

The Impacts of the Hearings of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill, and Brett Kavanaugh and
Christine Blasey Ford on Female Voting Behavior

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PO-400-Senior Thesis

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Abstract

The Senate Judiciary Committee hearings for Justice Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill occurred in 1991, following Hill's allegations of sexual harassment against Thomas. Similar hearings were conducted for Justice Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford in 2018, after Ford brought forward accusations of sexual assault against Kavanaugh. This study details the impacts these two cases had on female voting behavior in their subsequent elections.

Using an analysis of voting percentages and the statements of American female voters, it was found that, in both the elections of 1992 and 2018, women voted in higher percentages for Democratic candidates. Additionally, as a result of these hearings, women ran for seats in Congress in record-breaking numbers in both years. A sizeable majority of these women ran under the Democratic ticket. This data is relevant in predicting the success of each major party in elections if a case similar to the two addressed arises in the future.

Introduction

Different types of people vote in varying ways for a multitude of reasons. When an individual goes to the polls on voting day, there is never only one factor that impacts who they ultimately decide to vote for. Candidates must be able to identify these influences in order to adequately campaign to their many constituents and win a particular election. If they only recognize and campaign toward a few, but not all, potential factors, it is very likely that they will miss out on a large portion of votes that they may need to win the election. The demographics of constituents, on top of reasons why they vote for a candidate, are extremely significant in how someone votes. As a result of this, it is important to candidates, and therefore necessary to notice and study.

Since 1920 when the 19th amendment was ratified, when women were ultimately granted the right to vote in every state across the United States, how and why they vote became important not only to candidates but political scientists as well. The history of female voting behavior is extensive, considering how many years they have had the ability to cast a ballot, but absolutely vital; in part because of the larger number of American women over men, about 7 million more in total¹. Though female voting behavior can be seen and applied for the past 98 years in every state across the country, certain elections and their results are more significant than others, and were more impacted by female voters.

One meaningful event in US history was the Senate hearing of Clarence Thomas, as a result of the sexual harassment allegations by Anita Hill against him. This case brought the issue of sexual harassment and assault against women by men, especially those with power over them,

¹ “Total Population in the United States by Gender from 2010 to 2023 (in millions)*.” Statista.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/737923/us-population-by-gender/>. (Accessed January 3, 2019)

into the light and the prevalence of the American people. Following her testimony in 1991, this issue was seen as more of a problem than it previously had been². Prior to the hearings, the average person did not entirely understand what sexual harassment was. It was clear that it had been occurring in prevalence, especially with people of power, however it was very seldom ever talked about or addressed. As a result, Thomas's Senate hearings were unlike anything that had ever occurred in years past, thus making it difficult for the Senate Judiciary Committee to determine how they were supposed to act in terms of their questioning of Anita Hill. From this, after watching the hearings on television, many thought that the committee had handled the hearings poorly, and became very aware of the fact that the entire panel was comprised of white men. In a sense, this hearing brought about the perceived need for a wider variety of people in elected office, as well as issues and women's concerns that can still be seen and considered today.

In particular, the problem was visible in the Senate hearing of Brett Kavanaugh, which was thrown for a loop by Christine Blasey Ford, who instigated allegations of sexual assault during Kavanaugh's teenage years. Ford claimed that when she was 15, Kavanaugh 17, when both were in high school, he brought her into an upstairs room at a party and proceeded to assault her. Kavanaugh's hearings then raised the question of whether the assault actually happened, and whether or not something that allegedly happened over 35 years ago can disqualify someone for a position, such as but not limited to serving as a Supreme Court justice. As was the case with Anita Hill, some claimed that Ford was not treated properly during her testimony, allegations of

² Keneally, Meghan. "Meet Anita Hill, the First Woman to Upend a Supreme Court Confirmation with Misconduct Allegations." *ABC News*, September 26, 2018. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/meet-anita-hill-woman-upend-supreme-court-confirmation/story?id=57932008>. (Accessed January 3, 2019).

this were made, particularly in the case of the all-male Republican portion of the Senate Judiciary Committee³. Clearly, these two cases have notable similarities to one another in their context, as well as their effects on the citizens, particularly women, who were in observance.

These two investigations, predominantly as a result of their central focus around women and women's issues, influenced their subsequent elections; that of 1992 and the midterm election of 2018. This study will examine how these two hearings compare to one another, as well as how each impacted female voting behavior in both the 1992 and 2018 elections, if they did at all. Particularly in 1992 as a result of the Hill hearings, many women thought that there were not enough women in office. Following this, there are reports of an unprecedented number of women who both ran for office, and voted for female candidates, in 1992⁴. Once again, in 2018 women were upset again over the treatment of Ford during her testimony at the hands of the male Republican members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Logically then, it follows that women would have been less inclined to vote for candidates representing the party that this occurred under. Subsequently, this will be investigated at depth. Primarily, the study aims to establish how a great female catastrophe can impact how women vote. Not every woman would choose to run as many did in 1992, or vote for a female candidate after a hearing such as those of Anita Hill or Christine Blasey Ford, but I will argue that in these two instances, women were moved enough to vote in a particular way, on the side of the Democrats.

This study will also touch upon the other factors that could have impacted the patterns of female voting behavior, and the overall elections, in both 1992 and 2018. Though there is the

³ Gaudiano, Nicole. "Brett Kavanaugh: Senate Judiciary Committee Members to Watch." *USA Today*, September 26, 2018. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/09/26/brett-kavanaugh-senate-judiciary-committee-members-watch/1422267002/>. (Accessed January 22, 2019)

⁴ Paolino, Phillip. "Group-Salient Issues and Representation: Support for Women Candidates in the 1992 Senate Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 2 (May 1995): 294-313. Accessed January 18, 2019. JSTOR.

possibility that Hill and Ford's testimonies affected how women voted and the election results, this was not the only component worth noting in these elections. As in any election, there were various elements to be considered by voters, all having an impact on how an individual ultimately chose to vote. The additional factors in 1992 and 2018 differed for each year, and will be addressed and explained at length later in the study.

In performing this study, there comes the possibility of being able to predict what would be expected in the future if a case like this occurred again. It will be asserted that the Senate hearings of Thomas and Kavanaugh, as a result of the treatment of the women in question, impacted how women voted in the elections following. If this does turn out to be the case, it is likely that if something like this transpired again, a similar outcome would result in the ensuing election. This follows from the fact that women are more likely to identify as a Democrat than a Republican; 35% versus 26%, with 36% as independents, as of October 2018, less than a month following the hearings⁵.

Assuming there is truth in this, both parties would then be impacted in the next election, one positively and the other negatively, if a situation similar to these two were to happen again. If a case arose in which women's rights and issues were at stake, such as in these cases where sexual harassment and assault were being considered, in the future, it is likely the response by voters would be comparable to those of Hill and Ford. It would have been found that women were more likely to vote for Democratic candidates following the Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford hearings, which could reasonably result again if a similar situation emerged. Thus, like in these two cases, Republicans could lose votes, and potentially seats. This did occur

⁵ "Party Affiliation." *Gallup*, 2019. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/15370/party-affiliation.aspx>. (Accessed March 28, 2019)

following the 2018 midterms in which the Democrats gained 39 seats and took control of the House of Representatives (HOR), as well as many crucial governorships, where the Democrats gained 7, though the exact reasoning for this has not been addressed yet⁶. If control of the HOR and/or the Senate changed after an election, it is possible for policy to change as well.

Aforementioned, the Democrats gained control of the HOR after the 2018 midterm election. Subsequently, policy that comes out of the House would be more liberal. If the study finds that women were influenced to vote in a particular manner, increasingly for Democrats, policy could be impacted as a result of the possibility for the makeup of either, or both, chambers of Congress to be altered.

At the conclusion of the study, it was found that the Thomas/Hill and Kavanaugh/Ford cases did impact the voting behaviors of American women. In the subsequent elections following these hearings, women's behaviors changed. Women, turned out in greater numbers to vote for Democratic candidates than previously, and records were broken in the number of women who chose to run for seats in Congress. These effects can be traced back to the attitudes felt by women as a result of these hearings.

Literature Review

Gender and Voting Behavior

The voting behavior of women has changed astronomically over the course of history. The voter turnout of women was low in the elections right after they received the right to vote, but it has steadily increased to the point where women now turn out in higher percentages than

⁶ "US Midterms 2018 Live Results." *The Guardian*, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2018/nov/06/midterm-elections-2018-live-results-latest-winners-and-seats>. (Accessed January 22, 2019)

men to cast a ballot⁷. More specifically, in every election since 1964, women have voted in higher numbers than men. Alternatively, they have, however, voted in higher rates than men since 1980⁸. More recently, in the last presidential election of 2016, 63.3% of eligible women voted, compared to only 59.3% of eligible men⁹. This makes the choices they make at the ballot box every November even more crucial. Though not every woman will vote the same way, the fact that many, and more than men, frequently turn out to vote is significant. The voting choices of women can influence elections, and as a result cannot be ignored.

On top of the fact that women previously voted in lower numbers than men, in the beginning, they also voted predominantly for Republicans. For example, in 1972, only 38% of women voted for the Democratic candidate available to them¹⁰. Over time, however, this has changed to the point where now their sentiments seem to have shifted and they vote in greater numbers for Democrats. This can be attributed to the fact that this party has been significantly more supportive and receptive to gender-based issues than the other major party, seeing as Democrats “are committed to ensuring full equality for women. Democrats will fight to end gender discrimination in areas of education, employment, health care, or any other sphere. We will combat biases across economic, political, and social life that hold women back and limit their opportunities”¹¹. This began to change in force in 1983, where 43% of women who voted cast their ballot for a Democratic candidate. However, only 21% of women voted for a

⁷ Dittmar, Kelly. “The Gender Gap in Voting: Setting the Record Straight.” *Center for the American Woman and Politics*, July 3, 2018. <https://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/footnotes/gender-gap-voting-setting-record-straight>. (Accessed February 13, 2019)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Chaturvedi, Richa. “A Closer Look at the Gender Gap in Presidential Voting.” *Pew Research Center*, July 28, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/28/a-closer-look-at-the-gender-gap-in-presidential-voting/>. (Accessed February 14, 2019)

¹¹ “Women.” *Democrats*. <https://democrats.org/people/women/>. (Accessed February 14, 2019)

Republican candidate¹². Since this point, women's support has stayed with the Democrats more so than the Republicans. Beginning in 1996, at least have 50% of women have voted for the Democratic presidential candidate¹³. This statistic has continued in every presidential election since. If this were to be compared to the voting behavior of men in presidential elections, it would be found that "on average women have been 8 percentage points more likely than men to back the Democratic candidate in elections since 1980"¹⁴. Therefore, the number of women that do choose to vote for Democratic candidates is significant, considering the large difference between them and their male counterparts. To outline this even further, in 2014, one of the most recent midterm elections, a total of 58% of men voted for the Republican candidate for the House of Representatives in their district, compared to only 48% of women who did the same¹⁵. This means that a majority of men voted for the Republican, as pattern holds, while a majority of women voted for the Democrat.

