Australian Journal of Political Science

ISSN: 1036-1146 (Print) 1363-030X (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cajp20

# Gender and Leader Effects in the 2010 Australian Election

David Denemark , Ian Ward & Clive Bean

**To cite this article:** David Denemark , Ian Ward & Clive Bean (2012) Gender and Leader Effects in the 2010 Australian Election, Australian Journal of Political Science, 47:4, 563-578, DOI: 10.1080/10361146.2012.731485

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2012.731485

*Australian Journal of Political Science,*
*Vol. 47, No. 4, December 2012, pp. 563–578*

# Gender and Leader Effects in the 2010 Australian Election

David Denemark

*University of Western Australia*

Ian Ward

*University of Queensland*

Clive Bean

*Queensland University of Technology*

The impact of voters' gender on leader evaluations in parliamentary systems has been largely unexplored, while the impact of female leaders on voter attitudes and preferences remains to be fully established. This paper uses Julia Gillard's historic candidacy in the 2010 Australian federal election to explore how voters evaluated Australia's first female prime minister, and to test the impact of their assessments on vote choice. The authors also examine whether Gillard's high-profile candidacy affected women's levels of political interest, awareness and engagement in what had been largely a 'man's game'. Their findings confirm that Gillard enjoyed a gender-affinity effect in 2010 in terms of both leader evaluations and vote choice, and women's political engagement was significantly affected by the Gillard candidacy.

**Keywords:** Australia; gender; leader evaluations; parliamentary elections; voting; women

## Introduction

The 2010 Australian federal election provides a rare opportunity to explore how voters in a parliamentary system evaluate a female prime minister and major-party leader, as well as the effect of those estimations on voters' decision-making and wider political perceptions and involvement. Gender featured prominently in the election, due to both the Australian Labor Party (ALP) seeking electoral salvation in a female leader, and the novelty of a woman leading a major party (Sawer 2012, 251). The 2010 election campaign had the

David Denemark is Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Western Australia. Ian Ward is Reader in Politics at the University of Queensland. Clive Bean is Professor of Political Science at the Queensland University of Technology.

ISSN 1036-1146 print; ISSN 1363-030X online/12/040563-16 © 2012 Australian Political Studies Association
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2012.731485

potential to promote heightened interest, awareness and engagement among female voters because the election of women to high office is 'not just symbolically important', but may also 'mobilise and activate women in the electorate' (Electoral Commission [UK] 2004, 48).

Nonetheless, Julia Gillard's path to the prime ministership was controversial, with potentially significant implications for the evaluation of leaders by female voters. Kevin Rudd's removal from the Labor leadership just eight weeks before the election was painted as a 'political assassination' (Blewett 2010) – a portrayal that may well have provoked diverging estimations of Gillard, given that voters often hold stereotypical views that handicap women seeking political office. Political leaders are traditionally judged against stereotypical masculine traits, such as strength and competitiveness. Female leaders are expected to exhibit alternative traits, such as compassion and honesty, and can pay an electoral price for transgressing traditional gender stereotypes by displaying strength, forcefulness or other 'masculine' qualities (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 514; Kahn 1994).

Gillard acted just as might be expected of a male politician, by acting decisively, even ruthlessly, to wrest away the leadership. Yet in Australia, Cox (2010) observed, a 'tough, competent woman, doing no more than any man would do, is still judged more harshly'. Gillard's removal of Rudd sat uncomfortably with 'widespread, still entrenched views that there is something unnatural about women with power' (Cox 2010). Rudd had been extremely popular for a time, so there was considerable public misgiving surrounding his removal as Labor leader and prime minister. The evidence from opinion polls suggests that during the election campaign which followed, Gillard's popularity eroded substantially. This fall might be attributed, at least in part, to the Coalition's tactic of exploiting the disquiet surrounding Labor's 'assassination' of Rudd. However, it must also be asked whether, as a woman, Gillard suffered electorally in 2010 because voters used gender stereotypes to judge her competence to serve as prime minister, putting her at a disadvantage.

The election, involving Australia's first female prime minister, offered a 'powerful symbolic moment' (Smith 2010). This link between gender and politics was strengthened by Gillard's rival, Tony Abbott – a 'hyper-masculine' Liberal opposition leader, known for his 'action man' persona and for 'telling Australian women how to live their lives' (Sawer 2012, 251). Well before Labor changed leaders, commentators had suggested that Abbott's social conservatism posed problems for his 'attractiveness to women voters' (Murray 2009). When Labor turned to Gillard to avert the electoral threat from Abbott, pundits asked whether gender would prove to be a decisive factor in the contest.

In the end, the 2010 election produced the first 'hung parliament' in Australia since 1940 – only 30,527 votes dividing the two major parties in a ballot of more than 12 million voters. Labor survived with Gillard at the helm, but as a minority government. The question remains: what role did gender play in shaping voters' political attitudes, evaluations and decision-making?

## Gender, Leader Evaluations and Electoral Effects

Researchers have long sought to establish the influence of a candidate's gender on voters' choices. Several effects that have been found have special relevance to

the Gillard candidacy, including those showing that culturally entrenched gender stereotypes handicap the efforts of women to win electoral support (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b; Kahn 1994). Huddy and Terkildsen (1993a, 504) reported that voters tend to typecast female candidates as 'typical women – warm, gentle, kind and passive', while they perceive male candidates as 'typical men – tough, aggressive and assertive'. Similarly, Hayes and McAllister (1997, 8) showed that female voters judge candidates by reference to traits such as being compassionate, caring and sensible, while men look to leaders who appear to be strong, assertive and able to get things done. Women seeking political office may be regarded as lacking credibility if the job is seen as demanding toughness and strength, because women are popularly regarded as nurturers and carers, and are imagined to have 'different' and 'compassionate' behavioural traits and preferences (Koch 1997).

