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### Women in Campaigns: Do they Create a Presence?

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## Women in Campaigns: Do they Create a Presence?

### Abstract

In the last century, women have increasingly entered the electoral arena. In the past, female elected officials were single and obtained positions largely because they inherited leadership roles from their deceased husbands or were members of wealthy political families (Conway, Steuernagel, and Arern 1997). Now, however, more married and professional women choose to run for office out of their own regard. This paper addresses the central question: Do women have a perceptible presence in campaigns? Specifically, I will touch upon the issues around which women center their campaigns, how they advocate those issues, and how the electorate reacts to female campaigners. This study analyzes various campaigns to determine how often and in what way men and women include "female issues" in their platforms, as well as the extent to which the presence of female candidates influences voters' decisions to turnout at the polls. This paper will consist of a literature review, followed by a statement of my hypotheses and conclusions. I hope to show that women do in fact have a noticeable impact on campaigns that differentiate them from those solely involving men.

# **Women in Campaigns: Do they Create a Presence?**

**Jen Birkholtz**

## **Abstract**

*In the last century, women have increasingly entered the electoral arena. In the past, female elected officials were single and obtained positions largely because they inherited leadership roles from their deceased husbands or were members of wealthy political families (Conway, Steuernagel, and Arern 1997). Now, however, more married and professional women choose to run for office out of their own regard. This paper addresses the central question: Do women have a perceptible presence in campaigns? Specifically, I will touch upon the issues around which women center their campaigns, how they advocate those issues, and how the electorate reacts to female campaigners. This study analyzes various campaigns to determine how often and in what way men and women include "female issues" in their platforms, as well as the extent to which the presence of female candidates influences voters' decisions to turnout at the polls. This paper will consist of a literature review, followed by a statement of my hypotheses and conclusions. I hope to show that women do in fact have a noticeable impact on campaigns that differentiate them from those solely involving men.*

## **Literature Review**

Previous research has shown that female candidates bring a different perspective to the electoral arena, which is influenced by their experiences as mothers, their position in the workplace, or their socialization as children (Norris 1997). These factors affect how women candidates campaign. For example, in their 1985 study, Benze and DeClurg concluded that female candidates stress their warmth and compassion twice as often as male candidates, likely a result of childhood socialization or their experiences with raising a family (Norris 1997). Moreover, women campaigners differ from men because they do not shy away from stressing their group identities. While the groups may not center on religion or

race, they stress identity politics by focusing on gender (Plutzer and Zipp 1996). Since women have been socialized differently - creating different experiences compared to men, they bring a different approach to their campaigns.

The public automatically assumes female candidates will incorporate women's rights into their platforms solely because of their own gender (Carroll 1985). Because of this identification, a female candidate will encounter questions related to her gender and to female issues, even when she considers them irrelevant to her credentials for public office and her position on public policy issues (Mandell 1981). Women can use this identification to their advantage. Female candidates have been found to do well when they consider their constituents' stereotypes when designing their campaign advertising strategies (Norris 1997).

Likewise, researchers have found inherent differences in male and female candidates' ability to profit from advocating specific issues (Norris 1997). For instance, Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) found that women candidates consistently focus on "female" issues more frequently than male candidates. The greater preference for "female" issues was still found when the status of the candidate and party were controlled for (Norris 1997). In another study of Senate campaign races, female candidates were more likely to advocate issues like health care and education in their commercials, whereas male candidates focused on the economy, defense, and foreign policy in their advertisements (Norris 1997). These findings support the notion that a sizeable number of female candidate are feminists, who are likely to advocate women's issues (Carroll 1985).

Furthermore, a number of researchers' findings suggest the presence of a woman in a race encourages more discussion of female issues - even for male candidates (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991). Pippa Norris reported in *Women, Media, and Politics* that "female candidates do best when the campaign emphasizes 'women's issues'" (1997). Even when making a comparison of a female Democrat and a male Democrat well known for his support of women's issues, female candidates achieve greater profits by using these issues in their campaigns (Norris 1997).

