

Gender Politics in Latin American Presidential Elections: A Comparative Study on Brazil and Argentina

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Main theme

- * Why most women presidents in Latin America, which represent a large proportion of the world's female leaders of state, were elected not based on feminist platform, despite they frequently advance women's rights once in office?

Some stylized facts

- * Gender quotas have boosted female participation in politics, raising their share of parliamentary seats from an average of 13% in 2000 to 21% in 2010.
- * In the past five years, Brazil, Costa Rica, Argentina and Trinidad and Tobago have elected women leaders. Today Latin America has 4 of the world's 19 female heads of state.
- * Since 1974, Latin America also witnessed quite a few female presidents in Argentina, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Panama, and Chile

Some stylized facts

- * Peruvian president Ollanta Humala won a tight runoff race against Keiko Fujimori by focusing his campaign on women and the right to control their bodies
- * Chile's former president Michele Bachelet generally kept the issue of gender equity off her campaigning for office
- * Marina Silva took a strong last-minute political stand against abortion to gain favor with voters with traditional values and was elected as president of Brazil

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Feminization of political scene

- * The classical division into private sphere referred to women and the public sphere under male control, even still characteristic for LA society, has seen its boundary becoming more flexible
- * Cristina Fernandez Kirchner in Argentina was in a strong position in politics before became president
- * Dilma Rouseff in Brazil had high qualifications in economy and diplomacy and were regarded as the “iron lady” of the South

Women in power as a potent symbolism?

- * Some notice it is because of the shift of the main focus from a “social movement” to a “political-institutional feminism” which brings attention to the influential and articulate individuals rather than to those who really need further changes in granting them equality
- * It seems also interesting to notice that as women become social actors they change the political scene in the direction of the soft power rather than the hard one which was regarded as too aggressive and uncompromising.
- * However, despite their strong feminist credentials, women candidates in LA frequently advance women’s rights once in office but do not make gender an electoral focus during their campaigns.

Special interest politics (Grossman and Helpman)

- * Social norms of election—groups with their members of strong social connectedness may be best able to enforce a norm of voting
- * Fixed positions distinguish candidates from each other, but pliable policies are the key to be influenced. In an information signaling game, special interest group have incentive to inform their members about the parties' policy positions because the parties cater to informed voters and ignore the less-well-informed
- * High signaling and lobbying costs may allow the SIG with a large bias to convey information.

Political equilibrium with campaign contributions

- * The basic framework is that of agency in which an interest group offers a contribution schedule to the policymaker, who chooses a policy based on its preferences for policy and contributions.
- * The equilibrium is efficient in the sense that the policy chosen maximizes a weighted average of the policy preferences of the policymaker and the SIG.

Tentative propositions for Latin America

- * When multiple SIGs attempt to influence a single policymaker (a common agency), the power in the relationship can shift to the policymaker—with SIGs competing away the potential gains from political action. Policymaker will adopt a hands-off strategy—no particular intervention in gender equality
- * Self-interested groups serve the interests of their members or stakeholders whereas advocacy groups serve the interests of others (public interests)—Confrontation in public arenas caused by SIG actions may force policymaker to cater to interests of SIGs.
- * Grassroots actions can be directed to causing policymaker to change policies—activist groups, for example, campaign to force firms to improve their human rights policies



* But, why they were elected?