

Helping the Cause? The Effect of Female Top Candidate Nominations on Voters

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September 2024

Motivation



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Question

What effect does the nomination of a female top candidate have on female voters?

- **Mixed results** on whether women are more likely to participate if candidates are female (e.g. Atkeson 2003; Wolbrecht & Campbell 2007; Broockman 2014; Wolak 2020).
- **Gap:** Research has focused on candidates at the local, state, or legislative levels.

Motivating Observational Study

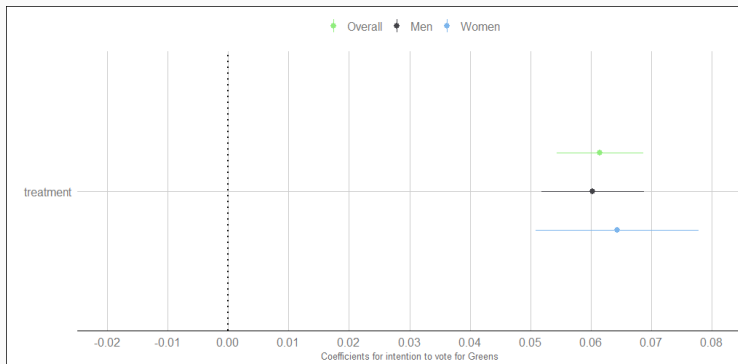
- Pre-registered UESD study exploiting the **surprise nomination** of Bearbock as the German Greens' candidate on April 19, 2021
- Survey data covering **69,629 respondents** from April 16 - 23, 2021

Results

The nomination of Baerbock had a positive effect on women's **and** men's voting intention for the Greens.

Main Observational Results

Figure 1: Average treatment effect of the Baerbock nomination on respondents vote intention for the Greens



Remaining Questions

- Not able to distinguish between a **female candidate effect** and a general **leadership effect**
- Limited data availability does not allow for the exploration of underlying **mechanisms**

Path Forward

Closely replicate the setting in an **experimental** study to observe both the female nomination and counterfactual male nomination and include measurements on possible mechanisms.

Mobilization Effect

- A female top candidate increases women's PTV for the party.

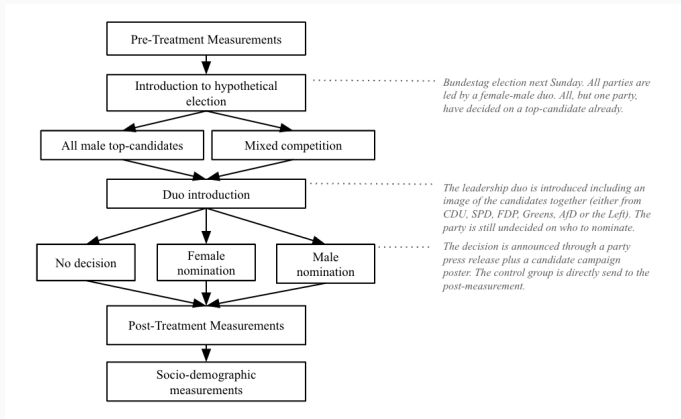
Leadership Effect

- Nominating a top candidate increases respondents' PTV for the party, irrespective of candidate gender.

Mechanisms

- (Stereotypical) Issue Competence
- Moderation Effect
- Gender Equality Concerns
- Social Identity
- Political Efficacy

Figure 2: Experiment flow



Nomination Announcement

The top candidate announcement included two pieces of information:

- A short **press release** by the party announcing the decision
- A campaign **poster** with the selected top candidate

Details

Treatment

Freie Demokraten
FDP

Als Spitzenkandidat für Sie in den Bundestag.



Am 17.12. wählen!

Jonathan Kirst

SPD

Als Spitzenkandidatin für Sie in den Bundestag.



Am 17.12. wählen!