Previous research also reveals that the electorate reacts differently to campaigns that include women compared to campaigns

that do not. The electorate assigns greater importance to leadership, knowledge, and experience, characteristics individuals typically associate with males, than the "female characteristics" of honesty, morality, and trustworthiness. This labeling forces female candidates to strive to reduce damaging stereotypes and stress their competence in their advertisements (Norris 1997). Constituents' perceptions of how women should behave limits female candidates' behavior and forces them to overcome obstacles (Mandel 1981). For example, female voters are more likely than male voters to evaluate candidates on the basis of campaign strategy. In particular, female voters are more affected by and more likely to use the presence of negative attack messages in their voting decisions when compared to male voters. Women are more likely to blame the speaker of the advertisement instead of the issues surrounding the opposition getting attacked (Norris 1997). Based on their constituents' stereotypes, female candidates typically do not use negative advertisements. Constituents hold stereotypes about "proper female behavior," which causes voters to look down upon female candidates who use negative ads (Norris 1997). From this finding, it can be inferred that races that include women contain less negative advertisements than races that do not include women.

Gender identity and the gender gap play an important role in the election process because they compete with party affiliation as a determinant of voting. Since women have a slightly higher voter turnout compared to men, the gender gap has become an important factor in deciding the outcomes of close elections (Plutzer and Zipp 1996). Male voters' decisions to vote for a woman candidate are directed by partisan influences, whereas women's choice to support a female candidate is a partisan and ideological decision (Dolan 1998). Female voters are more likely to support women candidates compared to male voters (Dolan 1998). In fact, women "show a significantly greater tendency to vote for women candidates" in House races (Dolan 1998: 288). There are a number of explanations for this occurrence. First, partisanship could be an important factor, especially if a majority of the women running are Democrats. Specifically, party could overshadow gender. Secondly, women may vote for female candidates more frequently because of the shared group identity of gender. Last, gender related issues could draw out more female voters (Dolan 1998). While women are more likely to vote for female candidates, they do not necessarily present more positive evaluations of the candidates compared to men (Norris 1997).

Women's support for female candidates even outweighs party loyalties. This is evidenced by the fact that women's self confidence and consciousness allows them the freedom to rely on each other for support (Mandel 1981). There are several bonds between female candidates and voters. Specifically, there are repeated instances of moral support and enthusiasm for female candidates, active involvement in campaigns as workers, volunteer efforts to organize voters, and ballot support on election day by female citizens for women candidates (Mandel 1981). Since women are turning out in increasing numbers to vote for female candidates, their votes could be key in determining close elections.

Nevertheless, the gender of a candidate does not affect his or her chances of winning an election (Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). Women win elections just as often as men do. This fact does not mean that voters do not see any differences between male and female candidates. Surveys reveal that the public assumes women have different characteristics simply because they are women. These characteristics determine the extent to which they are more or less qualified than men to deal with specific issues (Seltzer et. al. 1997). Similarly, findings support the conclusion that values and experiences of women and men in the electorate based on gendered social roles affect their image formation of candidates (Norris 1997). These findings can either benefit or be a detriment to female candidates. For instance, an antifeminist vote, differentiated from an antiwoman vote to keep female candidates out of office, is tied to specific issues rather than solely to gender (Mandel 1981). Voters believe that male candidates are more competent to deal with certain issues, while female candidates are better in handling other policy issues (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991). It has been found that voters view men as better able to deal with farm issues, foreign trade, arms control, defense spending, the economy, and foreign policy. On the other hand, women are viewed as better able to deal with daycare, poverty, education, civil rights, and healthcare (Norris 1997).

Even when a female candidate has proven her effectiveness, she still must overcome classic stereotypes, mainly those that place women as competent only for certain positions (Mandel 1981).

Since gender can be a relevant characteristic in assessing political candidates, women seeking nomination and election must face people's biases about their sex, both pro and antifemale biases

(Mandel 1981). When clear distinctions between opposing candidates exist, voters look at issue and ideological information as well to make their candidate choice (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991). Many factors, of which gender is an important one, may influence a voter's candidate decision. For example, in both Senate and House races, female voters are more likely to use gender-related issues to determine their vote choice compared to males (Dolan 1998).

