to be one of the strongest predictors of vote choice, party identification, and moral traditionalism among all religiosity measures.

were often viewed as "outsiders" who could contribute to changing the nature of Congress (Chaney and Sinclair 1994).

If stereotyped thinking about the issue credibility of women candidates is widespread, we would expect support for women candidates to come from those who are most concerned about issues on which women are generally given credibility, such as education, social welfare, and not as easily from those focused on issues like defense and crime, on which there is a "credibility gap" (Burrell 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a). The expectations for the variables included in this analysis are that those respondents who have less positive feelings about the military, support lower levels of defense spending and higher spending on social programs are those who hold issue positions more in line with stereotypical "women's strengths." They should be more likely to support women candidates than are other respondents. We would expect the same from those who are less concerned about the economy, spending for fighting crime, and those whose evaluation of Congress is more negative.

Model III: Gender Issues

Finally, we must consider, as others have, the influence of gender-related issues and group identity variables on support for women candidates. Besides the control variables, this model estimates the effect of respondents' position on abortion, perception of the seriousness of sexual harassment in society, and the need for government action in providing subsidized child care and guaranteed parental leave. Also included are measures of respondents' ideas about the proper place for women in society, and their feelings towards feminists. As other research has indicated, a shared group identity and shared gender-related issue concerns lead many voters to support women candidates (Paolino 1995; Plutzer and Zipp 1996).

While stereotyped thinking about the abilities of political candidates may work against women candidates on some issues, there are a number of issues on which women candidates are seen as uniquely qualified to provide representation. Chief among these are gender-related concerns (Burrell 1994). The hypothesis here is that respondents who hold certain positions on issues thought to have a particular impact on women will be more likely to support women candidates. For example, we would expect pro-choice voters, those who perceive sexual harassment to be a serious problem, and those who favor government assistance on child care and parental leave issues to be more likely to support women candidates. Also, we would expect higher levels of support for women candidates from those who see women as equal to men and those who feel positively towards feminists as a group in our society; people who might share a group-related identity with women candidates.

Each of the three models is estimated separately for the House and Senate. This step is necessary because of the important differences between House and Senate elections. First, we must acknowledge that voters may perceive House and Senate elections as elections of different magnitude and may employ different criteria in their vote choice decision. Research that suggests that support for women candidates is often contingent on the level of office they seek is relevant here (Dolan 1997; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b). Second, we know that House and Senate elections are different in their visibility on the electoral landscape. This reality is particularly important with regard to the role of information. Senate elections have much higher visibility and are more likely to focus on issue concerns than are House elections (Jacobson 1997). If information flow is different across these elections, then we must expect that gender-related considerations will influence each type of election differently.

Also, since past research indicates the primacy of voter gender to support for women candidates, each model is estimated separately for women and men respondents. This allows for an analysis of the possible interactions between gender and other variables. If theories of gender identity and issue salience are correct in their assumptions about the motivating influence of these variables, we would expect that women and men respondents would approach the decision to support women candidates differently. Specifically, it is expected that gender-based issues are more important in determining vote choice for women respondents than for men (Paolino 1995). The models are tested separately because to combine all variables (19) in a single model would sacrifice any notion of parsimony. Instead, significant variables ($p < .05$) from each of the models will be combined for the last part of the analysis.

Voting for Women Candidates

The House of Representatives

Table 1 indicates that there are several demographic characteristics important to supporting women candidates for the House of Representatives in 1992. The dependent variable here is whether the respondent voted for the woman candidate versus the male candidate. As anticipated, incumbency, party, and ideology are all significantly related to voting for a woman. Incumbents get a boost from this status, a particularly important aspect in House races. Note that the measure of respondent party identification is not significant; Democrats are no more likely to support women candidates than Republicans. Instead, the data indicate that respondents are more likely to vote for the candidate of their own party, man or woman. At the same time, voting for a woman is an ideological issue for many voters with liberals being more likely to vote for the woman candidate than conservatives.

