Women's political representation: The importance of ideology.

Women's Political Representation: The Importance of Ideology

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Abstract

Women's low rate of participation at the highest levels of politics is an enduring problem in gender stratification. Previous cross-national research has focused on the representation of women in national legislatures, yet women's participation is also limited in other political institutions and processes. This paper extends the understanding of women's political representation by examining the role of ideology in women's participation in elected and appointed positions. We analyze data from 33 countries to test the hypotheses that women are disproportionately represented in two types of political institutions: those with a tradition of women's political activity and those with a liberal ideology.
on women in national legislatures has stressed three explanations for differences in women's political representation: social structure, politics, and ideology. Despite strong theory suggesting the importance of ideology, it has not found support in previous cross-national statistical studies. But ideology has not been as well measured as structural and political factors. In this article, we demonstrate that gender ideology strongly affects the number of women in national legislatures. We do so by introducing a newly available measure of national gender ideology into a cross-national model of women in legislatures. We demonstrate that ideology, when measured more precisely, strongly predicts differences in women's political representation.
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