Voters also make their choice to support one candidate over another based on the groups of which they belong. For example, people who feel positively toward feminism are more likely to vote for a female candidate, and those who feel negatively are more likely to vote for a male candidate (Dolan 1998). Phillip Paolina (1995) argues that women do not vote for female candidates simply because of their gender, but because of group-based issues. Group-based political action contains two requirements. The first requirement is objective membership; membership is required because group-based political action occurs from experiences of which only the members of the social group can be exposed. The second requirement for group-based political action is political awareness. The members must be aware of the group's relative position within society (Paolina 1995).

Paolina found that members' group-specific experiences make some issues stronger in influencing their political decisions, in which group members perceive their in-group candidates as uniquely qualified to represent the group's issues (1995). Unlike men, women tend to identify themselves as part of a group as women. Women who identify with other women that have similar beliefs on the problems that women face are more likely to participate in political actions that help to decrease those common problems (Paolina 1995). In campaign races, women identify and support each other to bring women's issues to the forefront. Based on group-identity politics, female voters may support women candidates more frequently than male candidates because they relate to women through group-specific experiences and feel that women can better represent the interests of this shared gender group. Women do campaign differently than men. They must overcome different obstacles and use different approaches in their races. The most significant difference in campaigns is that women publicize their support for different issues than men. This difference causes

campaigns that include women to be different than campaigns that do not include women.

## **Hypotheses and Methodology**

To examine how campaigns including female candidates are different from those that do not, I looked at various 2000 House races. Initially, I located a list of the candidates included in the general election for the House from the Federal Election Commission website. I then randomly chose ten candidates in which the races consisted of a woman versus a man, ten candidates in which the races were a man versus another man, and the only six races in which there was a woman versus another woman, thus establishing three different types of campaigns.

*Hypothesis 1: Campaign races that include women contain "female" issues, which are issues of particular interest to women, that would only be marginally used or not used at all if there were no women in the race.*

In order to examine the issues used in each type of the three different campaigns, I used the print news to locate information on what issues candidates were raising in their campaigns. I located the issues the candidates included in the sample used in their races by doing a guided search on the Lexis-Nexis news archive. I first counted the number of times a candidate's name was mentioned in the print media in his/her respective state and then their region using the time period from five days after the candidate's primary election to December 15. Starting the time period after the primary election into the middle of December ensured that the issues reported on were only used for the general election.

I then ran a guided search using the candidate's name and one issue taken from a list composed of "female" issues (See Appendix A), of which each issue on the list was run separately with the candidate's name. Just like the first guided search, the candidate's name and the issue were run in the respective states and then the regions. With the data compiled from these searches, I computed a ratio with the number of times a certain issue was mentioned in the media for the numerator over the number of times the candidate's name was mentioned for the denominator. Since two different sets of numbers were used for each search, one for the state search and one for the region search, I added these two num-



bers for the numerator and the denominator to create one ratio. A ratio was needed to control for races in highly populated areas with many media sources, compared to races where there are not a large number of media sources.

Finally, with the data collected, I ran an independent samples T-test to observe whether there was a difference between each of the three campaign groups' means in regard to the ratios. The expected findings are races that include women versus women have the most mentions of "female" issues, races that include a woman versus a man have a significant number of mentions of "female" issues, and the races in which there is a man versus another man contain the least amount of mentions of "female" issues.

*Hypothesis 2: More women will turn out to vote if there is a female candidate in the race.*

The data for this hypothesis were found in the National Elections Study (NES). There is very little information available to determine absolute voter turnout by gender for each Congressional district for House of Representative races. I predict that Senate races including women are different than Senate races that do not include women; therefore, I expect to find the same pattern in voter turnout by gender for state Senate elections compared to elections in congressional districts. In order to test this hypothesis, I first found a list of Senate candidates on the Federal Elections Commission website to distinguish which races included women. Then I located three relevant variables in the NES codebook, including gender, whether the person voted in the election, and the state of the respondent. First, the NES data set was filtered by the three variables to make the data set small enough to use. Second, a frequency was run to locate which states were included in the study. Then the voting variable was recoded so that any answer that was not a yes or no was considered a missing case. Fourth, a new variable was created for each of the 50 states to note whether a woman was present in the campaign race or not present.