Table 1. Determinants of Support for Women House Candidates
Races with Women Candidates—1992
(Logit Coefficients)

Controls	b	b	b
Constant	–2.818*	2.992*	–.773
Female Incumbent	1.439*	1.348*	1.463*
Party ID	.073	–.036	.256*
Party of Candidate	2.486*	2.261*	3.077*
Ideology	–.366*	–.461*	–.253#
Demographic			
Gender	.833*		
Age	.023*		
Education	.015		
Race	1.655*		
Religiosity	.388*		
General Issues			
Defense Spending		–.046	
Economy		.290	
Military FT		–.003	
Social Welfare		–.029	
Crime		.034	
Evaluation of Congress		–.747*	
Gender Issues/Attitudes			
Abortion			.220
Sexual Harassment			.031
Child Care			–.069
Parental Leave			–.765*
Feminist FT			.018*
Women's Rights			.133
N	256	226	229
Chi Square	147.587	116.952	129.131
PRE	53.636	51.041	52.127

*Note: *p <.05; # p <.10; one-tailed test.*

Interestingly, this coefficient loses strength when controlling for gender is-
sues, which probably indicates a strong ideological content to these issues.

Beyond the controls, we find a strong and significant relationship be-
tween respondent gender and voting for a woman candidate: women are
more likely to do so and men less likely. The data also indicate that older
people, racial minorities, and those who are less religious are more likely to
vote for women than are other respondents. The finding that older respon-
dents are more likely to support women candidates is counter to the hypoth-
esis. Some research indicates, however, that support for gender-related is-

sues like the women's movement and feminism is strongest among middle-aged people, those who came of age during the 1960s and 1970s as the women's movement was expanding its scope and appeal (Cook 1996). Perhaps this connection between age and support for women candidates is more important than the hypothesized influence of the less traditional gender roles held by younger people. Also, contrary to the hypothesis, education does not distinguish those who would vote for women candidates.

Turning next to issue voting models, we find that the influence of issues is relatively limited. In 1992, beyond the expected influence of incumbency, party, and ideology, respondent positions on issues such as the economy, the military, and defense and social welfare spending did not influence voters to choose a candidate of one gender over another. The only general issue variable significantly related to voting for a woman candidate is evaluation of Congress. People who have more negative views of Congress are more likely to support the woman candidate than those who hold Congress in greater esteem. This finding is not surprising given the number of women who ran their campaigns on "outsider" themes, promising to "clean up the Congress" if elected. It is also consistent with Zaller's (1992) notion of the importance of information: in 1992 there was enormous attention given to the problems of incumbents and the general anti-incumbency mood of the public.

The same lack of influence of general issue variables generally holds true for the gender-related issues in the third model in Table 1. While incumbency, party, and ideology are all in the expected direction, respondents' views on abortion, sexual harassment, child care policy, or the proper place of women in society appear to have no significant impact on their vote choice. However, there are two important gender-related influences on vote choice. The first is respondents' position on parental leave policies. Those people who believe that the government should require employers to offer unpaid parental leave are more likely to vote for women candidates than those who are less supportive of a government role in this area. This finding may also reflect the influence of information: in 1992, the Democratic party made President Bush's veto of the Family and Medical Leave Act an important campaign issue. In addition, many women candidates who ran for Congress incorporated such issues in their campaigns, raising the visibility of an issue on which women candidates are more likely to be seen as credible by voters.

The second of the significant gender-related influences is attitudes towards feminists as a group. Those who felt more positively toward feminists are more likely to vote for the woman candidate and those who hold a negative view towards feminists are more likely to choose the man. This finding might suggest the importance of a psychological or attitudinal identification with women to supporting them politically.

Gendered Voting Patterns

Since respondent gender displays a strong and significant relationship with support for a woman candidate, and since past research confirms this pattern, it is safe to conclude that gender has a direct and additive effect on voting for women candidates. But additive effects are only part of the story. Equally important and interesting are the possible interaction effects of gender. Specifically, the other variables in the model may have different effects among women respondents than among men respondents. Given the emphasis placed on 1992 as the "Year of the Woman," and given that women are more likely to support women candidates than are men, it is expected that gender issues are more important for women respondents than for men. Therefore, the models in Table 1 are estimated separately for male and female respondents in order to isolate any gender interactive effects. By doing this, the analysis in Table 2 allows one to determine if the impact of any of the variables is contingent upon gender.

Table 2 indicates that there are some significant differences between men and women in terms of the variables important to their voting decision. The first involves the control variables present in each model. While incumbency and shared party identification are significantly related to support for women candidates for both men and women voters, ideology exhibits a different pattern. In each model, ideology is a significant influence only for women: more liberal women are more likely to vote for women candidates than are more conservative women. So, while men's decision to support or not to support a woman candidate is a choice directed by partisan influences, for women the choice of a woman candidate is also an ideological decision.

