Gender and LGBTQ Issues in Election Processes
Global and Local Contexts

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Introduction

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Many studies prove the regression in the equal rights of women and sexual minorities in those countries undergoing a democratic crisis (Democracy Report, 2021; Ilonszki & Vajda, 2019; Takács & Szalma, 2020). Researchers demonstrate that gender and LGBTQ issues are also an integral part of electoral processes around the world. It is obvious that in an era of strong polarisation of party systems and the growing popularity of populism, these issues are even increasingly exposed and instrumentally used. The stronger this exposure, the more attention they should arouse among political scientists. Unfortunately, despite the relatively large number of books and articles on gender and election issues in consolidated democracies, there is still a research gap on those issues in developing or non-democratic countries (with some exceptions as Chiva, 2018).

Moreover, in a very wide range of analyses of the causes of the global democratic backlash and the related human rights crisis (including women's and LGBTQ rights deterioration), authors limit their works to the macro-structural level analyses. Many studies have been prepared on the activities of international organisations (UN, UE) and federal or central governments, but there is a lack of research results relating to the local level. This "local" gap is sometimes filled by NGOs' reports, but it is certainly not sufficient.

Only a few authors argue that in-depth studies cannot be limited to general elections on the central or federal level (Banwart et al., 2003). Invoking the context of the 2016 US presidential election, Sanbonmatsu points out that differences in perceptions of gender politics in the United States should not be reduced to a contest between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, because decisions at the federal level are not crucial for the daily lives of US citizens. From their point of view more important are decisions taken at the state level, since "[t]he fifty states are often at the heart of public policy" (Sanbonmatsu, 2018, p. 280). All these gaps (Western–non-Western

and central/federal–local/regional) were identified in the in-depth literature review which we divided into two main sections: gender issues and elections, as well as LGBTQ issues and elections.

Literature review

Gender and elections

We identified four main themes most widely explored by scholars attempting to explain the relationship between gender and electoral processes. Researchers (1) mapped the barriers for women's access to public office, (2) explained why these barriers are unchangeable, (3) analysed the institutional solutions implemented to challenge these barriers, and (4) considered how gender affects voters' attitudes and behaviours.

(1) The increasing number of female candidates in elections has long been hindered by stereotypical roles, according to which women were positioned as mothers, carers, or educators, and men – as fathers, leaders, or decision-makers (Dillaway & Paré, 2013; Dolan, 2014; McDonagh, 2009a, 2009b). Even in the United States "presidents and presidential contenders, whether male or female, are expected to meet the masculine expectations of the office through words and actions" (Dittmar, 2016, p. 807).

　　That is probably the main reason why the media in many stable democracies still use different adjectives towards women and men, thus emphasising different traits, which indirectly influences voters' perceptions of candidates (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008). On the positive side, nowadays journalists and editors are increasingly less likely to stereotype female candidates on the basis of their appearance (although editorial cartoons are still an exception (Zurbriggen & Sherman, 2010)) – focusing on other issues (Major & Coleman, 2008).

　　Interestingly, voters are less amenable to these stereotypes than party leaders and selectors, who often decide how inclusive and supportive a party will be for minority groups (Kenny & Verge, 2016; Niven, 1998; Zipp & Plutzer, 1985). Researchers see a glass ceiling at the party level and often refer to it as the "party gap" (Palmer & Simon, 2010, p. 161). This bias is assumed to be twofold. On the one hand, men, who are in the majority in party elites, co-opt elite members on the basis of similarity, which results in women's discrimination and exclusion; on the other hand, the recruitment of female candidates to the elite cannot be supported by the experience of other women, as there are few women in the public sphere (Bjarnegård, 2013; Niven, 1998).

