**Gender Quotas in the 2016 Election**

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**Abstract**

The percentage of women elected in the Australian Parliament is comparatively low. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (August 2016), Australia ranks in the 56th position in term of women’s representation with many established democracy doing better. This situation has led to a discussion in political parties and the media about the necessity of gender quotas or target to increase women’s representation. Using the 2016 Australian Election Study, the paper proposes to test support for different measures aiming at increasing women’s representation in Australian politics. More specifically, the influence of the role model effect—that is the presence of women in the political sphere—is investigated on support for the various measures. It is hypothesized that the presence of a women running in elections—as oppose to being already elected—should highlight the lack of women’s representation, leading to greater support for measures aiming at correcting this issue. This relationship, however, should vary according to gender and ideological preferences.

**Introduction**

The representation of women in Australian politics has been a subject that both major political parties have had to address periodically. This occurs since women’s representation in Australia is comparatively low. On average, in OSCE countries, women occupy 25.9 per cent of seat in national legislature (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016). Australia is slightly above average with 28.7 per cent of seat filled by women. However, many advanced established democracies—particularly the Nordic countries—have much higher level of women’s representation. One solution that has been put forward around the world, and in Australia, to increase women’s representation is the adoption of gender quotas.

In established democracies, over 20 countries have adopted one form or another of gender quotas (Krook et al. 2009). The presence of gender quotas has been successfully linked with an increase of the percentage of women in the legislature over time (Caul 2001; Norris 2004 Tripp and Kang 2008; Schwindt-Bayer 2009). Thus, gender quotas are a consistent feature of discussions surrounding the under-representation of women in national legislature. An important factor explaining the adoption of gender quotas in established industrial democracies is that political parties adopt such policies in part because they believe citizens support such measures and electoral gains can be made by adopting quotas (Franceschet et al. 2012). Thus, understanding support for gender quotas among citizens can shed light on the explanations for resistance toward the adoption of measure aiming at increasing women’s representation.

This paper aims at contributing to the emerging literature on support for gender quotas by investigating the role model effect of women candidates on citizen opinions. Political parties by nominating candidates for elections can signal to citizen whether gender quotas are necessary to increase women’s representation. This paper shows, however, that these signals might be only perceived by citizens when a woman candidate of the same party as the voter is elected.

The paper proceeds as follow. First, I review previous studies on support for gender quotas. Second, I review the literature on gender quotas and the role model effect of women’s representation and elaborate hypotheses. Third, the data and method section discusses the main dependent and independent variables as well as how the statistical analyses are performed. Next, the results section is presented in two parts: a first test of the role of women candidates in explaining support for legislative gender, and second, I examine how ideology affect these relationships. Finally, I reflect on the importance of the findings for understanding support for gender equality policies.

**Previous Studies on Support for Gender Quotas**

Investigations on citizen opinions about gender quotas have been limited. When citizen support for gender quotas has been surveyed, findings show that women are more likely than men to support such policies (see, for instance, Gidengil 1996 or Meier 2008). This gender difference has been attributed to self-interest; women are expected to be more likely than men to support policies that favour them (Meltzer and Richard 1981). This finding has been also reproduced for other policies that benefit women such as abortion (Deckman and McTague 2015) or spending on breast cancer research (Cassese and Hannagan 2014).

The role of values has also been highlighted in previous research. Women are more likely than men to favour gender equality (Morgan and Buice 2013), which is in part due to self-interest, but also to women greater commitment toward egalitarian values. Indeed, Gidengil (1996) finds that women are more likely than men to support increased representation for racial minorities. This tends to demonstrate that women commitment to equality is not entirely rooted in their own self-interest as they support also policies that are likely to benefit men. Another important political value in explaining women’s support for gender equality policies is preferences for government involvement (Barnes and Córdova 2016). Citizen opinion varies regarding the role government should play, and especially on whether the government should intervene to create equal opportunities for citizens. Legislative gender quotas require government to mandate political parties to nominate a certain number of women to their candidate list. As this is direct government intervention citizens who belief that government can and should intervene to solve problem are more likely to support legislative gender quotas. Additionally, Barnes and Córdova (2016) argue that women are more likely to translate their opinion toward government intervention to support for legislative gender quotas. This occurs since women are more likely to attribute gender differences in favour of men to unfair treatment and limited opportunities (Swim et al. 1995).

Furthermore, Barnes and Córdova (2016) posit that political values and good governance interact to explain support for legislative gender quotas in Latin America. In other words, the context in which government policies are enacted matters for the translation of political values to support for gender quotas. If a government has a poor record of governance, then, Barnes and Córdova (2016) argue, citizens who belief in government intervention are less likely to support gender quotas—or any types of government policy requiring actions from the government—since the government does not have a good track record in implementing policies. On the other hand, good government should lead citizens supporting government intervention to support gender quotas. Men should be more likely to rely on governance quality to form their opinion on gender quotas because they lack strong self-interest motivation. In other words, since women are the beneficiaries of gender quotas they have a greater interest in seeing gender quotas adopted than men, regardless of the track record of the government.