Gender differences are also exhibited on demographic and issue variables. Age and religion are significant for women voters, but not for men. The relative importance of ideology and religiosity among women may reflect a stronger "traditionalism" component to the basis of evaluating women candidates for women than for men. Older, less religious women are more likely to vote for women candidates than younger, more religious women, but these variables do not distinguish among·men. In the issue position models, however, it is not so much that issues are important to one gender and not the other, but that *different* issues matter to each group. For men, the only issue that exhibits a significant influence on their vote choice is their evaluation of Congress. Men who disapprove of Congress are more likely to support women candidates than those who evaluate Congress more positively. The results for women respondents are strikingly different.

Among women, attitudes toward Congress had no discernible influence on women voters. Instead, the important influences among women are position on parental leave and feelings about feminists, with those interested in government mandated leave and those holding positive feelings towards

**Table 2. Determinants of Support for Women House Candidates
Models for Men and Women Respondents – 1992
(Logit Coefficients)**

	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Controls	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Constant	−1.735	−.773	2.765	3.308	−3.894*	1.057
Female Incumb.	1.272*	2.013*	1.217*	1.825*	1.217*	2.219*
Party ID	−.090	.223	−.227	.201	.123	.569*
Party of Cand.	2.636*	2.587*	2.728*	2.292*	3.293*	3.261*
Ideology	−.071	−.879*	−.286	−.861*	.002	−.764*
Demographic						
Age	.024	.031*				
Education	−.001	.025				
Religiosity	.111	.735*				
Race	.526	.492				
General Issues						
Defense Spending			−.331	.063		
Economy			.572	.152		
Military FT			.009	−.013		
Social Welfare			−.113	.224		
Crime			.247	−.514		
Evaluation of Congress			−1.258*	−.207		
Gender Issues/Attitudes						
Abortion					.209	.287
Sexual Harassment					.437	−.072
Child Care					−.142	−.115
Parental Leave					−.188	1.230*
Feminist FT					.027	.022*
Women's Rights					.148	.101
N	129	127	117	109	115	114
Chi Square	72.015	84.495	67.494	63.499	68.784	70.933
PRE	55.384	63.636	59.649	53.846	64.415	46.341

Note: * $p < .05$; one-tailed test.

feminists being more likely to support women candidates. This finding that vote choice is influenced by gender-related issues for women and not for men lends support to the suggestion that women voters sometimes choose women candidates to represent them on issues on which women candidates are seen to have greater credibility (Paolino 1995). It also suggests that women voters are better able to connect candidate gender to issue positions.

In general then, the data suggest that the most important determinants of voting for a woman in House races in 1992 are demographic characteristics

like gender and race, and attitudes about congressional elites and women in society. With the exception of parental leave policy, issues play a limited role in influencing vote choice for the sample as a whole, although the data suggest that women are considerably more likely to be affected by gender-related issues than are men. As Zaller (1992) indicates, House elections give voters less information than any other national elections. If these elections are low visibility affairs that focus on personalities and more "local" issues, it may be that many voters know little else about House candidates than very obvious things like their party affiliation, incumbency, and gender (McDermott 1997). In the absence of information, it may be more difficult for voters to make the connection between candidate gender and issue representation. The importance of information flow to voters' attitudes is also reinforced by the finding that the issues that do have an influence, such as attitude towards Congress and parental leave, are the ones that received almost saturation-level attention that year.

Voting for Women or Voting for Democrats?

The next question to be considered is whether the pattern of support for women candidates truly reflects support for women based on their gender or if it is just the coincidental overlap of support for Democratic candidates. To address this question, a model of significant determinants ($p <.05$) of the vote for women candidates in the House chamber is developed from the earlier analysis and estimated separately for two different dependent variables: vote for women and vote for Democratic candidates. If the earlier analysis is simply reflecting the fact that most women candidates in 1992 are Democrats, the results for the different models should be very similar. If, however, the earlier findings reflect the impact of women candidates on patterns of candidate support, the separate models should generate different results.

Table 3 presents the full model of determinants of support for women House candidates based on the significant variables reported previously in Table 1. In the first model in Table 3, the dependent variable is support for the woman candidate and the sample includes all House races in which there is a woman candidate. All of the variables in this model are significant and in the expected direction, and generally reflect the findings from Table 1.

