

also continued to expand. However, nine ministries still excluded them, and some that had accepted women in the 1920s excluded or restricted them in the difficult 1930s. The profile of women civil servants during this era was similar to that of the previous century, but with important distinctions. Most possessed the baccalauréat; many had a university degree; and the cohort of younger women was larger.

Clark concludes that professional women's situation in the interwar period had advanced, though precariously. The new reality and new image of the "working girl" was bitterly contested by a growing backlash against women's new (or perceived) independence. This backlash intensified in the 1930s and became an intrinsic part of Vichy ideology. Natalism and domesticity were the basis of Vichy's law of October 1940, which aimed to force older and married women out of the civil service. Women, like those labeled "undesirable, un-French, Freemasons, and Jewish," were to be purged from the civil service. Thousands lost their positions and civil-service job security was violated, but most women in the civil service continued to work. Given wartime realities, the Vichy regime had to abandon its ideological stance and accept the necessity of hiring and retaining women. By 1945 the number of women in the French labor force had increased, and public employment had expanded.

The new postwar governments pledged to reform the civil service. Women's suffrage, a civil-service statute guaranteeing full equality to men and women, and the creation of a new degree permitting entry to all ministries, seemed to ensure equality. Women already in the system continued to advance, but their numbers at the highest level of the civil service declined. Only 5 percent of those accepted in the postwar Grand Ecole, a diploma from which is now required for promotion in the civil service, have been women.

This meticulous study demonstrates that ambivalence about women wielding public authority persisted to the end of the twentieth century. Clark underscores how arguments for equality and for difference could simultaneously support women's advancement. She also notes the conditions under which arguments for women's difference became arguments for exclusion. This careful and lucidly presented study portrays the strength with which change is resisted and the complex way in which it is even partially achieved.

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Institutions and Innovation: Voters, Parties, and Interest Groups in the Consolidation of Democracy—France and Germany, 1870–1939. By Marcus Kreuzer (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2001) 210 pp. \$52.50

This study is an exercise in comparative political science. Its object is to offer generalizations about how electoral institutions influence the func-

tioning of political parties. Accordingly, the author undertakes a historical comparison of electoral systems in France and Germany, primarily as they functioned—or failed to function—during the interwar period. He argues that French parties responded to the challenges posed by the Depression and fascism with much more innovation and flexibility than their German counterparts, and that the most powerful explanation for the difference is institutional. The French electoral system was based on single-member districts, which encouraged candidates' responsiveness to voters' concerns. By contrast, the German system was based on proportional representation and large voting districts, which encouraged the bureaucratic sclerosis and ideological rigidity of the German parties.

The book introduces a number of provocative and plausible propositions about the significance of electoral institutions, but the historical comparison is built on premises that are difficult to accept—starting with the proposition that institutions are somehow “transhistorical” phenomena. In order to isolate electoral institutions as an independent variable, Kreuzer must posit the basic comparability of the party systems in the two countries. He does so at such a high level of abstraction that historians of France and Germany will have difficulty recognizing the results. One problem is that he filters out differences of constitutional structure—the fact that German parties operated simultaneously in several electoral contexts. Another is that he filters out the Catholic Center party from the German case, principally “because there is no comparable party in France” (18). With this hole, the analytical framework imposes a degree of comparability on the two party systems, but it generates a lot of conclusions that are simply wrong. The analysis also remains innocent of current controversies among historians of the German electoral system, which focus on the play of cultural milieus in the behavior of the parties.

The dependent variable in the analysis is also suspect because it is ill-defined. The author argues that the French parties were more “entrepreneurial.” They were more willing to take risks, adapt modern propaganda techniques—like “spirited stump speeches” (74)—and to embrace “Keynsian planism” (88) as an imaginative response to the Depression. Because entrepreneurialism is difficult to measure and Keynesianism is a capacious concept, the author's conclusions about both rest largely on shaky impressions.

These criticisms are not meant to contest the importance of electoral institutions for party behavior. They specifically address the utility of this “historical institutionalist” analysis for understanding historical institutions.

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