

Gender and Voter Appeal in Irish Elections, 1948-1997*

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Abstract: In general elections in the Republic of Ireland 1948-1997, female candidates have received on average a lower proportion of first-preference votes than males. This disparity between male and female candidates is worsening over time. Female candidates have less electoral campaign experience than male candidates, and this helps to explain the gender gap. The declining importance of the "widow's (or daughter's) seat" may contribute to the worsening of the gap. When these and other variables are taken into account, a residual voter bias against female candidates is statistically significant only among supporters of Fianna Fáil; PD supporters actually favour female candidates.

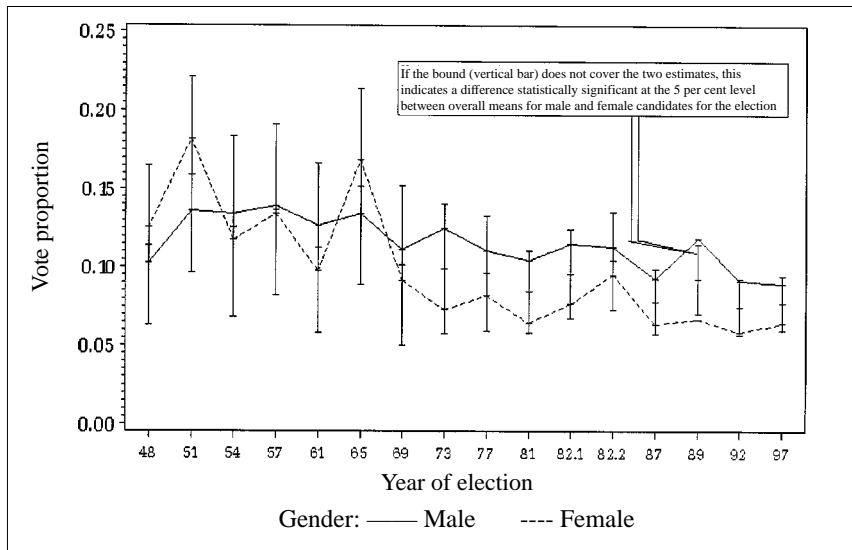
I INTRODUCTION

Female candidates' comparative lack of success in Irish elections is well documented (see e.g. Galligan and Wilford, 1999a, p. 132 and Gallagher, 1999, p. 123). Among elections in 1988-1992 for eleven countries analysed by Norris (1993, p. 310) only Australia and France were worse than Ireland in respect of the proportion of the women candidates who succeeded in getting elected. Estimates of the mean candidate first preference vote proportion at each general election in the Republic since 1948 suggest that the male advantage is actually becoming more distinct over time (Figure 1). Although every difference is not statistically significant at the 5 per cent level, male candidates have received a higher mean proportion of the first preference vote than females in every election since 1969. The perception of a vote-getting advantage for male

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candidates (e.g. Carty, 1980, p. 96) has contributed to the slowness of Irish political parties to choose female candidates (Manning, 1978, p. 96; Engstrom, 1987, pp. 127-128; Galligan and Wilford, 1999b, pp. 152, 154).

Figure 1: *Overall Mean Proportion of First Preference Votes in Irish General Elections, 1948-1997*



Note: The overall mean for an election is calculated as the mean of each candidate's proportion of the total first preference vote for his or her count. The longer the bound for the estimate of difference between means (vertical bar), the less precision there is in measuring the difference between male and female candidates in an election. Bounds are often wide due to the low number of female candidates (less than a dozen in each election before 1973). Note that the above figure cannot show the accumulated significance of differences between male and female candidates over time. To test for the gender effect over time, a multiple regression model is necessary.

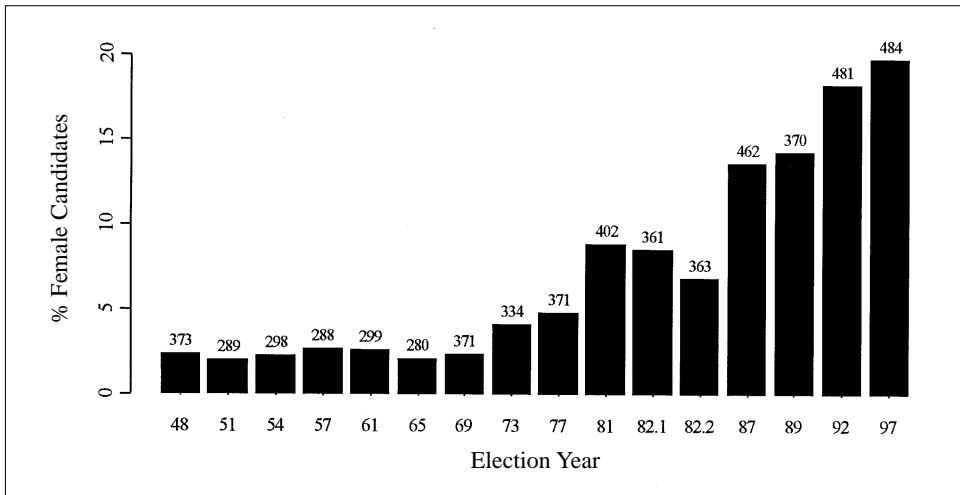
Source: Official Results of elections, 1948-1992; Donnelly, 1993, 1998.