　　A strong barrier to entry into the electoral market may be finances, which are harder to raise for female candidates (mostly challengers) than for male candidates (mostly incumbents). On this topic, research

results also come mainly from the United States, where the system of political financing is original and well-established (Werner & Mayer, 2007). However, there is a lack of data from countries where parties are publicly funded. In theory, the system of party funding through the budget should have no impact on gender politics (the state as a funder does not differentiate between genders when it gives funds to parties), but since the (male and patriarchal) party elites have a huge influence on the distribution of such funds, gender really does matter.

(2) Scientists explain that the barriers to entry into politics are so difficult to overcome because of the importance of cultural traditions and the maintenance of sociocultural stereotypes in the media. The latter play a crucial role in contemporary society.

Female candidates have to face the fact that journalists and interviewers treat them quite differently from male candidates, because the media environment is also – using the Bourdieu's term – a specific habitus. Media habits and gender bias continue to persist, although women are running in an increasing number of elections (Ilie, 2011). During 2010 and 2015 UK general election researchers observed that the media published more news coverage that was dedicated to women than that dedicated to men (Murphy & Rek, 2019; Ross et al., 2013). However, most studies from the United States, Canada, and Germany show the opposite trend – there is less news coverage about women, and even if there is a strong competition between male and female leaders, "gender did play a considerable role in framing certain stories" (Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007, p. 154). It turns out that the choice of communication channel varies according to gender. Using the Swedish example, researchers show that women perceive social media better than men and are more likely to use it to contact their prospective voters (Sandberg & Öhberg, 2017).

Research conducted at the local level shows that even the type of attack in an election campaign is strongly gender dependent. In Taiwan, male politicians do not hesitate to personally attack their female competitors on social media, while female politicians use negative campaigning far less frequently (Chen & Chang, 2019, p. 15). Furthermore, based on an analysis of more than 800 leaflets from Hong Kong's local elections, Lee demonstrated that election materials vary depending on whether they promote a man or a woman (Lee, 2007, pp. 875–877).

(3) Some legislators and advocates of equal rights believe that quota mechanisms can be a powerful institutional support for women in elections. How effective it is, has been the subject of a very large number of comparative studies (Fernández & Valiente, 2021; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009).

The great value of the local perspective is evidenced by the fact that, on the basis of analyses of specific political systems (considered peripheral), the authors came to non-obvious conclusions. For example, using the Polish case, Górecki and Kukołowicz observed that the

introduction of quotas in the open-list PR electoral system resulted in an increase in the number of female candidates, but paradoxically the increase was accompanied by a sharp decline in women's electoral performance (Górecki & Kukołowicz, 2014, p. 76). This is closely related to the point that "women tend to be nominated in unwinnable ridings (i.e., lost-cause districts, fringe party representation, and so forth)" (Rekkas, 2008, p. 987), for which the intra-party selectors, who de facto decide on the electoral chances of female candidates, are responsible. A different conclusion was drawn by Jones who, using the example of district elections in Latin America, argued that the impact of quotas is positive regardless of the type of party list (Jones, 2009).

Interestingly, research at the local level yielded unequivocally positive results in terms of the positive correlation between the number of women represented in parliament and the introduction of quotas mechanisms into the legal system (Jones, 1998), but this correlation becomes questionable at the central level. Moreover, it is considered more effective to introduce quotas in political parties rather than in parliaments or public offices (Studlar & McAllister, 1998).

However, the quota law does not always have positive effects per se. It appears that it may increase the number of women taking up public office, but limit this progression to elite and well-educated individuals. In such a scenario, women in manual jobs, or women with a low level of education or the female unemployed, still remain unrepresented (Kang, 2013, p. 101).

The whole electoral system seems to be an important factor influencing the increasing representation of women in politics. Using the example of Germany, Davidson-Schmich argues that it is possible to close the gap between the chances of women in the electoral votes and on the party lists (Davidson-Schmich, 2014). On the other hand, Josefsson noted in Uganda, an increase in the number of women with higher levels of education and less likely to report an interest in women's issues after the introduction of the popular vote, compared to earlier indirect elections (Josefsson, 2014, p. 102).