Barnes and Córdova (2016) highlight the necessity of investigating contextual factors for understanding citizen support for gender quotas. This paper proposes to deepen the studies of contextual factors by researching the role of elite cues in forming opinions about gender quotas.

**The Role Model Effect and Support for Quotas**

The presence of women in the political sphere—either as candidates standing for elections or as elected members of the national legislature—has been hypothesized to have a range of effects on citizens. More specifically, the presence of female politicians can create a symbolic effect—or role model effect—on citizen attitudes toward politics (Koch 1997; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997; Sapiro and Conover 1997; Hansen 1997; High-Pippert and Comer 1998; Burns, Scholzaman, and Verba 2001; Atkeson 2003; Atkeson and Carrillo 2007; Reingold and Harrell 2010; Barnes and Burchard 2013) and on citizen behaviour (Lawless 2004; Dolan 2006; Karp and Banducci 2008; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012). Symbolic representation can be defined as “the attitudinal and behavioral effects that women's presence in positions of political power might confer to women citizens” (Lawless 2004, 81). As women have traditionally been excluded from the political systems, the presence of female politicians can have a transformative power on citizens by changing how they view the political systems and how they interact with such system.

Moreover, the literature on the role model effect stipulates that the symbolic effect should be stronger on women’s attitudes and behaviours than on men’s. Traditionally, women have lower levels of political interest, political efficacy, and knowledge about politics as well as are less likely than men to engage in a variety of political activities (Burns et al. 2001; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012). When women are present and visible in the political system, it may challenge the traditional notion that politics is ‘a man’s game’, encouraging women to reconsider their attitudes and behaviour toward politics. Previous studies have shown that the increased presence of women as candidates and elected representatives affects positively women’s perception of the legitimacy of the political systems (Mansbridge 1999; Norris and Franklin 1997) and women’s confidence in representative institutions (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). In turn, gender differences in political attitudes decrease and men and women participate in political activities in more equal numbers (eg. Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer, 2012).

The literature on the role model effect does not investigate the impact of female politicians in shaping citizen support for gender quotas. I maintain that this is an important gap in our understanding of support for gender quotas since it has been shown, previously, that the presence of women as candidates or elected members of the legislature is an important contextual factor in shaping citizen orientations toward women in politics. For instance, Alexander (2012) finds evidence of a virtuous circle between the presence of women in the national legislature and women’s belief in their ability to govern. As the presence of women in the legislature increases, women are more likely to believe that they have a positive role to play in politics, which in turn, lead to even more women getting elected into office. Morgan and Buice (2013) argue that the relationship between the presence of women in the legislature and attitude toward women in politics can be explained, in party, by elite cues. They stipulate that political parties can provide cues to citizens about women’s appropriate roles in politics through their decisions in nominating candidates and members of cabinet. Cues about gender equality in politics, however, should be different for men than women. Citizens who already hold firm believe about gender equality should be less likely to be influenced by elite behaviour (Levendusky 2010). As mentioned above, women are more committed than men toward gender equality in part because it is in their self-interest. Consequently, their opinion should be less influenced by elite cues.

In contrast, Morgan and Buice (2013) emphasize that elite cues about women’s presence in the political system should have a greater impact on men’s attitudes. They argue that “men’s positions on gender issues are less personal and as a result are likely to be weakly held and malleable” (p. 646). Beaman et al. (2009) also find that men’s opinions on gender equality are affected to a greater extent by elite cues than women’s. When political parties demonstrate their support toward gender equality by nominating women to political leadership, men increase their support for women in politics (Morgan and Buice 2013). This effect is not reproduced to the same extent among women.

Consequently, it has been established that women’s representation matters for understanding support for women’s equality, but not for specific policies aiming at achieving this equality. The previous studies mentioned above only investigate commitment toward gender equality and about whether men are better political leaders than women. Furthermore, investigations of support for gender quotas have yet to account for the role model effect on citizen opinions. In addition to these gaps in the literature, previous studies have not distinguished between the different forms of gender quotas. While legislative gender quotas tend to be more popular among Latin American countries, voluntary party quotas dominate in established democracies (Krook et al. 2009). Thus, when discussing support for gender quotas in Australia, citizens have multiple options. I propose to test a series of hypotheses regarding the role model effect on citizen support for gender quotas while distinguishing the effects by types of quotas.

*Hypotheses*

Krook et al. (2009) provide a classification of gender quotas that exists in established democracies. They distinguish between three types of gender quotas. First, legislative gender quotas are adopted when the constitution of a country or its legislature mandates and requires political parties to designate a certain percentage of women candidates (Norris 2004). Failure to follow the quota legislation can result in penalties for political parties. The consequences of quotas for the nomination of candidates vary according to the electoral system (Krook et al. 2009). The composition of party list will be affected under PR system while the eligibility of candidates is influenced in majoritarian system.

