

Gendered Electoral Financing: Money, Power and Representation in Comparative Perspective

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Historically, the formal inclusion of women in institutional politics through the extension of the franchise often turned their outright exclusion into marginalization. The goal for electoral gender quotas, either legislated or voluntary, is to minimize the effects of this marginalization, with the hope of eliminating it. Although gender quotas are a good first step in addressing women's exclusion and possibly ensuring their participation, quotas have shown themselves to be insufficient in most cases (Araújo and Alves, 2007; Jones, 2009).

Recently, political and campaign financing have become a subject of interest for political science in general (Öhman, 2012; Scarrow, 2007). As too often happens in political science, most of these initial works ignored possible gendered effects or made only passing observations. *Gendered Electoral Financing*, edited by Muriaas, Wang and Murray, thus comes at the right time to fill that gap in knowledge.

The focus of the book is legislation and rules that direct funds to women's campaigns, ensure participation through financial penalties for noncompliance with quotas, or lessen the financial load during campaigns. Therefore, rather than test the impact of money itself—whether it's more or less of it—in women's and men's campaigns, it is assumed that money has a significant impact on campaigns and that women get fewer funds than do men. In fact, some chapters do not present financial data, and the remainder (those on France, Ireland, Malawi) present it without correlation to votes or election outcomes. That said, the book not only investigates financing rules that may affect a woman candidate's electoral bid but also discusses historical, cultural and institutional factors that shape different gendered financing regimes.

The book is organized into two parts, with six countries selected as cases on a most-different-systems basis. The first part focusses on party-centred gendered electoral financing (GEF), meaning measures that apply to parties rather than to individual candidates. Usually these are found in countries with proportional representation systems, such as two of the cases, Ireland and Cabo Verde, but a majoritarian exception is France—the third case examined here. The second part of the book deals with GEF tools focussed on individuals, which are most often found in countries with majoritarian systems. The book includes chapters on three such countries—the United States, Malawi and Ghana.

While the editors do not lay out a standardized methodology, there are similarities across the chapters regarding research questions and techniques. Some chapters rely more heavily on interview data, while others have more descriptive statistics, and occasionally there is a balance of both. All the case chapters follow a similar format: a summary of political history and the inclusion of women in institutional politics, followed by the data, analysis and conclusions. This enables readers to easily find specific information and draw their own comparative conclusions. The political history sections are particularly informative for anyone wanting to know more about these countries.

The introduction and the conclusion to the volume serve as benchmarks, where the editors set expectations and conduct the comparative analysis, respectively. In the former they lay out the typology that structures the book (party-centred and candidate-centred measures) and subdivides the country cases (financial punishment/reward, cost relief/earmarked funding).

The conclusion does an excellent job of putting together the individual analyses of the previous chapters, enabling comparison among them and generating possibilities for future studies, such as the analysis of more countries or the combination of the typology with inferential statistics. The authors argue that countries with proportional representation have an easier time developing GEF rules, given the broader application on parties and the use of sanctions on institutions rather than small individual benefits. They conclude that success also depends on not shifting rules between elections and having an authoritative body to oversee them. Importantly, they seem to be more effective when they exist in addition to gender quotas and in the presence of public funding as the main source of campaign funds.

The country with the most effective result, in that more women were elected after the measures were taken, was France, with a majoritarian system. However, the chapter's authors, Achin et al., attribute this to the rule heavily penalizing parties financially if they do not fill the quota. The main conclusion discussed by the editors in the final chapter is, therefore, that electoral rules on financing should be targeted toward parties, the gatekeepers of candidacies. The overall conclusion demonstrates the importance of negative consequences and positive reinforcements that reformulate the structure of the competition. By contrast, the authors find that individual incentives or rules placed on parties in places where the competition is individually organized have little to no impact.

One obstacle the authors faced was that most of these rules either have not been in existence or enforced for very long, which makes finding their effects and separating them from unique events quite difficult. Indeed, the authors also find that contextual factors are also relevant to the functioning of GEF. Furthermore, a shortcoming of the book is that despite the efforts to include Global South countries, there are no contributions from authors outside the West European–North American axis. The inclusion of African countries only from the Global South also restricts the analytical possibilities, which is acknowledged by the authors. Nonetheless, Muriaas, Wang and Murray have produced an engaging book, backed by well-grounded data, that explores an important subject in diverse countries. In fact, although campaign financing research is becoming more mainstream, this is the first book to investigate it from a gendered perspective, making it required reading for anyone who studies electoral systems and the consequences of rule interaction. The book is an excellent starting point for anyone looking to understand gender quotas and the electoral financing connected with that.

References

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