Though the rates in which women vote and the candidates they vote for is significant, it is also important to note the reasons for this that are frequently cited by women nearly every election cycle. For one, "in general, women are less likely than men to evaluate favorably the performance of Republican presidents, and women are more likely than men to evaluate favorably the job performance of Democratic presidents"¹⁶. According to this then, women would be more likely to vote for a Democratic candidate for president. This would likely hold for Congressional candidates as well. On top of this, women are more likely than men to say that the Democratic candidate understands the needs of people like them. This was evident in 2012 and

¹² "The Gender Gap." *Center for the American Woman and Politics*, June 2014.

<https://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/ggprtyid.pdf>. (Accessed February 13, 2019).

¹³ Chaturvedi, Richa. *A Closer Look*.

¹⁴ Chaturvedi, Richa. *A Closer Look*, 1.

¹⁵ Dittmar, Kelly. *The Gender Gap*.

¹⁶ *The Gender Gap*, 16.

2016 when Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton, respectively, were running for president on the Democratic ticket. 63% of women agreed that Obama better understood their needs, compared to only 53% of men who said the same. This was similar in 2016, where 53% of women agreed with the statement in terms of Clinton, and only 42% of men¹⁷. This could be the result of the Democratic party's history of voicing concerns about and taking action to tackle gender-based issues; these can include sexual harassment and assault, and abortion, among others. It is also possible that women simply want to see another woman in office representing them. A woman who felt this way would, in turn, likely end up voting for a Democrat considering that many women who are elected to Congress are Democrats¹⁸. However, if a woman has the option to vote for a male Democratic candidate or a female Republican candidate, they are still more likely to vote for the Democrat. This occurred in Connecticut's Senate race in 2010 where 63% of women voted for Democrat Richard Blumenthal, and only 32% of women voted for Republican Linda McMahon¹⁹. Most likely, this relates to the differences in the two major parties' attitudes towards women's issues. Overall, the Democratic party has been more involved with advancing women's issues than the Republican party. As a result, even if a candidate is a woman, a female voter might be more inclined to vote for a male Democrat as his party has historically done more to the benefit of women.

In addition, education level can also have an impact on how women generally choose to cast their ballot. White college-educated women vote in a majority for the Democratic party. The

¹⁷ Chaturvedi, Richa. A Closer Look.

¹⁸ Lizotte, Mary-Kate. "Gender Differences in American Political Behavior." *Scholar Strategy Network*, November 1, 2017. <https://scholars.org/brief/gender-differences-american-political-behavior>. (Accessed February 14, 2019).

¹⁹ "Women Voters Less Likely Than Men to Support Republican Women Candidates: Gender Gap Remains a Force in Election 2010." *Center for the American Woman and Politics*, October 25, 2010. https://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/pressrelease_10-25-10.pdf. (Accessed February 13, 2019)

number of white college-educated women who voted for a Democratic candidate has remained above 50% since 2008, compared to white non-college women whose votes for Democrats has remained below 50% during the same time period. This number was at its lowest in 2010 when only 38% of white non-college women voted for a Democratic candidate. The education level of a women, particularly in the case of white women, is significant in whether she will cast a ballot for a Democratic or a Republican candidate²⁰.

Voting for Democrats, however, has not always held true for all women equally. Historically, women of color have always, overwhelmingly, supported the Democratic party; over 80% in every election since 1994²¹. White women though, have not. Generally, the Republican party gets slightly more support from white women than the Democratic party does, but this split between the two parties is normally very close.²² This fact was particularly significant in the midterm elections of 2018. This then begs the question of why women would vote for the Republican party. The simplest answer is that married white women vote for Republicans with their husbands for status and material gain. Since the United States was built on white supremacy with white men on the top holding power, white women have benefitted through their association with white men. In general, the Republican party's stance on economic policies allows these white women's husbands to be successful financially, which in turn advantages them and their status²³. Though this may not be universal, this is one significant factor in a woman's vote for the Republican party.

²⁰ Friedersdof, Conor. "Why Have White Women so Often Voted for Republicans?" *The Atlantic*, November 26, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/white-women-gop/576586/>. (Accessed February 14, 2019)

²¹ "1. Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups." *Pew Research Center*, March 20, 2018. <http://www.people-press.org/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/>. (Accessed February 27, 2019)

²² Friedersdof, Conor. Why Have White Women.

²³ Friedersdof, Conor. Why Have White Women.

Over time, women's support of and sentiment toward the two parties has shifted, following the support the Democratic party has given to women's issues over the Republican party. They have turned out in increasingly larger numbers year after year to the point where they have ultimately surpassed the voting percentages of men. As a result of the large number of women who vote and their changing alliances, they are a significant voting bloc that warrants attention and consideration.

The Hearings and Impact of Anita Hill

Female voting behavior and the factors that influence each individual woman's ultimate choice at the ballot box is extensive. Certain factors are, however, more impactful in different elections. The same influences may not be front and center in every election, and the chances that this would happen are exceedingly low. More often than not, a particular issue will be prevalent for a few election cycles at a maximum, then will drop off in importance, likely because it was addressed, by Congress or possibly in the courts, and therefore resolved. This holds true in terms of concerns that affect women and their votes.

Yet, there are some issues that involve women that not only have been significant in more than one election, but have influenced the votes of women. These elections, and the effect these issues have had on women and their voting behavior, have been studied since it became possible in 1920 through most recently in the midterms of 2018.

Logically, the issues that would affect women and how they vote most drastically would be those that have a direct, or close to, impact on them. One of these such issues is sexual harassment. Though an exact definition of this problem has been widely debated in the United States for decades, the United States first tried to define sexual harassment in 1986 in the Supreme Court case, *Meritor Savings Bank, FSB v. Vinson*. In this case, the court unanimously

decided that an act of sexual harassment would be in violation of the Civil Rights Act “by proving that discrimination based on sex has created a hostile or abusive work environment”²⁴. The issue of sexual harassment was raised as a major concern to the American public, and actually paid attention to, during the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings for Clarence Thomas following his nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States. In the midst of the confirmation process, Anita Hill, who was a former assistant to Thomas in 1981 when he was the head of the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights and following when he was named the chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission, accused Thomas of sexually harassing her at work²⁵. At the time of these hearings, the definition of sexual harassment provided by the Supreme Court was the only description of this issue that the Senate Judiciary Committee and the American people had to work with, as this was the first time that this problem had really been addressed in the United States²⁶. It was not that this was a new phenomenon when Thomas’s hearings began in 1991: Sexual harassment had been occurring for years, especially in areas of power, one of which being the federal government. For instance, Wanda Baucus, the wife of former Senator Max Baucus, said during the Thomas/Hill hearings that she had been sexually harassed on multiple occasions at Senate functions, and made calls to current senators in light of this during the hearings to try and help them better understand what sexual harassment was²⁷.

²⁴ “Meritor Savings Bank, FSB v. Vinson.” *Oyez*. <https://oyez.org/cases/1985/84-1979>. (Accessed January 25, 2019)

²⁵ “Anita Hill.” *Contemporary Black Biography* 65, (July 30, 2008): Accessed January 3, 2019. Biography in Context.

²⁶ Fassin, Eric. “Sexual Events: from Clarence Thomas to Monica Lewinsky.” *A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (2002): 127-158. Accessed January 8, 2019. <https://muse-jhu-edu.sacredheart.idm.oclc.org/article/9638>.

²⁷ Davis, Adrienne, and Stephanie M. Wildman. “The Legacy of Doubt: Treatment of Sex and Race in the Hill-Thomas Hearings.” *Southern California Law Review* 65, no. 3 (March 1992): 1376-1392. Accessed January 18, 2019. https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/scal65&id=1409&men_tab=srchresults.

Especially because the issue of sexual harassment was not very prevalent at the time of Hill's allegations against Thomas and their subsequent testimonies before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Hill received a lot of backlash for speaking out against him. At various times during and after the hearings, a large majority of the country's sentiments were against Hill. In a New York Times/CBS poll, 58 percent of Americans believed Thomas, with only 24 percent finding Hill's story to be more credible, the remaining 18 percent were still undecided on which account they found to be truthful²⁸. Thus, it follows that Hill was reluctant to come forward with her allegations, the story about Thomas's alleged sexual harassment originally having been leaked²⁹. In 2016, Hill herself even said that if someone had been a victim of Thomas's advances and went to her asking her advice on whether to come forward, she would advise them not to, as the woman is frequently blamed and demonized. The point Hill made in this interview was reasserted by UCLA Law Professor, Kimberly Crenshaw, who notes that "in both rape and sexual harassment cases, the inquiry tends to focus more on the women's conduct and character rather than on the conduct and character of the defendant"³⁰. Instead of concentrating on how the man behaved, instead, women are blamed for how they were dressed, how they acted, when they came forward about what happened to them, etc.³¹ This made Hill's position even more difficult, on top of the fact that this issue was not widely focused on at the time and many, including the senators on the Judiciary Committee at the time, did not know how to handle it or the questioning of Hill and Thomas. Though this issue faced during the hearing procedure was relatively widespread, it had more of an impact for some of the Judiciary Committee members

²⁸ Lawrence, Jennifer. "A Rose by Any Other Name Might Smell as Sweet, but it Wouldn't Come in Dozens on Valentine's Day: How Sexual Harassment Got its Name." *Journal of American Culture* 19, (1996): 15-23. Accessed January 3, 2019. Biography Reference Bank.

²⁹ Anita Hill.

³⁰ Fallon, Kevin. "Kerry Washington: Why Anita Hill Matters Now More Than Ever." *The Daily Beast* (April 13, 2016): 408. Accessed January 8, 2019. Opposing Viewpoints in Context.

³¹ Lawrence, Jennifer. A Rose by Any, 15-23.

over others. One instance in particular saw former Senator Alan Simpson “distinguish sexual harassment from ‘real harassment’”³². Clearly from Simpson’s comment, Hill’s allegations were not being taken seriously, not even by the senators in charge of conducting the hearing.

However, Simpson’s sentiment for the situation was not universal across the entire committee. The chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee at the time, former Senator Joe Biden, better understood the situation at hand, and in one of his first comments addressed: “Some have asked, ‘how could you have the United States vote on Judge Thomas’s nomination and leave senators in the dark about Professor Hill’s charges?’... I answer: ‘How could you expect us to have forced Professor Hill, against her will, into the blinding light which you see today?’”³³ Senator Biden recognized that Hill did not want to be in the position she was in, but felt an obligation to explain what had, in her opinion, transpired a decade prior after it had first been brought to the attention of Democratic Senate Judiciary Committee staffers³⁴. If one of the committee members, and the chairman no less, could see Hill’s position, it is clear that not everyone at the time was against her and in disbelief about her allegations.