Huddy and Terkildsen (1993a, 514) argued that female candidates who emphasise their warmth, honesty and compassion may harm their electoral chances because voters primarily employ masculine, instrumental traits – not feminine, expressive traits – to judge candidates for national office. Female politicians face special problems in 'walking the tightrope of gender expectations', particularly in the requirement to combine masculine traits such as strength, and feminine traits such as compassion (Johnson 2010, 1). Those who transgress traditional gender traits and act forcefully risk being judged as 'unfeminine', while those who resist such masculine traits may lose vital electoral support. This dilemma is faced exclusively by female candidates.

A central finding is that male candidates who are viewed as competitive and power-seeking are not electorally disadvantaged, because power and power-seeking are 'central to the constructs of agency and masculinity' (Okimoto and Brescoll 2010, 924). However, female candidates who are judged to be power-seekers, or to be guilty of self-promotion or competitiveness, may suffer a 'backlash effect' and be 'penalized for their violation of stereotypical expectations' (Okimoto and Brescoll 2010, 924; see also Banducci 2002, 56). If most voters characterise the 'ideal leader' in terms of traits deemed masculine, such as strength and leadership, then female candidates may feel compelled to convince voters of their 'atypicality' by demonstrating that they possess these traits, and run the risk of voter backlash (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 520). Gillard's historic candidacy in 2010, premised on her role in Rudd's removal, is an ideal opportunity to examine the quandary faced by female candidates.

Voters' assessments of both gender and leaders' qualifications may play a particular role in the Australian context. The system of compulsory voting compels even the least interested members of the electorate to participate. Many decide their vote based on fleeting glimpses of leaders on television (Denemark 2002, 2005; McAllister 1992, 188). They may judge candidates on a 'gut feeling' and an impression of overall traits and character (Koch 1997, 120), or what Rahn et al. (1993, 188) termed 'summary assessments' of candidates' integrity and trustworthiness. If so, we contend that gender images and voters' estimations of candidates' overall character and persona will play an important role in shaping vote choices (Banducci and Karp 2000, 816). It is likely that in the 2010 Australian election, gender-based portrayals of the two leaders played a significant role in electoral evaluations and vote choice, even if not equally for all voters across the electorate.

A further gender effect involves women supporting a female candidate in order to express their gender identity as a social group, rather than from an assessment of the specific qualifications of candidates. This 'gender affinity effect' has been demonstrated more often in the American context than in 'Westminster-style parliamentary systems', which are 'more leader and party centred' (Goodyear-Grant and Croskill 2011, 224). Pomper (1975) proposed, in his 'dependent voter' thesis, that voters cast their ballots on the basis of perceived social-group membership. 'Group consciousness', according to this model, encourages votes for candidates who reflect that particular identity. If so, women may vote for a female candidate solely on the basis of gender affinity (Zipp and Plutzer 1985, 182).

It is argued that the visibility and competitiveness of candidates are essential for eliciting these effects among voters (Atkeson 2003, 1041–43). Significant gender-affinity effects have been shown in Senate races in the United States, irrespective of voters' partisan affinities (Plutzer and Zipp 1996, 42). However, equivalent effects have not been found, for example, in Canadian parliamentary elections, 'at least for candidates if not for party leaders' (Goodyear-Grant and Croskill 2011, 247). The gender affinity thesis has been investigated almost solely at the local and district level, and rarely examined in a high-profile, national parliamentary election where the leader commanding media attention is female.[1]

A female candidate in contention for, or elected to, high office may mobilise and activate female voters. The presence of a female candidate or leader may have significant effects on the political sensibilities of female voters, including political interest, knowledge, efficacy and awareness (Koch 1997, 125). Numerous studies have shown that women are less likely than men to discuss politics with friends and family, or to try to influence the vote choice of others (Atkeson 2003, 1041; de Vaus and McAllister 1989, 241; Koch 1997, 119). Karp and Banducci (2008, 106) used comparative data to consider whether the symbolic power of women in elected office can foster higher levels of mobilisation, political engagement and supportive political attitudes among women. They find insignificant effects in terms of voter turnout and other forms of active electoral engagement, but significant (non-electoral) effects on attitudes toward the political process and democracy itself (Karp and Banducci 2008, 113–14).

Karp and Banducci (2008, 106) have noted women's traditional 'invisibility in the political realm'. Historically, women have demonstrated lower levels of political knowledge than men, along with lower levels of internal political efficacy and interest in politics. This reflects particular social and economic circumstances, including women's exclusion from the workforce and limited economic independence. These attitudinal patterns are often seen to be rooted in traditional social realities, but Koch (1997, 119) has shown that they have persisted, despite controlling for generational effects and the level of

[1]Banducci and Karp (2000), a rare exception, assessed the impact of female party leaders in a study of Helen Clark, Kim Campbell, Margaret Thatcher and Cheryl Kernot. Goodyear-Clark and Croskill (2011) examined support for women candidates in the 2000 and 2004 Canadian elections.

individuals' education. Women continue to have a very different experience arising from the intersection of paid and unpaid work.

There is evidence, however, detailing change in 'traditional sex roles in the home and family, the expansion of equal opportunities for women in higher education and the paid workforce, and rising numbers of women entering the professions and management' (Electoral Commission [UK] 2004, 12). As a consequence, there is evidence of the erosion of various distinctive political attitudes (Banducci and Karp 2000, 816; Renfrow 1994, 119; Studlar, McAllister and Hayes 1998). Nonetheless, many women may retain distinguishing attitudes toward politics and the political system as a legacy of marginalisation, and the ongoing domination by men of the national political stage (Sapiro 1983).

The presence of female candidates is seen as producing a new psychological engagement, rather than an electoral effect *per se*. Women occupying and contesting public office signals that men no longer dominate politics (Electoral Commission [UK] 2004, 24; Karp and Banducci 2008, 106). As a consequence, it is argued, women who observe a political contest involving a high-profile female candidate may find the political process less alienating. This can be expected to fuel higher levels of political interest, knowledge and engagement. Julia Gillard's 2010 bid to retain the prime ministership provides an opportunity to analyse these gender effects.

All told then, the literature suggests there are a number of aspects of gender effects that might be anticipated in an election where a woman achieves prominence as the leader of a major party, such as Julia Gillard. These include effects on voters' vote choice, gender identity, leader evaluations and political attitudes, all of which we explore here in the context of the 2010 Australian federal election.