(4) The researchers focusing on electoral behaviour try to deal with the question of whether gender matters with regard to voters' decisions (Zipp & Plutzer, 1985). The gender gap among voters is visible at four levels: vote, attitudes towards issues, assessment of leaders, and partisan identification (Renfrow, 1994, p. 130). However, study results and findings depend heavily on the cultural context.

In New Zealand, there were no gender disparities among left and right voters, but there were some gender differences among mainstream and populist party voters (the latter more likely to be supported by men) (Coffé, 2013). Election studies in Australia and the United States on voters' perceptions of party leaders found that gender affects the vote, but the direction of this correlation is opposite

in these countries (Hayes & McAllister, 1997). In the United States, women demonstrated greater progressivism and were more likely to vote for Democrats, while in Australia, women were more likely to prefer (female) conservatism and to vote for the Liberal-National coalition (Renfrow, 1994, p. 131).

Furthermore, charismatic female leaders, such as Hillary Clinton or Julia Gillard, have the ability to mobilise the electorate on gender (and other issues of inclusiveness) not only during campaigns and elections themselves, but even afterwards, and even when they have lost elections (Denemark et al., 2012; Gomez et al., 2019).

In all of the above studies, the focus was put – according to Wallerstein's world-systems theory – mainly on the core countries, and much less on the semi-peripheral and peripheral regions. This is primarily due to the difference in resources of research centres in developed and underdeveloped countries, but it also creates another research gap: we know quite well in which aspects gender influences voting decisions in the United States, European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand but we know little about how it influences voting decisions in small or underdeveloped or conflict-ridden states.

Meanwhile, research in non-Western contexts, which is still under-represented, yields very interesting data and conclusions about voting behaviour. The example of Tanzania demonstrates that inequality in access to education results in less criticality towards the information and an inability to confirm its veracity. In turn, this contributes to the reasons why women were more likely to support the incumbent party than the opposition party. The author also points out that women were generally more vulnerable to being dissuaded from voting for the opposition "due to fear of potential violence" (Macdonald, 2018, p. 44). The importance of traditionally formed gender roles in India is pointed out by Kumar, who writes that "One of the main reasons offered for the limited participation of women in Indian politics is women's inability to make independent political decisions; many of them depend on male family members" (Kumar, 2021, p. 1).

Sometimes the findings from the core and semi-peripheral states sound very similar. The binary male-female contest, even in democracies such as the United States, generates emotions in the electorate rooted in sexism, that is, the belief that men are more suited to politics than women. Such a belief in the USA, had a stronger influence on the decisions of white voters (Bracic et al., 2019) and was also evident among Donald Trump's supporters (Georgeac et al., 2019). Similar studies conducted in Ukraine confirm this sexist tendency: men who supported the opposition male-leader Yushchenko in 2004 presidential election were less likely to support the opposition female-leader Tymoshenko six years later (Hrycak, 2011).

LGBTQ issues and elections

While research on the impact of gender on electoral processes is advanced and results have been published for several decades, far less is still known about the relationship between LGBTQ issues and elections. Only in recent years, especially in the past two decades, has there been an increasing amount of research dedicated to electoral processes that takes into account LGBTQ issues. Nevertheless – as in the previous section – we have identified the most important topics for articles and books on electoral and LGBTQ issues.

Often the subject of scientific papers is the LGBTQ community and its rights as a topic raised by candidates during election campaigns (Abramowitz, 2004) and media coverage of LGBTQ (Barnhurst, 2003). In the area of research on discourse and media we can find not only study of traditional or new media coverage of sexual minorities, but also the framing of political content in LGBTQ publications (Miller, 2014). The issue that can most often be found in studies is same-sex marriage, especially candidates attitudes to gay marriage as a part of political agenda and its effect on voting (Ensley & Bucy, 2010) and the impact of opinions about gay rights on voting for presidential candidates (Rhodebeck, 2015).