Second, party quotas are voluntarily adopted by political parties and not mandated by the state (Krook et al. 2009). A key feature of such gender quotas is that the selection of candidates standing for election has to take into account a gender balance. Failure to nominate the required number or percentage of women can result in internal party sanctions. Voluntary party quotas are applied differently according to the electoral system. In proportional electoral system (PR), political parties have to nominate a certain percentage of women and/or men on the electoral list. On the other hand, in majoritarian system, voluntary party quotas affect the candidates eligible for particular seats.

Finally, Krook et al (2009) identify soft quotas, which aim at balancing gender representation within political parties, but without imposing sanctions. These soft forms of quotas are voluntary adopted by political parties and set out informal targets for the candidate selection.

According to elite cue theory, decisions made by political parties can signal to citizen whether they believe that the presence of women in politics is important. One of the most important decisions political parties make during elections is to nominate candidates. By nominating women to run for office, political parties can highlight the importance of gender equality in the political process. This relationship between party cues and gender equality should be more likely to occur for men, as women should have more stronger beliefs toward equality than men. If men are more likely to support women’s political leadership when political parties nominate candidates, they may be more likely to support measures aiming at increasing women’s presence in the political system and at achieving gender equality.

**H1.** The presence of a woman running for office will be associated with more support for gender quota policies, and this effect will be stronger or men than for women.

Krook et al. (2009), furthermore, associate each form of gender quotas with a citizenship types. Australia is classified as liberal model of citizenship where the core value is individualism. In this model of citizenship, society values the equality of opportunities instead of the equality of results. This has, according to Krook et al., (2009) important consequences for the form of quotas that will be favoured by the country. Since a core belief of liberalism resides in the individual responsibility for the present inequalities and liberalism is associated with a preference toward non-state intervention to solve inequality issues, gender quotas favoured by Australia should be of the voluntary party and soft quotas. As a consequence, men—who should be more likely to support gender quotas when political parties nominate women candidates (H1)—should preferred voluntary party quotas or soft quotas over legislative quotas.

**H2.** The presence of a woman running for office will be associated with more support for voluntary party gender quota and soft quotas policies, and this effect will be stronger or men than for women.

The presence of women running for office can also have the opposite effect—that is, it can reduce support for gender quotas. Women’s success may lead to a backlash against gender equality and policies associated with achieving a greater presence for women (Morgan and Buice 2013). Or simply, the presence of women candidates may lead citizens to believe that gender quotas are not necessary. I argue that this should occur only when men are absent from politics, highlighting the success of women. In the Australian context, this should happen when the top two candidates in an electoral district (on the two parties preferred vote) are women. In this situation, citizens should be less likely to agree that a policy is needed to increase the presence of women in politics. Additionally, men should be more likely to react negatively to the presence of two women candidates. This dominance of women may lead men to believe that they are loosing their status in politics and lead them to embrace more traditional gender norms regarding the presence of women in politics (Franceschet et al. 2012). Additionally, gender quotas may seem as unnecessary as women appear to be successful in politics. Again, women should be less likely to be negatively influence by this dominance of women candidates since they should benefit from the adoption of gender quotas.

**H3.** The presence of two women among the two party preferred vote should be associated to lower support for gender quotas, and this effect will be stronger for men than for women.

Support for all types of gender quotas should be negatively affected by the presence to two top women candidates. However, I hypothesize that a greater dislike should occur for the legislative types of gender quotas. This should be in line with Krook et al. (2009)’s discussion of the impact of liberalism values for the form of gender quotas favoured by citizens. Since legislative gender quotas impose an equality of results solution to inequality between women and men, it creates a clash between values for liberal citizenship. The presence of both top candidates being women should furthermore highlight this conflict.

**H4.** The presence of two women among the two party preferred vote should be associated to lower support for all forms of gender gender quotas, and this effect will be stronger for legislative gender quotas and for men.

Finally, I hypothesize the effects discussed above should be mitigated by ideology. The negative relationship between two women candidates in the same electoral district and support for gender quotas may not necessarily occur for a citizen whose favourite candidates win. If a citizen vote for a woman candidate and this candidate win, he might more incline to support policies aiming at re-electing this candidate.

**H5.** The presence of an elected woman of the same party as the voter should increase support for gender quotas, and this effect will be stronger for men than for women.

**Dependent Variable**

To evaluate citizen support for various forms of gender quotas in Australia, I employ the 2016 Australian Election Study (AES). Respondents were asked the following question: “Should there be more efforts to increase the number of women MPs? If so, what means would you prefer?” Five possible answer choices were given: 1) No, there is no need to increase the number of women MPs; 2) No, nothing needs to be done, it will happen naturally; 3) Yes, by legally requiring all political parties to select more women candidates by mean of a quota; 4) Yes, the political parties should make their own voluntary commitments to increase the number of women MPs; and 5) Yes, by encouraging more women to participate in politics.