## Gender and Electoral Effects in Australia

Party loyalties are eroding in Western democracies. Arguably, this is freeing more voters to decide their votes on short-term factors, especially the appeal of leaders and issues in a given election (Wattenberg 1991). Yet analysis of leader effects in parliamentary elections is uncommon, and rarer still is investigation of the impact of female leaders on voters' preferences (Plutzer and Zipp 1996, 32). Worldwide, only a small proportion of party leaders are women (Banducci 2002, 50). The paucity of research into gender and leader effects reflects, at least in part, the fact that there have been relatively few female prime ministers.

Women now play a significant role within Australia's political parties, parliaments and lobby-groups. However, this is a comparatively recent development. As recently as the 1977 election, no women were returned to the House of Representatives. Kelley and McAllister (1983, 366) noted that until 1980, when three women were elected to the House, no more than two women had ever sat together in that chamber. Not surprisingly, then, little research has been conducted on gender and candidate evaluations in Australia (Renfrow 2003). A few researchers have investigated whether women who stand for seats in the House of Representatives face obstacles that men do not (Kelley and McAllister 1983; Studlar and McAllister 1991).

The difficulty in establishing whether a candidate's sex is politically significant in Australia is that individual candidates in local districts lack visibility. Historically, this invisibility reflected the depth of party loyalties among Australia's electorate (Aitkin 1982; McAllister 1992). More recently, as the number of voters with weak partisan affinities has increased (Marks 1993; McAllister 2011, 41–3), election campaigns have become quasi-presidential contests in which individual candidates play little part and go largely unnoticed (Bean and Mughan 1989; Denemark, Ward and Bean 2007; McAllister 1992). Banducci and Karp suggested that we can 'expect to see greater gender effects in elections where the party leader is the focus of the campaign' (2000, 826). This is the case given both the larger public profile of national leaders and the greater salience of their gender (Banducci and Karp 2000, 840). Gender is likely to influence electoral behaviour significantly only where a woman plays a prominent part in the campaign.

Until 2010, no Australian major party had selected a woman as national leader. In 1986, the Australian Democrats became the first party in the national parliament to appoint a woman to this role. Three other women followed in Janine Haines' footsteps.[2] There is evidence showing that in the 1996 election, female voters rated then-Democrats' leader, Cheryl Kernot, more favourably than men did, and that she attracted a higher vote among women (Banducci and Karp 2000, 826). However, this is not a convincing demonstration of a gender-affinity effect in Australia. As a minor party, the Democrats focused on the Senate and fielded relatively few candidates for the House of Representatives. Moreover, minor parties, as for Kernot and the Democrats, attract little media attention (Denemark, Ward and Bean 2007, 96). Without a female leader at the head of a major and genuinely national party, there has been no substantive Australian study to isolate any gender-affinity effect. The larger implications of this important connection between female leaders and voters' political attitudes have been 'all but ignored' (Hayes and McAllister 1997, 4).

## Data Analysis and Discussion

Leaders in parliamentary elections attract particular attention. Most are men. The involvement of women in this role could have a significant impact on the broader political attitudes of voters, as well as their vote choice on election day. This section draws on survey data from the 2010 Australian federal election study (McAllister et al. 2011).[3] It explores the gender-distinctiveness of political attitudes, as well as the impact of the Gillard candidacy on voters' political

[2]Cheryl Kernot led the Australian Democrats from 1993 to 1997, when she resigned to join Labor. She was succeeded as leader by Meg Lees (1997–2001) and Natasha Stott Despoja (2001–02).

[3]The 2010 Australian Election Study data file (McAllister et al. 2011) was made available through the Australian Social Science Data Archive, Australian National University, Canberra. The authors are solely responsible for the analysis and interpretation of the data. This survey-data set was selected for use given the variety of measures it affords for specifying our multivariate models. Published opinion polls, though of significant value in reporting voters' preferences at the time, do not have the breadth of attitudinal measures required to test various tenets in gender-gap theory.

interest, efficacy and engagement, before turning to voters' evaluations of Gillard and the effects of these assessments on vote choice.

The conventional orthodoxy regarding gender and political attitudes is that women have lower levels of political interest, efficacy and knowledge than their male counterparts (de Vaus and McAllister 1989, 241). Research shows a marked increase in women's involvement in direct forms of electoral engagement, such as attending political rallies and protests. Nonetheless, the majority of women continue to be less politically informed and efficacious, and less likely to be interested in political campaigns, to discuss politics with others or to attempt to influence another person's vote choice (Atkeson 2003, 1041; Karp and Banducci 2008, 105–06). A number of studies have suggested that the root of these attitudinal differences is the fundamentally different psychological engagement of men and women in the political process. Women often feel they are less qualified to understand political issues and to express their opinions about politics generally (Koch 1997, 119).

Despite the propensity of women to see politics differently from men, the emergence of prominent female candidates and leaders has provided women with a 'powerful symbolic cue that politics "is not just a man's game"' (Karp and Banducci 2008, 106). If this development is capable of promoting greater political interest, involvement and awareness among female voters, then Gillard's prominence as the first female prime minister and major-party leader in Australia can be expected to have a significant political impact. This is most likely to be evident in increased levels of women's political interest and engagement – if not in terms of mobilisation (given Australia's almost universal turnout due to the system of compulsory voting), then in the extent to which women engage with the electoral contest and have confidence in the nation's political processes more generally.

It has been argued that voters use distinctive traits in judging male and female political leaders and their performance – traits that echo stereotypes about male and female capabilities generally. These individual judgements occur within a more complex sociopolitical context, controls for which must be included in any multivariate model that seeks to isolate leader evaluations and gender as key elements in political attitudes and electoral decision-making. These are sketched by specifying the models that were tested in the four tables, below.

