

BOOK REVIEW

***Sexual Harassment in the UK Parliament: Lessons from the #MeToo Era.* By Christina Julios. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. 272 pp. \$119.99 (cloth). ISBN: 9783030871390.**

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What lessons have been learned from the #MeToo movement in politics? In what ways has the male-dominated culture of legislatures been transformed since the events of the fall of 2017? Five years after the global #MeToo movement spread across the world, Christina Julios sets out to answer these core questions in her new book, *Sexual Harassment in the UK Parliament: Lessons from the #MeToo Era*.

Using the U.K. Parliament as a case study, this book extends our knowledge of workplace gender and power relations in the present day, and it points to the lessons learned (and not) from the #MeToo movement on how to address sexual misconduct in politics. Julios pulls together an impressive array of data and documents from parliamentary, academic, and media sources to analyze specific cases of sexual harassment in British politics and beyond. One of the book's strengths is its deep contextualization of the problem of sexual harassment, which is situated within the broader sociocultural, historical, and legal contexts of British society and politics. A single-case study approach accords with recent research on the #MeToo movement, that highlights the movement's uneven resonance and successes globally and the importance of domestic political opportunity structures that influence country-level diffusion of this transnational movement (Lee and Murdie 2021). The book's interdisciplinary focus will be of interest to a range of gender and politics scholars and practitioners who are engaged in topics including social/women's movements, gender and organizations, feminist institutionalism, gender-based violence, and violence against women in politics.

The introduction provides an overview of its intersectional feminist approach, which sets out to examine the “multitude of overlapping systems of oppression that shape women's experiences in the workplace, particularly those employed in the male-dominated Houses of Parliament” (15). While intersectionality could have been more consistently applied in some places in the book (e.g., the case selections and analyses of legislative responses to gender-based

violence in politics), the theoretical discussion of intersectionality does a good job of highlighting how violence and harassment must be understood through the lenses of gender, race, sexuality, and other axes of marginalization.

Substantively, the book begins with a discussion of sexual harassment in the workplace and provides a comprehensive background of the nature, scope, and legal status of sexual harassment in British law. The author reflects on gendered power imbalances in the workplace in the #MeToo era, carefully documenting the rise of the movement which originated with Tarana Burke in 2006, a Black feminist activist based in the United States. Focusing on the Harvey Weinstein case and the events that unfolded in the fall of 2017, Julios's research shows how the #MeToo movement broadened current understandings of workplace sexual harassment, and how various underlying social structures and mindsets contributed to this problem in Hollywood and in workplaces globally (67). This section of the book will be of particular interest to women's movement scholars and activists.

Julios then traces the evolving problem of sexual misconduct in the British Parliament (or the "Palace of 'Sexminster'"), revealing how gendered abuses of power emerge from an institutionalized culture that privileges male-dominated norms and practices. The handling of specific cases of sexual misconduct (e.g., Sir Michael Fallon, the "Dirty Dossier," Damien Green, Charlie Elphicke, and others) are carefully researched, revealing a pattern of systemic power abuses at the centre of British politics. Julios then extends her analyses to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, where she documents instances of, and debates on, sexual misconduct in Scotland and Wales. This part of the book includes an excellent overview of the allegations made against Alex Salmond and the judicial review process that ultimately ruled in his favor.

In the next section of the book, Julios reflects on the British Parliament's efforts to address the problem of sexual harassment in the #MeToo era. It includes analyses of the MPs Code of Conduct, the Women and Equalities Committee's Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Report, and Dame Laura Cox's Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff Report. Situating the problem of sexual harassment within a broader global context, Julios additionally documents four high-profile sexual harassment/abuse cases, including the U.K.-based Matrix Chambers case (a human rights law firm) and the Presidents Club charity in London, as well as two international examples: the USA Gymnastics Team and the United Nations. These case studies provide further evidence of the widespread nature of sexual harassment globally, and of the ways unequal and inequitable gender power relations contribute to this problem.

The book concludes by offering some reflections on the lessons learned from the #MeToo movement. A particular strength of the book is its discussion of how male-dominated power relations are sustained in ways that conceal gendered abuses of power. As Julios points out, a "prevailing culture of complicity" is institutionally supported through various means, including the use of nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) that are used to silence victims and keep abuses of power away from the public eye (236–44). The use of NDAs in cases of harassment and violence is especially topical in the Global North today, where lawmakers are considering legislative changes to address this issue. Examples include recent

bipartisan efforts in the United States Congress to ban NDAs covering workplace sexual assault and harassment, as well as NDA-related legislation currently before the Irish Seanad Éireann (Gillibrand and Blackburn 2022). NDAs are also on the radar of some British and Canadian lawmakers, making the book's discussion of them highly relevant.

Overall, this is a well documented book that will be of interest to a wide range of gender and politics scholars. By highlighting the intersections between gender and power, organizational structures and cultures, and the role of the #MeToo movement in shaping societal and political discourses on sexual harassment, this book makes an excellent contribution to British and Global North scholarship on gender and politics.

References

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