"No loans for ladies": Julia Gillard and capital denied

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Abstract

One might expect that leaders for whom the acquisition of political capital proves elusive are 'inconsequential' leaders, lacking the attributes thought integral to building capital (Bennister, 't Hart and Worthy, 2013: 25-26). This paper tests this proposition by analyzing what it argues is a paradoxical case, that of the former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard (2010-2013). Notwithstanding episodes of policy misjudgement, her government could claim general competence, a record of delivery on policy commitments and efficient economic management. Relative policy success, however, never gained the recognition it deserved. She created and sustained parliamentary coalitions essential for minority government, despite viciously divisive tactics by her Opposition. But this did not translate into popular support. Though a courageous leader in adverse circumstances, this did not impress followers or lift morale. She won approval and loyalty from those who worked closely with her and from the majority in her Party room, but this seemed invisible to the public. She was, in effect, denied credit. The paradox, then, is that Gillard presented attributes conventionally thought conducive to the acquisition of political capital—delivery on policy commitments, effective coalition building, competence in government, courage in adversity, approval and loyalty from those most closely engaged with her—but never gained traction in the quest for capital. What, exactly, was behind this denial of credit? The paper considers numerous propositions offered to explain Gillard's failure in the context of debates about political capital and the 'leadership capital index' (LCI) to gauge the applicability and rigour of the 'elusive capital' thesis. Analyzing a paradoxical case underlines the need for caution and nuance. The paper concludes that leadership attributes/capacities must be carefully assessed in relation to exogenous factors (specific scenarios and the issues of context, political culture and historical timing they manifest) in attempts to operationalize LCI measures.

Introduction

Julia Gillard was Australia's first female prime minister (2010-2013). She had served as deputy prime minister in the Australian Labor Party (ALP) Government led by Kevin Rudd, elected in 2007. Rudd, having defeated Liberal Party giant, John Howard, who had served as prime minister for eleven years, initially sustained high levels of public popularity. His considerable gifts as a media performer not only served him well in campaigning, but bolstered his standing after election. He had appeared an effective operator in dealing with the Global Financial Crisis: Australia fared well and was said to be

a 'miracle economy'. But after little more than two years, his reputation as a non-consultative, controlling prime minister, failure to deliver on key promises and back tracking on issues he had identified as moral imperatives began to influence perceptions. In June 2010, following a precipitous fall in the government's standing in opinion polls and facing an election before the year's end, some faction leaders in the ALP caucus began to agitate for a vote on the leadership. After some prevarication, his deputy, Julia Gillard, informed Rudd that she would challenge for the leadership. When it became clear that he could not gain the numbers to win, Rudd resigned, relinquishing the prime ministership without having completed his first term (Walter 2013).

Gillard then opted for an early election. In the event, after an unedifying campaign, the ALP government lost its majority (Simms & Wanna 2012). The result was a hung parliament in which neither the ALP nor the Coalition could command a majority in its own right. After weeks of negotiation, Gillard managed to sustain an ALP government only with the conditional support of Green and Independent MPs. A parliament had been installed in which nothing could be achieved except through negotiation. She would prove skilled at this, but it was not a capacity that won public esteem

The heights of popularity Rudd achieved, paired with the rapidity of his fall, were unprecedented in Australian politics. There had been leadership depositions before (including that of Labor PM, Bob Hawke, by Paul Keating in 1991), but no prime minister had been defeated by his own party within his first term. Gillard's ascension, therefore, came about in unusual circumstances. Notwithstanding Rudd's fall from public favour, his longer term popularity had not been forgotten and made his sudden overthrow all the more perplexing. His shortcomings were not apparent to the general public; the rapid transition from speculation to challenge caught the media by surprise; and Gillard—at least to most—was relatively unknown (Williams 2010). The politically engaged public, always a small proportion, was aware that she had been a feisty and combative performer in parliament; she had been noted as a possible leader in 2005; for most of Rudd's term she had been seen as a loyal and supportive deputy; and in the policy community she was well regarded as a Minister who worked effectively with public service and private office advisers, listened to others and sought pragmatic rather than visionary solutions. But now, suddenly, this person who had paid little attention to building a media presence had brought down the most adept of media performers.