The second model in Table 3 uses vote for the Democratic candidate as the dependent variable. The sample here is still all House races in which there is a woman candidate. The data clearly indicate that several of the variables that are significantly related to voting for a woman candidate are *not* related to voting for Democratic candidates even when the analysis is restricted to races that involve women candidates. Most significant is the absence of a relationship between voter gender and support for Democrats. Other variables that are no longer significant are age, race, and evaluations

Table 3. Determinants of Support for Women House Candidates
Full Model—1992
(Logit Coefficients)

	Model 1[a]	Model 2[b]	Model 3[c]
	b	b	b
Constant	−.752	1.613	1.003
Incumbent	1.594*	1.601*	.977*
Party ID	.294*	−.324*	−.523*
Party of Candidate	3.215*	—	—
Ideology	−.424*	−.422*	−.192*
Gender	.690*	.108	−.040
Age	.023*	.016	.008
Race	1.513*	.606	1.504*
Religiosity	.371*	.275*	.104
Evaluation of Congress	−.932*	−.217	.456*
Feminist FT	.016*	.029*	.006
Parental Leave	−1.144*	−.787*	−.065
N	234	234	731
Chi Square	151.048	151.458	344.008
PRE	56.730	60.169	47.712

Note: *$p < .05$; one-tailed test.

[a]Dependent variable is support for the woman candidate. The sample includes respondents who voted in House races in which there was a woman candidate.

[b]Dependent variable is support for the Democratic candidate. The sample is all House races in which there was a woman candidate.

[c]Dependent variable is vote for the Democratic candidate. The sample is House races without women candidates.

of Congress. However, the gender-related issue variables still exhibit a significant influence.

The clearest test of all is presented in the third model. In this model, the dependent variable is vote for the Democratic candidate and the sample is all House races *without* women candidates. Here again, there are several differences between this model and the one estimating support for women candidates. There is no relationship between gender and voting for Democrats when there are no women candidates involved. Nor is there a relationship with age or religiosity. And, while race and evaluation of Congress are significant, the gender issue variables are not. Clearly, there are differences between voting for women and voting for Democrats in House elections. These results make one point very clear: the presence of women candidates definitively changes the nature of voting behavior in House elections.

The Senate

As stated previously, an examination of the patterns of support for women candidates in the 1992 Senate races is important to this analysis because it allows for an examination of the impact of the information context in elections. It also allows us to determine if the patterns of candidate support displayed in the House of Representatives still hold.

Analysis of the determinants of support for women Senate candidates in 1992 suggests that respondents approach candidates for Senate elections somewhat differently than they do candidates for the House (See Appendix A for results). First, respondent demographic characteristics are less relevant to support for women candidates than was displayed in the House analysis. The only significant relationship here is that between religiosity and vote choice: the less religious are more likely to vote for women candidates (Table A1).

One of the most important differences is that respondent gender does not significantly affect vote choice. At first glance, this may be unexpected given the fairly consistent gender gap in voting for women Senate candidates reported after the 1992 election (Cook 1994). This is consistent, however, with Paolino's (1995) analysis of the 1992 Senate elections and may indicate that gender is probably a more important variable in House races than in Senate races because voters have little other information about the candidates in House elections. Whereas, in Senate races, the candidates are more visible and voters have a relative abundance of information on which to base their vote decision. With more information, voters will rely less on heuristic cues such as gender and engage in more "sophisticated" voting.

If demographics are less relevant to vote choice in Senate races, issue positions are clearly more important. A number of general and gender-related issues are significantly related to voting for women candidates, including defense and social welfare spending, sexual harassment, child care policy, parental leave, and affect towards feminists. These variables are all related to vote choice in the anticipated direction.

The major similarity between the House and Senate analyses is the continuation of gendered voting patterns (Table A2). With regard to general issues, the data indicate women are more likely to be influenced by these considerations than are men. For example, concerns about defense and welfare spending are significant influences for women voters, but not for men. That women who support lower levels of defense spending and higher levels of social welfare spending would be more likely to support women candidates is expected given the gender gap on these issues (Clark and Clark 1996). However, the absence of defense or social welfare issues as important voting cues for men would seem to contradict research that suggests that they might

withhold support from women based on issue stereotypes. Once again, this may indicate that the primacy of gender for women makes it easier for them to make connections between issues and candidate gender.

Gender differences in the role of gender-related issues are even larger. The one common influence for women and men is affect for feminists. Both women and men who feel more positively about feminists are more likely to support women candidates than those who do not. After this, the genders diverge. Women are influenced by the two gender-related variables that could be considered of greater immediate importance to women: abortion and sexual harassment. Pro-choice women who perceive sexual harassment to be a major problem in society are significantly more likely to vote for women (not surprising in the period after the Hill-Thomas hearings), while these issues are not significant for men. Instead, men's voting decisions are significantly influenced by their concerns about parental leave and subsidized child care. While we might conclude that these gender issues are important to men because they are issues that might have the most relevance for families in which both partners work outside the home, only parental leave operates in the expected direction.