Few would disagree that the male advantage is, to some extent, bound up with Irish political and social structures. For example, it has been argued that inaccessibility of social networks forms an obstacle to female candidates' selection (Randall and Smyth, 1987; Galligan, 1992a, pp. 186, 189-191). Male advantages in incumbency (Galligan, 1993, pp. 149-151) and campaign experience (Galligan, Laver and Carney, 1999, pp. 118-122) have also been used to explain the gender gap. Others have adduced the Irish electoral system itself: Engstrom (1987) suggested that the male advantage might be a product of the lack of proportionality in Ireland's relatively small constituencies. Galligan (1992b, pp.

19-20) noted that significantly fewer women were returned to local councils outside the Dublin region in the local government elections of 1991. It may be that the cultural and social influences inhibiting female participation in Irish politics are stronger in rural areas than in urban areas. In general, the efforts by the Catholic Church and the constitution of the state to restrict the role of women in Ireland may have contributed to Irish women's political interest and engagement being among the lowest in the EU during the 1980s (Galligan and Wilford, 1999a, pp. 142-143). The lack of a pool of eligible women may well have led in turn to a shortage of prospective women candidates in Ireland (Norris, 1993, p. 310).

But Norris points out that for the representation of women to improve, political parties must also have a candidate selection policy which selects female candidates. Irish political parties still select only a small number of female candidates for the Dáil (Darcy, 1988, p. 74), although the situation has improved over the last 15 years (Figure 2). The extent to which women are "inheriting" seats is decreasing (Galligan, 1993, p. 149) and so one of the few traditional female advantages in this area is disappearing. Party officers have an important role in encouraging female candidates to put themselves forward (Fawcett, 1992, pp. 52, 54), but most party officers are male. (See Galligan, 1993, p. 161 and Galligan and Wilford, 1999b, p. 156 for the 1991 and 1997 figures respectively). It has been argued that these male elites tend to protect their monopolies of power (Lovenduski, 1993, p. 11, Galligan and Wilford, 1999a, p. 144).

Is the male vote-getting advantage attributable to such structural effects alone, or is there a voter bias against female candidates? It is true that, when the structural effects are taken into account in a multiple regression model, studies of a single election do not always suggest a male advantage (see Marsh, 1981, on the 1977 election; Galligan, Laver and Carney, 1999, pp. 118-122 on the 1997 election). Furthermore, Eurobarometer polls for the period 1975-1987 (Gardiner, 1992, p. 36) show a decline in pro-male bias among voters in Ireland and in Europe generally. The percentage answering that they would have *more confidence in a man* than a woman parliamentarian declined among Irish male respondents from 42 per cent to 33 per cent over the period. Among Irish women the decline was from 33 per cent to 17 per cent. Although the Irish men were among the most conservative of their European counterparts, the Irish women occupied a median position. This change in public opinion was reflected in a growth in support throughout Europe, the US and elsewhere during the 1980s for getting more women into politics (Lovenduski, 1993, pp. 1-2). EU legislation for gender equality fostered this trend in Ireland and elsewhere. The EU facilitated an increase in female employment in Ireland, and in the early 1990s established the network Women in Decision-Making to attempt to remedy the democratic deficit with regard to gender (Gardiner, 1999, pp. 38-53).

Figure 2: *Percentage Female Candidates in Irish General Elections, 1948-1997*

Note: The number above each bar is the denominator (N) for percentages. The denominator is the total number of candidates in each election for whom gender was available. A candidate is counted once for every constituency contested. There are instances where a single candidate contested several constituencies (e.g. Barbara Mary Hyland contested 13 constituencies in 1987; William Abbey of the Holy Cross Fitzsimon contested 7 constituencies in 1989).