It might have been seen as a salutary reminder of the superficiality of 'mediatized' politics (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Campus 2010; Boumans *et al.* 2013), a reassertion of the significance of party, responsible cabinet government and policy; instead it was one of the factors that would cruel her leadership. Her case illustrates the extent to which the political capital essential to successful leadership depends upon perceptions rather than documented achievement; that those perceptions can be detrimentally restricted by contingencies; and, given the contemporary 'mediatization' of politics, can be unfavourably manipulated by adversaries in a manner that denies the acquisition of capital.

Skills

The factors that contributed to the rapid decline in Julia Gillard's reputation are discussed below, but it is notable that the views of most who worked closely with and for her are in direct contradiction to that public reputation. Combining toughness with warmth and attentiveness, she was liked and admired by many colleagues and, notably, by her staff. Organisationally adept, she could manage crushing workloads. Indeed, it is said that as acting PM, in the course of Rudd's many trips during his first term, bureaucrats and staffers would rush to have her sign off on the many items he had failed to complete in the PMO: arriving at the office, she would call out, 'bring out your dead!'

Only she could have negotiated and sustained the minority government: it is inconceivable that Rudd could have matched her in that, and the 2010 alternative, L-NP coalition leader Tony Abbott, squandered the opportunity. In many ways she was to be the obverse of her predecessor. Rudd traded in inspiration and moral challenges; she delivered legislation. How much will survive, though, is now a moot point. Rudd thrived on media attention and grand claims; Gillard, clever and talented in dealing with the piecemeal, was an effective parliamentary performer, quick on her feet when dealing with discrete issues, but less able in conveying the big picture. Her gift was not in communicating at large or in impressing the crowd, but in working one-to-one or with small groups.

It was this ability that allowed Gillard's to be a government of achievement against the odds. It avoided parliamentary deadlock. In the face of a rancorous, disruptive Opposition and withering personal and public attacks such as have faced very few leaders, Gillard remained resilient: her refusal to flinch or concede ground was courageous. She did what was needed to keep the Greens and cross-bench supporters on side, but every matter of substance had to be negotiated. Legislation was passed. Gillard was the closer on some bold initiatives that Rudd had initiated, but failed to bring to fruition: carbon pricing (now incorporated in a Clean Energy Future – CEF – package), a mining tax, a National Broadband Network; as well as backing new initiatives of substance, such as a highly lauded national disability scheme, health agreements with the states, plain packaging of cigarettes, GP super clinics, pharmaceutical benefits reforms, educational reform and much more. Success in the carriage of an extensive, reforming legislative agenda should have been accounted a major achievement (see Kent 2013; Johnson 2013), but there were two insurmountable problems. First, some of these initiatives—such as the CEF package and the mining tax—were already so compromised by concessions locked in under Rudd, or agreed to later to mollify the fierce resistance of powerful interests, as to be severely limited in their effects. In any case, Abbott's coalition had vowed to overturn them on winning government. Second, other more definitive reform initiatives needed time to be bedded down, and the Gillard government was not to be granted this time.

It must also be acknowledged that by seeking to appear decisive when it came to apparently intractable issues, Gillard was prone to serial misjudgements. For example, a tentative proposal for a citizens' assembly on climate change during the 2010 campaign was ridiculed as policy on the run.

Then, in trying to outflank the Opposition's attack on her failure to 'stop the boats' (of asylum seekers reaching Australia), she first announced the possibility of a regional processing centre in East Timor without having secured agreement from that government, and later sought to establish a 'people swap' agreement with Malaysia that was struck down by the High Court—neither plan apparently having been diligently attentive to necessary detail. On such issues, it appeared that she had retreated into the inner circle that develops around most leaders, and failed to ensure basic reality checks.

Gillard's private office was initially targeted as a source of dysfunction, and the origin of such initiatives as the citizens' assembly. In 2011, her chief of staff and close adviser, Amanda Lampe, resigned and Ben Hubbard, who had led her office when she was deputy PM, returned to the role. Hubbard was personable, methodical and had both policy and administrative experience: his reorganisation appeared to stabilise matters (Taylor 2011). One of the senior staffers suggested:

> … the Rudd Office was more frenetic, more last minute, less predictable and more focused on the next thing that was going to happen. It also wanted to work on longer-term strategy and narrative … but it found that very difficult. And the Gillard Office … attempts to work more systematically through its planning processes and its coordination processes, and to build and maintain strong working relationships with other offices in other parts of the system. And so … the Gillard Office has a calmer culture, is more methodical in the way that it does work … and has a more orderly relationship … with other Ministerial Offices but certainly with the Cabinet process, the Department and other parts of the public service machinery.