According to Studlar, McAllister and Hayes, studies have shown that the electoral gender gap is influenced by two broad groups of factors, as well as the 'residual' influence of the individual's socialisation and adoption of 'gender roles' (1998, 782). The first group, 'social structural' influences, includes factors that have historically explained the gender gap as the product of men's and women's religious, socioeconomic and occupational distinctiveness – such as education, social class, occupation and religious practices. Various studies have shown that women's historical conservatism and support for right-of-centre parties have been sustained by differences in these sorts of factors. The more recent decline of the gender gap is attributed to the erosion of these differences in men's and women's social-structural realities (de Vaus and McAllister 1989; Hayes and McAllister 1997). To control for these influences, the multivariate models below include measures for the respondent's level of education, employment status, union membership, church attendance, self-identification of social class, and membership of the Catholic Church. Age is also included as

a control variable, given research showing that older women are more conservative than their younger counterparts (Norris 1993, 134).

The second group of influences on the gender gap is labelled 'situational constraints', and includes such factors as marital situation and responsibility for child-rearing (Studlar, McAllister and Hayes 1998, 782). These influences are controlled for by the inclusion of a factor for the respondent's marital status. Finally, two other factors are included in the models to control for political bias and for political preferences that are the product of economic performance, not leader evaluation. The first, measuring party identification with the Australian Labor Party, is designed to control for voters supporting Gillard as a proxy for party loyalty, not from leader-oriented evaluations. The second, measuring respondents' estimations of the country's economic situation, is designed to control for respondents supporting the prime minister on the basis of the government's performance in economic policymaking, not assessments of individual leaders. The multivariate tests use this model specification (see Appendix for details on survey questions, coding and scales).

Table 1 reports the results of a multivariate regression analysis employing three alternative leader-evaluation scales. The first is a nine-component leader-evaluation scale, combining respondents' assessments of Gillard on all nine Australian Election Study leader traits (Intelligent; Compassionate; Competent; Sensible; Provides Strong Leadership; Honest; Knowledgeable; Inspiring; and Trustworthy). The second is a three-item 'feminine' scale of voters' assessments of Gillard, based on three measures shown to be used traditionally by voters in

**Table 1.** Gillard Leader Evaluations – Three Alternative Models: Regression

| | 9-Item Evaluation | 3-Item Female Scale | 11-point Like–Dislike Scale |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female | .32** (.04) | .22** (.04) | .79** (.12) |
| Disapprove Way Rudd Removed | −.59** (.05) | −.56** (.05) | −1.65** (.14) |
| Labor Party ID | .72** (.04) | .68** (.05) | 2.88** (.13) |
| Country's Economy Improving | .31** (.05) | .28** (.05) | .92** (.14) |
| Age | .01** (.00) | .00* (.02) | −.00 (.00) |
| University Education | .14* (.05) | .11** (.05) | .68** (.13) |
| Employed | −.06 (.05) | −.04 (.05) | −.11 (.14) |
| Union Member | .00 (.05) | −.02 (.05) | .10 (.14) |
| Catholic | .02 (.05) | .04 (.05) | −.18 (.14) |
| Attends Church | −.05 (.04) | −.08 (.05) | −.14 (.13) |
| Married | .13* (.05) | .08 (.05) | .24 (.14) |
| Middle-Class ID | −.01 (.04) | −.01 (.05) | −.48** (.13) |
| Constant | −.45** (.11) | −.23* (.12) | 4.53** (.33) |
| *n* | 1604 | 1633 | 1662 |
| *R* Square | .33 | .28 | .40 |

Note: Figures in the table are regression coefficients (b) with the standard error in parentheses.
*significant at the .05 level.
**significant at the .01 level.
See Appendix for details on all variables used in this table: JULIA_FAC9, JULIA_FACF3, GILLARD, FEMALE, ANTICOUP, LABID, OZECONUP, AGE, HIGHEDUC, WORKING, UNIONMBR, CATHOLIC, CHURCHGO, MARRIED, MIDCLASS.
Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al. 2011).

judging female candidates (Compassionate; Sensible; and Honest). Factor analysis was employed to produce a factor score for each respondent, for both the nine-component leader scale and the three-component feminine scale. The third scale is an 11-point like/dislike scale measuring voters' perceptions of Gillard.

A number of important patterns are discernible in the three regression models reported in Table 1. Perhaps the most important is that all models show that women are significantly more positive or supportive in their evaluations of Gillard than men. These measures of a gender-affinity effect are net of the significant effects for Labor partisanship and the perception of improvements in the national economy during the preceding year. However, disapproval of the way the ALP handled its leadership change had a significant, negative effect on assessments of Gillard. It is not clear how much of this resentment is the product of Gillard's involvement in removing Rudd, and how much is merely a proxy for anti-Labor sentiments across the electorate. Importantly, however, these sentiments are evident despite controlling for voters' party identification.

It is likely that the juxtaposition of this negative perception with the positive evaluations of Gillard accurately reflects the 'tightrope' she had to walk in the 2010 campaign between two disparate public personae – caring and compassionate as a woman, but strong-willed and assertive as ALP leader and prime minister. In short, women held Gillard in especially positive regard, despite a pervasive dissatisfaction with the way she acquired the Labor leadership.

Table 2 – examining only women's attitudes – tests the impact of women's evaluations of Gillard (using the three-item, feminine-trait scale) on their electoral engagement. Those women who viewed the prime minister positively were much more likely to have strong interest in the election campaign. However, women holding strong evaluations of Gillard were no more likely to discuss politics with others, or to try to persuade others to change their vote, and were no more likely to say they would definitely vote even if it were not compulsory to do so. Women did tend to evaluate Gillard in a very different way than men. However, among female voters, Gillard's candidacy did not sustain a sufficiently strong sense of identity or 'empowerment' to encourage their active engagement with the 2010 election campaign. University education and middle-class identity, not women's evaluations of Australia's first female prime minister, emerge as the most important predictors of active political involvement.

Table 3 also focuses on the attitudes of women. It shows that women with a positive assessment of the prime minister had significantly higher levels of political trust, external political efficacy and satisfaction with the way Australian democracy works. However, having a strong evaluation of Gillard appears to be unrelated to interest in politics. The impact of Gillard's candidacy is more apparent in women's general attitudes toward the political process than in various aspects of their active electoral engagement.