By the end of the questioning of both Thomas and Hill, no one could say for certain who was telling the truth, leaving the country to have to accept the fact that nobody except for the two of them would ever know what truly happened between them. Regardless of this, Thomas was confirmed to the Supreme Court by the United States Senate on October 15, 1991 by a 52-48 margin. At the time, this was the closest confirmation of any justice nominated to the U.S.

³²Davis, Adrienne, and Stephanie M. Wildman. *The Legacy of Doubt*, 1389.

³³Lawrence, Jennifer. *A Rose by Any*, 15.

³⁴Totenberg, Nina. “A Timeline of Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill Controversy As Kavanaugh to Face Accuser.” *NPR*, September 23, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2018/09/23/650138049/a-timeline-of-clarence-thomas-anita-hill-controversy-as-kavanaugh-to-face-accuse>. (Accessed January 27, 2019)

Supreme Court³⁵. Yet, it wasn't the perceived guilt or innocence of Thomas, or even the vote to confirm him to the court, that really mattered at the conclusion of the hearings, in the grand scheme of things. The real significance of this case came in the impact it had on the country, and women, in particular.

The next major election to occur after Thomas's confirmation was the presidential election of 1992. This year, 1992, was termed the 'Year of the Woman' by various different press and feminist organizations around the country. These outlets claimed that the term meant a variety of different things, all relating to women in the election and women's issues overall. It referred to the idea that women were energized for the election as a result of the Thomas/Hill hearings and ready to make a change in their representation, that women overall would get more involved as a result of the events preceding it, and that gender and issues relating to it would be significant in campaigns³⁶. History though, would eventually see this term refer to the unprecedented number of female candidates, and women elected, for Congress. In some instances, this was even referred to as the 'Anita Hill effect'³⁷. Up until 1992, it was almost unheard of for a woman to serve in Congress. Before these elections, there were only two female Senators, with none before 1979. In the House of Representatives, the numbers shifted between 5 and 6 percent³⁸. Before the hearings, this fact was not really a concern or even addressed. However, the Thomas hearings brought the lack of women in Congress into the light. These hearings were televised, which was especially significant to this point. Women around the

³⁵ "Supreme Court Nominations: Present-1789." *United States Senate*.

<https://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/reference/nominations/Nominations.htm>. (Accessed January 27, 2019)

³⁶ Sapiro, Virginia, and Pamela Johnston Conover. "The Variable Gender Basis of Electoral Politics: Gender and Context in the 1992 US Election." *British Journal of Political Science* 27, no. 4 (October 1997): 497-523. Accessed January 16, 2019. JSTOR.

³⁷ Fassin, Eric. Sexual Events: from Clarence Thomas, 127-158.

³⁸ Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Ester R. Fuchs. "The Year of the Woman? Candidates, Voters, and the 1992 Elections." *Political Science Quarterly* 108, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 26-36. Accessed January 18, 2019. doi:10.2307/2152484.

country were able to see the underrepresentation of women in the Senate through their own eyes as a committee of only men arguably mishandled the questioning of Anita Hill about her sexual assault allegations, then voted to confirm the accused to the Supreme Court. This brought up concerns about whether or not issues pertinent to women were, or even could, receiving enough attention by the men in power³⁹. Though there were multiple issues women had an interest in, as connected to the Hill allegations, sexual harassment was one. Though it was largely ignored before the hearings, women could see the prevalence of sexual harassment in their own lives, and the lives of millions of other women, and Anita Hill's testimony reminded them of their own experiences, and the fact that men simply do not understand the situation women feel themselves to be in as a result⁴⁰. Since women did not think that men would adequately be able to represent them and issues applicable to them, more women than in any election previously decided to run for office.

One of the most significant aspects of the aftermath of the Thomas/Hill hearings was the fact that more female candidates than usual decided to run for office. It signified the fact that these hearings did have an impact on the American people, and specifically women. However, these hearings did not only affect the women that ran for office in 1992; it impacted the average voter as well. In races where a female candidate was running, women in that district or state, depending on whether the woman was campaigning for a seat in the House of Representatives or the Senate, were more involved. In this context, 'involvement' refers to actually going out and voting for a candidate, as well as engaging with the media for election coverage. In these

³⁹ Paolino, Phillip. Group-Salient Issues and Representation.

⁴⁰ Kaplan, David A. "Does Kavanaugh-Ford Hearings Show Progress Has Been Made Since Anita Hill? Here's Newsweek's 1991 Cover Story; Would Social Media Have Shifted Sentiment in 1991?" *Newsweek* (October 19, 2018): Accessed January 16, 2019. Opposing Viewpoints in Context.

instances, men and women were equally politically involved. Interestingly though, in all-male contests, as compared to a mixed contest with one male and one female candidate, men were more politically-active⁴¹. However, a woman was not always available to vote for. In areas where a woman was not running for office and therefore a male candidate had to be selected, women were more likely to vote for the Democrat over the Republican. This was even more clear in Senate races as “attitudes toward the Hill-Thomas hearings had a large effect upon the probability of voting for a Democratic Senate candidate”. This was because if a someone thought that sexual harassment in the workplace was a serious problem, they would be more likely to vote for a Democrat to represent them in the Senate, predominantly because the Democratic party tends to be more concerned with women’s issues⁴².

Though the aforementioned Senate Judiciary Committee hearing was important in the events of the 1992 election, there were other factors involved as well. Though, of course, there were many, as in any election, some can be picked out as being more critical than others. More than any other additional issue in this election, besides the Thomas/Hill hearings, the most significant was abortion. With the hearings came talk of women’s issues, one of these being the idea of a woman having a right to an abortion. The right to an abortion was first federally protected in the United States in 1973 when the US Supreme Court ruled that “a woman’s right to an abortion fell within the right to privacy protected by the Fourteenth Amendment”⁴³. Following this ruling, debates over whether or not abortion was right, and should be protected by the Constitution, surfaced. Even Thomas’s nomination to the Supreme Court had roots in the abortion issue. Since 1973, Republicans have been trying to overturn the Court’s ruling, and had

⁴¹ Sapiro, Virginia, and Pamela Johnston Conover. *The Variable Gender Basis*, 497-523.

⁴² Paolino, Phillip. *Group-Salient Issues and Representation*, 300.

⁴³ “Roe v. Wade.” *Oyez*. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1971/70-18>.

hoped that they would be successful by adding a conservative justice like Thomas⁴⁴. As a result of this, many candidates added their support or rejection of abortion to their campaign platform in an attempt to win over potential voters, since it was such a prominent issue at the time. In this election, many Democratic nominees were voicing support for Anita Hill along with approval of abortion in order to show a commitment to women's rights and the acknowledgement of gender-related issues. This was done particularly to win support from women, and the more ideological of Democratic voters for success in the primary⁴⁵.

The importance of abortion in the 1992 election was voiced and agreed upon by others as well. In addition to the Thomas/Hill hearings, whether or not a certain candidate either supported or opposed abortion could dictate how someone voted⁴⁶. The abortion issue also specifically impacted women, their attitudes toward the potential candidates, and who they cast a ballot for in the end. More specifically, "abortion attitudes also had a noticeable impact on emotional reactions towards the candidates: pro-choice attitudes stimulated positive reactions to Clinton and negative reactions to Bush among women in particular". Based on Sapiro and Conover's findings it is clear that how a woman viewed abortion impacted their perspective on not only congressional candidates, as was previously discussed, but the presidential candidates as well⁴⁷. How an individual views a candidate, and in this instance women, will impact who that person chooses to vote for, based on which candidate they had a positive versus negative reception of. Following this, abortion attitudes could have had an impact on Clinton's victory in the presidential contest. There was a similar pattern in terms of women and abortion attitudes in

⁴⁴ Fassin, Eric. *Sexual Events: from Clarence Thomas*, 127-158.

⁴⁵ McGurn, William. "The Year of the Woman." *National Review* 44, no. 13 (July 6, 1992): 21. Accessed January 8, 2019. *Global Issues in Context*.

⁴⁶ Sapiro, Virginia, and Pamela Johnston Conover. *The Variable Gender Basis*, 497-523.

⁴⁷ Sapiro, Virginia, and Pamela Johnston Conover. *The Variable Gender Basis*, 511.

congressional elections. It was found that female congressional candidates, more so than their male counterparts, were in support of abortion rights⁴⁸. This might have been exacerbated by the fact that women are more likely to run as Democrats than Republicans⁴⁹.

Abortion was a very significant factor in the 1992 presidential election. However, its prevalence can be explained by the Anita Hill case. The controversy of Thomas and Hill brought women and gender-based issues to the forefront of the election, one of these being abortion, the other sexual harassment directly. If it had not been for the Thomas/Hill case, abortion itself would not have been as impactful in the election as it was. After all, one of the main motivators for Bush to nominate Thomas to the Supreme Court in the first place was overturning *Roe v. Wade*⁵⁰. These two factors were intertwined with one another, and the Thomas/Hill hearings propelled the significance of abortion to this election forward. As a result, the dispute between Thomas and Hill was the most important issue in the 1992 election, and most aggressively impacted the voting choices of women.

The Hearings and Impact of Christine Blasey Ford

After the hearings of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill and the 1992 elections, sexual harassment and gender-issues were still important, but they faded in significance slightly as years passed and the allegations became no more than a recent memory for the American public. However, this changed when Christine Blasey Ford accused then Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, of sexual assault in September of 2018. This allegation brought the issue of sexual harassment and other gender-based issues to heightened importance again, only months before the 2018 midterm election. As compared to the Thomas/Hill hearings, there was more

⁴⁸ Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Ester R. Fuchs. "The Year of the Woman, 26-36.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Fassin, Eric. *Sexual Events: from Clarence Thomas*, 127-158.

information and knowledge about sexual assault available to both the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the American public, seeing as more exposure had been given to this issue in the interim. One of the best descriptions that was available to the committee at the time of the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings was given by the United States Department of Justice. It distinguished that “sexual assault means any nonconsensual act proscribed by Federal, tribal, or State law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent.”⁵¹ This definition is much more extensive than the one provided by the United Supreme Court in 1986 a few years before the Thomas/Hill hearings. As a result of this, there was a lot more information about sexual assault that the Judiciary Committee could make use of, and ideally better prepare for the questioning of Ford and Kavanaugh. Succeeding Ford’s claims, two other women came forward with accusations against Kavanaugh from his college years after Ford. Kavanaugh denied all of the allegations, the White House standing by his rejection, saying that the allegations were ridiculous and never happened⁵². In essence, he claimed that Ford and the other women were lying in an attempt to unsubstantially destroy his career and reputation. Yet, after the Senate Judiciary Committee was made aware of the assertions, a call for an FBI investigation was made in an attempt to determine if Ford was telling the truth about the alleged incident. The retired FBI agent, Jerry Hanafin, who conducted a polygraph examination on Ford in August, said that the results showed “no deception indicated”, which essentially meant “she was being truthful”⁵³. However, he was not called to speak before to the FBI during their investigation, just as many suggested witnesses were not, who could have potentially damaged the credibility of

⁵¹ Sexual Assault.

