

BOOK REVIEW

Leonardo R. Arriola, Martha C. Johnson, and Melanie L. Phillips, eds. *Women and Power in Africa: Aspiring, Campaigning and Governing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2021. 277 pp. \$85.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-19-289807-4.

There is a fast-growing body of literature on women's political representation in Africa—a continent that often challenges the existing beliefs and common understandings of women's representation in politics developed in the Global North. A recent addition to this literature is *Women and Power in Africa: Aspiring, Campaigning and Governing*, edited by Leonardo Arriola, Martha Johnson, and Melanie Phillips. As a result of the research in this book, conventional wisdoms are upended. The book tackles women's pathways into power, the gendered effects of electoral systems, media coverages of campaigns, gender stereotyping, and women's access to campaign finances. Other variables such as educational background, family obligations, and organizational capital are also investigated. The book represents a significant contribution to the field of comparative politics and deepens the theorization of women's representation in politics.

The introductory chapter sets the scene, combining knowledge from the Global North on what we already know about women's political representation with knowledge generated in Africa. In this chapter the structure of the book is explained, with Part One investigating how women enter electoral politics and their motivation to make themselves available as candidates. Part Two deals with how women campaign, and Part Three engages how women govern.

Institutional and individual perspectives are integrated in Part One. The research in these chapters challenges the common wisdom that more women are elected in Proportional Representation Multi-Member District systems than in First Past the Post Single-Member District systems. It shows that electoral systems on their own have a negligible effect on women's access to political power. What also needs to be considered is the interaction with gender biases and parity commitments among party leaders, as well as competition of women with men for a place on the ballot. What Chapter Four shows, on decentralization to local government level, is that this type of decentralization draws candidates from the national level to the

local level at the expense of women. This chapter contributes to the theorization of the variation of women's electoral successes on the local level.

Chapter Five (in Part Two) by Matthew Gichohi is a fascinating analysis of the Kenyan presidential bid by Martha Karua. While Karua had everything to recommend her as a good president, her candidacy was not successful. Gichohi argues that ethnicized sexism leads to women presidential candidates developing multi-ethnic programmatic platforms rather than making ethnic-based clientelistic promises, underplaying the significance of ethnicity and making gender salient (118). Karua's candidacy was marred by her refusal to present herself as an ethnic candidate, as well as her net worth of Ksh 56 million, which was far less than that of the male candidates. The perception of the voters was that she would not be able to sustain the necessary patron-client relations. Karua also used motherhood to counter ethnic chauvinism. This linked her to a woman's (read weaker) position, but when she was combative she was viewed as violating gender norms. Both approaches counted against her. Karua could not overcome the ethnic constraints of gender constructions and resource limitations that made her seem like an unviable option for most voters.

In Chapter Six, on media representation of women parliamentary candidates, Amanda Coffie and Peace Medie's research shows that in Ghana's 2016 election media coverage did not reproduce gender stereotypes, as is often believed/experienced, but women candidates received proportionally more coverage than men, even though it linked them to women's issues in order to make the women's policy positions clear. Results also show that the majority of men and women did not receive coverage. The positive coverage of women was partly due to the advocacy and training by civil society organizations, stressing a point also made in other chapters, that successful candidates need to have a good relationship with civil society as well as women's organizations.

In Part Three, a case study of Burkina Faso by Alice Kang and Rachel Fisher is informative about who speaks for women on the floor of parliament when men dominate. In Burkina Faso, women make up a small political minority. As in many parliaments, some men and women never speak. What the results show is that when women make oral interventions they more often speak about women's issues, but some men also speak on women's issues.

Chapter Nine, the concluding chapter, is very helpful, with findings of the three parts summarized in tables. The conclusion neatly brings together the issues investigated in the book—financial resources, educational attainment, organizational capital, electoral systems, party primaries, and decentralization. In relation to how women campaign, it reflects on gender stereotypes, voter bias, media coverage, violence, and financial resources. Concluding with observations on how women govern, the insights regarding substantive representation show that women legislators speak more often on women's issues and introduce more laws on women's issues than men, but also that women legislators are less likely to lobby for women if they think that the party will punish them. The research also confirms the greater

importance of critical actors rather than critical mass, as found in studies in the Global North.

Recommendations for further research include party loyalty and how it hampers women candidates, even leading to violence from members within their own parties. We still know little about the impact of electoral violence on women, but as the research suggests, violence does not only exclude women from political life, it also shapes what is possible for them. A two-step assessment is suggested: (1) strategies women pursue in the face of violence, (2) the relationship between these strategies and women's political prospects. Further research is also required on the gendered nature of economic institutions and its impact on women in politics, especially the gendered nature of patron-client relations.

A chapter on South Africa would have made a significant contribution to this book. South Africa is a country that is often cited as a success story, with a 50 percent quota for women in a closed-list Proportional Representative (PR) system and a mixed system on the local government level (PR and wards). Yet as the consolidation of democracy is failing under the vast patronage networks of the ruling party, the ANC, there is a decline in women's substantive representation. Blind party loyalty becomes a substitute for good governance. A South African case study would have illustrated some of the insights in the book very well.

All the authors in this book teach at tertiary institutions in the Global North, except for the scholars from Ghana (Coffie and Darkwah). The book could have benefitted from collaboration with local African scholars in the different countries represented in this book.

I strongly recommend that scholars with an interest in women's representation located in the Global South and North read this book. It should also be prescribed reading for post-graduate courses on women's representation.

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