Each of these effects closely parallels those found by Karp and Banducci (2008, 112) in their analysis of the impact of women in elected office on women's political efficacy and satisfaction with democratic processes. Overall, these effects suggest that the 'empowering' influence of female leaders on women's political sensibilities manifests itself in an internalised sense of confidence, and

**Table 2.** Gillard Leader-Evaluation Effects on Electoral Engagement – Female Respondents Only: Regression

| | Interest in Election Campaign | Discussed Politics with Others | Tried to Persuade Others re: Vote | Definitely Vote if Not Compulsory |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Julia Gillard Evaluation[+] | .05 (.03) | −.02 (.03) | −.04 (.03) | .02 (.04) |
| Disapprove Way Rudd Removed | −.09 (.07) | .02 (.07) | −.18* (.06) | .03 (.08) |
| Labor Party ID | −.01 (.06) | .06 (.06) | −.10 (.06) | .07 (.08) |
| Country's Economy Improving | −.01 (.06) | .05 (.07) | .05 (.06) | .03 (.08) |
| Age | .01** (.00) | .00 (.00) | −.01** (.00) | .01** (.00) |
| University Education | .22** (.06) | .34** (.06) | .03 (.05) | .25** (.07) |
| Employed | −.03 (.06) | .07 (.06) | .08 (.05) | −.08 (.07) |
| Union Member | .06 (.06) | .05 (.07) | .12* (.06) | .11 (.08) |
| Catholic | .04 (.06) | −.02 (.07) | .03 (.06) | .01 (.08) |
| Attends Church | .04 (.06) | .03 (.06) | .08 (.05) | .07 (.07) |
| Married | .02 (.06) | .03 (.06) | −.11* (.05) | .15* (.07) |
| Middle-Class ID | .27** (.06) | .16** (.06) | .06 (.05) | .18** (.07) |
| Constant | 2.38** (.14) | 2.64** (.15) | 1.83** (.13) | 3.57** (.18) |
| *n* | 837 | 842 | 827 | 838 |
| *R* Square | .09 | .07 | .07 | .06 |

Note: Figures in the table are regression coefficients (b) with the standard error in parentheses.
[+]Evaluation scale is the 3-factor scale, 'Julia_FACF3' (see Appendix).
*significant at the .05 level.
**significant at the .01 level.
See Appendix for details on all variables used in this table: INTCAMP, DISCUSS, PERSUADE, DEFVOTE, JULIA_FACF3, ANTICOUP, LABID, OZECONUP, AGE, HIGHEDUC, WORKING, UNIONMBR, CATHOLIC, CHURCHGO, MARRIED, MIDCLASS.
Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al. 2011).

not a newly energised activism which is played out during the election campaign.

Table 4 explores the impact of evaluations of Gillard on vote preferences. It shows the independent impact of respondents' gender on their vote choice, employing the same controls as in the previous three tables but without the Gillard-evaluation term. The results reveal that women were significantly more likely than men to vote Labor, even when controlling for Labor partisan identity, positive estimations of the economy and disapproval of Rudd's removal from office. The Gillard candidacy had important consequences for women's sense of connectedness to the political process, but it also had an important short-term effect in galvanising women to vote for the ALP. This finding is consistent with commercial opinion polling conducted during the campaign.

As Sawer noted, opinion polls conducted by Newspoll and Nielsen revealed a 'continuing gender gap' (2012, 253), and confirmed that '[m]ore women than men approved of Julia Gillard' (251). Conversely, fewer 'women than men approved of Tony Abbott', and this gap widened during the campaign (251). After a long period in which elections exhibited the vestiges of a pro-Liberal, conservative gender gap, the 2010 election signalled the arrival of a 'modern

**Table 3.** Gillard Leader-Evaluation Effects on Political Interest, Trust and Efficacy – Female Respondents Only: Regression

| | Interest in Politics | Political Trust | Political Efficacy: Politicians | Satisfaction with Australian Democracy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Julia Gillard Evaluation[+] | .03 (.03) | .32** (.09) | .16** (.04) | .16** (.03) |
| Disapprove Way Rudd Removed | −.08 (.06) | −.26 (.20) | −.03 (.09) | −.12* (.06) |
| Labor Party ID | .11 (.06) | .24 (.18) | −.04 (.08) | −.03 (.05) |
| Country's Economy Improving | −.01 (.06) | −.04 (.19) | .05 (.08) | .09 (.05) |
| Age | .01** (.00) | .02** (.01) | .00 (.00) | .00 (.00) |
| University Education | .31** (.06) | .16 (.18) | .24** (.08) | .08 (.05) |
| Employed | .03 (.06) | −.13 (.17) | .02 (.08) | .02 (.05) |
| Union Member | .05 (.06) | −.24 (.19) | −.02 (.08) | −.00 (.05) |
| Catholic | .01 (.06) | −.03 (.18) | .16* (.08) | .02 (.05) |
| Attends Church | .09 (.05) | .49* (.17) | .03 (.07) | .02 (.05) |
| Married | −.04 (.06) | .13 (.18) | .09 (.08) | .04 (.05) |
| Middle-Class ID | .19** (.06) | .27 (.17) | .14 (.07) | .04 (.05) |
| Constant | 2.10** (.19) | 2.72** (.42) | 2.25** (.18) | 2.72** (.12) |
| *n* | 841 | 838 | 842 | 842 |
| *R* Square | .12 | .06 | .06 | .09 |

Note: Figures in the table are regression coefficients (b) with the standard error in parentheses.
[+]Evaluation scale is the 3-factor scale, 'Julia_FACF3' (see Appendix).
*significant at the .05 level.
**significant at the .01 level.
See Appendix for details on all variables used in this table: INTPOLS, TRUST, EXTEFF2, SATDEMO, JULIA_FACF3, ANTICOUP, LABID, OZECONUP, AGE, HIGHEDUC, WORKING, UNIONMBR, CATHOLIC, CHURCHGO, MARRIED, MIDCLASS.
Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al. 2011).

gender gap', with women more often voting 'to the left of men' (253).[4] It is likely that the razor-edged election was decided by women whose preference for Gillard made the difference for Labor.