⁵² Hauser, Christine. “The Women Who Have Accused Brett Kavanaugh.” *The New York Times*, September 26, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/us/politics/brett-kavanaugh-accusers-women.html>. (Accessed January 23, 2019).

⁵³ as cited in Hauser, Christine. The Women Who Have.

Kavanaugh's testimony⁵⁴. This led to claims by segments of the Senate, American public, and Ford's attorney's that the investigation was not being conducted properly.

Similar to Anita Hill, Christine Blasey Ford was also a recipient of retaliation from opponents after coming forward against now Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. It seemed that nothing had really changed since the Hill hearings, seeing as the woman who had spoken up was hated more than the accused, received death threats and condemnation, and was used as a pawn by the political parties⁵⁵. Not only was Ford hated and threatened, but she simply was not believed, not even by some women. There was one group of women in particular that supported Kavanaugh after hearing of Ford's allegations, the 'conservative anti-feminists'. These women #StandWithBrett, and believed that Ford was lying about Kavanaugh having been the one who assaulted her. Some even claimed that even if better support was found that Kavanaugh really had sexually assaulted Ford, they still would have supported him and his confirmation to the Supreme Court. They believed he was honorable, and denounced the hearings altogether⁵⁶.

However, though this group of female Kavanaugh supporters was the most extreme, they were not the only ones that came to his side following the allegations during the Senate hearings. This idea could be expanded in looking at women's demographics specifically, and the support they had for Kavanaugh based on this. It was found that an overwhelming majority of minority female voters supported Ford over Kavanaugh, but white women were split in their support. More specifically, only 46 percent of white women were in support of Ford, while 43 percent

⁵⁴ Watkins, Eli, and MJ Lee. "Christine Blasey Ford Attorneys: Kavanaugh Investigation a 'Stain' on the FBI." *CNN Politics*, October 4, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/04/politics/christine-blasey-ford-fbi-wray/index.html>. (Accessed January 31, 2019)

⁵⁵ Kaplan, David A. Does Kavanaugh-Ford Hearings, 1120L.

⁵⁶ Nickerson, Michelle, and Emily S. Johnson. "Women are Deeply Divided on Brett Kavanaugh. Here's Why." *The Washington Post*, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2018/10/01/women-are-deeply-divided-brett-kavanaugh-heres-why/?utm_term=.f21af4cafb63. (Accessed January 19, 2019)

were on Kavanaugh's side, the other 11 percent were not sure who to believe⁵⁷. Overall though, more women were in support of Ford than against her. 55% of women oppose Kavanaugh's confirmation versus only 37% that support it, the remaining portion still undecided one way or another⁵⁸. This split would have played a role in the midterm elections that followed in November. However, though some women were against Ford, there were still many that believed and supported her, some even going as far to voice their support, or protest Kavanaugh's confirmation at the Senate⁵⁹.

Though it wasn't the only significant factor, the Kavanaugh/Hill hearings had an impact in the 2018 midterm elections. As occurred after the Hill allegations, more women than ever before decided to run for office. This was in part because of the so-called 'Kavanaugh effect'. It gave women a reason to want to run, and try to make a change in the makeup of Congress⁶⁰. The fact that the hearings were televised allowed women to see that, still, all of the Republican Senators Ford had to testify to were men⁶¹. The Republicans even hired an experienced, female sex crimes prosecutor to question Ford, as they wanted a woman to do this instead of themselves, seeing as they were men⁶². This showed women that even in the two decades since Hill's testimony, not much had changed in terms of how sexual violence is handled in America. The

⁵⁷ Graves, Lucia. "Women Aren't a Monolith – and the White Women Supporting Kavanaugh Prove It." *The Guardian*, October 6, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/06/women-arent-a-monolith-and-the-white-women-supporting-kavanaugh-prove-it>. (Accessed January 19, 2019)

⁵⁸ Mangan, Dan. "Nearly Half of American Voters Oppose Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court Nomination After Sex Claims Against Trump Pick, New Poll Says." *CNBC*, October 1, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/01/nearly-half-of-american-voters-oppose-brett-kavanaugh-nomination-poll.html>. (Accessed February 7, 2019)

⁵⁹ Rhor, Monica. "Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court Confirmation Hearing Shows Divide Between Men, Women." *USA Today*, September 29, 2018. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/09/28/brett-kavanaugh-christine-blasey-ford-assault-claim-gender-divide/1459557002/>. (Accessed January 19, 2019).

⁶⁰ Page, Susan, and Cat Hofacker. "There is a 'Kavanaugh Effect', and it Boosts Democrats More Than GOP in Midterms." *USA Today*, October 24, 2018. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2018/10/24/brett-kavanaugh-effect-democrats-republicans-midterms-usa-today-suffolk-poll/1739876002/>. (Accessed January 24, 2019)

⁶¹ Kaplan, David A. Does Kavanaugh-Ford Hearings, 1120L.

⁶² Gaudiano, Nicole. Brett Kavanaugh: Senate Judiciary.

women that chose to run for office would have been able to see the lack of empathy granted to Ford by the male Senators, and decided to take it upon themselves to campaign and change this. Ideally, by adding more women to Congress, gender-based issues and women's concerns would receive more attention and support⁶³. Not only did the effects of the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings spur many women to run for election, but it may have helped their chances at winning as well. The desire of many women to increase their representation in Congress because of the presentation of the hearings and its results, could have aided female candidates in receiving the votes they needed to win their congressional races⁶⁴. In addition to more women choosing to run in the 2018 midterm elections than any previously, this election cycle also saw a change in how women elected to cast their ballots. This year in particular, a shift was seen in how some women chose to vote. The most significant was of white college-educated women, who, for the first time, voted in a majority for the Democratic party⁶⁵. This was consistent for both undergraduate and post-grad white female voters. Though it is too early to say, it is possible that this trend will continue in other elections, which would mean that the issues of this election could have created a permanent re-alignment of this group from the Republicans to the Democrats⁶⁶; their support for Democratic candidates having increased by approximately 8 percentage points since 2016⁶⁷. This fits with the recent trend that women are more likely to register and refer to themselves as

⁶³ Pfaff, Leslie G. "What's Changed from Anita Hill to Christine Blasey Ford." *Rutgers Today*, September 25, 2018. <https://news.rutgers.edu/what%E2%80%99s-changed-anita-hill-christine-blasey-ford/20180924#.XEH3Cs9KhsN>. (Accessed January 18, 2019)

⁶⁴ Page, Susan, and Cat Hofacker. There is a 'Kavanaugh Effect'.

⁶⁵ Page, Susan, and Cat Hofacker. There is a 'Kavanaugh Effect'.

⁶⁶ Graves, Lucia. Women Aren't a Monolith.

⁶⁷ Schaffner, Brian F. "These 5 Charts Explain Who Voted How in the 2018 Midterm Election." *The Washington Post*, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/11/10/these-5-charts-explain-who-voted-how-in-the-2018-midterm-election/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.1de4973840ea. (Accessed January 16, 2019)

Democrats⁶⁸. Along these same lines, young people, including both males and females, which encompasses the age range of 18-29, also voted strongly for the Democratic party⁶⁹. As a result of the Kavanaugh hearings, voters on both sides of the aisle were energized and excited for the prospects of the midterm election and the chance to redistribute power in Congress. This being said, though a USA Today/Suffolk University poll suggests that both Democrats and Republicans felt this pull to vote after Kavanaugh's confirmation, voters have increasingly reported that it has encouraged them to vote for Democrats; 35% more likely to vote for the Democrats versus 27% for the Republicans, the remaining 37% said Kavanaugh would not influence their vote. Thus, though both the Democrats and the Republicans were angered over the proceedings and results of the Kavanaugh/Ford investigation, it created more action for the Democratic party, especially on gender lines. By 12%, women were more likely to vote for a Democratic candidate than a Republican as a result of the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings⁷⁰. This was in large part the result of women, and their animosity for a man who had been accused of sexual assault and still been confirmed to the Supreme Court, and the people who put him there⁷¹.

Though the number of women in all categories who voted for the Democratic party for House candidates was high, the difference was more significant for some groups over others. More specifically, the 2018 midterms saw a massive increase in the number of white college-educated women who cast votes for Democrats rather than Republicans. This is particularly

⁶⁸ Harwood, John. "The 'Gender Dividend' in the Post-Kavanaugh Midterm Elections." *CNBC*, October 9, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/10/09/the-gender-dividend-in-the-post-kavanaugh-midterm-elections.html>. (Accessed January 24, 2019)

⁶⁹ "How We Voted in the 2018 Midterms." *The Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/graphics/election-2018-votecast-poll/>. (Accessed January 24, 2019)

⁷⁰ Page, Susan, and Cat Hofacker. There is a 'Kavanaugh Effect'.

⁷¹ Brownstein, Ronald. "Brett Kavanaugh Could Make the Midterms a Landmark Election for Women." *The Atlantic*, September 20, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/09/brett-kavanaugh-t-rump-midterms-women-of-color/570727/>. (Accessed January 25, 2019)

important considering the racial differences in female party affiliation. According to Figure 1 (see appendix A), which shows the percent of party affiliation for each major party by racial group from 1994 to 2017, black women have, historically, been staunch supporters of the Democratic party. In 1994, 83% of black women identified as Democrats. In the years from 1994 to 2017, this percentage never dropped, to where it was most recently recorded in 2017 at 87%⁷². Clearly, the vote of black women is solidly on the side of the Democrats, as it is expected to remain. This pattern, however, is not consistent for white women voters. Prior to 2018, white women did not vote overwhelmingly for Democratic candidates. Aforementioned, support for the Democrats increased from women to 60%. The alterations in voting behavior to create this shift was not consistent for all groups of female voters though. The main group of women that caused this dramatic leaning to the Democratic party in the election of 2018 was college-educated white women. Though college-educated women have had strong support for Democrats for the past 10 years, 56% voted for Democratic House candidates at its lowest in this time period in 2010, the increase in 2018 was still significant and had a major impact in the results of the election. Based on Figure 2 (see appendix A), which charts the percent of white college and non-college educated women and men from 2008 to 2018, the jump in 2018 is worth noting. In the midterm election of 2018, approximately 67% of white college-educated women voted for a Democrat for the U.S. House of Representatives⁷³. This is an 11-point increase from the lowest percentage of votes in 2010. This is a substantial swing, and, also significant, is a larger base of support than from women in general in 2018, considering that fact that only 60% of women overall voted for Democratic House candidates.

