

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY MODIFIES THE EFFECT OF GLASS CLIFF CANDIDACIES ON ELECTION OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN IN AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATIVE RACES (2011 - 2016)

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Article Abstract

Research on glass cliff political candidacies shows that compared to men, women are more likely to run for office in districts where they are likely to lose. We examined if party differences in whether female candidates face these worse conditions in the United States could account for persistent and growing party and state variation in women's representation. Using election data from 2011 to 2016, we compared Republican versus Democratic candidacies at the state legislative level. We found that women in both parties faced glass cliffs in House races, but not in the Senate. For Republican women, glass cliff conditions accounted for worse election outcomes, but Democratic women were more likely to win when these conditions were considered. Variation in party by state measures of glass cliff effects were also found to explain state variation in women's office holding. We found that for Democrats, more women win when more women run, but for Republicans, more women win only when the seats they face are more winnable. These results point to the role of polarized traditional versus progressive political ideologies in structuring the motives which underlie glass cliff conditions for women in politics, suggesting that practical solutions be tailored to party. To overcome the growing gap in women's representation, current efforts to increase the quantity of women running would be complemented by a focus on improving the quality of contests they face, with Republican women most likely to benefit. Further research attending to the multiple sources of variation which impact gendered election outcomes can inform more targeted solutions for advancing equality. *Additional online materials for this article are available on PWQ's website at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0361684321992046>*

Résumé vulgarisé (English)

At the state legislative level in the United States, similar to many other countries, women are less likely to win political contests compared to men. There have been improvements to these outcomes over the last few decades, with more women winning, but progress has noticeably stalled, and one political party has clearly benefited more than the other. Female Democratic political representatives outnumber female Republican representatives 2 to 1. Past research shows that compared to men, women are more likely to run for office in districts which are *glass cliffs*, in other words, where they are more likely to lose. We examined if political party differences in whether female candidates face these worse conditions in the United States could account for the persistent and growing differences in women's representation between the parties, and differences across states. Using election data from 2011 to 2016, we compared Republican versus Democratic candidacies at the state legislative level. We found that women in both parties faced glass cliffs. For Republican women, glass cliff conditions accounted for worse election outcomes, but Democratic women were more likely to win when these conditions were considered. Party differences in the impact of glass cliff conditions on election outcomes were also found to explain state variation in the number of women in office. We found that for Democrats, more women win when more women run for office, but for Republicans, more women win only when the seats (or competitions) they face are equally or more winnable compared to men. Our results also suggest the importance of traditional versus progressive political ideologies in structuring the motives which underlie glass cliff conditions for women in politics, suggesting that practical solutions be tailored to party ideology, particularly with regard to attitudes toward, or beliefs about women's equality. To overcome the growing gap in women's representation, current efforts to increase the quantity of women running for office in the United States would be complemented by a focus on improving the quality of contests they face, with Republican women most likely to benefit. Further investigation of the role of glass cliff conditions in other national contexts, in link with political party ideologies and associated attitudes towards women's equality, can inform more targeted solutions for advancing women's representation in the political sphere more broadly.

Résumé vulgarisé (Français)

Aux États-Unis, comme dans de nombreux autres pays, les femmes sont moins susceptibles de remporter des élections que les hommes au niveau législatif des États. Ces résultats se sont améliorés au cours des dernières décennies, avec davantage de femmes ayant été élues. Malgré cela, les progrès ont sensiblement stagné, et un parti politique en a clairement bénéficié plus que l'autre. Les représentantes politiques démocrates sont en effet deux fois plus nombreuses que les républicaines. Les recherches antérieures ont montré que, comparées aux hommes, les femmes sont plus susceptibles de se présenter aux élections dans des districts qui sont des « falaises de verre », dans lesquels elles sont davantage susceptibles de perdre. Nous avons examiné si cette tendance pouvaient expliquer la différence croissante dans la proportion de femmes élues au sein de chaque parti, ainsi que des différences de représentation entre les États. En utilisant les données électorales de 2011 à 2016, nous avons comparé les candidatures républicaines et démocrates au niveau législatif des États. Nous avons constaté que les femmes des deux partis faisaient face à des falaises de verre. Pour les femmes républicaines, ces conditions précaires ont engendré de moins bons résultats électoraux, mais les femmes démocrates étaient davantage susceptibles de gagner lorsque ces conditions étaient prises en compte. Ces différences entre les partis expliquent également la variation entre les États concernant le nombre de femmes élues. Nous avons constaté que pour le parti Démocrate, les femmes gagnent plus souvent lorsque le nombre de femmes se présentant aux élections est important. Pour le parti Républicain, cette même tendance ne s'observe que lorsque les sièges

auxquels les femmes sont confrontées ne sont pas plus difficiles à remporter que ceux des hommes. Nos résultats suggèrent également l'importance des idéologies politiques traditionnelles versus progressistes dans la structuration des motivations qui sous-tendent les conditions de la falaise de verre pour les femmes en politique. Cela suggère que les interventions doivent être adaptées à l'idéologie du parti, en particulier en ce qui concerne les attitudes ou les croyances à l'égard de l'égalité hommes-femmes. Afin de surmonter l'écart croissant en ce qui concerne la représentation des femmes, les efforts actuellement déployés pour accroître le nombre de femmes candidates aux élections aux États-Unis gagneraient à être complétés par une amélioration des conditions dans lesquelles elles se présentent en tant que candidates, les femmes républicaines étant les plus susceptibles d'en bénéficier. Une étude plus approfondie des conditions qui facilitent l'émergence d'une falaise de verre dans d'autres contextes nationaux, en lien avec les idéologies des partis politiques et les attitudes à l'égard de l'égalité femmes-hommes, est susceptible de générer des solutions plus ciblées pour faire progresser la représentation des femmes dans la sphère politique.