In the end, it is important to remember that elections are won or lost on the basis of relatively tiny margins in the electoral centre that divide the two main parties. Parties must entice voters from their rivals' ranks, while retaining those of their own who might otherwise defect. The models reported in the second and third columns of Table 4 examine the difference between men and women in vote-switching to and from Labor between the 2007 and 2010 federal

[4]A left-of-centre gender gap in the United States was first detected in the 1970s and became consistently evident in the 1980s (Miller 1988). Various studies have explored the rise of a progressive gap in voting patterns in other industrial societies (Norris and Lovenduski 1993; Welch and Thomas 1988). Research has suggested that a new, progressive gender gap is more likely to be evident in a handful of key social policies, and in attitudes toward war and military force, than in electoral preferences for political parties (Denemark 2004, 5–6; Studlar, McAllister and Hayes 1998, 783). Social concerns, especially the family, education and health, have been shown to be key focal points for female politicians and voters' assessments (Norris and Lovenduski 1989; Thomas 1991).

**Table 4.** Gillard Leader-Evaluation$^{+}$ Effects on Vote Choice: Logit

| | Labor Vote in 2010 | Switch to Labor in 2010 | Switch from Labor in 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Female | .49** (.15) | .77* (.25) | −.29 (.16) |
| Disapprove Way Rudd Removed | −.50* (.17) | −.60* (.26) | .24 (.20) |
| Labor Party ID | 3.54** (.15) | −.09 (.26) | −.12 (.18) |
| Country's Economy Improving | .54** (.17) | .45 (.26) | .06 (.18) |
| Age | −.01 (.01) | .00 (.01) | −.03** (.01) |
| University Education | .12 (.17) | −.12 (.27) | −.00 (.18) |
| Employed | −.18 (.17) | .21 (.28) | .02 (.18) |
| Union Member | .16 (.18) | .07 (.28) | .46** (.18) |
| Catholic | −.14 (.17) | −.15 (.30) | .25 (.18) |
| Attends Church | −.27 (.16) | −.65** (.26) | −.05 (.17) |
| Married | .16 (.17) | −.28 (.26) | .06 (.19) |
| Middle-Class ID | −.44* (.16) | −.06 (.26) | .31 (.18) |
| Constant | −1.17* (.41) | −2.74** (.67) | −.90* (.42) |
| *n* | 1619 | 1534 | 1534 |
| -2 log likelihood | 1228.29 | 575.29 | 1102.39 |
| Nagelkerke *R* Square | .61 | .06 | .06 |

Note: Figures in the table are regression coefficients (b) with the standard error in parentheses.
$^{+}$Vote choice is House of Representatives vote.
*significant at the .05 level.
**significant at the .01 level.
See Appendix for details on all variables used in this table: LABHVOTE, SWTOLAB, SWFRMLAB, FEMALE, ANTICOUP, LABID, OZECONUP, AGE, HIGHEDUC, WORKING, UNIONMBR, CATHOLIC, CHURCHGO, MARRIED, MIDCLASS.
Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al. 2011).

elections. Women were significantly more likely than men to switch to Labor. However, women were not significantly less likely than men to switch from the ALP to another party in 2010: a simple cross-tabulation of gender by vote-switching away from Labor confirms that more men (13.3 per cent) than women (10.9 per cent) changed from Labor to another party in 2010.

Gillard's electoral value to the ALP seems clear-cut. Controversy may have surrounded her 'assassination' of Rudd, but in 2010, Gillard had a positive, and likely decisive, impact on the ALP's electoral fortunes. In contesting the prime ministership, she also generated significant increases in women's sense of political connectedness. In both respects, the high-profile candidacy of Australia's first female prime minister and major-party leader must be seen as having had a significant effect on the nature of the gender gap in Australia, and on the promotion of women's sense of political involvement.

## Conclusion

Gillard's historic candidacy in 2010 confirms several elements of gender theory about the role of high-profile female leaders in women's political attitudes and behaviour, and clarifies the 'question of whether voter bias exists toward female

politicians' (Fulton 2012, 303). Despite the 'tightrope' female leaders must walk between voters' expectations that women should not be 'power-seeking', and yet should be competent and self-assured, our findings suggest that positive assessments of Gillard more than counterbalanced suspicions that she was an inappropriately combative female. Australian voters disapproved of the way Gillard and the Labor caucus deposed Rudd from the prime ministership, but women in particular were enthused by her candidacy. The net positive effect in terms of women's sense of political efficacy, trust and satisfaction is clear.

Similarly, Gillard secured a gender-affinity effect in terms of her electoral impact. She won Labor more votes than she lost the party; this was vital in a close-fought ballot that took weeks of post-election preference-counting to decide. Our findings support the notion that women in high-profile, national leadership positions – even where party leaders are not directly elected – can 'empower' women and generate a heightened sense of involvement with the political process (Atkeson 2003, 1051). This, in turn, can affect vote preferences, at least in the short term. Our findings broadly confirm the 'gender identity' model (Plutzer and Zipp 1996, 42), and the argument that female leaders can have a pervasive and salutary impact on women's sense of political inclusion. Gillard's prime ministership fuelled a perception that politics is no longer 'just a man's game' (Karp and Banducci 2008, 106). Nonetheless, Gillard's inevitable engagement in the cut and thrust of power politics may also remind women, as Margaret Thatcher did in the 1970s, that politics can be a ruthless process, whether it involves a man or a woman.

## References


Aitkin, D. 1982. *Stability and Change in Australian Politics*. 2nd edn. Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Atkeson, L.R. 2003. Not All Cues are Created Equal: The Conditional Impact of Female Candidates on Political Engagement. *Journal of Politics* 65: 1040–61.

Banducci, S. 2002. Gender and Leadership. *In*: J. Vowles, P. Aimer, J. Karp, S. Banducci, R. Miller and A. Sullivan, eds. *Proportional Representation on Trial*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.