Klaudia Jakob

Figure 3: ATE on PTV for both treatments and overall

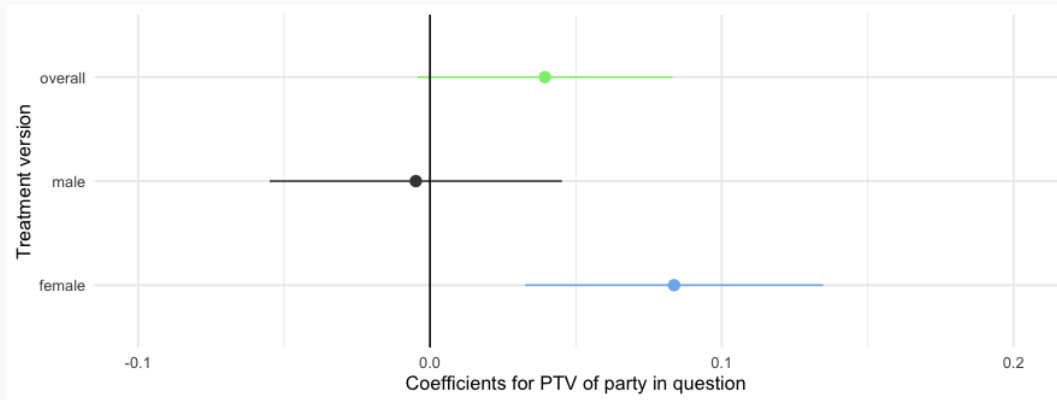


Figure 4: ATE of female nomination by party

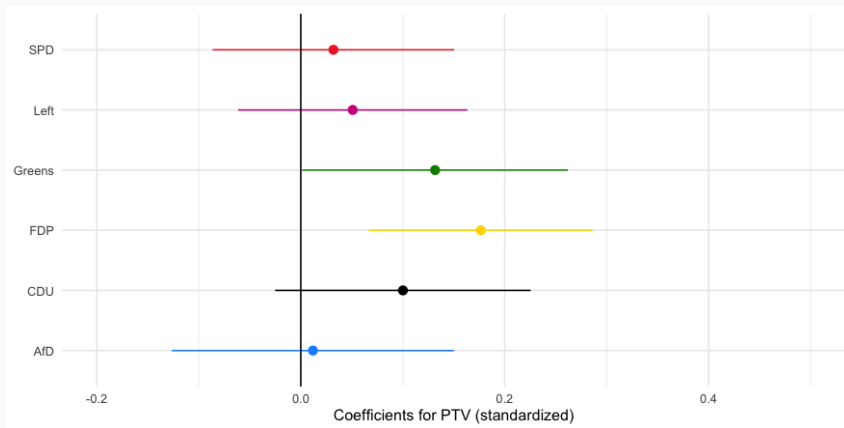
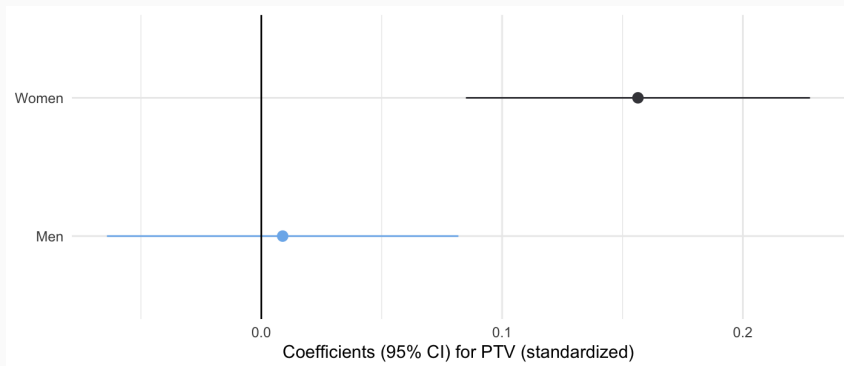
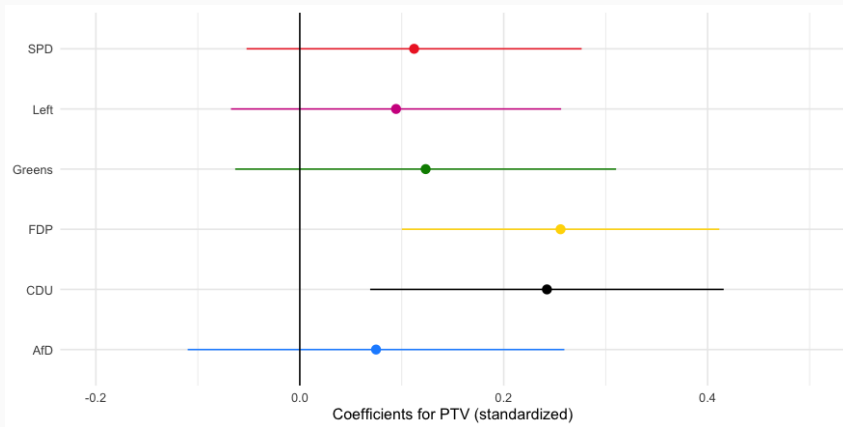


Figure 5: ATE of female nomination conditional on respondent's gender



Results by Party among Women

Figure 6: Effects of female nomination on PTV per party among women (95% CIs)



Conclusion

- Positive effect of female nomination, not male nomination – **no leadership effect**
- **Greens** and **Liberals** benefit *overall*, **Christian Conservatives** & **Liberals** profit *among women*

Estimation

- **confirmatory evidence** on stereotypical policy competence, gender equality perception, social identity and political efficacy mechanisms
 - no moderation effect
-
- **Implications:** descriptive representation matters, female top-candidates promising election strategy

Thank you for your attention.