Still, the Rudd mode had not been entirely shaken off, said one senior official:

> … the Gillard Office has repeated many of the mistakes [of] the Rudd Office, in part, because some of the people from the Rudd Office have stayed on … I mean … [they] just would run their own line and do it privately, and take it down a path that was quite dangerous for her, when what they should have been worried about is how do they marshal professional advice and combine it with political advice so the Prime Minister can make a well-informed decision. Because Julia's a great reader … she really does attend to the papers and is incredibly well-informed. You'd never fault her for how she runs the Government. She's perfect. Other than when, on a big issue, she decides to go off and do it herself because she wants to do the deal, or do it herself with a couple of close advisors.

It is that last qualification that is crucial, since it is the wish to 'do it herself' or to work with 'a couple of close advisers' that characterized those repeated misjudgment that dogged Gillard.

Gillard had to engineer agreements, which militated against appearing decisive. Yet she was capable of delivering effective government. A pragmatist, she did not deal effectively in big pictures. Once astute, articulate and quick on her feet, her earnest attempt to adopt the repertoire of public leadership diminished those skills and failed to capture her strengths. The talents that enabled her achievement in this unusual parliament did not register in the public eye.

And so it was that Gillard in turn came to be usurped. In part she sowed the seed by a misguided decision to announce the 2013 election date nearly eight months in advance, arguing that this would clarify matters, giving business certainty in planning the year, and apparently believing it would destabilise the machinations of Rudd and his supporters. It had the opposite effect. It provided an incentive for voters to make up their minds: polling support for Labor continued steadily to deteriorate. It gave the Opposition a sure schedule for planning its campaign, and allowed Abbott a staged increase in his devastating attacks. And it delivered to Rudd's backers, who had never ceased to push back, a timetable in which action must be taken if they were to prevail: they set about persuading increasingly anxious colleagues that only Rudd (whose popularity as preferred prime minister was now twice that of Gillard and well ahead of Abbott) could stem the disaster ahead. Gillard, always with significant caucus support, had defeated Rudd in 2010, and twice more stared down his attempts to recapture the office, in a formal challenge (February 2012) in which she prevailed decisively (71-31), and again when she offered an opportunity following an abortive attempt by senior party figure Simon Crean to force the issue, which Rudd declined (March 2013). But at last the caucus despaired. On the fourth occasion, June 26, 2013, in the last sitting week of Parliament, Gillard recognised that the situation had become untenable—it was said a petition calling for a leadership vote was in circulation—and she announced a caucus meeting that evening in which leadership positions would be spilled. If she lost, she said, she would not contest the forthcoming election, and she had elicited the same promise from Rudd. This time Rudd defeated her 57-45 in the Party room. He was back in time to fight the 2013 election, but to no avail: an initial spike in the polls dissipated once the campaign was underway, and Labor lost the election (though some argued, losing fewer seats than it would have done had Gillard remained in office) (Strangio & Walter 2014).

Relations

Achievement against the odds, with a minority government in a divided parliament, depended very much on Gillard's people skills. She was at her best as an administrator (Lasswell 1977: 127-52)—comfortable in dealing with small working groups face to face, interested in alliances, willing to show flexibility in reaching a consensus solution, attentive to what was needed to get the job done. These skills were appropriate to the task of creating and then sustaining a minority government: probably only such a leader could have survived as she did. It was, as with every leader, an exercise of power, satisfying the politician's need to change the world, but it was not adapted to the public stage.

In working relationships it was evident that Gillard had a sense of humour and a high level of emotional intelligence (see Greenstein 2009), the ability to read others and devise ways to achieve consensus. Remarkably, Gillard fits neatly into Harold Lasswell's pioneering delineation of political types: she was the archetypal administrator (Lasswell 1977: 127-52; Davies 1980: 51-99). Management can be a means of taking control, an avenue for achievement and authority.

