

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

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# Motivation



Leadership duos & the top job dilemma

## Question

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

- **Mixed results** on the mobilizing effects of female candidates (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

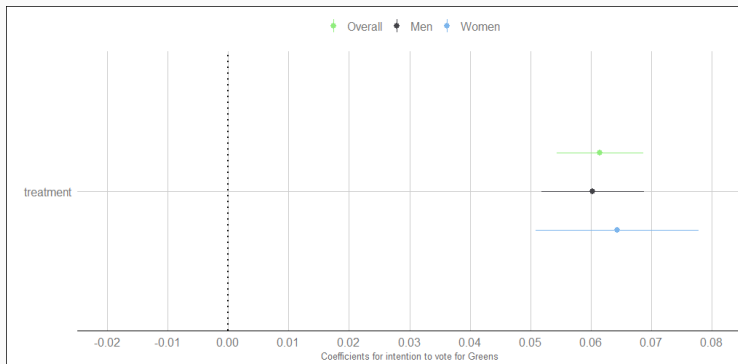
- Pre-registered UESD study exploiting the **surprise nomination** of Bearbock as the German Greens' candidate on April 19, 2021
- Survey data covering **69,629 respondents** from April 16 - 23, 2021

## 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

- Cannot distinguish between a **female candidate effect** and a general **leadership effect**
- Limited data availability for the exploration of **mechanisms**

### Strategy

- **Survey experiment** with Respondi,  $N = 9,000$
- **hypothetical election** closely resembling 2021
- Manipulating the **nomination decision**, randomizing gender & party

## Mobilization Effect

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

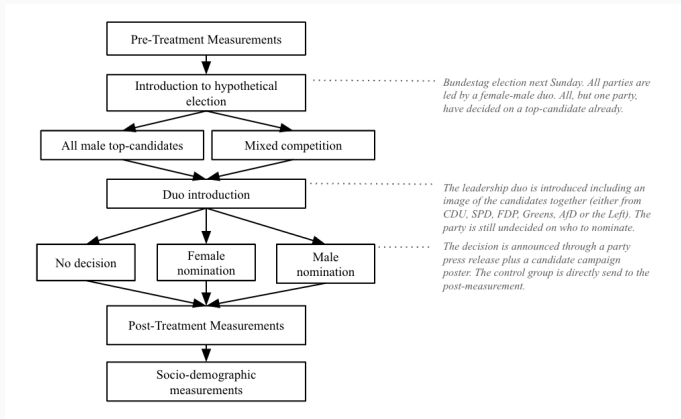
## Leadership Effect

- 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

The announcement includes two inputs:

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

Details



**Figure 3:** ATE on PTV for both treatments and across

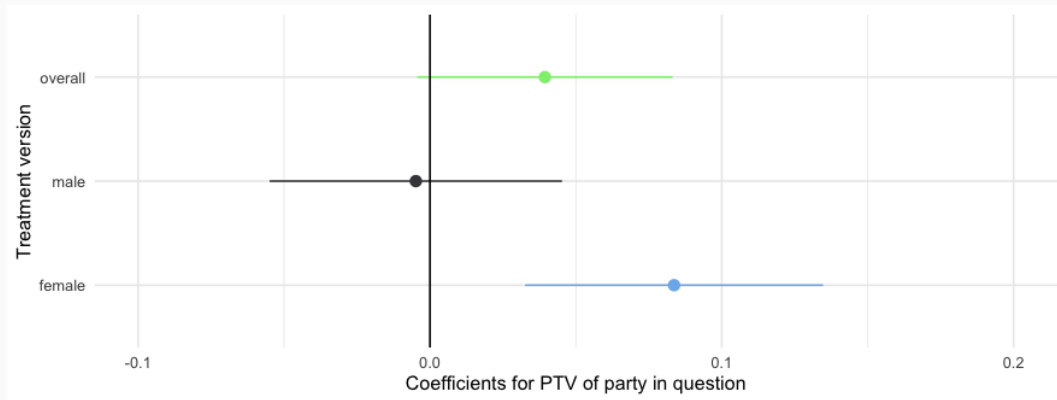
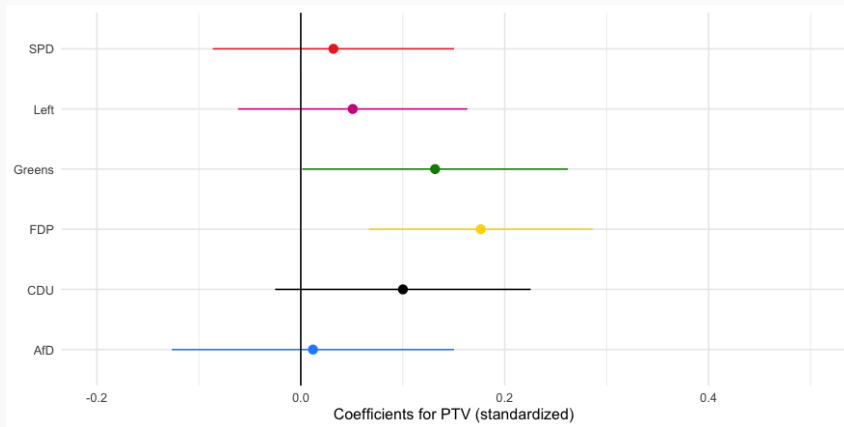
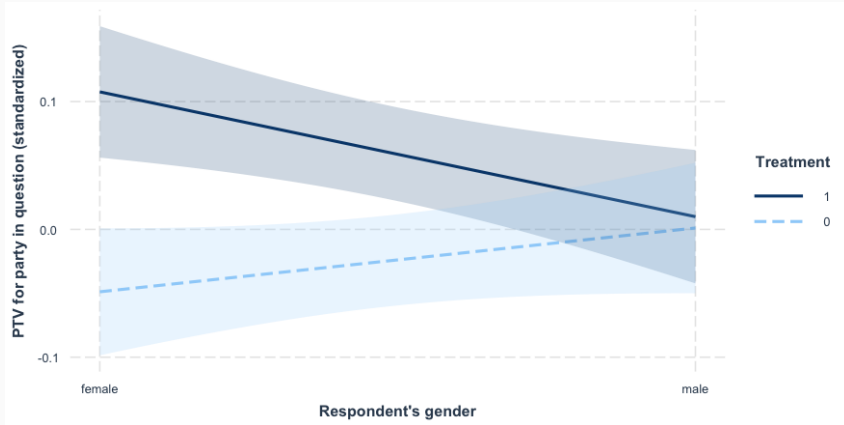