However, the same Eurobarometer surveys suggest that both sexes in Ireland remain relatively unfavourable to the idea of gender equality in family roles; and uneasy with regard to women in non-traditional roles — more so than any of the other seven European countries analysed (Wilcox, 1991, pp 130-135). Marsh's important survey of seven elections in the period 1948-1982 (Marsh, 1987) suggested strongly that, taking other variables into account, male candidates did receive more first-preference votes than female candidates. Marsh's model estimated a vote advantage of 595 votes for non-incumbent males and a vote advantage of 1,144 votes for incumbent males.

This paper re-assesses the apparent vote disadvantage among female candidates, examining all Irish general elections 1948-1997. Taking account of the structural hurdles which female candidates face, it tests for the existence of a statistically significant residual voter bias. The paper then attempts to explain why the gender gap has become more distinct in recent years.

II DATA AND METHODS

It is difficult to base conclusions about Irish politics on a single election. The weaker explanatory variables such as alphabetical order, locality and gender

vary in significance considerably from election to election. Thus, for instance, Marsh found that the results of Walsh and Robson's influential work (1973) on alphabetical voting in the 1973 election did not appear to hold for the election in 1969 (Marsh, 1981, p. 65). To get as general a picture as possible, this paper makes use of data for all Irish general elections from 1948 to the present.¹

To summarise the data from all sixteen elections and to take account of the other obstacles which female candidates face, this paper uses regression analysis (as in Marsh's and Engstrom's papers) with a candidate's first preference vote proportion as the dependent variable. Interaction of the explanatory variables is included in the regression model where these interactions are significant.

Based on the review of the literature in the preceding section, variables used in the regression to explain candidate vote proportion include party; whether the constituency was urban or rural; constituency size; alphabetical order on the ballot paper; incumbency; political family links; and campaign experience.² Details of data coding are included in an Appendix.

I have used Marsh's classification (Marsh, 1987, pp. 70, 72) for explanatory variables.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Is the apparently widening gap between male and female candidates (Figure 1) statistically significant? Scholars have not remarked on this apparent growing disparity between male and female candidates, except to note that the number of female candidates and female TDs actually declined in 1989 compared to 1987, and that the number of female TDs has not increased since 1992 (e.g. Galligan and Wilford, 1999a, p. 132). In fact, in a simple regression model (not shown) with gender and election year as the variables (treating election year as linear), the interaction does show the gender gap worsening significantly with time ($p=0.0036$). This contrasts with the Eurobarometer findings, which indicate that voters are becoming less biased against women in public office. If the Eurobarometer findings are accurate, the growing gender gap may be explained by something other than a growing voter bias. It should be borne in mind that

1. Campaign history and family links of candidates were largely deduced from the Official Results, with supplementary information derived from Gallagher (1993); Browne (1981, 1982); Trench (1982) and Donnelly (1993, 1998). Much of the data used in this paper was kindly made available to the author electronically by Richard Sinnott and James McBride. Results for the 1992 and 1997 elections were kindly made available by Seán Donnelly. Some first preference, incumbency, gender and other data was added by the author.

2. Because of the large number of variables and interactions explored, a regression term was required to be significant at the 3 per cent level (as opposed to the usual, less stringent 5 per cent level) to be included in the model. Main effects involved with an interaction were not tested for significance before inclusion in the model.

Table 1: *Regression Model of Candidate First Preference Vote Proportion for General Elections in the Republic of Ireland, 1948-1997*

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>p-value resulting from F-test</i>
Situational	
<i>Election Year</i>	
<i>Number of Candidates</i>	
Interaction of # candidates with Incumbent(Y/N)	0.0001
Interaction of # candidates with family link	0.0001
<i>Party</i>	
Interaction of Party with election year	0.0001
<i>Urban Constituency(Y/N)</i>	
Interaction of Family link(Y/N) with Urban(Y/N)	0.0011
<i>Constituency has Three Seats(Y/N)</i>	
Interaction of constituency size with party	0.0002
Political/Position/Sex	
<i>Dáil Campaigns</i>	
Interaction of Dáil campaigns with election year	0.0034
Interaction of Dáil campaigns with party	0.0001
Interaction of Dáil campaigns with constituency size	0.0001
Interaction of Dáil campaigns with family link (Y/N)	0.0001
Dáil campaigns quadratic effect	
Interaction of Dáil campaign quadratic effect with election year	0.0032
Interaction of Dáil campaign quadratic effect with party	0.0001
Interaction of Dáil campaigns with its quadratic effect	0.0001
<i>Candidate has Political Family Link(Y/N)</i>	
Interaction of Family link(Y/N) with party	0.0288
<i>Alphabetical Order</i>	
Interaction of alphabetical order with party	0.0001
Interaction of alphabetical order with Incumbent(Y/N)	0.0001
Alphabetical order, quadratic effect	
Interaction of alpha quadratic effect with party	0.0001
Interaction of alpha quadratic effect with Incumbent(Y/N)	0.0001
<i>Incumbent(Y/N)</i>	
Interaction of Incumbent(Y/N) with party	0.0001
<i>Gender</i>	
Interaction of gender with party:	0.0008
Variance explained (R**2 x 100)	65
(N)	5694