⁷² 1. Trends in Party Affiliation.

⁷³ Schaffner, Brian F. These 5 Charts Explain.

Kavanaugh, however, was not the only aspect of this election that caused the results that were seen in November. One of the most important aspects of the 2018 midterms was President Donald Trump. Since his candidacy was announced for the presidency, and his subsequent victory in 2016, Americans have been clinging to the president with undying support, and others rejecting him and all that he stands for with everything in their power. This divide manifested itself in the 2018 election, and played a major role in convincing more eligible voters in 50 years to cast a ballot in a midterm election; the 47% of eligible voters who voted in November was the highest since 1966 when 49% voted. This is extremely significant seeing as the previous two midterm elections, 2010 and 2014, only saw turnouts of 41% and 36.7%, respectively⁷⁴. The fact that the voter turnout was so much higher than in recent years shows how truly important this election was. Donald Trump was one of the main factors to this. Though there were many components to this election and how an individual would end up voting, many voters saw the midterms as a referendum of the sitting president⁷⁵. For many, though Donald Trump's name was not on the ballot, they were essentially giving an approval or rejection of him and what he had done thus far in his presidency. This is common in midterm elections; the president's party generally loses seats in Congress midway through his presidency as a punishment from voters, but this election was more dramatic than others. A majority, a total of 60%, of voters saw their

⁷⁴ Domonoske, Camila. "A Boatload of Ballots: Midterm Voter Turnout Hit 50-year High." *NPR*, November 8, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/08/665197690/a-boatload-of-ballots-midterm-voter-turnout-hit-50-year-high>. (Accessed February 2, 2019)

⁷⁵ Hayes, Christal. "Election Day 2018 is Here. Here's What You Need to Know Before You Cast Your Midterm Ballot." *USA Today*, November 4, 2018.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/11/04/midterm-election-whats-stake-where-vote-poll-hours-rules-locations-results/1826145002/>. (Accessed January 24, 2019)
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/11/04/midterm-election-whats-stake-where-vote-poll-hours-rules-locations-results/1826145002/>. (Accessed January 24, 2019)

vote as either a vote for or against President Donald Trump⁷⁶. This is different from voters simply wanting to punish or support the president's party; they wanted to punish or support the president himself. A phenomenon such as this is not seen in the average midterm election, and goes to show how divisive of a president is currently sitting in office. The number of voters who viewed their vote as a check of the president was not restricted to one party over the other. Both Democratic and Republican voters felt that they had something to say in November as a result of Trump. As described by Mia Costa, an assistant professor of government at Dartmouth College, "With Trump at the center of the election, I think voters were just fired up on both sides"⁷⁷. The president was seen as a major player in the midterms, even though he was not running for office, and voters voted accordingly. Though the so-called 'Trump Factor' was a significant actor in all aspects of the midterms, it was especially relevant in the House of Representatives races, where the Democrats gained 40 seats from the Republicans and control of the House⁷⁸. Following the election, the numbers of the House stand for the next two years with 235 Democrats and 199 Republicans⁷⁹. This was likely in part because of President Trump, and voters' desire to pass judgement on him and his performance as president thus far.

Though there were many issues that held importance for voters in the weeks before the midterm election of 2018, voters latched onto some more than others, thus allowing those to

⁷⁶ Tyson, Alec. "The 2018 Midterm Vote: Divisions by Race, Gender, Education." *Pew Research Center*, November 8, 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/08/the-2018-midterm-vote-divisions-by-race-gender-education/>. (Accessed January 24, 2019)

⁷⁷ as cited in Astor, Maggie, and Liam Stack. "Midterm Election Turnout Was Up. How Much? We Don't Know Yet." *The New York Times*, November 9, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/09/us/politics/election-turnout.html>. (Accessed January 24, 2019)

⁷⁸ Jones, David R., and Melissa J. Herrmann. "Exit Polls Show Trump a Major Factor in 2018 Midterm Election Voting." *CBS News*, November 6, 2018. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/exit-polls-show-trump-a-major-factor-in-2018-midterm-election-voting/>. (Accessed January 24, 2019)

⁷⁹ "US House Election Results 2018." *The New York Times*, January 28, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/06/us/elections/results-house-elections.html> (Accessed February 2, 2019)

have particular significance and influence in this election. This could be seen, mainly, in the form of the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings, and the opinions of the sitting president and his administration's policies.

Findings

The Impact of Anita Hill

The hearings of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill were entirely new for the general American public. Though sexual harassment had been occurring for many years before this incident, it was not given attention by society, or the elected representatives. As a result of this, the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings for Thomas, because of the sexual harassment allegations against him, were not something that the Judiciary Committee members had any experience with. In light of this, the hearings were arguably handled poorly. In all, the rising attention to sexual harassment and other gender-based issues, seeing as, though it was not the intention, "the hearings were about the state of sexual harassment in America" and the administering of the hearings by the committee led to a change in female voting behavior in the subsequent election⁸⁰. More specifically, women became more involved in the presidential election of 1992 through the decision of many to run for office, and vote for female and/or Democratic candidates. These shifts can be traced back to the Thomas/Hill hearings and the great impact they had on American women all over the country.

Even after the hearings had concluded, the controversy was still fresh in the minds of American women in every state when 1992 rolled around. The notion prevailed that, "there was the idea that American women intend to enact vengeance for the treatment of Anita Hill by the male-dominated Capitol Hill"⁸¹. With this in mind, it would follow that the voting behavior of

⁸⁰ Lawrence, Jennifer. *A Rose by Any*, 19.

⁸¹ McGurn, William. *The Year of the Woman*, 21.

women in this election was altered by the proceedings of the Thomas/Hill hearings. In particular, women would have chosen to cast their ballots meaningfully to lessen the impact the Republican party, and more specifically the male Republican party, would have in the future. This applied heavily to gender-based issues, in which they became increasingly more significant in the eyes of the American public, and, as a result, “the descriptive underrepresentation of women in the United States Senate became a salient issue during the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings”, as questions arose as to whether or not an all-male committee could effectively handle sexual harassment, and those related, cases⁸². This kept the Thomas/Hill case fresh in the minds of voting women in 1992.

One of the most significant aspects of the Hill case, which in turn affected the voting behavior of women, was how the hearings were viewed by the American women who watched them unfold. In general, when considering the many elements of politics, “it would be difficult to overstate the importance of the perceptions formed by a mass electorate for the decisions it must periodically render”⁸³. Thus, the perceptions surrounding a particular issue, in this case the controversy of Thomas and Hill, can alter how a group of people, in this instance women, chose to vote. In other words, if a group of people are impacted by and feel strongly about a certain issue, it could easily dictate how they vote, based on the stances, or the perception of a stance, each party takes. In this circumstance, the Republicans were regarded as being on the side of Thomas as the president, who was Republican at the time, nominated him, while the Democrats were seen as belonging to the latter, in opposition to the nomination. With this came the idea that “changes in these parts of the popular view of the parties show the impact that changes in the

⁸² Paolino, Phillip. *Group-Salient Issues and Representation*, 295.

⁸³ Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

external world can have on political attitude”⁸⁴. This fits the claim that the Thomas/Hill hearings impacted how women voted in 1992. If the political attitudes of women changed after this case, which they did, how they voted would as well. These adjustments stemmed from the perceptions of the inquiry that women held.

Arguably, the one of the most significant effects of the controversy surrounding Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill on the political behaviors of women was the drastic increase in women who both ran and were elected to Congress, which encompasses the House of Representatives and the Senate. The election of 1992 saw the most women to run for office ever, up to that point in history. This is especially significant considering how few women generally chose to run for office, and were actually elected up until that year. The change is due, in large part, to the Thomas/Hill hearings. This can be illustrated by the fact that “the percentage of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives has hovered between 5 and 6 percent... The numbers are even worse in the U.S. Senate, where, before the 1992 elections, only two of the seats were held by women”⁸⁵. On its own this issue is apparent, but it is made even more clear after considering the population of the United States. Overall, there are more women living in the U.S. than there are men. Keeping this in mind, it would follow logically that, going strictly off of population, there should be more female representatives in Congress than male. In the Senate, there should likely be 51 female senators; in 1992 there were only 2. As a result of this, it is reasonable that women who watched the Thomas/Hill hearings would have been aware of the underrepresentation of women both on the Senate Judiciary Committee, and in the Senate as well. This pattern translated to the House of Representatives. Due to this image, more women than ever before wanted to run for an elected position.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁸⁵ Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Ester R. Fuchs. “The Year of the Woman?”, 31.

Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill testified before the Senate in the latter half of 1991. However, the proceedings were not forgotten by women in the year interim between the hearings and election day. Aforementioned, more women than ever chose to try and get elected to Congress in 1992. Since these hearings remained in the minds of many American women, “in the aftermath of the hearings, numerous women ran for and won election to government office for the first time, citing their dissatisfaction with the all-male Senate Committee’s response to Hill’s allegations as their primary reason for doing so”⁸⁶. In other words, if it had not been for Hill’s testimony and the reaction it generated, many of the women who did run in 1992 most likely would not have.

This phenomenon can be seen dramatically, even in a small two-year span between the election of 1990, and the election of 1992, where a significantly greater number of women ran for office. In 1990, there were 8 female candidates for seats in the Senate. Following the Thomas/Hill controversy, there were a total of 11 female candidates for the Senate in 1992. The number jumped up. Keeping this in mind, the pattern continued in the House of Representatives as well. There were 69 women who ran for seats in 1990, compared to 106 female candidates for the House just two years later in 1992⁸⁷. This split is significant. For 37 more women to decide to run for elected office in a span of only two years, something significant had to have happened to cause this change. This cause was the testimony of Thomas and Hill, and how the case was handled overall, that created this reaction from women, as was cited by many of those who did run in 1992. The significance of this election and the great number of women who ran is shown even further by comparing to the following presidential election year, 1996. In this particular

⁸⁶ Anita Hill, 1.

⁸⁷ “Women Candidates for Congress 1974-2018.” *Center for the American Woman and Politics*, 2018. http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/canwincong_histsum.pdf. (Accessed January 28, 2019)

election, 9 women ran for a seat in the Senate, and 118 competed for House spots⁸⁸. After comparing this election year to 1992, the extremes of the election of 1992 are clear. 2 fewer women ran for Senate seats, and there was only a 12 person jump from 1992 to 1996 in women who ran for seats in the House of Representatives. If the changes had stayed the same between 1992 and 1996 as they had between 1990 and 1992, 180 women would have run for a seat in the House, and 17 would have run in Senate races. This did not happen. As a result of this, considering the fact that the large increases in female Congressional candidates from 1990 to 1992 did not continue afterwards, it shows that the 1992 election was different for women. The divergence in this year were the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings for Clarence Thomas.

