

Review 5

Title: The Political Psychology of Women in U.S. Politics. By Angela L. Bos, and Monica C. Schneider (2016). 254 p. New York: Routledge. ISBN 9781138683242

Reviewed by: Joya Kenens (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

Together with seventeen contributors Angela L. Bos and Monica C. Schneider created this excellent book that draws on interdisciplinary research in psychology, politics and gender. The authors begin by showing how research in psychology contributes to gender politics, both theoretically and methodologically. The book collects various studies in these domains with different research methods in focus.

The book contains three parts covering different aspects of political life with focus on women's roles and the difficulties they face. The first part of the book talks about women as citizens in contrast to men as citizens. Two main subjects of this first part are gender socialization and gender gaps in public opinion, public policy and political action. The second part of the book talks about women as candidates. Two main subjects of this second part are political ambition and gender stereotypes. The third and last part of the book talks about women in political leadership.

The book starts with the case of Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential primaries and sets out some questions regarding gender dynamics and the possible implications of electing the first female president. At the end of the book, authors Bos and Schneider get back to this case and draw several conclusions based on the insights from the different essays, capturing the key concepts and theories once again by applying it to our very reality. In the next paragraphs I will present each part in more detail.

As mentioned, the first part of the book talks about women as citizens. In these chapters, theories (among others) like the Social Learning Theory and the Social Role Theory are discussed and used to explain gender differences in respectively party identification and policy attitudes. Zoe M. Oxley updates previous work on the transmission of party identification from parents to their children. She confirms that mothers continue being more influential than fathers, because of the parental distribution of childcare responsibilities and societal attitudes toward gender roles. Britney G. Brinkman addresses how different definitions of civic engagement, political participation, and activism may impact the conclusions we draw from research.

Mary-Kate Lizotte draws upon the Social Role Theory as an explanation for the gender gap in public opinion. This would mean that as men and women have different social roles, they are socialized to adopt the traits necessary for these roles, which leads to a difference in opinion. At first, this explanation might appear somewhat short-sighted but the theoretical foundations manage to provide additional nuance to the arguments. Next,

Heather E. Bullock and Harmony A. Reppond talk about economic inequality and the gendered politics of redistribution, where they draw upon the self-interest theory and the system justification theory to understand attitudes toward redistribution. The subject of self-objectification in terms of political consciousness and gender collective action is explained by Rachel Calogero. Finally, Christina E. Bejarano talks about the intersection of race, ethnicity and gender and how this intersecting identity impacts our political attitudes and political participation.

Women as political candidates are discussed in the second part of the book, which focuses two main topics: political ambition and gender stereotypes. In terms of gender and political ambition, Kristin Kanthak, Kira Sanbonmatsu and Susan J. Carroll refer to different psychological approaches for explaining the political ambition of women. Especially the chapter by Kira Sanbonmatsu and Susan J. Carroll, is noteworthy as the authors stand up against the application of traditional theories of ambition to women's decision to run for office. Instead they propose their "relationally embedded" model, a different psychological perspective that explains women running for office in terms of women's focus on relationships. This insight is new and refreshing as it breaks the traditional view on ambition and sets the tone for future research in this field. Next, Nichole M. Bauer and Jill Greenlee, Grace Deanson and Carrie Langner talk about gender stereotypes and group identity. In both essays the authors conducted interesting research and they both formulate direct recommendations to actors in the political domain.

Finally, women as political leaders are dealt with in the third part of the book. In the first essay, Brian Frederick and Shannon Jenkins talk about the impact of gender in the legislative process and builds on several theories that explain gender differences in legislative behavior. Before setting out empirical evidence, the authors refer to previously discussed theories like gender role socialization, gender stereotypes, the backlash effect and informational asymmetries. The second essay of this part and last essay of the book is set out by Kjersten Nelson. This essay seemed somewhat less 'suited' in this book, as it discussed the role of gender in terms of U.S. judges and courts. It was definitely interesting, but I felt like this was a rather faint end of the book. However, a complete conclusion follows upon this essay, which makes up for it.

The conclusion comprises seven broad implications across the different chapters. In general, the authors conclude that gender matters but that the context makes the effect vary. Also, women are not just one homogenous group of people. As for future research they recommend to rethink conceptualization and measurement of constructs. Furthermore, the approach of intersectionality of identities and roles repeatedly appears in the different essays. I would not call this a common thread, but rather a common urge or call by all four authors to make a greater investment in the approach of intersectionality in all areas of study. In their conclusion, Bos and Schneider refer to the areas of stereotyping, the gender gap in political issue positions and youth socialization and girl's activism in particularly.

The major strength of *The Political Psychology of Women in U.S. Politics* is the fact that it draws on interdisciplinary research in psychology, politics and gender. As a result, broad theories and key concepts are applied to the subject of women in politics. Also, different methods are used, which sets power to the book as it combines the strengths of multiple disciplines.

Another strength of this book is its refreshing, open-minded and critical look on the theories regarding gender and the position of women in U.S. politics. The authors recognize the challenges that human psychology poses to “the creation of positive change for woman”. The entire book is built up around the existing theories, but the authors never hesitate to question these theories and bring forward new insights and suggestions to ameliorate future research, being an inspiring and thought-provoking addition to this work. Furthermore, this book is also very approachable by persons with a less profound academic background, as all concepts and theories are summarily explained.

Coming up with weaknesses of this book was not an easy task. However, I will discuss two general remarks. First, I would recommend including research on European politics in the book. The comparison between the two areas seems extremely interesting to me as I suppose there will be a lot of differences, but also some similarities. Adding European literature to the book or collaborating with European researchers would be a real added value for the research field.

Second, I often felt like in throughout the entire book gender was presented as a difference between men and women. Most of the time the theories drew upon this black and white assumption. As some authors recognize, only heterosexual parents are included in most research. Also, none of the authors refer to the LGBTQ-community which is a big deficit of this book. Finally, the style of writing is well above par and I did not detect any spelling or grammatical errors, which allowed me to read the book very easily and fluently.

In conclusion, I would definitely say this is a must read for (European) politicians, their strategists and political enthusiasts. Apart from the examples in U.S. politics, all theories are perfectly applicable to European politics. A lot of the insights given by the different authors are and will be a strong and fascinating addition to the limited research that has been conducted concerning women, politics and psychology at this moment in time.