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Jenny Chapman: *Politics, Feminism and the Reformation of Gender*, London & New York: Routledge, 1992, 315 pp.

Although the author in her introduction takes great pains to demonstrate how the parts of this book are interlinked, this is not really a coherent study of a clearly defined research problem. Rather, it is more like a textbook consisting of a number of articles which depict and analyze different aspects of the general problematique of women in political parties and the strategies and development of different feminist movements. The parts can be read as separate studies with varying degrees of empirical depth and substance; the contours of the book as a whole remain rather blurred. Characteristically enough, the concluding chapter, in which one would expect an account of the major results of the study, comprises little more than two pages and is cast in very general terms indeed.

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in which women are expected to participate is founded on the gender roles of men, while the female role – those characteristics which separate women as a group from men – originates from the *private* sphere. Consequently, women are “one of many out-groups and subject to the same competitive rules as men, and yet by virtue of their gender [they] are uniquely set apart, not just an out-group but *outsiders too*” (p. xii, emphasis in original).

These two dimensions of the “scissors” are very loosely defined, and the author identifies a multitude of different phenomena with them. One might say that the theoretical starting-point is clearly more present in the first part of the book, which is thematically more coherent than the second part, which really does not amount to more than a collection of essays.

Part I deals with the recruitment and success of election candidates in the USA, Scotland and the USSR. It consists of three separate sections, the first one being clearly dominant in terms of scope and depth. The first empirical chapter deals with major parties and the recruitment of candidates, the second with non-partisan recruitment and the third with “minor parties and the gender pattern”.

The empirical analysis of the three cases rests on widely varying foundations. Scotland is analyzed in the light of an impressive set of primary data, whereas secondary sources are used for the USA and the USSR. The fact that the same hypotheses are confronted with all three cases nevertheless renders the analysis structurally coherent.

Chapman’s basic hypothesis is that success in the public sphere is related to features characteristic of men as a group; at the same time, those characteristics that are derived from the “gender role of women” are of no avail or even constitute an obstacle to success in politics. Moreover, it follows from this that the attributes of women candidates are expected to be similar to those of losing men; in the event that woman candidates are successful, they are likely to display attributes typical of winning men.

The empirical analyses deal more with the *success* of candidates than with the actual process of their *recruitment*. This is typical of “recruitment studies” and the author is well aware of this imbalance. Nevertheless, the data offer a reasonably clear and consistent picture of who gets selected as candidates and what kinds of candidates – in terms of educational and occupational characteristics – succeed in the elections themselves.

Basically, Chapman’s hypotheses do find support in the data, as women candidates indeed consistently resemble “men losers” clearly more than “men winners”. Moreover, in the limited number of instances where women candidates are successful, they display characteristics typical of male winners. Labour in Scotland displays a clear and – from the point of view of the general theory of political elites – paradoxical pattern. Women Labour candidates in Scotland simply seem to be much too well educated and not nearly “proletarian enough” to stand a chance at the polls. One has to be an industrial worker with merely a basic education to make it (this goes for the few women winners as well)!

This, and many other comparable details in the text make the first section of the book worthwhile reading for all those interested in candidate selection and electoral success. The general design, rather than the concrete analysis, calls for criticism.

Since it is the explicit ambition of the author to test her propositions in a comparative context, it is unfortunate that her choice of cases leaves out a great deal of variation in some of the most relevant factors. The greatest problem is surely that the three countries are rather similar as to the general level of women’s representation. The fact that none of the countries in which female representation

has attained high levels (read: Scandinavia) is included in the analysis, certainly restricts the generalizability of Chapman's results. Are the women/men losers/winner categories also in systems where women have made considerable headway in terms of political representation? Are characteristics related to the female gender role a clear burden even in these societies? Rosabeth Moss Kanter's theory about the significance of the relative size of the minority in various social organizations readily springs to mind here. Interestingly enough, this seminal work is not mentioned by Chapman at all.

Moreover, the three cases consist of two Anglo-Saxon two-party systems and the Soviet one-party system. This leaves out the multi-party systems found in most of the countries of the democratic West. Would the results have been the same if this important variable had been brought into the analysis?

Finally, although not entirely cross-sectional, the empirical analysis does not offer any systematic review of possible changes over time. This would have been still another way to check the relative weight of the factors Chapman uses as explanatory variables. Is change over time explicable in terms of changes in these factors as well?

The second part of the book mixes chapters dealing with various aspects of gender theory and feminist strategy with descriptions of a wide variety of empirical cases: feminist movements in nationalist Finland and revolutionary Russia, women and the West German Greens, Norwegian "state feminism" and the Icelandic women's electoral alliance (*Kvennalistinn*). These accounts are based on secondary sources and contain little new information to those familiar with source literature. It is of value, however, that these cases are here portrayed in a form available to a large international readership.

The general impression of the book is, nevertheless, predominantly fragmental. The first part is concrete and detailed enough to call for interesting comparisons in the light of, *inter alia*, Scandinavian data. The second part brings together facts and processes of such a varied kind that it is difficult to see how these could be used to prove or test so general a notion as the "scissors" problem for any meaningful sense (if indeed it can be proven at all).

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