Administrators can be driven and controlling. But the administrator prefers to work directly with others, she is transactional and task oriented, given to imposing order on unstructured situations. Given the chaos created by Rudd, one might deduce that such people may well be driven to the fore through sheer exasperation with those of less organizational ability: stand aside and let me get on with it! More closely tied to individuals, she is free of the compulsion to 'get a rise out of' large numbers of people. The administrator is uninterested in abstractions, never having needed them to deal with emotional problems, but this lack of interest may diminish the capacity to capture the rhetorical flights now demanded by public leadership. With little need to personalize professional interactions (family and friendship circles meet those needs), the administrator can avoid overinvestment in workplace relations—affectively adjusted, but flexible. Gillard came from a close knit, emotionally supportive family, but one that encouraged ambition and high ideals. Clever, but inordinately shy, she would not easily find the avenue for realizing ambition, or for meeting her family's ideals, in public performance. But the sense of her family's investment might well have engendered the deep reserves of self-belief that both drove her ambition, and provided the extraordinary resilience she was able to maintain in the face of an unusually conflicted period in government.

Gillard could rarely satisfy the contemporary public leadership expectation of a performance that projects decision and vision with an ability to draw big pictures and communicate a narrative of belief. But as noted earlier, one of her senior officials remarked, 'You'd never fault her for how she runs the Government. She's perfect'. Perhaps we are left with a conundrum: has the prime ministership as an institution now reached the point where the demands for public leadership versus the demands for effective government are so divergent, and the party, cabinet and parliamentary constraints have become so weak in containing that divergence, that the role is near impossible?

Reputation

The circumstances surrounding her ascension would have a defining influence on Gillard's reputation. A small group of senior players in the parliamentary party, expecting Rudd to lead the government to defeat, had engineered a 'coup' (Taylor 2010; Williams 2010). In retrospect it is difficult to square accounts of Gillard as having been an active catalyst (Williams 2010) or, alternatively, a reluctant conscript (Crabbe 2011: 32; Walsh 2013: 5) but it was in any event a situation that engendered stories of manipulation by 'faceless men' and of betrayal. Rudd's assiduously cultivated press contacts augmented such impressions: a senior journalist, Laurie Oakes, for example, challenged Gillard to say whether she had reneged on an agreement with Rudd to give him space to resolve policy issues and improve his poll position; her response was that she would not reveal her discussions with her predecessor (Williams 2010). Gillard maintained this silence: '… it's hard to explain' she later said, 'without being disrespectful to the efforts of the former government, which did achieve … remarkable things. And more particularly, the efforts of the former prime minister. And even though it leaves a

gap, I think it's the better and more respectful course to create that gap than to do the alternative' (Crabbe 2011: 33). So Gillard persisted with a question begging explanation that she had challenged because 'a good government had lost its way'. But why and how this had happened could not, at least initially, be explained: 'We can't tell the story' one minister concluded, 'one, because the structure is so fragile, and we need Kevin. Two, because the whole story doesn't reflect well on the participants' Crabbe 2011: 32).

A spike in the government's popularity after Julia Gillard's accession to leadership was short-lived. Signalling her difference from Rudd, she promised to be a leader who listened to her colleagues and to the voters, a follower of Bob Hawke's precept: governing by consensus. But she displayed uncertain judgment, calling an election relatively soon after assuming office, before any indication of her leadership quality could be discerned and before satisfactorily addressing the policy drift that had been said to bedevil Rudd's administration. Having condemned the government of which she had been part, there could be no looking back, even to the undoubted successes of the Rudd term: sound economic management and sure-footed dealing with the GFC. Her administration was besieged on four fronts: by an Opposition led by a robust and clever aggressor in Tony Abbott and gifted with the story of Rudd's leadership failure on which it could capitalize without having itself to risk much policy detail; by implacably hostile media interests, primarily populist radio 'shock jocks' and elements of the Murdoch press; by Rudd and his supporters whose leaking destabilised the government and unsettled Gillard (Walsh 2013) and by the Greens who could claim to represent the values on which Labor had reneged and to be the standard bearer of progressive politics.

It is a measure of the reputational effects of such tactics that international confidence in Gillard's government was decidedly at odds with domestic perceptions. As the after-effects of the GFC continued to wreak havoc elsewhere, Australia's economic indicators continued to improve substantially, partly as an effect of the demand from China and India for resources, but also manifesting continued trust in Labor's economic management. Yet measures of public confidence were lower than those in Spain (which had 25% unemployment, and whose credit rating had then dropped to one notch above junk bond status). Australians were hyper-alert to problems abroad, encouraged by influential commentators to believe that despite appearances, the country was on the edge of an abyss. The government's inability to escape an obsession with returning the budget to surplus, even when the best economic advice indicated that it was secondary to other priorities, led to increasingly counterproductive strategies for achieving this, until the commitment was finally dropped. This was trumpeted as a signal failure. Parliamentary discord, and ruthlessly negative campaigning not only by the Opposition but by powerful media interests against all that the government did encouraged disquiet about politics in general and leaders in particular. That Gillard was not to be trusted became an article of faith. Misjudgements such as those noted above could be exploited to promote a perception that national affairs were in the hands of wreckers and chancers. Attempts to set the record straight were not heard: the electorate stopped listening.