With this new data set created, the data were filtered to include only the states in which women were present in the Senate race in order to run a test determining whether female voter turnout increases when a woman is present in the campaign. After the data was filtered, an independent samples T-test was run to compare

means. To further examine this hypothesis, a bivariate cross tabulation table was run using a Pearson chi-square test.

### *Qualitative Analysis*

To broaden research on whether campaigns that include women are different from those that do not, I qualitatively analyzed a number of the print news articles from the Lexis-Nexis searches used to test hypothesis one. I read forty-eight articles concerning the campaigns of six candidates, two from the "women versus women" group, two from the "men versus men" group, and two from the "women versus men" group. I created a coding system to distinguish whether the candidate supported the issue, the action candidates desired on the issue, and whether the candidates had a pro-women stance in their campaigns (see Appendix A).

### **The Results**

*Campaign races that include women are no different than campaign races that do not include women in regards to issue support.*

Independent samples T-tests were run to compare the means for each of the six "female" issue ratios between each of the three different campaign groups, women versus men, men versus men, and women versus women. The issue means of the women versus men campaigns were compared to the men versus men campaigns. Then the women versus men campaigns were compared to the women versus women campaigns, and lastly, the men versus men campaigns were compared to the women versus women campaigns. All three of the independent samples T-tests showed no significant variation in the means for any of the comparisons. Contrary to my hypothesis, these findings suggest that women do not create a different presence regarding issues in campaigns.

To further attempt to find variation among the issue means between the three campaign groups, I aggregated the six issues for each of the candidates and created a new ratio. The new ratio represented the sum of the ratios for the six issues as the numerator and the total mentions of the candidate's name as the denominator. This ratio included the count for the number of mentions of the issues and the candidate's name within the respective states and the region as used in the previous ratios. The new aggregate ratio was used in a second independent samples T-test analysis comparing the mean

Table 1.1 Averaged Ratios for Each Female Issue Among Female and Male Candidates

Issue	Female	Male
Sexual Harassment	.002	.002
Child Care	.005	.009
Parental Leave	.000	.000
Education	.248	.183
Health Care	.114	.095
Breast Cancer	.009	.012

of the new ratios amongst each of the three different campaign groups as tested in the first independent samples T-test. Similar to the first test, there were no significant variations found among the aggregate issues between the three campaign groups.

These two tests show no differences among the three different campaign groups in regard to the use of "female" issues, but a nominal comparison of the ratio averages for each issue between genders does reveal a difference. Table 1.1 shows these results.

A significant difference is found in the issues of education and health care, in which the female candidates raise these issues more often than the male candidates. Female and male candidates mention sexual harassment equally, but a qualitative analysis could reveal that women speak to create action to stop sexual harassment, whereas men could be in the media for participating in sexual harassment. Neither the female or male candidates mentioned parental leave. Contrary to my expectations, male candidates were more likely to mention childcare and breast cancer than the female candidates. The male candidates could be raising these female issues because they contain a large number of women in their congressional districts from whom they are trying to garner support. Also, women running for office may not want to solely base their campaigns on female issues, as they may want to show that they can service the larger population of females and males alike. The fact that only nominal differences are found between the male and female candidates suggests that this study contains too small of a sample. A larger sample over a longer period of time may be appropriate in order to show differences in campaigns that include women compared to campaigns that do not include women in regards to issue usage.

*Campaigns that include women do not have higher rates of female voter turnout than campaigns that do not include women.*

**.Table 1.2 Percentage of Female Vote Regarding the Presence of a Female Candidate in the 2000 Senate Campaigns**

	<b>Did Not Vote</b>	<b>Vote</b>
<b>Woman Not Present in Campaign</b>	25.9 %	74.1 %
<b>Woman Present in Campaign</b>	26.6 %	73.4 %

An independent samples T-test was run solely among the women respondents to the NES. The data was filtered to only include the women respondents. The variable of whether the respondent voted in the last election was run against the variable of whether a female was present in the state Senate campaign. Contrary to my hypothesis, the independent samples T-test revealed no significant results; therefore, according to this sample, whether a female is present in a campaign has no effect on female voter turnout.

