

# Updating the Glass Cliff

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The Glass Cliff Phenomenon (GCP), in which women appear more likely to be promoted to leadership in times of crisis, is thought to be a function of stereotypic views of leadership. In this study, we systematically replicated Kottke and associates (2013), who had replicated Bruckmüller and Branscombe's (2010) study, to determine whether people's perceptions of leadership traits operate under the paradigms "think manager — think male" and "think crisis — think female." Thus, we expected to find the existence of gender stereotyping of characteristics associated with the GCP based on respondents' awareness of the context of the crisis.

After reading a vignette of either a fictitious company in financial crisis or a fictitious company thriving financially, 268 working students ( $M = 24.9$  years old,  $M = 6.4$  years of work experience; 111 participants had supervisory experience) were asked to rate a list of 58 traits on bipolar scales assessing how essential each characteristic was in selecting a new leader. Using an effect size of .20 or greater, 15 characteristics emerged as essential for thriving companies, with eight of these female-gendered (*flexibility, openness, fairness, ability to admit errors, dependability, ability to encourage others, sophistication, and consideration*), and two male-gendered (*courageous, innovative*), two male-gendered (*courageous, innovative*), and the remaining five, neutral with regard to gender. No characteristics emerged as highly essential for the leader of the company in crisis.

There was no support for the idea that characteristics perceived as more typical of female leaders would be seen as particularly appropriate for companies in crisis. Although some traits were, in fact, rated as being needed for a leader of a thriving company, there was very little overlap with the expected gender-typed leadership traits. We are not suggesting that the GCP does not exist, but argue that the method of investigation and the situation's framing is important to observers' perceptions.

Visit [Jan Kottke's website](#) for more information on her research, including a downloadable copy of the paper she and her research team presented at the 2014 APS Annual Convention.

**-Jan Kottke**  
*California State University, San Bernardino*