Banducci, S. and Karp, J. 2000. Gender, Leadership and Choice in Multiparty Systems. *Political Research Quarterly* 53: 815–48.

Bean, C. and Mughan, A. 1989. Leadership Effects in Parliamentary Elections in Australia and Britain. *American Political Science Review* 83: 1165–179.

Blewett, N. 2010. The Assassination of Rudd. *Australian Book Review* 324 (September): 9–11.

Cox, E. 2010. A Woman PM – Is it a Step Forward? *Crikey,* 24 June. URL: <http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/06/24/eva-cox-a-woman-pm-is-it-a-step-forward/>. Consulted 22 May 2012.

Denemark, D. 2002. Television Effects and Voter Decision Making in Australia: A Re-examination of the Converse Model. *British Journal of Political Science* 32: 663–90.

Denemark, D. 2004. Security and Domestic Issues in Australian Gender Gap Politics. *AQ: Journal of Contemporary Analysis* 76: 4–13.

Denemark, D. 2005. Information Flow and Voter Decision Making in the 2001 Australian Federal Election: The Role of International and Domestic Issues. *Political Research Quarterly* 58: 397–412.

Denemark, D., Ward, I. and Bean, C. 2007. Election Campaigns and Television News Coverage: The Case of the 2001 Australian Election. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 42: 89–109.

de Vaus, D. and McAllister, I. 1989. The Changing Politics of Women: Gender and Political Alignment in 11 Nations. *European Journal of Political Research* 17: 241–62.

Electoral Commission [UK]. 2004. *Gender and Political Participation*. Research Report. Trevelyan House, London: Electoral Commission.

Fulton, S.A. 2012. Running Backwards and in High Heels: The Gendered Quality Gap and Incumbent Electoral Success. *Political Research Quarterly* 65: 303–14.

Goodyear-Grant, E. and Croskill, J. 2011. Gender Affinity Effects in Vote Choice in Westminster Systems: Assessing 'Flexible' Voters in Canada. *Politics & Gender* 7: 223–50.
Hayes, B. and McAllister, I. 1997. Gender, Party Leaders and Election Outcomes in Australia, Britain and the United States. *Comparative Political Studies* 30: 3–26.
Huddy, L. and Terkildsen, N. 1993a. The Consequences of Gender Stereotypes for Women Candidates at Different Levels and Types of Office. *Political Research Quarterly* 46: 503–25.
Huddy, L. and Terkildsen, N. 1993b. Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates. *American Journal of Political Science* 37: 119–47.
Johnson, C. 2010. Politicians, Gender and Emotion. *Australian Political Studies Association Conference*. 27–29 September, University of Melbourne. URL: <http://apsa2010.com.au/full-papers/pdf/APSA2010_0229.pdf>. Consulted 22 May 2012.
Kahn, K.F. 1994. Does Gender Make a Difference? An Experimental Examination of Sex Stereotypes and Press Patterns in Statewide Campaigns. *American Journal of Political Science* 38: 162–95.
Karp, J. and Banducci, S. 2008. When Politics is not just a Man's Game: Women's Representation and Political Engagement. *Electoral Studies* 27: 105–15.
Kelley, J. and McAllister, I. 1983. The Electoral Consequences of Gender in Australia. *British Journal of Political Science* 43: 365–77.
Koch, J. 1997. Candidate Gender and Women's Psychological Engagement in Politics. *American Politics Quarterly* 25: 118–33.
Marks, G. 1993. Partisanship and the Vote in Australia: Changes over Time, 1967–1990. *Political Behavior* 15: 137–66.
McAllister, I. 1992. *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.
McAllister, I. 2011. *The Australian Voter: 50 Years of Change*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
McAllister, I., Bean, C., Gibson, R.K. and Pietsch, J. 2011. *Australian Election Study, 2010*. [Computer file]. Canberra: Australian Social Science Data Archive, Australian National University.
Miller, A. 1988. Gender and the Vote: 1984. *In*: C. Mueller, ed. *The Politics of the Gender Gap*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Murray, P. 2009. Selling Tony Abbott a Tall Order. *The West Australian*, 7 December. URL: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/opinion/post/-/blog/paulmurray/post/281/comment/1/>. Consulted 22 May 2012.
Norris, P. 1993. The Generation-Gap in British Elections. *In*: D. Denver, P. Norris, D. Broughton and C. Rallings, eds. *British Elections and Parties Yearbook 1993*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
Norris, P. and Lovenduski, J. 1989. Women Candidates for Parliament: Transforming the Agenda. *British Journal of Political Science* 19: 106–15.
Norris, P. and Lovenduski, J. 1993. Gender and Party Politics in Britain. *In*: J. Lovenduski and P. Norris, eds. *Gender and Party Politics*. London: Sage.
Okimoto, T. and Brescoll, V. 2010. The Price of Power: Power Seeking and Backlash against Female Politicians. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36: 923–36.
Plutzer, E. and Zipp, J. 1996. Identity Politics, Partisanship and Voting for Women Candidates. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60: 30–57.
Pomper, G. 1975. *Voters' Choice*. New York: Harper and Row.
Rahn, W., Aldrich, J.H., Borgida, E. and Sullivan, J.L. 1993. A Social-Cognitive Model of Candidate Appraisal. *In*: R. Niemi and H. Weisberg, eds. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*. 3rd edn. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
Renfrow, P. 1994. The Gender Gap in the 1993 Election. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 29: 118–33.
Renfrow, P. 2003. Gender Politics. *In*: I. McAllister, S. Dowrick and R. Hassan, eds. *The Cambridge Handbook of the Social Sciences in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sapiro, V. 1983. *The Political Integration of Women*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Sawer, M. 2012. Managing Gender: The 2010 Federal Election. In: M. Simms and J. Wanna, eds. *Julia 2010*. Canberra: Australian National University E Press.
Smith, T. 2010. *Candidate Gender in the 2010 Australian Federal Election*. Democratic Audit Discussion Paper 1/10 (August). URL: <http://democraticaudit.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/smithAugust2010.pdf>. Consulted 22 May 2012.
Studlar, D. and McAllister, I. 1991. Political Recruitment to the Australian Legislature: Towards an Explanation of Women's Electoral Disadvantages. *Western Political Quarterly* 44: 467–85.
Studlar, D., McAllister, I. and Hayes, B. 1998. Explaining the Gender Gap in Voting: A Cross-National Analysis. *Social Science Quarterly* 79: 779–98.