Figure 4: ATE of female nomination by party



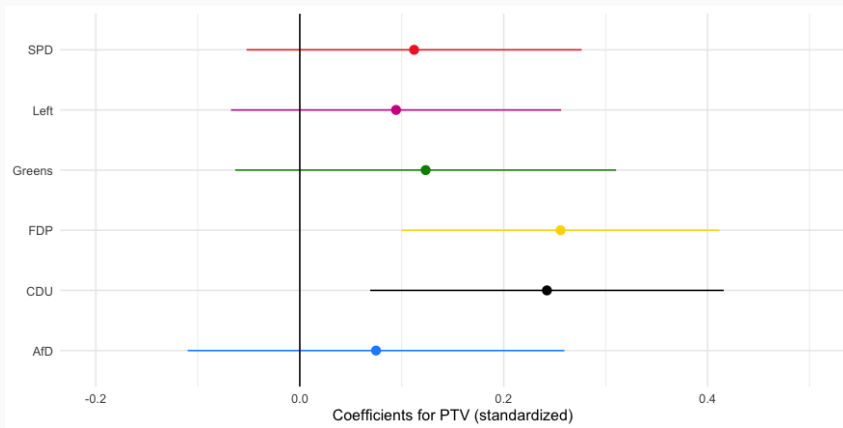
# Main Results

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

## Mechanisms

- 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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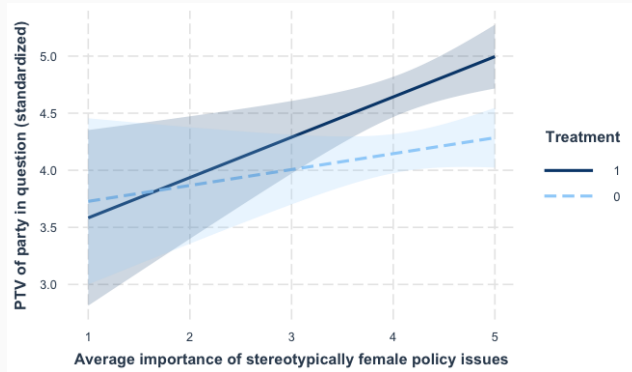
# Treatment Details

- 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

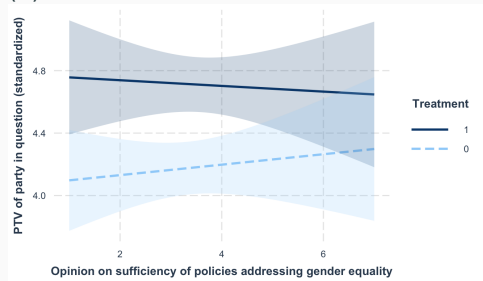
**Figure 7:** Effects of female nomination on PTV along average importance of stereotypically female policy issues among women (95% CIs)



# Mechanisms – State of Gender Equality

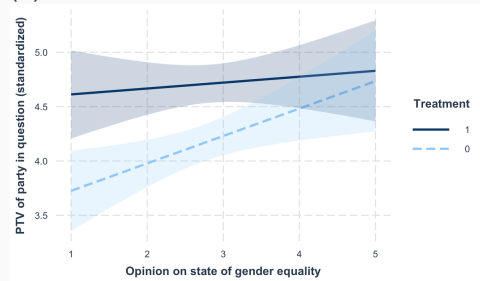
**Figure 8:** Effects of female nomination on PTV along opinion on gender equality among women only (95% CIs)

(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).

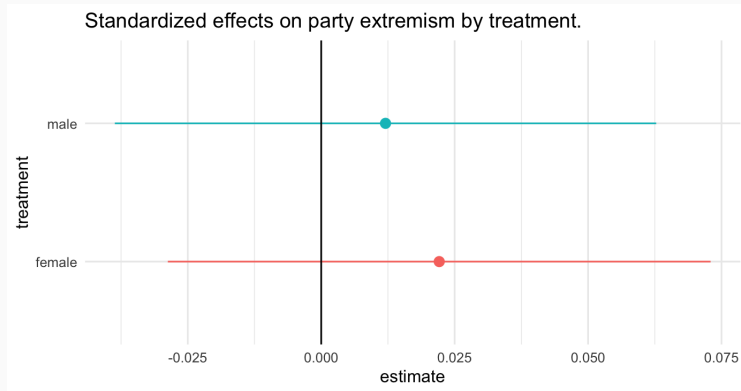
# Mechanisms – Social Identity

**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)