Note: If involved in an interaction, a main effect was included in the model but F-test is not presented.

any explanation of the gap between male and female candidates will not confute the existence of the gap — but may suggest that it is due to factors other than simple voter bias against female candidates.

The multiple regression model (Table 1) does indeed suggest that although the gender gap has grown in the period 1948-1997, this is probably due to factors other than an increase in gender bias among voters in the period. When other structural variables are taken into account the gender-by-time effect disappears, and this interaction is thus not included in the model.

However, every main effect in the model is involved in some significant interaction. Thus gender itself, for example, is present in the model on its own — that is, as a “main effect” — but gender is also present as part of an interaction with the party-grouping variable. The regression coefficient of gender on its own is not very useful or even meaningful in this context.³

The most meaningful way to examine the effect of a variable which, like gender, is involved in an interaction, is to look at the model’s estimate of the predicted vote proportion for each value of each of the interactions in which the variable occurs. In the case of the current model gender has just one significant interaction, i.e. the interaction with the party-grouping variable. In this case the model estimates can be presented in a single table showing the predicted vote proportion for a male candidate and a female candidate for each party grouping. For any interaction, the model’s estimate of the predicted value (sometimes referred to as the least-squared mean) will take into account both the interaction itself and all other model effects. The proportion will be predicted assuming candidates are equal with regard to all other attributes.⁴

Party and the Male Advantage

Model predicted mean proportions for each gender by party (Table 2) show that, everything else being equal, the predicted male first-preference vote would be significantly higher only for FF candidates. Although the male advantage is clearly most important for FF, it should be noted that the estimate for male candidates is greater than that for females for all except the Other party grouping and for Independent candidates.

Among candidates from the Other party grouping, which includes the Progressive Democrats (PDs), there is a tendency for voters to favour female

3. The meaning of a main effect becomes even less useful when its interaction is with a continuous variable. For example, in the model $\text{Vote} = \text{Gender} + \text{Campaigns} + \text{Gender} \times \text{Campaigns}$, the main Gender effect would estimate Gender assuming zero campaigns.

4. In order to concentrate on the gender effect, this paper will examine only regression coefficients involving gender. Because the other effects are all involved in numerous significant interactions, it would be beyond the scope and space of this paper to examine them here in the detail which they require.

Table 2: *Predicted Mean Candidate First Preference Vote Percentage, by Gender and Party Grouping, for the Period 1948-1997*

<i>Party</i>	<i>Female Candidates %</i>	<i>Male Candidates %</i>	<i>Difference, Male-Female %</i>	<i>p-value</i>
FF	12.5	15.2	2.7	0.0001
FG	12.5	13.0	0.5	0.3200
Labour	11.6	12.7	1.1	0.1373
SF/SFWP/DL	11.6	11.7	0.1	0.9729
Independents	9.9	9.9	0.0	0.9081
Other parties	12.2	10.8	-1.4	0.0412

Note: p-values are calculated on the basis of a t-test for difference between predicted means for female and male candidates.

candidates over males (the p-value, at 0.0412, is significant at the 5 per cent level). In fact, if the elections in the period before and after the PDs came into existence are analysed separately, the Other party grouping maintains its significant female advantage only for the period where the PDs were contesting elections ($p=0.0290$). This confirms suggestions in the literature that female candidates for the PDs are relatively successful (e.g. Galligan and Wilford, 1999b, pp. 159-161). The success of the PDs with regard to female participation and election, despite its gender-neutral stance, has surprised commentators, but has been explained by the fact that the party was co-founded by a woman and that, being a new party, it lacked the traditional structural constraints which inhibit female participation.