The importance of issues in the Senate models contrasts with the House analysis, where issues were less likely to be related to vote choice for the sample as a whole, and is consistent with our understanding that Senate elections tend to be higher visibility elections that are more "national" in focus and have a greater issue emphasis. In Senate races in 1992, many women candidates made gender-related issues like sexual harassment, the Hill-Thomas hearings, and feminism centerpiece issues in their campaigns (Plutzer and Zipp 1996). The apparent result is a greater reliance on issues in Senate races than in House races and a reliance on issues by women voters in races involving a woman candidate.

Finally, the Senate analysis confirms the finding from the House analysis that voting for women is distinct from voting for Democrats (Table A3). Here, there are two models.[4] The first is estimated with all of the significant ($p < .05$) variables from the Senate analysis (Table A1). Again, the dependent variable is support for women candidates and the sample includes all Senate races in which there is a woman candidate. One difference that should be noted in the full model reported in Table A1 is that religiosity and sexual harassment are no longer significant. Other than that, all other variables retain their significant relationship to voting for women. The second model uses

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[4]There are only two models for the Senate comparison, as opposed to three for the House, because all of the women Senate candidates included in the 1992 NES are Democrats. Therefore a model estimating support for Democratic candidates in races in which there were women candidates would be the same as the first model reported in Table A2.1.

vote for the Democratic candidate as the dependent variable and includes all Senate races without women candidates. Again, the data demonstrate a number of differences between those things that influence voting for a woman and those that influence voting for a Democrat. In the second model, attitudes towards feminists is the only variable beyond the control variables that is significant. None of the issue variables (defense, social welfare spending, sexual harassment, child care, parental leave) are significantly related to voting for a Democrat. These findings, taken together with the House data from Table 3, strongly suggest that voting for a woman candidate is not merely a reflection of voting for Democratic candidates. In 1992, voters are clearly looking to women candidates for representation on a unique set of issues and attitudes. These same issues and attitudes do not shape support for Democratic candidates in general.

Conclusions

More women were elected to Congress in 1992 than at any other point in our nation's history: 24 newly elected women entered the House and four entered the Senate, bringing the total number of women in each chamber to 47 and six respectively. The "Year of the Woman," as it came to be called, seemed to be upon us. Yet these women were not elected merely because of their gender. They were elected because they appealed to coalitions of voters and to the demographic, attitudinal, and issue characteristics of these voters. They were outsiders in a year when people were fed up with "business as usual" and scandal in Congress. They were identified with a greater concern for domestic and social issues at a time when these issues achieved a level of prominence. They presented approximately half of the population with an opportunity to seek representation on issues like sexual harassment and abortion. And perhaps just as important to their success, they campaigned in an election year in which the salience of and information about gender-related issues was higher than it had been in the recent past.

The data examined here suggest that gender is indeed an important variable in congressional elections. Women respondents show a significantly greater tendency to vote for women candidates for the House of Representatives than do men. In Senate races, general issues and specific gender-related issues are much more important to determining vote choice than they were in House races. These differences make sense given the differences in the information context of the contests. And in both types of races, women are more likely to use gender-related issue positions in determining their vote choice than are men. Finally, these data demonstrate that voting for women is a phenomenon with its own unique dynamic and influences and is

distinct from voting for Democratic candidates. Above all else, the presence of a woman candidate elevates the importance of a number of demographic and issue variables, particularly for women voters.

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Determinants of Support for Women Senate Candidates Races with Women Candidates—1992
(Logit Coefficients)

Controls	b	b	b
Constant	1.623	1.691	2.893*
Female Incumbent	.486*	.657*	.649*
Party ID	−.474*	−.460*	−.400*
Ideology	−.351*	−.303*	−.325*
Demographic			
Gender	.287		
Age	.002		
Education	.029		
Race	1.083		
Religiosity	.191*		
General Issues			
Defense Spending		.269*	
Economy		−.059	
Military FT		−.006	
Social Welfare		.445*	
Crime		−.012	
Evaluation of Congress		.036	
Gender Issues/Attitudes			
Abortion			.211
Sexual Harassment			−.397*
Child Care			.141*
Parental Leave			−.682*
Feminist FT			.022*
Women's Rights			−.134
N	382	352	351
Chi Square	162.821	166.104	179.374
PRE	53.807	54.098	57.458

Note: *$p < .05$; one-tailed test.