Throughout her tenure, Gillard battled against Tony Abbott's pugnaciously effective negative campaign, faced internal destabilisation from those who believed Rudd should be returned to the helm, and was dogged by the relentless anti-government stance of Murdoch's News Ltd, which dominated tabloid publication, controlled 60% of Australia's newspapers, and had radio and television interests. *The Australian*, News Ltd's national broadsheet, made clear its intention to see the government defeated soon after the 2010 election (Walsh 2013: 28), and its tabloid stable-mates followed suit. Every slip and misjudgement was magnified. Substantive achievements were sometimes acknowledged (by very able journalists) but then undercut by polemical opinion pages, salacious attention to alleged scandal and unwavering editorial opposition to redistributive measures and anything that could be represented as backsliding on the economic reform agenda. The more negative aspects were further accentuated by the shock-jocks of talk-back radio; they encouraged a visceral misogyny against Gillard.

It is widely acknowledged that women in positions of power, especially political leaders, encounter a double-bind with scepticism about their ability to exercise the 'masculinist' assertive qualities said to be imperative for leadership, yet disquiet when they offend against normative prescriptions of femininity by displaying just those capacities (Hall & Donaghue 2013; Sykes 2013). Gillard's abrupt deposition of Rudd transgressed such prescriptions. Comments from focus groups, such as 'I don't trust her after what she did to Rudd', and 'shafting Rudd in the way she did was appalling', were reported. Analysts of the public mood claimed, 'People have to a large extent tuned out to Gillard, and they find her to a certain extent embarrassing … There's not much in the way of positives … People just don't understand who or what she is' (Crabbe 2011: 32).

It is difficult, however, to find a precedent for the level of vitriol directed against Gillard. Its links with disturbing misogyny have been amply documented (Brett 2012; Kent 2013: 75-82; Hooper 2013; Lohrey 2012; Rodgers-Healey 2013; Trenoweth 2013 and especially Summers 2012). Gillard, in the main, chose not to put gender 'right in the foreground', but after enduring18 months of this onslaught, she rounded on Abbott. The occasion was Abbot's attempt to discredit Gillard by playing the sexist card against her; alluding to the lewd text messages a dissident Liberal MP, Peter Slipper—whom Gillard had agreed to appoint Speaker—had allegedly sent to a staffer, and asserting the government should have 'died of shame'. This transparently echoed a (widely condemned) comment a few weeks earlier by virulently anti-Gillard radio host Allan Jones, that her father had 'died of shame' after her 'lies' to parliament. Provoked beyond measure, Gillard responded 'I will not be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man … Not now, not ever', and proceeded with a forensic analysis of Abbott's long history of heedlessly sexist comments and more recent complicity with misogynistic appeals designed to mobilise opposition to progressive measures (Gillard 2012). The speech had a galvanising effect, demonstrating the divide between press commentators, who thought it tactically ill-advised, and significant sections of the public, which were at last roused by her passion and applauded her courage in fighting back. Her speech was praised in the *New Yorker*,

mentioned favourably in the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* and on the BBC, and went viral on the internet.

Gillard would later observe that 'The reaction to being the first female prime minister does not explain everything about my prime ministership, nor does it explain nothing about my prime ministership … It doesn't explain everything, it doesn't explain nothing, it explains some things' (Gillard 2013). But it is hard to disagree with her conclusion that 'there is 'an underside of sexism, really ugly, violent sexism' in Australia, and that 'I would have thought we were beyond that and it's kind of depressing that we're not' (quoted in Kenny 2013: 6). It seemed, above all to reflect a lack of respect for the office of prime minister 'as if a woman had no right to a man's job' (Kent 2013: 76).

Discussion: contingencies, timing and culture.