To test this hypothesis further, a bivariate analysis was done with a cross tabulation table using the Pearson chi square test. Table 1.2 illustrates the results.

As Table 1.2 reveals, a woman present in a senate campaign has no effect on female voter turnout. In addition, the Pearson chi square was not significant. The results from the independent samples T-test and the bivariate analysis produce no results supporting hypothesis two.

### *Qualitative Analysis*

To extend my research on whether campaigns that include women are different than campaigns that do not include women in regards to issues, I conducted a qualitative analysis by reading a sample of the print media articles originally used in hypothesis one. Based on this qualitative analysis, I did find a difference between men and women candidates and how they support different female issues. Table 1.3 represents a comparison among the three different campaign groups of different action positions the candidates could take in regards to the six female issues that were used to test hypothesis one. These action positions were each coded (See Appendix A), and I noted in each of the articles which action positions the candidates were recorded as taking. It should be noted that some of the articles portrayed the candidate as taking more than one type of position advocacy, in which case I recorded all the action positions a candidate was recorded as taking. After all forty-

eight articles were read and coded, I recorded and totaled the number of times each position was advocated within each of the three different campaign groups. The results of the count are shown in Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3 A Count of the Differences Between the Positions Men and Women Take On Female Issues**

	Vote Support	Increase Spending	Top Issue	Decrease Cost	General Support	Decrease Spending
Women vs. Women	1	4	4	1	1	0
Men vs. Men	0	2	0	0	1	2
Women vs. Men	0	5	1	4	1	0

Table 1.3 clearly demonstrates that the women candidates were more likely to advocate a female issue as one of the most important issues in their campaigns compared to the male candidates, who did not use any female issue as one of their top issues. For example, an article was written about Corrine Brown, a candidate from Florida in the woman versus woman campaign group, stating, "She still keeps education as her top long-term priority and said her biggest goal in her next term is to secure more money for rebuilding and renovating inner-city schools." Only one of the female candidates, an incumbent, and none of the male candidates showed support for female issues by voting. The female candidates were also significantly more likely to advocate an increase in spending for certain programs related to the female issues, such as creating new programs within healthcare, implanting more child care programs, money for breast cancer research, etc. Furthermore, the female candidates consistently advocated a decrease in costs within these programs, like discounting prescription costs in health-care programs or giving a tax credit for child care, which the male candidates never advocated.

Of importance, only the male candidates were recorded as not supporting either one or a number of the female issues and actually took a position in support of a decrease in spending for one of these issues. Todd Akin, a candidate from Missouri in the man versus man campaign group, was reported to oppose an increase in spending on health care. An article written about him stated, "Several times, Akin said he opposed socializing health care. He said he would limit the federal government and said the U.S. Constitution does not guarantee jobs, education, or health care." Table 1.3 reveals that women's use of and support for female issues

is different compared to men; therefore, campaigns that include women are more likely to use female issues differently than campaigns that do not include women.

In addition, the articles were coded to represent whether each individual article contained a pro-woman tone for women's advancement compared to a tone that was neutral and had nothing to do with women and advancement. A pro-woman tone in an article portrays a candidate as specifically being an advocate of all women and women's rights and equal treatment. An article written about Carolyn Maloney, a candidate from New York included in the woman versus woman campaign group, represents an example of a pro-woman tone. The article quotes Ms. Maloney as stating, "But we realize we stand on the shoulders of the giants who served before us, great Democratic congresswomen [gives names]....They opened the doors of opportunity for America's women....We remember when women could not get credit for their own names, when women could not serve on juries, when equal pay for equal work wasn't even a slogan....Not anymore."

On the other hand, an article that was coded as not containing a pro-women tone was considered neutral and portrayed the candidate as neither supportive nor opposing women's advancement. Table 1.4 illustrates the number of articles for each type of campaign group that contained a pro-woman tone compared to articles that contained a neutral tone.