This question is suited for testing the hypotheses elaborated above since it allows respondents to distinguish between various types of gender quotas as well as it gives the option of rejecting any policy aiming at increasing women’s representation. Additionally, the question in the AES provides a description of the various forms of gender quotas allowing respondents whom might not be familiar with the different policies to increases women’s representation to formulate an opinion. Indeed, only 1.27 per cent of respondents did not provide an answer to the question used in this investigation.

A possible issue with this question on support for gender quotas is the presence of voluntary quotas in the Labor party and whether citizens are aware of such policy. If a respondent knows that the Labor party has adopted gender quotas, a problem in measuring support could arise if that respondent supports voluntary party but feels it is unnecessary to employ such policy to increase women’s representation because it already has been adopted. The likelihood of this problem occurring is limited by the descriptions included in the answer choice. If citizens want to answer ‘no’ to the question asking whether there should be more efforts to increase women’s representation because they know that the Labor has already committed to party quotas, they probably still would not select no since the answer choice provides two options that specify either that there is no need to increase women’s representation or that the presence of women candidate will occur naturally. It is more likely that these citizens would answer that voluntary party quotas are needed. It is unlikely that citizens who support voluntary party quotas already implemented would agree that there is no need to increase women’s representation; in the gender quotas discourse both options are viewed as opposite.

Table 1 provides the distribution of answers by gender for each possible answer choice for the question used as the dependent variable in this investigation. Overall, men tend to be more likely to agree that increasing women’s representation in not necessary while women hold the opposite view. Women are more likely than men to support legislative gender quotas, voluntary party quotas, and encouraging women to participate in politics. All these differences are statistically significant. Support also varies across the different forms of gender quotas. Softer forms of quotas such as encouraging women to run for office are more popular among both women and men than party quotas, followed by the legislative types of quotas, which is the least popular forms. These gender differences are in line with the previous studies of support for gender quotas. On the one hand, women are more supportive of gender quotas while, on the other hand, voluntary and soft quotas are more popular as expected in countries adhering to a liberal form of citizenship.

**Table 1.** Support for Increasing the Number of Women MPs by Gender

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Men | Women | Gap |
| No, there is no need to increase the number of women MPs | 10.15 | 5.80 | 4.35\*\*\* |
| No, nothing needs to be done, it will happen naturally | 41.83 | 28.94 | 12.89\*\*\* |
| Yes, by legally requiring all political parties to select more women candidates by mean of a quota | 9.06 | 13.10 | -4.04\*\*\* |
| Yes, the political parties should make their own voluntary commitments to increase the number of women MPs | 12.94 | 17.19 | -4.25\*\* |
| Yes, by encouraging more women to participate in politics | 26.03 | 34.97 | -8.94\*\*\* |
| N | 1291 | 1344 |  |

*Note*: Cell entries are percentages. The gap is calculated by subtracting the percentage of women from the percentage of men.

Chi-square tests are used to indicate whether gender differences are significant.

\*: p < 0.05; \*\*: p < 0.10; \*\*\*: p < 0.001

**Individual- and District-level Independent Variables**

The main independent variables of this investigation are sex and the presence of women candidates running for elections. Gender differences in support for the various forms of gender quotas are assessed with a question asking respondents whether they are male or female. For the purpose of testing the hypotheses elaborated above, women are coded 1 and men are coded 0. The presence of women running for office is measured with data from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The two candidate preferred (TCP) voting results is used. TCP is employed instead of the full electoral results since previous studies has showed that the role model effect of women candidates on citizen behaviour is more likely to occur for competitive candidates (Atkeson 2003). In other words, the presence of women candidates with little chance of winning is not likely to impact citizen support for gender quotas. The gender of each of the TCP was found by searching the candidate’s campaign website.

Four separate indicators are used to assess the impact of women’s representation on support for gender quotas. First, a simple dichotomous indicator specifies whether at least one of the TCP identifies as a female; the indicator takes the values of 1 when this occurs and 0 when it otherwise does not. 59.01 per cent of respondents in the AES have at least one female candidate in the TCP. Second, to test H3 and H4, another dichotomous indicator indicates situations where both TCP identify as female. Again, this indicator is coded 1 for when both candidates are female and 0 for all other situations. There is 16.22 per cent of respondents residing in districts with two female candidates. Finally, the last two indicators identify when a women candidate win a seat. One indicator takes the values of 1 when a female labor candidate wins office (19.66 per cent of respondents have a female labor MP) and 0 otherwise and the other takes the values of 1 when a female coalition candidate wins the seat and 0 otherwise (6.73 per cent of respondents have a female coalition MP). These four indicators were coded for all respondents of the AES with a valid postcode. Using the AEC, each postcode was match to an electoral district.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In addition to the main independent variables, control variables are added to assess individual- and district-level factors that might also influence support for gender quotas. At the individual-level, a control for ideology is included since citizens who identify with a more left-wing position tend to be more open to policy meaures favouring equality. On the other hand, more right-wing citizens will tend to oppose such policies. Ideology is measured in the AES on a 10-point left-right scale. Citizens are asked to place themselves on such scale where 0 means lefts and 10 means right. Three dichotomous indicators are created to assess the influence of ideology on support for gender quotas (right-wing citizens are used as the reference category). Citizens who score between 0 and 3 are coded a left; citizens who answer between 4 and 6 are coded as centre; and citizens who score betweeen 7 and 10 are coded as right. An additional measure of ideological nonresponse is also added since the nonresponse rate for this question was high. Ideological nonresponses are coded 1 on this indicator and otherwise 0.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The perceived performance of the incumbent government could also influence citizen opinions toward gender quotas. This indicator takes the form of an index based on two questions assessing citizen opinion on whether the federal government’s policies has had a good, bad or no effect on personal finance and the general economy.

