



The Gendered Effects of Electoral Institutions: Political Engagement and Participation (Comparative Politics)

Miki Caul Kittilson, Leslie A. Schwindt-Bayer

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In most countries around the world, women continue to lag behind men in an array of political orientations and activities. Understanding why this is the case and why some countries have been more successful than others at moderating gender gaps in political involvement is imperative for producing stronger and more representative democracies. Cultural, socioeconomic, and political factors explain some of the gender gaps in political involvement, but not all of them. In this book, the authors argue that electoral institutions attenuate gender gaps in mass political engagement and participation by drawing women, an 'undertapped' constituency, into the democratic process. Using cross-national and country-specific analyses, the authors show that electoral institutions play a complementary and significant role in reducing gender gaps in political involvement. The cross-national analyses draw on comparative survey data from a wide range and large number of countries. The case studies draw out the processes underlying changes in political attitudes and behaviors with evidence from four country studies: New Zealand, Russia, France, and Uruguay. All four countries have altered their electoral institutions, either through large-scale reform of the electoral system itself or adopting gender quotas, allowing the authors to examine patterns of political involvement pre- and post-reform. The book finds that inclusive electoral systems that produce more proportional electoral outcomes have larger effects on women's political engagement and participation than on men's. Gender quotas also mediate women's engagement and participation, but to a lesser degree. On the whole, the book concludes that electoral rules designed to promote social inclusion in parliament are critical for promoting social group inclusion among the electorate.

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