Sometimes the issue of LGBTQ rights appears in broader context questions about the civil rights of minorities (Riggle et al., 2009), or the intersections between race and sexuality (Conway, 2009). Some researchers focus their attention on openly gay candidacies for public office (Button et al., 1999) and the representation of sexual minorities in party manifestos in general elections and regional elections (Chaney, 2013; Haider-Markel, 2010). On the other hand we can find scholars who analysed electoral preferences of lesbians, gay, and bisexuals (Lewis et al., 2011) and the potential impact of these groups of voters on elections (McThomas & Buchanan, 2012).

Becker and Scheufele (2009) suggested that attitudes towards gay marriage were shaped to a great extent by ideological orientations and religious predispositions. Campbell and Monson (2008) also examined issue of gay marriage in elections in the context of religious conditions. Religious predispositions as well as the aforementioned race, or other sociocultural elements, could be important part of studies dedicated to LGBTQ in electoral processes. Button et al. (1999) find similarities between the pattern of electoral activities of lesbians and gay men, and other disadvantaged minorities.

It is important to emphasise that there is huge body of literature dedicated to Western countries, especially the United States. Therefore, there are many publications showing the role and consequences for the election process of amendments to state constitutions that banned same-sex marriages (Riggle et al., 2009; Smith, 2007), or the US presidential elections (Lannutti & Galupo, 2018; Lewis et al., 2011).

Nevertheless, during recent years there was a significant increase in interest in the subject of LGBTQ issues in electoral process or more generally –

in political processes. There are some attempts to analyse not only the United States but also other advanced western democracies, such as the United Kingdom, and New Zealand (Magni & Reynolds, 2021), as well as beyond the Western countries, e.g., from Africa (Conway, 2009). At the same time it is observed that in the cases of non-Western countries, there are more general studies dedicated to LGBTQ rights in different countries, e.g., Bosnia (Swimelar, 2020) or regions, e.g., Asia (Lau, 2020), or Latin America (Corrales, 2019). There are also authors who try to combined LGBT issues in elections in the United States and abroad (Magni, 2020) or use a transnational perspective to analyse LGBTQ politics (Moreau, 2018).

A new contribution to the research

As we can see, gender and LGBTQ issues and their influence on electoral competition have already found their place in the scientific discourse. However, the work on relationships between gender and electoral processes focuses mainly on the issue of substantive representation (Celis et al., 2008) and the issue of the impact of quota mechanisms on equal opportunities for representation in legislative and executive bodies (Seierstad et al., 2017). There is also a clear overrepresentation of books and chapters devoted to the gender factor in election campaigns in the United States and United Kingdom.

The aim of this book is to fill those two gaps: institutional and communicological. In the first area, the contributors deal with issues that have so far been overshadowed by the discussion on quotas and women's representation, i.e., accountability (for an election failure) and loyalty (towards voters and parties) after the elections. In the second area, they are interested in examining how gender issues determine the election campaign not only in consolidated democracies (such as the United States, New Zealand, and Norway), but also in a country facing an undemocratic turn (such as Poland).

What the editors focused on was to maintain a balance between the global and local contexts of the research. However, it is important to underline that even the chapters of the "local" part of the book show the broader cross-cultural and comparative context. This gives the second part an international background, and the results of research may be interesting not only for researchers of the local political systems and political communication, but also for scientists dealing with comparative politics.

Main research questions

The subject of interest of the book's contributors is the impact of the gender and LGBTQ issues on the electoral discourses and electoral processes in the global and local contexts. In their chapters, they answer the following

main research questions: (1) What does the instrumental use of gender and LGBTQ issues by political parties in specific election campaigns depend on? When is this topic considered to be popular, and when is it not the axis of the election discourse? (2) Does raising the subject of gender and/ or LGBTQ affect electoral processes? (3) What are the similarities and differences between the studied countries? Can any common pattern be identified? (4) What language tools do politicians use to emphasise gender and LGBTQ issues in election campaigns? (5) What roles are assigned to women and LGBTQ communities in the political discourse?