The simple fact of more women choosing to run for office in 1992 was not the only important effect of the Thomas/Hill controversy. The candidates that women as a whole actually chose to vote for can also be traced back to these hearings. In 1992, women voted in greater numbers for the Democratic party over the Republicans. As previously described, women ran for office in higher numbers in 1992. Though this on its own is worth noting, the more significant aspect of it “is not women candidates but liberal Democratic women candidates”⁸⁹. From this, it becomes clear that more women not only chose to run for office in this particular year, but that a vast majority of these women chose to run on the Democratic ticket. Many of these such “Democratic nominees enter their races spouting solidarity with Anita Hill”⁹⁰. Logically then, approval for Hill fit with the Democratic party’s platform in the 1992 race, and would garner support from potential voters. On top of this, in 1992, 54% of women were registered with the

⁸⁸ “List of Women Candidates – Election 1996.” *Center for the American Woman and Politics*, 1996. <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/can1996results-hi.pdf>. (Accessed January 23, 2019)

⁸⁹ McGurn, William. *The Year of the Woman*, 21.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

Democratic party, while only 38% were registered with the Republican party⁹¹. Keeping this in mind, it follows that support for the Anita Hill would relate to the Democratic party. If a majority of the women who ran for office were Democrats and expressed support for Hill, these two ideas have to be comparable, with the act of supporting Hill being more likely for a Democrat. This is also logical with the common trends of the party. In 1992, as a result of the underrepresentation of women in Congressional office, women tended to support female candidates, however, if a woman was not available to vote for, women were more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate, because they're generally more concerned with women's issues⁹². This directly correlates with the fact that women's "attitudes towards the Hill-Thomas hearings had a large effect upon the probability of voting for a Democratic Senate candidate⁹³. This pattern can be connected to the fact that female voters were concerned with gender-based issues, especially as a result of the Thomas/Hill hearings which brought them to the forefront, and the Democratic party better reflected their concerns. As a result, many women would have supported and run on the side of the Democratic party.

The idea of women leaning more towards the Democratic party in the election of 1992 as a result of the testimonies of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill can further be explained by the actual numbers of women who appeared on the ballot for each party. Aforementioned, more women chose to run as Democrats than Republicans, however this split was significantly larger than in other years. In 1990, there were 69 female candidates for the House of Representatives; of these, 39 were Democrats and 30 were Republicans. The difference in this election year was

⁹¹ "Party Affiliation Among Voters: 1992-2016." *Pew Research Center*, September 13, 2016. <http://www.people-press.org/2016/09/13/2-party-affiliation-among-voters-1992-2016/>. (Accessed January 22, 2019)

⁹² Paolino, Phillip. Group-Salient Issues and Representation.

⁹³ Paolino, Phillip. Group-Salient Issues and Representation.

very close. However, there was a major shift in 1992 where a total of 106 women ran for seats in the House of Representatives, with 70 running as Democrats, and 36 as Republicans⁹⁴. Here, not only did more women run for a seat in the House, but a significantly greater number of them ran as Democrats than had previously. In the previous Congressional election, the number of Democratic and Republican female candidates was almost an even split, however in 1992 there were almost twice the number of women who ran on the Democratic ticket than Republican. The pattern of more women choosing to run as Democrats rather than Republicans continued in the Senate as well. In the Senate, there were 2 Democratic and 6 Republican female candidates in 1990. Clearly, of the women who ran for Senate seats in 1990, a wide majority of them were Republicans. In 1992 though, this switched almost completely where there were 11 female candidates for the Senate; 10 ran as Democrats and only 1 ran as a Republican⁹⁵. The differences in the parties that women chose to run under in 1992 compared to only two years earlier can be translated to the Thomas/Hill hearings. Aforementioned, the Democratic party is more likely to support women's issues than the Republican party is. As a result of this, considering the fact that many women were concerned with gender-based issues, one of which being sexual harassment as was shown during the hearings, they would be more likely to support and/or run as Democrats. This was reflected in the breakdown of women who ran for Congressional office in 1992 as Democrats versus Republicans.

The push for the Democratic party in the election of 1992 was consistent with female voters, not only those who ran for elected office. As was previously described, women were angered over the lack of attention and consideration both Anita Hill and women's issues in general received from the male-dominated, and at the time, Republican majority Congress. The

⁹⁴ Women Candidates for Congress.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Democratic party was seen as being more receptive to gender-based concerns, and female voters noticed this. As a result, there was increased support for the Democratic party by women in 1992 when these particular issues were at a height in importance following the hearings of Thomas and Hill. As shown in Figure 3 (see appendix A), 54% of women aligned themselves with the Democratic party⁹⁶, compared to only 38% who were registered to the Republicans⁹⁷. This chart shows the percentages of women who identify with the Democratic party from 1990 through 2012. Though a majority of women have aligned with the Democrats consistently from 1990, the percentage in 1992 is still significant. In 1990, a total of 52% of women identified as Democrats; which means that there was a 2% jump in 1992. However, the most significant aspect is the fact that the percentage of women aligned with the Democratic party did not exceed that of 1992 until 2008 when 56% of women considered themselves to be Democrats. This suggests that there was something significant in 1992 that was not present in years prior or following that caused women to place their support for the Democrats in the largest percentage for many years. It is clear that there is an event that caused this spike in support for the Democratic party of women, of which were the hearings of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill.

In addition to this, the voting results of the presidential election of 1992 overall are relevant and revealing. There were three major candidates who ran for president in 1992; Bill Clinton, the Democrat, George H. W. Bush, the Republican and incumbent, and Ross Perot, who ran under a third party. In total, 45% of women voted for Clinton, 38% for Bush, and 17% for

⁹⁶ “The Gender Gap: Three Decades Old, as Wide as Ever.” *Pew Research Center*, March 29, 2012. <http://www.people-press.org/2012/03/29/the-gender-gap-three-decades-old-as-wide-as-ever/>. (Accessed February 21, 2019)

⁹⁷ “1. Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups.” *Pew Research Center*, March 20, 2018. <http://www.people-press.org/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/>. (Accessed February 27, 2019)

Perot⁹⁸. Right off the bat, it is clear that more women voted for the Democratic candidate than for any of the other two. This aligns with the trend that women supported and voted in greater numbers for Democrats as a result of the Thomas/Hill hearings and the Democrat's subsequent increased support for gender-based issues following. At first glance, it may not seem like a substantial number of women voted for the Democratic candidate, especially considering the fact that Clinton did not even receive a majority of women's votes, but there is a reasonable explanation for this. Perot, the third party candidate, was also liberal in his leanings. As the most relevant example to this case, Perot was outspoken in being in favor of a woman's right to choose, and believed that federal funding should be available to women who wanted an abortion, but could not afford one on her own⁹⁹. It would then follow that some of the women who would have naturally voted for Clinton, the Democratic nominee, would have instead voted for Perot. This is particularly true since women's issues, of which abortion is commonly classified, were of the utmost importance in the election of 1992 following the Thomas and Hill hearings, and Perot was concerned with and supported them. It makes logical sense that 17% of women would have voted for him. If he had not run in this race, though no one can say for certain, it is likely that these women would have instead voted for Clinton, as the Democrats are more frequently associated with supporting gender-based issues, which would then have put the women's vote for the Democratic presidential candidate in 1992 over the majority at 62%. This trend, women voting in larger numbers for the Democrat, is in large part the result of the testimonies of Thomas and Hill, the reactions they created, and the following concern the Democratic party gave to both Hill and women's issues in general, particularly sexual harassment.

⁹⁸ "How Groups Voted in 1992." *Roper Center for Public Opinion Research*, 2019.
<https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/how-groups-voted-1992>. (Accessed February 21, 2019)

⁹⁹ "1992 & 1996 Reform Party Nominee for President." *On The Issues*, 2019.
http://www.ontheissues.org/Ross_Perot.htm. (Accessed February 21, 2019)

Overall, the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill created a new and substantial reaction from the American public. This was the case, particularly, for women. Women, more so than their male counterparts were impacted, in many situations, personally by throughout the course of the hearings. For some women, the testimonies brought be memories of the sexual harassment they received, and for others they put into perspective the lack of female representation in Congress. Regardless of how the hearings impacted a particular woman, they influenced female voting behavior in the election of 1992. More specifically, the Thomas/Hill hearings caused women to give more support to the Democratic party, in both votes and running for office, of which more women than in any election previously decided to do. This was due to Thomas and Hill's hearings and the impact they had on women around the country.

The Impact of Christine Blasey Ford

More than a quarter of a century after the proceedings of the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings for Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill, history seemed ready to repeat itself in 2018. Again, the committee, made up of only men on the Republican side, was to hold hearings for a new Supreme Court pick, Brett Kavanaugh, who was accused of sexual assault in the heat of his hearings by Christine Blasey Ford. After the accusation was brought up by Ford, 2018, like in 1992, saw an election centered on the rights of women and what is, or more realistically is not, being done to address gender-based issues. The testimonies of Kavanaugh and Ford, once again, brought the concerns of sexual harassment and sexual assault into the forefront and forced both voters and elected officials to recognize the problem. As occurred in the election of 1992, the 2018 midterms saw increased involvement from women in voting and running for office as a result of the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings and the emotions they created. This surge in involvement, overall, was in favor of the Democratic party.

Women, as a result of these hearings, were impacted greatly. Though there were some women who believed Kavanaugh and supported his approval to the Supreme Court, there were also many, and a wide variety, of women who were outspoken against him and did not want the Senate to approve his nomination. Victoria Church, a lawyer from Connecticut, is a good example of a woman in opposition to Kavanaugh and the course of the proceedings. As agreed upon by many, “Kavanaugh’s hearings were not a criminal trial. There was no requirement that the allegations be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. The hearings were for a job interview for one of the most respected positions in the United States... For me, that should have been enough for more senators to vote no.”¹⁰⁰ These sentiments were shared by many women around the United States who also believed that, regardless of whether or not it was proven with absolute clarity that Kavanaugh did do what he was accused of, it was irrelevant. As Church stated, the hearings were more in the fashion of a job interview than a trial, intended to gauge the character and intentions of the nominee. Based strictly on this definition, Kavanaugh’s ability to perform as a functioning member of the Supreme Court would be in question. Lisa Baracker, a doctor from California, for one, agreed. She told the *New York Times*, on the topic of Brett Kavanaugh and his behavior, “I want my children to know that if they ever act the way Kavanaugh did, either in high school or for a job interview, that I will not be on their side. I will discipline them for vile behavior with everything in my power.”¹⁰¹ Baracker too saw Kavanaugh’s hearing as a job interview, and thought that he had performed very poorly, even going so far as to say that her own children would not have had her support if they were in his situation. These two women, like many others, were against Kavanaugh and, as a result of their strong views, their votes in the

¹⁰⁰ as cited Virella, Kelly. “We Asked Women What the Kavanaugh Vote Means for the Next Generation. 40,000 Responded.” *The New York Times*, October 9, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/09/reader-center/women-kavanaugh-confirmation.html>. (Accessed January 23, 2019)

¹⁰¹ as cited in Virella, Kelly. We Asked Women What.

midterm election of 2018 probably would have been affected. This trend was common throughout the duration of the hearings and the subsequent election.