Finally, at the individual-level, controls for socioeconomic status and individual charateristics are included in the statistical analyses. Age, education, employment status, and marital status have previously been found to influence support for social policies.

Two more electoral district-level control variables are also included in the analyses. First, I include the TCP margin to control for the competitiveness of electoral districts. This indicator takes the form of the difference in the number of vote (based on the two candidate preferred vote) between the top candidate and the candidate who finishes in second place. Second, I control for whether a woman was elected to the electoral division in 2013.

**Method**

To test for the hypotheses elaborated above, I use interaction term between sex and each measure of women’s representation. The interaction terms assess whether the relationship between women’s representation and support for quotas is similar or different in for women and men. When an interaction term is significant at the p < 0.05 level, it indicates that the men’s and women’s level of support is influenced differently when women candidates are running for office or winning their seat. Logistic regressions with interaction terms are conducted for 2016 AES data. H1 through H4 will be tested in the same statistical models. As for H5, I separate the AES sample into two groups: Labor voters and Coalition voters. This will allows me to measure to impact of voting for a winning candidate on support for the various forms of gender quotas and compare voters of the two major political groups.

**Findings**

To test support for the various forms of gender quotas, I transform the question described above into a series of dichotomous dependent variable. Each dependent variable takes the value of 1 for respondents who selected the particular option and 0 if they did not. Results are presented in Table 2. Model 1 through Model 5 present the relationships between the main independent variables (and controls) with support for the five options provided to the AES respondents for the question asking whether there should be more efforts to increase the number of women MPs.

**Table 2**. Women’s Representation and Support for Gender Quotas

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|  | Legislative quotas | Party quotas | Encourage women | No need to do anything | Will increase in time |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sex | 0.421 | 0.159 | 0.140 | -0.244 | -0.317 |
|  | (0.291) | (0.306) | (0.222) | (0.352) | (0.210) |
| Woman | -0.317 | 0.271 | -0.0358 | -0.474 | 0.233 |
| candidate | (0.332) | (0.303) | (0.225) | (0.318) | (0.204) |
| Two women | 0.419 | -0.424 | -0.405 | -0.746 | 0.501 |
| candidates | (0.486) | (0.473) | (0.339) | (0.592) | (0.328) |
| Sex X | 0.139 | 0.203 | 0.0461 | -0.175 | -0.275 |
| Candidate | (0.411) | (0.402) | (0.310) | (0.552) | (0.299) |
| Sex X Two | -1.355\* | 0.297 | 1.116\*\* | -0.258 | -0.512 |
| Candidates | (0.589) | (0.527) | (0.408) | (0.910) | (0.411) |
| Women won | 0.396 | -0.402 | 0.0948 | 0.174 | -0.150 |
| 2013 | (0.306) | (0.303) | (0.211) | (0.334) | (0.212) |
| Margin | 0.000 | -7.00e-08 | -0.0000128\* | -0.00000594 | 0.00000896 |
|  | (0.0000093) | (0.0000098) | (0.0000064) | (0.0000107) | (0.0000061) |
| Education | 0.0125 | 0.0404 | 0.0763\* | -0.0859 | -0.0811\* |
| level | (0.0448) | (0.0425) | (0.0333) | (0.0593) | (0.0325) |
| Left ideology | 1.449\*\*\* | 0.886\*\* | 0.111 | -1.971\*\*\* | -0.729\*\*\* |
|  | (0.306) | (0.314) | (0.210) | (0.419) | (0.214) |
| Centre | 0.737\* | 0.461 | 0.237 | -1.100\*\*\* | -0.188 |
| ideology | (0.298) | (0.286) | (0.176) | (0.288) | (0.162) |
| Ideology | 0.434 | 0.330 | 0.512+ | 0.00135 | -0.722\*\* |
| nonresponse | (0.421) | (0.427) | (0.297) | (0.430) | (0.276) |
| Married | 0.161 | -0.286 | -0.580\*\* | 0.631 | 0.541\* |
|  | (0.258) | (0.235) | (0.194) | (0.395) | (0.222) |
| Divorced | 0.357 | -0.289 | -0.632\*\* | 0.149 | 0.651\* |
|  | (0.301) | (0.267) | (0.224) | (0.446) | (0.255) |
| Goverment | -0.431\* | 0.236 | -0.165 | -0.116 | 0.283 |
| performance | (0.207) | (0.210) | (0.162) | (0.338) | (0.175) |
| Work | -0.0105 | 0.114 | -0.116 | 0.152 | 0.0131 |
| fulltime | (0.198) | (0.178) | (0.155) | (0.255) | (0.146) |
| Constant | -2.990\*\*\* | -2.572\*\*\* | -0.609+ | -1.235\* | -0.802\* |
|  | (0.465) | (0.423) | (0.332) | (0.584) | (0.337) |
| *N* | 1493 | 1493 | 1493 | 1493 | 1493 |