Thomas, S. 1991. The Impact of Women on State Legislative Policies. *Journal of Politics* 53: 958–76.
Wattenberg, M. 1991. *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Welch, S. and Thomas, S. 1988. Explaining the Gender Gap in British Public Opinion. *Women and Politics* 8: 25–44.
Zipp, J. and Plutzer, E. 1985. Gender Differences in Voting for Female Candidates: Evidence from the 1982 Election. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49: 179–97.

## Appendix: Variable Codes, Scales and Measures

### *Political Measures*

**LABHVOTE** A dummy variable for a Labor Party House of Representatives vote in the 2010 Australian federal election: 1 = Labor; 0 = vote for any other party (Original 2010 Australian Election Study item: *B9REPS*).[5]

**SWTOLAB** A dummy variable for House vote-switch to Labor in the 2010 election: 1 = switch to a Labor vote in 2010 from any other party in the 2007 election; 0 = switch from a 2007 vote for Labor to a 2010 vote for any other party, or consistent votes for Labor or any other party in 2007 and 2010 (*B14* and *B9REPS*).

**SWFRMLAB** A dummy variable for House vote-switch from Labor in the 2010 election: 1 = switch from a Labor vote in 2007 to any other party in the 2010 election; 0 = switch from any party in 2007 to a Labor vote in 2010, or consistent votes for Labor or any other party in 2007 and 2010 (*B14* and *B9REPS*).

**LABID** A dummy variable for party identification with the Australian Labor Party: 1 = Labor Party ID; 0 = ID for any other party (*B1*).

**ANTICOUP** A dummy variable for disapproval of the way the Labor Party handled the Kevin Rudd leadership change in June 2010: 1 = strongly disapprove or disapprove; 0 = strongly approve or approve (*C6*).

**OZECONUP** A dummy variable for perception that Australia's economic situation was better across the last 12 months: 1 = a lot better or a little better; 0 = about the same, a little worse, or a lot worse (*D4CNTRY*).

**INTPOLS** A 4-value variable for level of interest in politics: 4 = a good deal; 3 = some; 2 = not much; 1 = none (*A1*).

**INTCAMP** A 4-value variable for level of interest in the election campaign overall: 4 = a good deal; 3 = some; 2 = not much; 1 = none (*A4*).

**DISCUSS** A 4-value variable for frequency of discussing politics with others in person during the election: 4 = frequently; 3 = occasionally; 2 = rarely; 1 = not at all (*A5P1*).

**PERSUADE** A 4-value variable for frequency of talking to other people to persuade them to vote for a particular party or candidate: 4 = frequently; 3 = occasionally; 2 = rarely; 1 = not at all (*A5P2*).

**DEFVOTE** A 5-value variable for likelihood would have voted in the last election if it was not compulsory: 5 = definitely would have voted; 4 = probably would have voted; 3 = might, might not; 2 = probably not; 1 = definitely not (*A10*).

**EXTEFF2** A 5-value variable for the perception that federal politicians know what ordinary people think: 5 = politicians know; 1 = politicians don't know (*C12*).

[5]Items in parentheses below refer to the 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al. 2011).

**SATDEMO** A 4-value variable for satisfaction with the way democracy works in Australia: 4 = very satisfied; 3 = fairly satisfied; 2 = not very satisfied; 1 = not at all satisfied (*C7*).

**TRUST** An 11-point scale of trust in politicians generally: 10 = great deal of trust; 0 = no trust (C1).

*Leader-Evaluation Measures and Scales*

**GILLARD** An 11-point scale measuring likes/dislikes of the Labor Party leader, Julia Gillard: 0 = 'strongly dislike'; 10 = 'strongly like' (*C3JULIA*).

**JULIA_FAC9** A continuous variable derived from a factor analysis of nine leader-evaluation components, analysing Labor leader, Julia Gillard (Intelligent; Compassionate; Competent; Sensible; Provides Strong Leadership; Honest; Knowledgeable; Inspiring; and Trustworthy (*C4JGINT, C4JGCMP, C4JGCMPT, C4JGSEN, C4JGLEA, C4JGHON, C4JGKNO, C4JGINS* and *C4JGTRU*).

**JULIA_FACF3** A continuous variable derived from a factor analysis of three 'feminine' leader-evaluation components, analysing Labor leader, Julia Gillard (Compassionate; Sensible; and Honest) (*C4JGCMP, C4JGSEN* and *C4JGHON*).

*Demographics*

**FEMALE** A dummy variable for respondent's gender: 1 = female; 0 = male (*H1*).

**AGE** A continuous variable for respondent's age (*AGE*).

**HIGHEDUC** A dummy variable for respondent's level of education: 1 = post-graduate degree or diploma, bachelor degree, or undergraduate diploma; 0 = no qualification since leaving school, trade qualification, or non-trade qualification (*G3*).

**UNION** A dummy variable for respondent's union membership: 1 = union member; 0 = not a union member (*G6*).

**WORKING** A dummy variable for respondent's full-time or part-time employment: 1 = employed; 0 = not employed (*G4*).

**CATHOLIC** A dummy variable for respondent's Catholicism: 1 = Catholic; 0 = any other religion (*H5*).

**CHURCHGO** A dummy variable for respondent's church attendance: 1 = attend church at least once a year; 0 = do not attend church at least once a year (*H6*).

**MARRIED** A dummy variable for respondent's marital status: 1 = married or in de facto relationship; 0 = not married or in a de facto relationship (*H7*).

**MIDCLASS** A dummy variable for respondent's class self-identification: 1 = middle-class identity; 0 = working-class identity or none (*H13*).