**Table 1.4 Articles That Contained a Pro-Woman Tone vs. Articles That Contained a Neutral Tone Among the Campaign Groups**

	Pro-women Tone	Not pro-women Tone
Women vs. Women	6	10
Men vs. Men	0	16
Women vs. Men	2	14

As Table 1.4 portrays, the male candidates used in this analysis did not ever use a pro-woman tone compared to the female candidates, who did use a pro-woman tone in advocating their issue stances and concerns. It must be noted that even though some the articles about the female candidates portrayed them as having a pro-woman's standpoint, many of the articles about the female candidates and the female issues were neutral, similar to the male can

didates' articles. Even so, Table 1.4 does suggest that campaigns that do include women contain a more pro-woman's advancement tone than campaigns that do not include women.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis for the women versus women campaign group revealed that the female candidates in this group were strong advocates of the treatment of lower income women, the advancement of all women, or strong support for the elderly and children, which are two groups of people that women are commonly associated with taking care of compared to men. Even though the statistical analysis of the three different campaign groups showed no significant differences, a qualitative analysis suggests that campaigns that contain women are different than campaigns that do not in the use and support for female issues.

## **Conclusion**

Although the statistical tests done in this study gave no significant results, the qualitative analysis did reveal that campaigns that include women are different than campaigns that do not include women. This study found that even though some male candidates use "female" issues in their campaigns, women candidates advocate these same issues differently. Female candidates are more likely to use a "female" issue as one of the top issues in their campaigns compared to male candidates. They are also more likely to advocate an increase in spending for a "female" issue and a decrease in a cost for a program within a "female" issue. Furthermore, female candidates sometimes use a pro-woman advancement tone in their campaigns, whereas male candidates do not. These results suggest that women do create a presence in campaigns.

Despite the non-findings in this study, I still predict that differences are present between the issues female and male candidates advocate in their campaigns. The fact that some nominal differences were found suggests that this study may have contained too small of a sample. Future researchers may want to examine a larger sample over some period of time. I do support the notion that the best way to look at what issues candidates use and how they advocate those issues is through the print media, unless interviews of the candidates themselves can be conducted. Future research studying voter turnout may want to look at absolute turnout among women over a large span of time. This span of time could be broken into



two samples. The first sample could be a time period in which women were not very active in the electoral arena. The second sample could contain a sample from a certain time point to the present when women attained a threshold in which they were making differences in the electoral arena. I predict that comparing female voter turnout between these two time periods will show an increase in female voter turnout as more women run for elective office, and the same would hold true for a comparison done throughout the whole time period. One might also want to study the level of political attentiveness and education of the female voters. I assert an increase in female voter turnout when a woman is present in a campaign among educated women would be present. Some lesser educated and politically attentive women may not even know a female candidate is running for an elective position.

"Female" issues are just beginning to be recognized and brought to the forefront by women. Women are gaining positions in which they can advocate and publicize important issues that affect all women, and which may not be recognized presently. Differences between women and men and the issues they support can be found in a number of places besides the print media. One might want to look at differences between women and men in state legislatures or in Congress. Differences in issue advocacy could be discovered by examining what committees the members want to be placed on, what types of bills women and men are sponsoring, or how women and men vote on gendered bills compared to non-gendered bills. Issues that affect half of the population should be addressed and discovered. Some of the results of this study illustrate that women are advocating issues differently than men, which shows the importance of studying the differences between men and women in the electoral arena regarding the issues they advocate and work to make a difference on. More women in the electoral arena would provide a great route for promoting and educating many about women's issues.



## Appendix

	W vs. W		M vs. M		W vs. M	
	Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 1	Candidate 2
Sexual Harassment						
Pro/Con	1	0	0	0	0	0
Action	1	0	0	0	0	0
Pro Woman Tone	1	0	0	0	0	0
Breast Cancer						
Pro/Con	1	1	1	0	1	1
Action	5	0	2,5	0	4	2
Pro Woman Tone	1	2	2	0	2	1
Education						
Pro/Con	1	1	1	2	1	1
Action	3	2,3	2	6	2	2
Pro Woman Tone	2	2	2	2	2	2
Health Care						
Pro/Con	1	1	0	2	1	1
Action	3,2	2,3,4	0	0	3,2,4	2,4
Pro Woman Tone	1	1	0	2	2	2
Child Care						
Pro/Con	0	1	0	0	1	1
Action	0	2	0	0	5	4
Pro Woman Tone	0	1	0	0	1	2

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