Standard errors in parentheses

+ *p* < 0.1, \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < 0.001

The first noticeable findings in Table 1 is that once all controls variables are included, sex is not significant at the p < 0.05 level, meaning that both women and men support all five options equally. This is contrary to previous findings indicating that women are still more likely to support gender quotas even after socio-economic controls are added. A possible explanation for this finding might be in the change in the sample size between Table 1 and Table 2 (see footnote 1). About a third of the sample is missing in the multivariate analyses, which might impact coefficient significance. Although the sex coefficient in not significant in all five models, the sign of the coefficient is in the expected direction; women are more likely to support legislative quotas, party quotas, and encouraging women to enter politics while men are more likely to agree that increasing women’s representation is not necessary or will occur in time.

Additionally, contrary to expectations, both H1 and H2 are not confirmed by the results presented in Table 2. For all five models, both the indicator measuring whether a woman candidate was running for office and the interaction term between this indicator and sex are not significant at the p < 0.05 level. On the other hand, two interaction terms between two women candidates and sex are significant: for supporting legislative quotas and for encouraging women to run for office. Interaction terms and the meaning of the sign and its significance can be difficult to interpret (Kam and Franzese 2007). Following Brambor et al. (2006), what I present and discuss here are the post-estimation effects that calculate the probability of men and women to hold a particular opinion. As the interaction terms are significant for supporting legislative quotas and encouraging women, figures are only presented for these two dependent variables. For the three other opinions, results in Table 2 indicate that the presence of two women candidates does not influence differently women and men’s opinions.

Figure 1 illustrates men’s and women’s probability of supporting legislative gender quotas with the 95 per cent confidence interval when there are two women candidates (right side of the figure) and when this does not occur (left side of the figure). The graph does not support H3 and H4. When there are no two women candidates, women have a higher probability of supporting legislative quotas than men; however, both confidence intervals overlap, indicating that there is no significant gender difference. The presence of two women candidates does not decrease men’s support for legislative quotas as expected. The opposite occurs—men’s probability of supporting legislative quotas increases while women’s decrease. Again, gender differences are not significant. The significant interaction term in Table 2 indicates that the relationship between two women candidates and the probability of supporting legislative is different for women and men—which is shown in Figure 1. Despite this different relationship, gender differences remain non significant.

**Figure 1.** Predicted Probability of Supporting Legislative Quotas

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Figure 2 graphs the predicted probabilities of preferring to encourage women to enter politics for women and men with the 95 per cent confidence interval. The figure provides support for H3, stipulating that the presence of two women candidates should decrease men’s support for gender quotas; however, the decline illustrated in the figure is small and non significant. A stronger effect occurs for women where their probability of supporting encouraging women increases when two women are candidates. When both candidates are female, women are significantly more likely to support encouraging women. Consequently, Figure 2 does not provide support for H3 and H4.

**Figure 2.** Predicted Probabilities of Favouring Encouraging Women to Enter Politics



A possible explanation for these results presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 might be that the presence of two women candidates creates conditions for women to decrease their support for legislative quotas. As expected by the self-interest explanation, women should be more likely to support gender quotas; however when both candidates are female, women may believe that such measure is not necessary. In this situation women are faced with a choice between answering no to the question about whether more effort should be made to increase the number of women MPs and support other forms of gender quotas. As the overall number of women in Australian politics is still lower than the number of men and that women’s have traditionally been in a minority in politics, women may believe that there are still efforts that need to be made; thus rejecting the no answer. Encouraging more women to enter politics might be the compromise answer between a situation where gender quotas are not necessary—as two women are running for office—and the continuous under-representation of women in Australian politics.

The final hypothesis highlights the possibility that the relationship between the presence of women candidates and support for gender quotas might be influenced by ideology. Whether a citizen has voted for a winning female candidate might impact what policy she supports. Table 3 and Table 5 present the results associated with testing H5. Table 3 present the effect of a female Labor winner and a female Coalition winner for support for increasing the number of women MPs only for Coalition voters. Again, it is hypothesized that these relationships should be different for women and men. Table 3 demonstrates that this indeed occurs but only when a female Coalition candidate wins her seats. Significant relationships and interactions terms exist for support for legislative quotas and agreeing that there is no need to increase the number of women MPs. To better understand the relationships between winning candidates and citizen opinions, marginal effects and conditional standard errors are calculated and presented in Table 4. This table shows the relationship between the winning candidate and support for legislative quotas for women and men; this information in not originally provided in Table 3 (see Brambor et al. 2006).