Contact

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- More input on survey and treatment
- Detailed results on mechanisms

Election Setting

- Hypothetical, imminent election with the current Bundestag parties as choices
- All parties are introduced as being led by a duo
- Depending on assignment, they have all decided on their male leader as top-candidate or there is a woman in the race
- Leadership duo of the assigned party is introduced
- Short biographies of each person – similar except for gender

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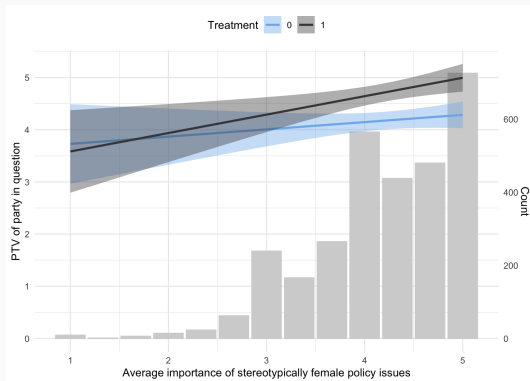
Treatment Details

- Short bios written by ChatGPT, allocation randomized except gender cues
- Press release and acceptance speech written by ChatGPT, constant except for the name and gender cues
- Names for all candidates generated with random German name generator
- Images from London Faces Lab, duos comparable in age and attractiveness rating, all self identifying as White

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Mechanisms – Policy Area Importance

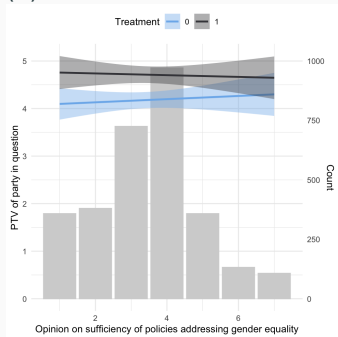
Figure 7: Effects of female nomination on PTV along average importance of stereotypically female policy issues among women (95% CIs)



Mechanisms – State of Gender Equality

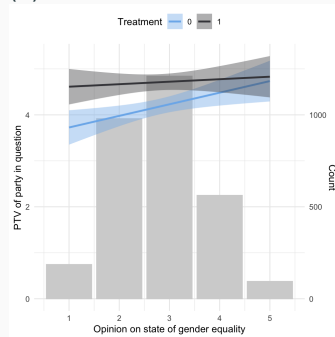
Figure 8: Effects of female nomination on PTV along opinion on gender equality among women only (95% CIs)

(A)



Note: Scale from 1 (policies do not go far enough) to 7 (policies go too far)

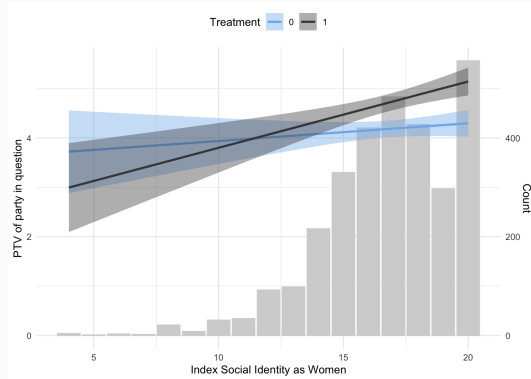
(B)



Note: Scale from 1 (very unequal) to 7 (very equal).

Mechanisms – Social Identity

Figure 9: Effects of female nomination on PTV along index on social identity as women (among women) (95% CIs)



Mechanisms – Moderation effect

Figure 10: Effects by treatment version on perceived party extremism as indicated on a left-right-scale

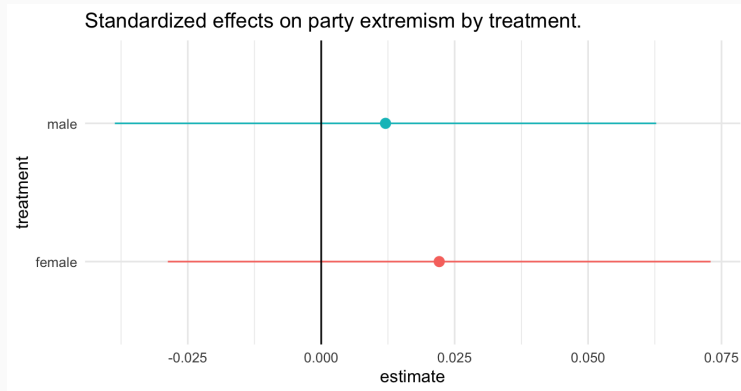


Figure 11: Effects of female nomination on political efficacy among women (95% CIs)