It is more difficult to explain the significant male advantage for FF candidates. All of the three major parties (FF, FG and Labour) have attempted to encourage female participation (Galligan, 1993, pp. 150-165; Galligan and Wilford, 1999b, pp. 153-165). Indeed, FF may have been the first party whose leader took direct action in this regard, when Jack Lynch added six female candidates to the Fianna Fáil team for the 1977 election. However, it is generally agreed that, after this promising move, progress in FF has been slow. After 1977, FF has almost always had the smallest proportion of female candidates among the three major parties. The single exception was 1987, when both FF and Labour had 8 per cent female candidates, considerably below FG's 11 per cent. In both 1991 and 1997 FF had by far the lowest proportion of female constituency chairpersons (none in 1997). Although its mean female office holding at constituency level (which takes chairpersons, secretaries and treasurers into account) was similar to that of the Labour party, it was well below that of FG and the PDs. Women's representation on the party National Executive also tends to be considerably lower for FF than

for either FG, the PDs or the Labour party. These figures indicate that, despite documented initiatives, the FF party organisation has been slow to facilitate female participation from within. The importance of party officers in encouraging female candidates to come forward has already been discussed. But it may also be that party activists and thus party voters are affected by this deficit in female participation in the party power structure.

The FF voter tends to be slightly older than supporters of the other major parties (Sinnott, 1995, p. 189). Wilcox (1991, pp. 134-135) has shown that older cohorts in Ireland (and all the other countries he analysed) have less confidence in women legislators than the younger cohorts. Thus the age of FF supporters may also help to explain a bias against female candidates. It is noteworthy that the age profile of PD supporters (who, as we have seen, appear to favour women candidates) is the youngest among the five parties surveyed by Sinnott.

Whatever the causes, since FF is the most electorally successful party in the state, it is clear that the larger male advantage among FF candidates will have an important impact on any gender gap in vote-getting. In contrast, the Other party grouping, the only grouping where female candidates have the advantage, is small in terms of the number of candidate/elections contested and seats won in the 1948-1997 period. Thus the male advantage is strongest where it counts the most, in FF; and any female advantage lies in the smaller and more transient Other party grouping. In short, to the extent that there is bias among Irish voters, it appears to be significant only among supporters of FF candidates. Over and above this bias, female candidates also confront the difficulties posed by the social and political structures represented by other variables in Table 1. These require further examination.

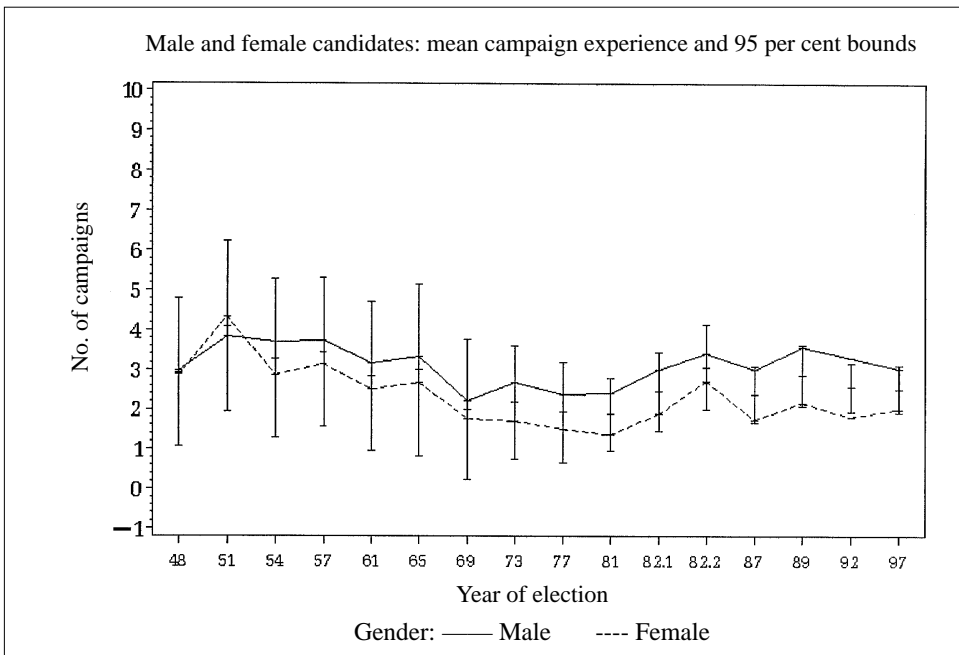
Campaign Experience and the Male Advantage

Except for the elections of 1948 and 1951, the electoral experience of male candidates is consistently greater than that of female candidates (Figure 3). A multiple regression model of electoral campaign experience (not shown here) confirms that male candidates have significantly more campaign experience than female candidates in the period 1948-1997 ($p=0.0001$). The multiple regression model of mean vote proportions in Table 1 shows that the number of campaigns fought is a significant predictor of electoral success ($p<0.004$ for all campaign interactions). This seems to suggest that female candidates are disadvantaged by their short electoral careers (Darcy, 1988, p. 74).⁵ Is it special