**Table 3.** Role Model Effect and Support for Gender Quotas for Coalition Voters

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|  | Legislative quotas | Party quotas | Encourage women | No need to do anything | Will increase in time |
| Female Labor Winner |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sex | 0.506 | 0.677+ | -0.213 | 0.158 | -0.319 |
|  | (0.529) | (0.407) | (0.334) | (0.429) | (0.284) |
| Female Labor | 0.222 | -0.595 | -0.293 | 1.054+ | -0.0418 |
| Winner | (1.203) | (0.676) | (0.434) | (0.576) | (0.395) |
| Sex X Labor | -1.327 | 0.149 | 0.951 | -0.691 | -0.353 |
|  | (1.528) | (0.808) | (0.590) | (0.879) | (0.542) |
| Constant | -3.708\*\*\* | -2.023\*\*\* | -0.575 | -3.090\*\*\* | -0.134 |
|  | (0.780) | (0.613) | (0.573) | (0.793) | (0.482) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Female Coalition Winner |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sex | 0.517 | 0.676+ | -0.209 | 0.167 | -0.322 |
|  | (0.530) | (0.408) | (0.334) | (0.431) | (0.284) |
| Female Coalition | -13.10\*\*\* | 1.230 | -0.764 | -13.40\*\*\* | 0.762 |
| Winner | (0.912) | (0.814) | (0.702) | (0.701) | (0.579) |
| Sex X Coalition | 15.21\*\*\* | -1.053 | 0.839 | 12.94\*\*\* | -1.270 |
|  | (1.288) | (1.161) | (0.885) | (1.324) | (0.822) |
| Constant | -3.712\*\*\* | -2.022\*\* | -0.638 | -3.090\*\*\* | -0.108 |
|  | (0.780) | (0.619) | (0.581) | (0.791) | (0.483) |
| *N* | 689 | 689 | 689 | 689 | 689 |

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls for women candidates, 2013 winner, margin, education level, marital status, government performance, and employment status are included in the statistical analyses, but not presented here.

+ *p* < 0.1, \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < 0.001

For male coalition voters, Table 4 demonstrates that the presence of a female coalition winner significantly decreases their likelihood of supporting legislative quotas and of agreeing that there is no need to increase the number of women MPs. The presence of a winning female coalition candidate may highlight for male coalition voters that legislative gender quotas are not an adequate policies since women are present in politics. Alternatively, this result may also be occurring since a winning woman candidate highlights women success at the expense of men, leading men toward a backlash against gender equality values (Morgan and Buice 2013). However, men are not more likely to agree that increasing the number of women MPs is not necessary which we would expect in the case of a backlash. It seems more plausible, consequently, that men do not believe in the necessity of legislative quotas when their female candidate gets elected. This relationship does not occur for women; according to Table 4, women are significantly more likely to support legislative quotas when a female Coalition candidate wins. The negative relationship between a winning female Coalition candidate and the declining support for legislative quotas for male Coalition voter—and increased support for women Coalition voters—may occur since party serve as a cue. Partisans may be more likely to notice winning female candidate when they are of their own party. It is only when citizens notice that a female candidate wins that the hypothesized impact occurs.

**Table 4.** Marginal Effects and Conditional Standard Errors for Coalition Voters

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Legislative quotas | | No need to do anything | |
|  | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Female Coalition | -13.10\*\*\* | 2.107\* | -13.40\*\*\* | -0.466 |
| Winner | (0.912) | (0.924) | (0.701) | (1.137) |

+ *p* < 0.1, \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < 0.001

Table 5 presents the statistical analyses for Labor voters. The results in Table 3 are not reproduced for these voters. There are no effects of having a female Labor winning candidate or a Coalition female winner on men or women’s support for legislative quotas. A possible explanation is that left-wing women and men tend to be more likely to agree with state-based actions to support to resolve inequality. This ideological belief may counter the hypothesized negative influence that successful winning women should have on male’s opinion toward equality and gender quotas.