Similar to 1992 following Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill's hearings, after those of Kavanaugh and Ford, women noticed the underrepresentation of women in Congress, and realized that it could be advantageous to enhance their representation. Many women from across the country felt this, and believed that American women everywhere should vote accordingly. For instance, Julia Specht, a writer from New York, does "think it's vitally important to have more women in public office, because our government should be representative of the people in this country. That means fewer 50+-year-old white men and more young people, people of color and women. We deserve a government that looks like we do."¹⁰² Specht, like many other women, thought that having more women in elected office would be useful to the nation overall. Aforementioned, historically, the men who have been in office have not been overly concerned with gender-based issues. The argument has been raised that women would be more interested in these issues as they affect them directly and personally. This is one relevant argument as to why more women should be elected to office. Lisa Sharon Harper, a faith leader, writer, and organizer from Washington D.C. agrees, and that, more than anything, women need to get out and vote. She argues that "Our current president is in office because he won 70,000 more votes in three key swing states. Many of the senators who voted 'Yes' on Kavanaugh won their seats in midterm elections. The lesson is this: 'Vote!'"¹⁰³ Clearly, many women, angered by the events of the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings, all agreed that women getting out to vote in great numbers would be absolutely vital in November. Based on the events of the previously mentioned hearings, women's issues were not always considered and made to be important as they should have, and

¹⁰² as cited in Virella, Kelly. We Asked Women What.

¹⁰³ as cited in Virella, Kelly. We Asked Women What.

the potential for this to be changed with a change in representation existed. Women noticed a lack of women in office, and related this to the proceedings of Kavanaugh and Ford's testimonies.

As a result, not only did more women get out and vote, as was encouraged extensively, but women decided to run for office in record numbers. In 2018, a record-setting 468 women, which encompassed the entire primary level, ran for the House of Representatives. Previously, the highest was 298 in 2012¹⁰⁴. Nearly 200 more women ran for office in this most recent election than the previous high only 4 years prior. This dramatic increase in female candidates in 2018 shows how truly important this election was. The same pattern continued in the Senate as well. In total, 51 women ran for Senate seats in 2018. 2016 had the previous record, where 40 women ran for seats¹⁰⁵. The fact that the expansion of women who ran for Congress was so drastic alludes to the idea that there was something significant to cause it; this was the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing for Brett Kavanaugh. The proceedings and results of these hearings was "another galvanizing moment for the female voters."¹⁰⁶ Many women were angered over the results of the Senate vote and the proceedings of the testimonies. These emotions lead to the severe increases in female candidates for Congress. Additionally, on top of the fact that, in general, many women chose to run for election in the 2018 midterms, this year also saw the highest number of female nominees, which refers to the individual a party ultimately nominates for the general election following the state's primary election. Overall, there were 235 female nominees for the House of Representatives. The previous record was 167 in 2016. 22 women

¹⁰⁴ Thomsen, Danielle. "Women Are Less Than a Quarter of All U.S. House Candidates This Year, but That's Still record-Breaking." *Center for the American Woman and Politics*, June 28, 2018.

<http://cawp.rutgers.edu/footnotes/women-are-less-quarter-all-us-house-candidates-year-thats-record-breaking>. (Accessed February 25, 2019)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Brownstein, Ronald. Brett Kavanaugh Could Make.

were nominated for the Senate, which broke the prior record of 40 in 2016¹⁰⁷. This is a significant increase, in both chambers, and shows that women were important in this election. In this instance, the prevalence of women in the election of 2018 would refer to the fact that there is a lack of female representation in Congress, and gender-based concerns, both of which were highlighted by the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings. As a result of these hearings and the increased importance of gender-based issues, more women ran, and were successful, in the midterm elections.

The party split of female Congressional candidates and nominees, as related to the testimonies of Kavanaugh and Ford, is also worth noting. As in 1992, women are more likely to run for office as a Democrat than a Republican. This is logical, considering the fact that as previously described, historically, the Democratic party has been more receptive to gender-based issues than the Republicans. As a result, women, who were more concerned with women's issues than their male counterparts, and more so after the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings that brought this problem to light in full, were more likely to run with the party than has proven itself responsive to sexual assault; the Democrats. Starting in the 1980s, the number of female candidates who ran under each party were approximately equal, at around 10%¹⁰⁸. However, over the years, this has not remained consistent. Over time, more women have begun to run for office, more so in the most recent midterm election as a result of the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings. The increase in female candidates has not been split evenly between the two major parties though. As described by Kelly Dittmar of Rutgers University's Center for the American Woman and Politics: "Much of the current surge in women candidates has been fueled by Democratic women". For example, in

¹⁰⁷ Dittmar, Kelly. "By the Numbers: Women Congressional Candidates in 2018." *Center for the American Woman and Politics*, September 12, 2018. <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/congressional-candidates-summary-2018>. (Accessed January 23, 2019)

¹⁰⁸ Thomsen, Danielle. Women Are Less Than.

2018, 33% of Democratic candidates were women, compared to only 14% of Republican candidates who were women¹⁰⁹. There is almost a 20% difference between the number of women who run for each major party, thus showing that significantly more women chose to run on the Democratic ticket than the Republican in 2018. In this midterm, this can be traced back to the testimonies, considering the fact that they emphasized gender-based issues, and Democrats were more, in general, more receptive to them.

In addition to the fact that women are more likely to run for office as Democrats, they are also more likely to win their election under these conditions. In the midterm election of 2018, “in U.S. House primary contests, Democratic women candidates had the highest win rates of any group, both among candidates and non-incumbents only.”¹¹⁰ Figure 4 (see appendix A) reflects this in outlining the percentages of women, referring to the number of women who won their primary races as Democrats and Republicans overall, and more specifically as challengers. Among all House candidates, which includes both incumbent and non-incumbents, 52.7% of Democratic women won their primary, which can be compared to only 43.7% of Republican women who did the same. To go even further, only 33.7% of Democratic men won their primary race¹¹¹. Almost 10% more Democratic women won their primary contest than Republican women, and nearly 20% more than Democratic men. From this, it is clear that of all House candidates, Democratic women were the most successful.

This trend continued for those of non-incumbent U.S. House candidates as well. Under this specification, 44% of Democratic women won their primary race, related to only 34.3% of Republican women. 21.1% of Democratic men won their primary. Considering the fact that

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁰ Dittmar, Kelly. By the Numbers.

¹¹¹ Dittmar, Kelly. By the Numbers.

incumbents are more likely to be successful in their race than a challenger, it follows that the previous percentages are lower than those among all House candidates. However, regardless of this, the most significant piece, that Democratic women won their primary races in the highest percentages in 2018, still stands. This can be related back to the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings. Aforementioned, the hearings brought sexual assault to prominence in this midterm, and with it the concerns of Americans, and particularly women, around the country. It follows that more women, and specifically those of the Democratic party, would have been more successful in their primary bids. These hearings showed the underrepresentation of women in Congress to female voters around the United States. As a result, many women believed that it is “extremely important to have more women in office, especially Democratic women.”¹¹² Many felt that women, more so than men, would be concerned with gender-based issues. This sentiment was exacerbated when party considerations came into play, as the Democratic party has generally been cited with more regard to sexual violence than the Republican party. These differences were especially significant in the election of 2018 as a result of the hearings of Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford. Thus, because of these testimonies, it follows that Democratic women would have had the most success in their primary elections.

Though the increased number of women who ran for public office and the prevalence of Democratic challengers was important, these were not the only factors of significance that resulted from the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings. As a result of these testimonies, women voted for the Democratic party in higher numbers than in previous years. This was especially significant in the voting for U.S. House candidates. As shown in Figure 5 (see appendix A), which outlines the amount of women versus men who voted for Democratic candidates in House races from 2008 to

¹¹² as cited in Virella, Kelly. We Asked Women What.

2018, women voted in a higher percentage for Democrats. Overall, since 2008, women have always been more likely than men to vote for the Democratic House candidate, however, the significance of the difference has changed. Ten years prior, in 2008, about 56% of women voted for the Democratic candidate, compared to 49% of men for a difference of approximately 7 percentage points. The split was much larger in 2018. In this most recent midterm election, 60% of women voted for the Democratic House candidate, with only 47% of men doing the same. The difference between the two was almost double that of the split in 2008, at 13%. It is also necessary to look specifically at the percentage of women's votes for Democratic House candidates, regardless of how many men did the same. Aforementioned, 60% of women voted for a Democrat for the U.S. House in 2018; this was the highest percentage of the past 10 years. This is a significant jump up from 2 years earlier where 53% of women voted for Democratic House candidates in 2016¹¹³. A 7% increase in only 2 years, the difference of one U.S. House election to the next, is significant. As a result, it leads itself to the question of why such a large increase was recorded in 2018 from 2016. The most relevant and logical answer is that something occurred in the time leading up to the midterm election of 2018 that caused women to vote in higher numbers than ever before for the Democrats: The Senate Judiciary Committee hearings of Kavanaugh and Ford. The proceedings and results of these hearings solidified many women's sentiments, who had likely been liberal-leaning previously, from the Republican to the Democratic party. Considering this transfer, it follows that the amount of women who voted for Democrats for the House would have increased from previous years in 2018.

In addition to the factual changes in female voting behavior among white college-educated women in 2018, the reasoning behind this is important as well. In this particular

¹¹³ Schaffner, Brian F. These 5 Charts Explain.

midterm election, “white college-educated women increased their support for Democratic candidates by eight percentage points over 2018”, in which approximately 59% of women in this category voted for Democratic House candidates¹¹⁴. This increase for Democratic support by white college-educated women is attributed to something known by researchers as ‘hostile sexism’, which refers to openly unfavorable definitions of and stereotypes about gender. In 2018, a woman who disagreed with these sexist comments was less likely to vote for a Republican candidate, as compared to 2016 where whether or not a woman agreed with sexist comments did not influence her decision of choosing a Republican candidate. Sexist comments were made during the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings, namely on the Republican side. One of the best examples of such came during a break in Ford’s testimony. During this period, a woman spoke out to Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican senator from South Carolina, that she had been raped earlier in her life. Senator Graham all but dismissed her, responding, “I’m so sorry, you needed to tell the cops”¹¹⁵. However, Graham was not the only one to behave in this way during the Kavanaugh hearings, as “such casual indifference to women’s mistreatment is visible not only in the Republicans’ endorsement of Kavanaugh, but also in the party’s dismissal of the #MeToo movement and the president’s obvious sympathy for accused men over accusing women.”¹¹⁶ Clearly, sexist comments and sentiments against women prevailed during the course of the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings. As a result of this, considering the fact that women were more likely to vote for a Democratic candidate if they disagreed with sexist comments, it follows that “white women with college degrees became energized after the confirmation of Justice Brett

¹¹⁴ Schaffner, Brian F. These 5 Charts Explain, 1.