5. Darcy (1988, pp. 73-74) suggests that the shorter electoral career of female candidates may be due to their lack of success in the more stable three-seat constituencies. But a multiple regression model of all candidates' length of career shows size of constituency not to be a significant explainer of the length of electoral career. A multiple regression model of the number of years Teachtaí Dála (TDs, or parliamentary representatives) retain their Dáil seats in the period 1948-1997 shows size of constituency not to be a significant explainer of this item either.

pleading to argue that female candidates receive fewer votes because their careers are shorter? It might be suggested that, on the contrary, the careers of female candidates are shorter simply because they do not get the votes (and perhaps become discouraged). It is, after all, acknowledged (e.g. Darcy, 1988, p. 71) that female candidates spend less time during their electoral career as an elected TD (Teachta Dála) than male candidates.

Figure 3: *Overall Mean Number of Elections Fought 1948-1997, by Gender and Election*



Source: Official Results, 1948-1989; Browne, 1981, 1982; Trench, 1992; Gallagher, 1993; Donnelly, 1993, 1998.

One measure suggests that female candidates do not necessarily retire early because of electoral difficulties. If female candidates did tend to leave politics earlier than males because of relative electoral failure, then female candidates could be expected to retire at a relatively low point in their electoral careers — the implication being that their retirement might be due to a declining vote

Darcy also noted, as is implicit in the results of Marsh's paper, that the apparent vote disadvantage for female candidates is relatively strong for incumbents. The interaction of gender with the variable for incumbency was not significant in the present model ($p=0.9636$), so it appears that this conclusion may not hold for the 1948-1997 period as a whole.

proportion. To test whether this is in fact the case, for every candidate in the period 1948-1997 who fought more than one election, the peak performance of their career — the highest proportion of first-preference votes received — was identified. To find the deficit in a candidate's vote on retirement, the vote proportion received by the candidate at the election following which s/he retired was subtracted from this peak performance quantity. The resulting quantity is the retirement deficit. If a candidate's retirement deficit is large the candidate has retired at a low point in his or her career, and it may be reasonable to deduce that s/he is retiring because of electoral failure. If, on the other hand, a candidate's final electoral performance is quite close to their best performance, then it is reasonable to deduce that something other than electoral failure has motivated them to retire. The view that this latter is the case for female candidates is supported by a multivariate statistical model of retirement deficit which gave no evidence to suggest that female candidates retire because of electoral failure ($p=0.1081$). Indeed the estimate for females' retirement deficit was actually smaller than that for males. (Candidates with a single campaign were excluded, as were current (1997) candidates. In all, 896 candidates were included in the model, of whom 48 were female).

Thus although female candidates do not spend as much of their career in the Dáil as male candidates, it may be that causes other than poor electoral performance are associated with the shorter electoral career of female candidates, compared to male candidates. If "socialisation ... into an acceptance of an extremely traditional ... role" — that of home-maker — is among the causes which lead female candidates to cut short their electoral careers, then this phenomenon is changing (Randall and Smyth, 1987, p. 200) and it may be that the electoral careers of female candidates will lengthen in the future. Many women have found the difficulties of a life in politics exacerbated by the hostility of the dominant male cliques — as recently as 1989 one county councillor reported such abuse as "Why aren't you at home minding the children?" and "Where's your husband?" (Fawcett, 1992, p. 49). If the number of women representatives increases, this kind of experience may also become less frequent and women may have longer electoral careers as a result.

Constituency Size and Male Advantage

Richard Engstrom's suggestion that female candidates are at a disadvantage only in the smaller, three-seat constituencies has not been challenged in the literature, and his results for the three elections in 1981-1982 are persuasive. However, there is no significant interaction between gender and constituency size ($p=0.2533$) in the overall multiple regression model. This suggests that the size of the constituency gives no particular advantage to either sex when the larger number of elections in the period 1948-1997 are taken into account. Plots

for the longer period 1948-1997 (not shown) also suggest that Engstrom's 1981-1982 period just happens to be a bad one for female candidates in three-seater constituencies.

Political Family Links and the Male Advantage

A possible explanation for the apparently higher vote proportion among the few female candidates before about 1973 is related to the well-known effect of a political pedigree on a candidate's vote proportion (Gallagher, 1984, pp. 258-260). By Gallagher's broad definition, 25 per cent of the TDs in the 1989 Dáil had a political pedigree — a “uniquely high level for any modern parliament” (Gallagher and Komito, 1992, p. 135). For this paper a candidate with a political pedigree or family link is defined as one who first went up for election at most two elections after the departure (usually due to death) of a relative who had been a candidate in the same constituency or (in Dublin or Cork) from the same urban area.