The talents Gillard demonstrated – as a negotiator, a people person best suited to working face-to-face with others to find compromise solutions – while far better suited to minority government than those of Tony Abbott, were unsuited to the expectations of sure leadership an uneasy electorate demanded. Only someone with her talents could have established the precarious coalition that governed after 2010. Only a leader with these abilities could ensure that things got done—through unending negotiation with cross-bench members, willingness to accept the views of others and capacity to make deals. She was, then, exactly the sort of leader that the exigencies of a divided parliament and minority government demanded. But these capacities ensured that she was embattled and unpopular almost from the start, since striking deals, trimming to achieve consensus decisions, were seen as compromising the objectives she had once promised—most notably, in relation to carbon pricing.

Reserved, practical and suspicious of rhetoric, Gillard's style of presentation was at odds with the public performance of leadership that had been established by her domineering predecessors (Walter and Strangio 2007). And they were enacting increasingly 'leader centric' trends that have been evident in every Western polity (Pakulski and Körösényi 2012: 51-80). It was not that Gillard was reluctant to play the 'leader centric' role, but that she was poorly suited to it. The spark and fire that had made her an interesting parliamentary performer largely disappeared: she was too intent on staying on message, too concerned with capturing the gravitas of a 'proper leader' – and presented as scripted, wooden and insincere. An astonishing moment in the 2010 campaign when she said she would now speak as 'the real Julia' merely highlighted the confection and led to ridicule and questions about how anyone could know which was the real Julia.

This played into claims that she would say anything and stood for nothing, a perception amplified by the compromise integral to sustaining minority government. No matter that she was capable of calmly expounding her commitment to education and opportunity (e.g. Gillard 2011), and at times of crisis spoke (without notes) with grace and humour: she failed in the role of communicator in chief. Nothing she said appeared to cut through. Most seriously, when she repeatedly tried to explain why, having said before the 2010 election that a majority Labor government would not

introduce a carbon tax, she had changed her position in response to the Greens and the cross-benchers with whom she had to work in minority government, the people ignored her argument. They listened instead to Abbott's relentless representation of her initial stance as nothing but a calculated lie. Trust became an abiding issue.

Arguably, Julia Gillard was thrust into (or opted to seize) the prime ministership too early, her promise destroyed before it had had a chance to mature. She was certainly never given the opportunity to overcome the stumbles that plague many first term prime ministers. But she proved to be tough and resilient, and when the end came, unlike Rudd, she neither harped on her achievements, nor broke down in tears, but spoke briefly and with grace of her disappointment but of understanding the difficult conundrum her colleagues faced (Gillard 2013). Such 'grace notes' have been an element on which supporters have seized in vigorous efforts to effect a positive revaluation of Gillard and her administration. Despite a recent poll showing that retrospectively even Labor voters rate Gillard low in the pantheon of prime ministers (Bramston 2014), a frenetic enterprise in reputational revision has been evident both in public meetings and in the rapid appearance of books and articles identifying the sources of opposition and extolling Gillard's achievement (Kent 2013; Rodgers-Healey 2013: Summers 2012; Trenoweth 2013; Walsh 2013).

It is likely that the more fervent claims such works advance will eventually be moderated, but it is also probable that eventually there will be a more positive recognition of her government: leadership capital may have been elusive, but she will be regarded as a far from inconsequential leader. What seems persuasively established is the extent to which hard ball politics degenerated into destructive incivility under the pressure of a 'win at all costs' opposition and a concerted anti-Labor campaign engineered within Australia's unusually consolidated media industry; the destabilization created by a thwarted, media savvy antagonist within her Caucus; and the mobilisation of a disturbing level of incipient misogyny in the Australian political culture. That each of these factors could be contrived to work in concert with the others demonstrated the potential for distortion and misrepresentation now accessible in the context of mediatized politics. The level of antagonism this generated seemed at a level beyond that usually precipitated by the 'double bind' strong female leaders can expect to encounter. The *media logic* inherent in the unending drama of leader conflict and a woman 'unsuited' for the role swamped the *political logic* of administrative competence, a functional parliament, policy pursued and legislation passed.