¹¹⁵ Schaffner, Brian F. These 5 Charts Explain, 1.

¹¹⁶ as cited in Young, Neil J. “Here’s Why White Women are Abandoning the GOP.” *The Atlantic*, October 1, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/will-white-suburban-women-vote-republican-november/571720/>. (Accessed February 14, 2019)

Kavanaugh”, and voted for Democrats in significantly greater numbers in the 2018 election, keeping in mind the dominance of hostile sexism in the hearings of Kavanaugh and Ford¹¹⁷.

The Senate Judiciary Committee hearings of Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford reintroduced the conversation around and importance of sexual violence in American society from its previous discussion in 1991 during and after the hearings of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill. The Kavanaugh/Ford hearings had a significant effect on the average American citizen, and particularly women. Female voters all over the country were angered by the results, Kavanaugh’s approval to the Supreme Court, and the proceedings of the testimonies, particularly the arguably poor questioning of Ford by the Republican Judiciary Committee majority. As a result, the political behavior of women changed drastically. More women than ever before chose to run for Congress, a solid majority as Democrats, and a substantial amount who did not run for office chose to cast a ballot for a Democratic candidate. This was most significant for white college-educated women who, because of the hearings, chose to give their support to Democrats extremely high numbers. According to Kohler, the change in female political sentiments in 2018 may have been “a shift that could be a more permanent alignment” as a result of women’s reactions to the Kavanaugh/Ford hearings¹¹⁸. The accuracy or inaccuracy in this statement is yet to be seen but, regardless, the voting behavior of women was different in the midterm election of 2018, and the source of such can be traced back to the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings of Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford.

Conclusion

¹¹⁷ Frey, William H. “Will Minority and Female Turnout Surges Seal Democratic Midterm Victories?” *Brookings*, October 31, 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/will-minority-and-female-turnout-surges-seal-democratic-midterm-victories/>. (Accessed January 16, 2019)

¹¹⁸ as cited in Graves, Lucia. *Women Aren’t a Monolith*, 1.

Female voting behavior has not remained consistent every year. The patterns of their voting has switched between one party and the other depending on the election in question and the events leading up to it. Logically, certain years and issues had more of an effect on the voting decisions of women than others. Two of these such elections were in 1992 and 2018.

In the year prior to the presidential election of 1992, the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearings of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill were conducted. Though these testimonies resulted in Thomas's confirmation to the Supreme Court, they allowed women all across the nation to see the underrepresentation of women in Congress, and the arguably poor treatment she received at the hands of the all-male judiciary committee. As a result of the Thomas/Hill hearings, an unprecedented number of women both chose to run for seats in Congress, and vote for Democratic congressional candidates; of which a significant portion were women.

This occurred again almost a quarter of a century later when the hearings for Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford were administered by the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2018. As in 1991, Kavanaugh was voted onto the Supreme Court, but the hearings still had an important effect on women and their voting decisions. Women selected to run for office, both the Senate and the House of Representatives, in record numbers. Many cited the hearings as a main motivator in their decision to run. This held true for the average female voter across the country as well; many deciding to vote for a Democratic, and possibly a female, candidate for office.

It was also found that, though both of these elections saw a drastic increase in female candidates for congressional seats, a large majority ran as Democrats rather than Republicans. This fact speaks to the two parties' platforms, and the increased support the Democrats have historically had for gender-based issues over the Republicans.

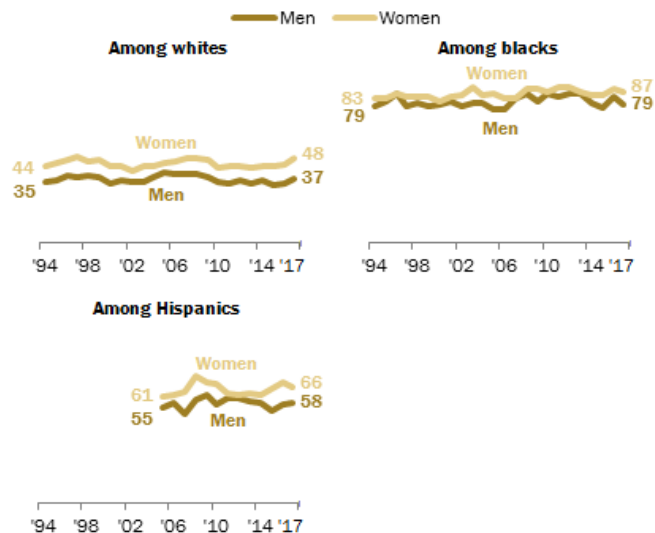
This study is significant in the nation's legislative and political future. It was established that historically, the Democratic party is more likely to support gender-based issues. As a result, future legislation centered around gender-based issues, such as but not limited to sexual harassment and sexual assault, would be more likely supported by the Democrats in office. Keeping this in mind, predictions can be made regarding the success or failure of this type of measure based on the political affiliations of the members in office. Politically, this study outlines the potential voting outcomes of women following a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing with sexual harassment or sexual assault at the forefront. Based on this information it would be possible to anticipate the effects of a similar situation in the future on the voting behavior of women, and with this, elections as a whole. This aspect is particularly important considering women make up a larger portion of the total population than men, and vote in greater numbers, and as a result can greatly impact the results of various elections. As a result, it is valuable to understand situations, such as the hearings of Thomas/Hill and Kavanaugh/Ford, that can impact how women ultimately choose to vote.

Appendix A

Figure 1- Similar Gender Gaps Across Racial and Ethnic Groups

Similar gender gaps across racial and ethnic groups

% of registered voters who identify as Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party

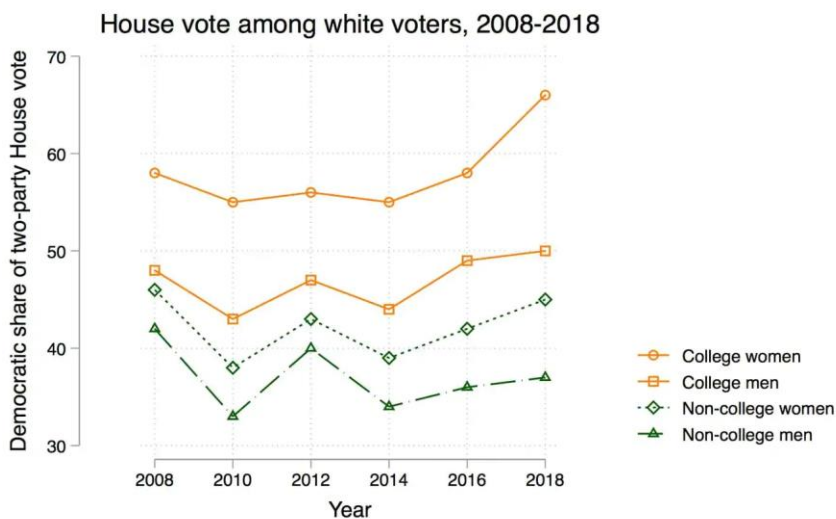


Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Data for Hispanics shown only for years in which interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. Asian Americans by gender not shown because of insufficient sample sizes.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

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Figure 2- House Vote Among White Voters, 2008-2018



Data: Cooperative Congressional Election Studies.
2008-2016 based on validated voters.
2018 based on likely voter model developed by Anthony Rentsch.

Figure 3- The Gender Gap in Party Identification

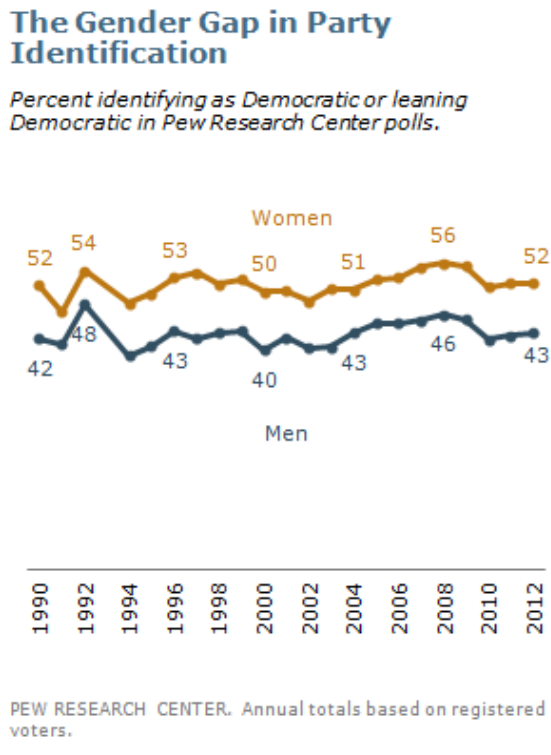


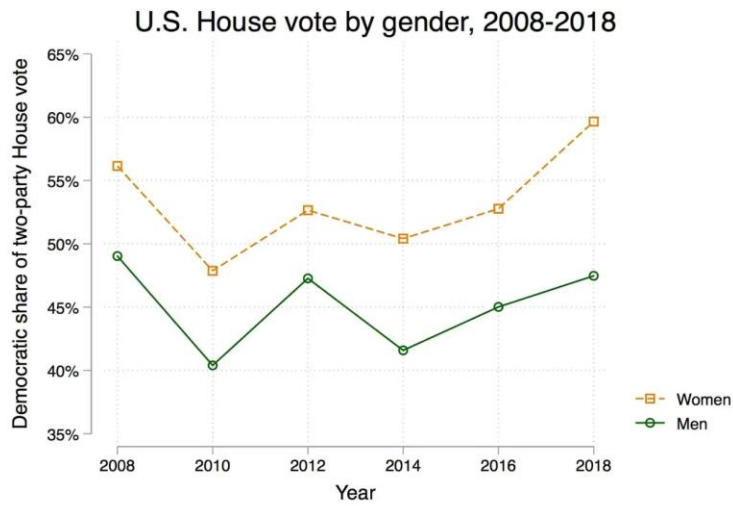
Figure 4- Primary Win Rates for 2018 U.S. House Candidates

Primary Win Rates for 2018 U.S. House Candidates

	Democrats	Republicans
All House Candidates		
Women	52.7%	43.7%
Men	33.7%	45.3%
Non-Incumbent House Candidates Only		
Women	44%	34.3%
Men	21.1%	28.8%

Source: Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University

Figure 5- U.S. House Vote by Gender, 2008-2018



Source: Cooperative Congressional Election Study. 2008-2016 is based on validated voters. 2018 is based on likely voters defined by probabilistic model developed by Anthony Rentsch.

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