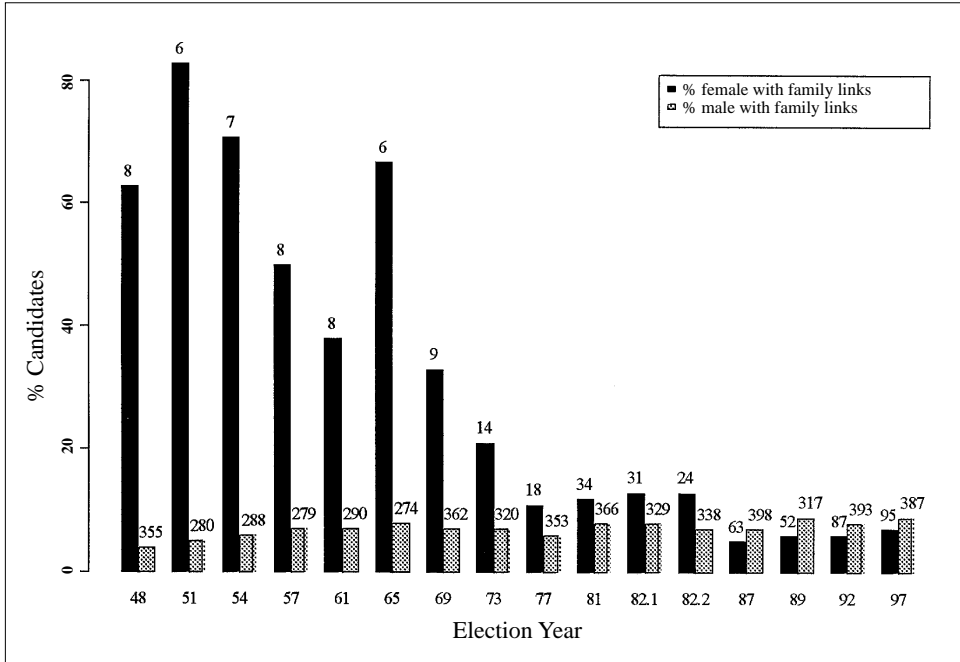
While for males the proportion of candidates with a political pedigree has increased slightly over time, for female candidates the story is very different (Figure 4). Up to the 1960s the number of female candidates in an election who had family links with ex-politicians often exceeded the number without such links (Gallagher, 1984, p. 253). But as the number of female candidates grows from the 1970s on, the proportion of female candidates without the advantage of a political pedigree increases dramatically — the “widow's seat” is becoming less important as a route to Dáil candidacy (Galligan and Wilford, 1999a, p. 144). The proportion of female candidates with political family links is now smaller than that of male candidates.

A political family link is strongly associated with candidates receiving a higher proportion of votes, and the proportion of female candidates with political family links has decreased as the gender gap visibly has become more distinct (Figure 1). The very high proportion of female candidates with family links up to the 1970s may therefore be an explanation of the irregular pattern of relatively high vote proportions for female candidates in that period seen in Figure 1. The small proportion with family links after the 1970s means that female candidates have now lost this advantage.

IV CONCLUSION

Over the period 1948-1997 as a whole, female candidates received a lower mean proportion of votes than males. But if we take into account other variables, voter bias against female candidates was statistically significant only among supporters of FF candidates. For the Other party grouping and among the PDs in particular, voters actually preferred female candidates. Thus voter bias has

Figure 4: *Percentage of Candidates Related to a Previous Candidate, 1948-1997, by Gender*



Note: The number above each bar is the denominator (N) for percentages. Denominator for percentages for each gender is total candidates of that gender with family link data available.

Source: Official Results, 1948-1989; Browne, 1981; Gallagher, 1993; Donnelly, 1993, 1998.

been worst among supporters of the party whose effect on Irish politics is greatest.

Although larger constituencies with their smaller quota requirement might be expected to favour up-and-coming female candidates, the multivariate regression model gave no evidence that gender gap varied with size of constituency.

However, male advantage is bolstered in other ways by Irish social and political structures. Female candidates tend to have less electoral campaign experience than males, and extensive campaign experience is associated with markedly higher vote proportions. Female candidates may spend less of their career as TDs, but a comparison of vote proportion at retirement with vote proportion at the high point of each candidate’s career shows that there is no evidence that, compared with their male counterparts, female candidates retire because their career is at a particularly low ebb. Thus the significantly shorter campaigning career associated with female candidates is more likely to be due to social or

party political pressures than to electoral disappointment.