In relation to leadership capital, notwithstanding that Gillard made significant mistakes, five things are striking:

- Perceptions are much more integral to establishing leader authority than evidence of capacity, bills passed or policy enacted (that a key official, speaking for many, felt 'You'd never fault [Gillard] for how she runs the Government' counted for little);
- The expectation of the leader as communicator in chief shapes perceptions more decisively than does executive performance; but

- The framing of those perceptions will be inflected by elements specific to the political culture (a paper drafted immediately after Gillard's election predicted the bias a female prime minister might expect—see Hall & Donaghue 2013—but progressive thinkers were shocked by the ease with which a vitriolic misogyny, seemingly inherent in the Australia culture, was mobilised against Gillard—see Summers 2012);

- The dynamic interplay between leaders and followers is more than ever mediated by media interests (the dominance of the Murdoch Press in Australia's highly concentrated industry, and its open avowal of opposition to Labor in general and Gillard in particular, are well-established);

- The media are now crucial in a leader's ability to acquire capital; given the right circumstances, there can be an outright denial of 'leader capital.' Gillard would be granted none of the concessions available to male leaders (to stick with the capital metaphor, and remembering that until very recently Australian banks denied credit to women, there were to be 'no loans for ladies').

The adoption of a leadership capital index (LCI) helps us to identify the issues central to reputation, authority and longevity: to rank the creation and manipulation of public perceptions, the extent to which a leader can influence these, and their capacity to be manipulated by other agencies, against seemingly more concrete factors, such as legislation, control of parliament and management of the executive. Surprisingly, in relation to leadership capital, the latter may prove to be more evanescent than the former. Gillard's case, however, should also alert us to the importance of contingency (the dynamics of the party caucus, the concentrated nature of Australia's media industry, the fact that she was a female leader); questions of timing (coming to power in unusual circumstances, possibly at a time she would not have chosen, in a context of global economic unease demanding sure leadership) and issues of culture (a level of confrontational politics in Australia conducive to the more general incivility emerging in liberal polities—see Strachan & Wolf 2012 —and arguably an unusually high antipathy to female leadership). Rather than advancing these as definitive statements, I proffer them as the incentive for further research to refine the LCI; in its application, we need to find the means for capturing the nuance of individual cases.

Conclusion: Gillard and the Leadership Capital Index

The elements of this discussion can be drawn together and factored into the LCI as follows:

TABLE: GILLARD'S LEADERSHIP CAPITAL INDEX RATING

Indicators	Score		Evidence	Rating
LCI01Evaluation of performance	**Manager** 1 Very poor 2 Poor 3 Average **4 Good** 5 Very good	**Communicator** 1 Very poor **2 Poor** 3 Average 4 Good 5 Very good	As a <u>**manager**</u>, Gillard was very good indeed: managing huge workloads without overburdening her office or the APS; winning loyalty and support from insiders; achieving results that few thought possible. As a <u>**communicator**</u> to the public at large, she was poor, seemingly unable to adapt the quick witted, doughty, feisty manner of her former parliamentary performance to the leaders role, and conspicuously failing to win the public	6
LCI02 Personal poll rating	1. -9-05 2. -05-01 3. **0** 4. 1-5 5. 5-10		On preferred Prime Minister polling, Gillard maintained a healthy lead (average 19%) over Opposition leader Abbott during the first 6 months of her term. During the last 6 months prior to her deposition in 2013, at a time when the press deemed her 'finished', she led Abbott (Jan- early March) by a slim margin (average 4%), but between March and June she fell back – Abbott led, but only by an average 6%.	3
LCI03 National election result	**1 Small (39.9)** 2 Near min (40-47.9) 3 Minimum (48-52) 4 Above min (52.1-60.0) 5 Large (60.1 and above)		The parliamentary ALP took an enormous gamble in deposing Rudd; Gillard in turn took a gamble in going precipitately to an election. The initial result was a hung parliament, with Labor and the Coalition each holding 72 seats—4 short of the majority needed to govern. After prolonged negotiation, Gillard gained the backing of 3 independent MPs and a Green, forming the first national minority government since the 1940s. She would not survive to fight another election.	1
LCI04 Longevity: Time in office	1. Less than a year 2. 1 – 2 years 3. **2 – 3 years** 4. 3- 4 years 5. More than 4 years		Gillard served as PM from June 2010 until June 2013: given the Australian convention that federal governments serve for 3 years, this constituted virtually a full term.	3
LCI05 Party cohesion-defeats/resignations/rivals	1. **Strongly divided and/or strong challenger** 2. Divided and challenger 3. Medium-some division but not on major issues. No substantial challenge 4. Unified with no challenger 5. Strongly unified		Kevin Rudd was a strong challenger, never accepting his overthrow; he and a small group of supporters would be a destabilising influence within the parliamentary Caucus, with the prospect of challenging Gillard always present. He managed, too, to rebuild his electoral popularity, soon polling more strongly than either Gillard or Abbott. While he retained a core of strong supporters, the Caucus itself overwhelmingly supported Gillard (as did most Labor voters) until the end, when it was persuaded that only Rudd might avert the electoral disaster indicated by polls in 2013.	1
LCI06 Leadership election	1 Slight (-49.9) 2 Narrow (50) **3 Reasonable (55-59.9)** 4 Large (60-66.6) 5 Landslide (66.7+)		There was no vote in June 2010; a challenge was mounted by Gillard, Rudd was persuaded he could not win and stood aside. Claims that Rudd would challenge Gillard (which Rudd denied) emerged in 2011. In February 2012, Rudd resigned from the Foreign Ministry, claiming lack of support from the PM, and precipitated a spill: Gillard defeated him resoundingly, 71 to 31. Following another period of speculation, and then a dramatic intervention by senior Party Figure Simon Crean, there was another spill in March 2013: Rudd this time refused to stand and Gillard was re-elected	3