**Table A2. Determinants of Support for Women Senate Candidates
Models for Men and Women Respondents—1992
(Logit Coefficients)**

	Men	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*
Controls	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Constant	4.187*	−.052	2.891*	.176	2.612	1.303
Female Incumb.	.624*	.283	.605*	.662*	.592	.812*
Party ID	−.458*	−.537*	−.430*	−.502*	−.458*	−.393*
Ideology	−.377*	−.279*	−.361*	−.258*	−.361*	−.407*
Demographic						
Age	−.009	.013				
Education	−.056	.120				
Religiosity	.067	.306*				
Race	1.675	.612				
General Issues						
Defense Spending			.158	.353*		
Economy			−.412	.326		
Military FT			−.004	−.009		
Social Welfare			.363	.723*		
Crime			−.209	.300		
Evaluation of Congress			−.178	.139		
Gender Issues/Attitudes						
Abortion					−.063	.405*
Sexual Harassment					−.083	−.672*
Child Care					.418*	−.039
Parental Leave					−1.512*	−.249
Feminist FT					.029*	.016*
Women's Rights					−.026	−.193
N	171	211	161	191	155	196
Chi Square	72.123	93.762	66.669	100.449	79.114	111.442
PRE	52.439	53.921	47.435	57.777	48.611	58.510

Note: *$p < .05$; one-tailed test.

Table A3. Determinants of Support for Women Senate Candidates
Full Model—1992
(Logit Coefficients)

	Model 1[a]	Model 2[b]
	b	b
Constant	.215	2.368
Incumbent	.667*	.448*
Party ID	−.334*	−.490*
Ideology	−.255*	−.357*
Religiosity	.154	.037
Defense	.288*	−.073
Sexual Harassment	−.263	−.045
Child Care	.157*	−.080
Parental Leave	−.717*	−.475
Feminist FT	.025*	.195*
N	360	321
Chi Square	187.967	159.202
PRE	56.315	56.862

Note: *p <.05; one-tailed test.
[a]Dependent variable is support for the woman candidate. The sample includes respondents who voted in Senate races in which there was a woman candidate.
[b]Dependent variable is support for the Democratic candidate. The sample is all Senate races in which there were no women candidates.

APPENDIX B

The following are the questions taken from the 1992 American National Election Study:

Religiosity was created from v3822: People practice their religion in different ways. Outside of attending religious services, do you pray 1 = several times a day, 2 = once a day, 3 = a few times a week, 4 = once a week or less, or 5 = never?

Defense was created from v3603: Some people say the U.S. should maintain its position as the world's strongest military power even if it means continuing high defense spending. Would you say that you 1 = agree strongly, 2 = agree somewhat, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree somewhat, or 5 = disagree strongly.

Economy was created from v5722: What do you think are the most important problems facing this country. Responses were coded 1 = the economy, taxes, the budget deficit, 0 = all others.

Social Welfare was created by inverting the scale for v3817: Should federal spending on solving the problems of poor people be 1 = increased, 2 = kept about the same, or 3 = decreased?

Evaluation of Congress was created by inverting the scale for v5949: In general, do you 1 = disapprove, or 2 = approve of the way the U.S. Congress had been handling its job?

Crime was created from v3814: Should federal spending on dealing with crime be 1 = increased, 2 = kept about the same, or 3 = decreased?

Abortion was created from v3732: There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view? The result is a five-point scale where 1 = by law, abortion should never be permitted, 2 = the law should permit abortion only in the case of rape, incest or when the woman's life is in danger, 3 = the law should permit abortions for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established, 4 = by law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice, 5 = R rejects the concept that abortion should be regulated by law; law has nothing to do with it.

Sexual Harassment was created from v3741: Recently there has been a lot of discussion about sexual harassment. How serious a problem is sexual harassment in the workplace? Is it 1 = very serious, 2 = somewhat serious, 3 = not too serious?

Child Care was created from v3745: Do you think that 1 = the government should provide child care assistance to low and middle income working parents, or 2 = it isn't the government's responsibility?

Parental Leave was created from v3717: Do you think 1 = the government should require companies to allow up to six months unpaid leave for parents to spend time with their newborn or newly adopted children, or 2 = is it something that should be left up to the individual employer?

Women's Rights was created from v3801: Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that 1 = women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry, and government. Others feel 7 = that women's place is in the home. Where would you place yourself on this scale (seven-point scale), or haven't you thought much about this?

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