

***Women's Empowerment and Disempowerment in Brazil: The Rise and Fall of President Dilma Rousseff.*** By Pedro dos Santos and Farida Jalalzai. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2021. 214 pp. \$29.95 (paper).

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Brazil is one of the countries with the lowest rates of women's political representation in Latin America. It is also one of the four countries in the region to have had a woman president. The economist Dilma Rousseff was elected as Brazil's president in 2010, reelected in 2014, and removed from office in 2016 by a controversial impeachment. This political crisis ended a cycle of policy making targeting women and gender inequalities.

In *Women's Empowerment and Disempowerment in Brazil*, Pedro dos Santos and Farida Jalalzai provide a detailed account of Rousseff's trajectory and tenure. Focusing on this case, they contribute to research on whether and how a woman president empowers other women in politics and society. Empowerment is understood in the book as the enhancement of the assets, capabilities, and achievements of women in reaching equality and exercising influence and political authority. To analyze the patterns and limits of women's empowerment, dos Santos and Jalalzai identify obstacles that are part of "regular" times as well as the crisis that affected Brazil and Rousseff's government. This attention includes analysis of whether and how the setbacks confronted by Rousseff turned into a backlash against women's empowerment in Brazil more broadly.

The five chapters of the book focus on Rousseff's enhancement of women's empowerment and its limits at different moments in her two elections and presidency. Chapters 1 and 2 provide information about Rousseff and the Brazilian political context in which she was elected as the "Mother of Brazil" (2010) and reelected as a "warrior woman" (2014). Dos Santos and Jalalzai ground their interpretation of this shift from strategic essentialism to a less conventional image evoking her opposition to the military dictatorship in field research and interviews. The golden period of the election of the first woman president opened the opportunity for the largest percentage of women in the cabinet in Brazilian history and invigorated positive gendered perceptions of

women's leadership. However, dos Santos and Jalalzai argue that the period of the crisis and its aftermath poses a harsh question: could a violent backlash against a woman president have a lasting negative symbolic effect? This inquiry leads the authors to an original conclusion. They contend that the blow of the impeachment was followed by negative and violent deployment, but also by collective resistance reinforcing the relevance of women's political participation.

Indeed, the book's approach to violence against women in politics is one of its main contributions to current research. The authors acknowledge and conceptualize its effects on women as a group and the "message" that it sends to proponents of women's empowerment as part of their analysis of Rousseff's impact in Brazil. The conceptual connection between misogyny, violence against women in politics, and the backlash against women's empowerment is also analytically significant. Feminist movements shifted from suspicion and even disapproval to a strong defense of Rousseff because they had a clear perception of the collective threat involved in the manipulation of negative assessments of her as a woman leader.

The second part of the book showcases dos Santos and Jalalzai's main contributions to studies on the effects of women's leadership. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 analyze Rousseff's performance as president, considering three key functions related to women's empowerment: appointment, policy making, and symbolizing. Their multimethod approach is an adequate choice, following their understanding that women's empowerment is always a process, that it takes place in ambivalent and nonhomogeneous ways, and that it is susceptible to drawbacks and violent reactions.

For example, the clearest effects of Rousseff's tenure on women's empowerment concern cabinet appointments. She selected more women to her cabinet than any other Brazilian president, and she also nominated women to influential positions conventionally connected to "masculine" traits and capabilities. Rousseff effected these advances in spite of political barriers connected to the Brazilian political system and the masculine overrepresentation within political parties. However, the growing opposition faced after 2014 made her prioritize making space for members of coalition parties, which reduced the percentage of women in the cabinet. Following that, the crisis that removed Rousseff from office and opened a space for conservative anti-gender actors made explicit that systemic constraints are distinct from the open denial of gender equality.

The book's analysis of empowerment through policy making shows a more ambivalent picture of Rousseff's tenure. For example, the expanded budget of the Secretary of Policy for Women and Rousseff's engendering of narratives

for public policy targeting women were taken as evidence of advancements in this dimension. At the same time, Rousseff “often drew criticism from those involved in the bureaucracy and the women’s movements,” and the authors argue that their study would have stopped at this point if it were not for Rousseff’s impeachment and “an almost complete dismantling of state machinery targeting women-related policymaking” (86).

Was Rousseff a symbol of change for women? Was she prone to challenging traditional norms? Chapter 5 answers these questions by inspecting the controversies about the demand by Rousseff to be named *presidenta*, an intentional breaking of the conventions defining the masculine word “president” as neutral. This chapter also analyzes the changing perceptions of elite women involved in the political process. Attentive to symbols, language, and their political effects in contentious contexts, they remind us that women’s empowerment means very different things for different groups of women. This is conceptually relevant, as women dispute these symbols as part of complex networks of belonging and interests. In particular given the rise of the far right in Brazil and elsewhere, we need to understand better the way these groups (men and women) mobilize gendered symbols.

The book’s contribution to the understanding of Rousseff’s terms and the recent Brazilian political crisis is undeniable. However, its analysis pays little attention to another important aspect of this process: the dynamics of reactions and counterreactions in a country (and region) facing the expansion of feminist movements and protests. Indeed, attention to these dynamics might have influenced the authors’ analysis of empowerment through public policy. The authors might have reached a different conclusion if Rousseff’s government had not been followed by a complete dismantling of gender-sensitive policy. Viewing class-based policies such as Rede Cegonha (Stork Network) as empowering women despite their maternalistic bias reduced the authors’ attention to the role of conservative actors in the coalition supporting Rousseff’s government — as well as their acknowledgment of the ways she reacted to their pressure. The disputes concerning the framework for policy targeting women were underway long before the political crisis, as elucidated by some of the interviews done by the authors.

Future research might also examine more closely the restrictive political conditions met by feminist activism after 2016. Violence against women in politics, including activists and journalists, is reaching new heights with the rise of the far right. Increasingly prevalent anti-gender perspectives contribute to the normalization of this violence.

Dos Santos and Jalalzai define their book as “a cautionary tale of a woman cracking the presidential glass ceiling in a context where men continue to dominate the political landscape” (12). Their research and book should stimulate scholars to investigate the complexities of women’s empowerment in these peculiar times in Latin America. As we praise the achievements of feminist movements, we also worry and multiply our efforts to understand and resist backlash.

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***Good Reasons to Run: Women and Political Candidacy.*** Edited by Shauna L. Shames, Rachel I. Bernhard, Mirya R. Holman, and Dawn Langan Teele. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020. 334 pp. \$37.95 (paper).

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While women remain underrepresented in politics, the increased number of women running for office in recent election cycles offers a welcome opportunity to assess and update research on women’s political candidacy. *Good Reasons to Run* provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of women’s political candidacy from an impressive collection of rising and established gender scholars. The edited volume has a strong intersectional focus that lays bare how the barriers for women candidates are significantly higher for women of color, and it further considers how the experiences of running for office as a Republican woman are distinct from those of running as a Democrat. It also includes a much-needed comparative perspective on efforts to boost women’s political representation beyond the United States.

The volume is divided into five parts that consider different aspects of women’s candidacy. Part I takes up the question of which women run for office and how factors such as women’s race, political party affiliation, and participation in candidate training programs inform their willingness