Research paradigms and methods

While single elections in the United States – even at the level of individual states – can be the basis for general conclusions (Reiheld, 2017; Sapiro & Johnston Conover, 1997; Sigel, 1999), for other countries such a research strategy is sometimes considered insufficient and contextually limited or – at best – categorised as so-called area studies-oriented. What we need – especially in the discipline of gender studies – is a much more inclusive view without any predilections for the cultural dominance.

We can also clearly see the methodological diversity involved in research on the interrelationship between elections and gender and LGBTQ issues. For a long time, questionnaire data collected either among voters after they have left the polling station (Mansbridge, 1985), or cross-population data before and after the electoral process (Sineau, 2010), have been used as essential (primary) data by researchers.

Contrary to this approach, in this volume most of the chapters are set in a constructivist paradigm. Rarer, though noticeable – in the context of elections and political systems – the contributors used the neo-institutional paradigm in their work. We believe this is an advantage of the book, as readers have the opportunity to confront the pros and cons of both paths. The intention was also to achieve synergies and to show the advantages of a multidisciplinary and multi-paradigmatic approach to gender and queer politics research.

The contributors oriented towards expanding the research field (comparative analyses) used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The contributors who chose the strategy of deepening the research field applied a mixed strategy: the collected empirical data provided the background for critical discourse or qualitative content analysis. Two sets of sources were identified as the basis for research: (1) materials produced by political entities participating in the election competition (web content on official websites and social media profiles), (2) materials produced by journalists and media employees (press content, including the division of the media market into pro- and anti-government titles, and TV content divided into private and public media).

Book overview

The book presents 12 chapters and consists of two parts: (1) The global and comparative context, (2) The local contexts in the comparative and cross-cultural perspectives. The opening chapter by Anna Pacześniak shows results of studies on the gender aspect of electoral defeat in the narrative of Belgian, British, and Polish political parties. Researchers try to determine whether gender-based regularities emerge, and what they might result from. The next chapter, written by Przemysław Żukiewicz, is dedicated to the role of gender in post-election intraparliamentary volatility in East Central Europe. The author conducts comparative analyses of the Czech, Lithuanian, and Polish parliaments in this respect. Magdalena Tomala and Maryana Prokop present in their chapter the impact of women's participation in the electoral process on the role of woman in society. The purpose of authors is to indicate the relationship between the family model and women's participation in politics. The next chapter in this part, written by Tomasz Płudowski, discusses the subject of gender and race issues in American presidential ads. Then in the fifth chapter Przemysław Żukiewicz and Laura Piel Martín show results of their study dedicated to Jacinda Ardern's leadership during and after election in context of the masculine frame.

The second part of book is opened by Cornelia Ameyo Nyadroh, who focuses on sociocultural values and international regulations as determinants of women's political participation in Ghana. In the seventh chapter, Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka pays attention on gender issues from the perspective of electoral processes, taking into account the multicultural aspect. The author analysed the example of the Belarusian minority in Poland. Paulina Barczyszyn-Madziarz and Róża Norström focus in their study on the discourse on LGBTQ in the Polish presidential campaign in 2020, concentrating primarily on the perception of the LGBTQ community and the foreign media. The next chapter, written by Agata Włodkowska and Joanna Gajda, presents the context of gender in the presidential election campaigns in Poland 2015–2020, especially how gender is perceived in the view of candidates. In the tenth chapter, Sylwia Hlebowicz presents a critical analysis of the election programmes of four main Norwegian parties in 2019 local elections to compare attitudes towards sexual minorities. Radosław Kubicki dedicated his chapter to women in the political thought and activity of the agrarian Polish People's Party, and pays attention to the approach of this party towards the role of women in comparison to other Polish political parties. The last chapter in this part, written by Edyta B. Pietrzak, is an essay dedicated to the process of gendering political science. The final chapter of the book, by the editors, is an attempt to present interrelations between global and local contexts of gender and LGBTQ issues in the elections, as well as key findings from research.

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