**Table 5.** Role Model Effect and Support for Gender Quotas for Labor Voters

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|  | Legislative quotas | Party quotas | Encourage women | No need to do anything | Will increase in time |
| Female Labor Winner |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sex | 0.437 | -0.400 | 0.406 | -0.799 | -0.0899 |
|  | (0.484) | (0.501) | (0.406) | (0.534) | (0.439) |
| Female Labor | 0.456 | 0.946 | -1.044\* | -0.480 | 0.0176 |
| Winner | (0.646) | (0.641) | (0.493) | (1.918) | (0.495) |
| Sex X Labor | -0.810 | -0.562 | 1.813\*\* | 0[[3]](#footnote-3) | -1.432\* |
|  | (0.762) | (0.797) | (0.653) | (.) | (0.685) |
| Constant | -1.723\*\* | -1.536\*\* | -0.281 | -2.515\*\* | -2.082\*\*\* |
|  | (0.609) | (0.505) | (0.521) | (0.839) | (0.543) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Female Coalition Winner |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sex | 0.431 | -0.385 | 0.411 | -0.787 | -0.104 |
|  | (0.482) | (0.496) | (0.407) | (0.536) | (0.439) |
| Female Coalition | 0.562 | 0.263 | -0.603 | 0 | -0.0274 |
| Winner | (1.154) | (1.275) | (1.138) | (.) | (1.061) |
| Sex X Coalition | -0.644 | -0.475 | 0.248 | 0 | 0.735 |
|  | (1.386) | (1.495) | (1.291) | (.) | (1.272) |
| Constant | -1.719\*\* | -1.528\*\* | -0.290 | -2.547\*\* | -2.086\*\*\* |
|  | (0.608) | (0.503) | (0.512) | (0.841) | (0.545) |
| *N* | 430 | 430 | 430 | 370 | 430 |

Standard errors in parentheses

Controls for women candidates, 2013 winner, margin, education level, marital status, government performance, and employment status are included in the statistical analyses, but not presented here.

+ *p* < 0.1, \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < 0.001

Table 3 also indicates that the presence of a winning female Labor candidate significantly decreases men’s likelihood to agree that we should encourage more women to enter politics. Table 6 with the marginal effects and conditional standard errors supports this result. Furthermore, a significant interaction term is also found for agreeing that the number of women MPs will increase with time in Table 5. Table 6 shows that the presence of a female winning Labor candidate decreases women’s likelihood of selecting this statement while it has no effect on men’s.

**Table 6.** Marginal Effects and Conditional Standard Errors for Labor Voters

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Encourage women | | Will increase in time | |
|  | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Female Coalition | -1.044\* | 0.770+ | 0.0176 | -1.414\*\* |
| Winner | (0.493) | (0.439) | (0.495) | (0.511) |

+ *p* < 0.1, \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < 0.001

**Conclusion**

Overall, the results presented here are mixed. There is no consistent support for any of the five hypotheses tested. First, contrary to the expectations of previous studies, women are not consistently more likely to support gender quotas. One explanation is the limited sample size of the multivariate analyses. Another explanation might be what is being referred to as the post-feminist environment of Australian politics—that is, the belief that men and women have achieved equality and feminism is no longer necessary in poltics. In such a political environment, both women and men may adhere to this position, leading women and men to equally reject policies aiming at increasing the presence of women in politics.

Second, despite this lack of gender differences, I find some gendered effects of the presence of women candidates on women’s and men’s support for various forms of gender quotas. The simple presence of a woman candidate is not enough to affect citizen opinion; however, the dominance of women and ideology seem to matter. To have an influence on citizen opinion, the presence of women in politics needs to be known by citizens. This might be more likely to occur when women candidates dominate a race or when a female candidate of voters’ own party wins the election.

There is little evidence that the dominance of women creates a backlash, leading men to retreat to a more traditional conception of gender equality. Women are the ones that are more strongly affected by the top two candidates in an electoral district being women. This situation declines their support for legislative quotas, but does not lead them to agree that efforts are not needed to increase the presence of women in politics. It seems that form of quotas supported by women to increase the number of women MPs changes; women will be more likely to support a softer form of quotas instead.

Additionally, what seem to be important to form women’s and men’s opinion about quotas are political parties. Importantly, political parties by making decisions about candidates can send a message to citizens about whether gender quotas are needed or not to increase women’s presence in politics. This message—or cue—however, is filtered through ideology. This is an interesting avenue for future investigations of the role model effect on support for gender equality policies. Previous investigations have yet to research the links between the role model effect of women’s representation and how this is filtered by ideology. This present investigation demonstrates initial support that signals provided by women running for office are affected by political parties.

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1. For postcodes that are associated with two or more electoral districts, respondents were coded as missing. Consequently, 37.86 per cent of the sample is coded as missing. Future drafts will investigate possible solutions to problems associated with a large percentage of missing values. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gender egalitarian attitudes are also a typical individual-level control variable used in investigations of support for gender quotas. The presence of both ideology and gender egalitarian attitudes led to a multicolinearity problem in my analysis. The variance inflation factor measure was above 10 for gender egalitarian attitudes. Thus, I elected to remove gender egalitarian attitudes from the statistical analysis. Conserving both control variables would lead to biased standard errors. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For Model 4, there are not enough Labor voters whom agreed that there is no need to do anything to increase the numbers of women MPs. Thus, the model is not able to calculate the effect of a winning female coalition candidate on Labor voters having this opinion, explaining why the model produces 0. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)