		unopposed. Finally, in June 2013, amidst a further spike in febrile leadership speculation, Gillard called another vote and this time Rudd won, 57-45. Thus, within the Caucus, support favoured Gillard by a strong margin for most of her term.	
LCI07 Party polling	1. **-10.1 and below** 2. -10 to-2.5 3. -2.5 to 2.5 4. 2.5 to 10 5. **10.1 and above**	At the 2010 election, Labor's primary vote was 38% (L-NP 43.3%), but TPP was 50.1% (L-NP 49.9%). Polls steadily deteriorated thereafter: by June 2013, the most reliable polls had Labor's primary vote at 29% (L-NP 48%) and TPP at 43% (L-NP 57%). These were the circumstances in which Gillard was replaced by Rudd.	1
LCI08 Trust in leader	1. 0-20 2. **20-40** 3. 40-60 4. 60 80 5. **80-100**	Preferred PM polling does not serve as a proxy for trust. Voters never really warmed to Opposition leader Abbott (he was the first prime minister to have won office in 2013 with a net negative approval rating). However, the Opposition made Gillard's alleged untrustworthiness a major campaigning issue from the first, and reported focus group research suggests that trust was a significant negative for her. This does, however, have to be understood in relation to an unprecedentedly vicious campaign against her, including a significant element of deceit and misogyny, which had a decided influence on voter perceptions.	2
LCI09Legislative/ Policy achievement	1 few (if any) policy achievements or other actions 2 1 or 2 policies passed and few other actions **3 2 or 3 major policies enacted and 1 or 2 major actions** 4 Major policy reforms in different areas enacted 6 Most policies enacted and enshrined in law	Despite being embattled, managing a minority government, and having to negotiate cross-bench support for every measure, the Gillard Government could claim a record of significant legislative achievement—all too little of which was adequately reported or appropriately recognised. The problem has been that even the most important of these initiatives (such as the NDIS, the CEF package, or education reforms) will be substantially revised or entirely abolished by the subsequent government, since they were not in place long enough for their positive effects to become bedded down or fully understood by the electorate.	3
LCI10 Revision	1 Thoroughly revised downwards 2 Reputation declined 3 Stayed the same **4 Revised upwards** 5 Thoroughly revised upwards	In the year after her defeat, there were especially vigorous attempts by Gillard's supporters to map the scale of the campaign against her, with essays and books rapidly produced to chart the alleged calumny of those who tore her down and in defence of her achievements. While it is likely that these claims will be moderated in due course, it is probable that her reputation will be revised upwards in the long term.	4
			27 (60)

Comment

The acquisition or diminution of leadership capital is principally a matter of follower and voter perception and/or misperception. It is evident that while mistakes and misjudgement played some part in diminishing Gillard's leadership capital, four factors that may not appear self-evident in the mode of scoring adopted above must be taken into account: a relentlessly negative Opposition campaign that succeeded in casting doubt on the legitimacy of the minority government and of Gillard; a concerted campaign by the Murdoch Press against Labor in general and Gillard in particular; destabilisation within her own parliamentary Party by Kevin Rudd; and the conspicuous mobilisation of misogynistic bias by radio shock jocks and internet activists. Other female leaders at state level in Australia have faced some of these obstacles: none has confronted such a 'perfect storm' as that which Gillard encountered.

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