

Women more likely to recruit other women for political office

August 8 2011

The gender composition of those responsible for candidate recruitment plays a crucial role in either encouraging or discouraging women candidates to run for office, according to a recent study in *Political Research Quarterly* (PRQ) published by SAGE on behalf of the Western Political Science Association.

"Researchers Christine Cheng and Margit Tavits looked at "party gatekeepers" (local party presidents) from the five major political parties in the 2004 and 2006 Canadian [national elections](#). Unlike the US, the nomination of party candidates for the Canadian Parliament is solely the prerogative of the local party associations, and local presidents are in a position to both formally and informally influence the nomination of candidates. The research found an important relationship between the gender of party gatekeepers and who ultimately is nominated to run for office."

The study highlighted three distinct mechanisms where the gender of the party gatekeepers was likely to affect whether the local party candidate was a man or a woman: 1) gatekeepers are more likely to directly recruit and promote people like themselves, 2) the professional and social networks of [women](#) gatekeepers are more likely to include qualified women who would be suitable parliamentary candidates which increases the opportunities for direct recruitment of female candidates and, 3) the presence of female party gatekeepers sends an encouraging signal to potential female candidates that women are welcome and can be active in politics, creating a virtuous cycle of participation.

"Districts with a significant historical record of female candidates are more likely to nominate women candidates in the future" conclude the authors. "Even if party leaders are not directly responsible for their party's nomination process, the leadership can informally encourage preferred candidates to contest nominations or, even less directly, send signals about who would be welcome and would fit in with the existing local party elite. This is an important insight that other studies have missed."

More information: *Political Research Quarterly* June 2011 vol. 64 no. 2 460-471. [doi: 10.1177/1065912909349631](https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912909349631)

Provided by SAGE Publications

Citation: Women more likely to recruit other women for political office (2011, August 8)
retrieved 14 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-08-women-political-office.html>

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