A contributory source of worsening of the gender gap may be the rapidly decreasing proportion of female candidates with family links to ex-politicians. More than a third of female candidates had the advantage of a family link up to the late 1960s. However, with the increase in the number of female candidates in the 1970s the proportion with political family links declined and it is in this same period that female vote disadvantage becomes clearer in Figure 1. The proportion of male candidates with links to ex-politicians has if anything increased in recent years, so males have not been disadvantaged in the same way.

Will the male vote-getting advantage continue to grow? Although the mean vote proportion for female candidates is declining, the multivariate model gives no evidence that this is due to an increasing voter bias against female candidates. The decline is more likely associated with structural factors such as the loss of the advantage of political family links, and the shorter electoral career of female candidates. The proportion of male and female candidates with political family links now looks stable, and is fairly evenly balanced between the sexes. The female disadvantage with regard to campaign experience continues, but it does not appear to be worsening in recent years. Thus there is reason to believe that the gender gap will not increase further. Where females have an advantage, it is among candidates for the PDs — the most recently established party in the Dáil, and the one with the youngest support base. This indication of female advantage among younger voters is consistent with Eurostat findings, and suggests the possibility of decreasing voter bias in the future. But the shorter career of female candidates and the statistically significant bias among FF supporters both mean that the gender gap will persist for some time.

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APPENDIX

Details of Variables used in the Multivariate Regression

Situational variables

Election year: this variable allows the model to take into account the fact that the overall proportion received by the typical candidate can vary considerably from election to election. An obvious reason for this: the overall number of candidates per quota varies considerably from election to election. Election year is treated as a categorical variable (often called a "dummy variable"). Its presence in interactions allows the model to take into account the fact that some variables may vary significantly in effect from election to election. For example, the interaction of election year with party allows for the fact that overall party performance may vary significantly from election to election.

Number of candidates in the constituency: operationalised (to match the dependent variable) as $1/n$ where n is the number of candidates in the constituency.

Party: 1 = Fianna Fáil (FF), 2 = Fine Gael (FG), 3 = Labour, 4 = Sinn Féin (SF)/Sinn Féin the Worker's Party (SFWP)/Democratic Left (DL), 6 = Independents, 16 = Other parties: this grouping consists of parties who contested elections on some occasions between 1948 and 1997, but not throughout the whole period. These parties include Clann na Talmhan, Clann na Poblachta, the Progressive Democrats (PDs), Independent Fianna Fáil (IFF) and other, smaller parties.

Constituency is urban(Y/N): Y for all Dublin constituencies except Dublin North and, pre-1969, Dublin County, Y for Dun Laoghaire and Y for Cork constituencies with "City", "Central" or "Borough" in their titles. N otherwise.

Constituency has three seats(Y/N): Engstrom suggested that the gender variable may operate differently in three-seater constituencies than in larger constituencies (Engstrom, 1987, p. 126). Hence this classification.

Political / Positional / Sex variables

Incumbent (Y/N): Y if candidate was a TD in the previous Dáil.

Family links (Y/N): Y if candidate's career began within two elections of a relative retiring from the constituency or, if Dublin or Cork, from the urban area.

Number of campaigns: treated as a continuous variable: a count of the number of contiguous elections fought by the candidate to date for this constituency. A gap of one election unfought was allowed, but elections fought prior to a larger gap were ignored. Campaign experience before 1948 was calculated from Gallagher (1993).

Alphabetical order: as on the ballot paper: 1 = first position on ballot paper, 2 = second position, and so on: treated as a continuous variable.

Age was not included in this model although, with the influx of new female candidates since the 1970s, the age profile of female candidates may have become younger than that of male candidates (Darcy, 1988, p. 73). However, Marsh suggests that age is significant only for incumbents; older candidates are, if anything, at a disadvantage (Marsh, 1987, p. 75, note, and Galligan, Laver and Carney, 1999, p. 118-122). Thus the possibly younger age profile of female candidates recently is unlikely to help explain the male advantage.

For the continuous variables, the square of the variable (the "quadratic effect") was also included in the model-building process. In practice, this often allows the regression to model the diminishing effect of a variable as that variable becomes large. For example, it might be posited that the difference in effect between one and four years' campaign experience in a candidate is greater than the difference between seven and ten years' experience — at some point, further campaign experience is of limited vote-getting value to a candidate. The quadratic campaign effect will allow the regression to reflect this. There is such a tapering-off of effect for both the alphabetical order and the campaign variables.

