Book Reviews / Recensions

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BOOK REVIEWS/RECENSIONS

Ms. Prime Minister: Gender, Media, and Leadership

Linda Trimble, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017, pp. 328.

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Women's executive office-holding is an important subject matter, in no small part because leadership positions give politicians the strongest influence, authority and discretion, especially in Westminster systems where backbenchers are comparatively constrained. From the perspective of women/gender and representation, access to leadership positions can create powerful opportunities for political women to substantively represent a gender-equitable policy agenda. Questions about whether and how women make it to the top and about the experience of women executives are therefore of great importance.

Trimble's book adds considerably to scholarship on women executives by providing a systematic, comparative analysis of the news media environment that characterized the experience of four women prime ministers (Kim Campbell, Julia Gillard, Helen Clark and Jennifer Shipley) in three countries (Canada, Australia and New Zealand) at four career stages (winning the party leadership, election campaigning, governing and exiting the prime minister's office). The research design is impressive and provides a strong base for the book's conclusions, especially when understood in the context of Trimble's extensive expertise on the topic of women/gender, media, and politics and the large body of her work that preceded the publication of *Ms. Prime Minister*. The book has many strengths, and the remainder of the review will focus on its standout empirical and theoretical developments that propel the literature and political practice forward.

The comparative focus is really commendable. We know a fair bit about how individual women executives (or aspiring executives, such as Hilary Clinton) are portrayed in the news media. However, the fundamental danger with examinations of political elites is how to turn proper names into variable names. How generalizable are the patterns identified in the study of a single person? That Hilary Clinton received awful coverage is well known, but disentangling the idiosyncratic from the systematic is challenging when studies focus on a single actor.

Also commendable is the rigorous attention to four distinct executive career stages, which is a major empirical development and one that provides a window into the restraints and opportunities characteristic of each stage. For example, Trimble's analysis of the governing and exit stages reveals that longevity in office—for example, Helen Clark's three terms as New Zealand prime minister—shifts the gendered complexion of news discourse. As time goes on, "gendered firsts" and "gender versus merit" fade from the framing of women prime ministers, presumably as a result of the women's experience in office and their increased familiarity to journalists and the public. Naturally, the features described here as empirical innovations also provide important theoretical advantages, since they allow Trimble to 1) sort out the conditions under which various patterns of gendered coverage will occur or not, and 2) better theorize the causal pathways to balanced versus gendered coverage.

The major theoretical innovation of the work—and it is major—is the way in which Trimble challenges the gendered mediation thesis, instead encouraging a more nuanced view of the ways that news coverage can disrupt established gender norms and practices in politics. For example,

in the chapter titled "Love and War", the book argues that the use of standard masculine political frames around war, sport and games does not inevitably masculinize politics or result in "bracketing out women and their embodied performances" (149). Indeed, Trimble argues that we have overlooked the ways that the love and war lexicon, as applied to both men and women leaders, can disrupt or decentre the association of men/masculinity with politics, enhance political women's "mediated legitimacy" and also "expose putatively 'masculine' and 'feminine' identities as social constructs" (212).

The concept of "mediated legitimacy" deserves special focus here, because it moves the discussion beyond simple questions about whether coverage presents women positively or not. Mediated legitimacy asks instead whether coverage acknowledges or communicates a "political actor's right to seek, hold, and exercise a political leadership role" (29). Mediated legitimacy does not require uniformly positive or affirming coverage. Rather, it requires coverage that does not undermine the authority of a political actor, and this is where the most interesting questions about women leaders' coverage lie today. Predictably, mediated legitimacy is most likely to be bestowed upon leaders whose ideas, backgrounds and demography match that of the archetype—as Trimble notes (214). However, practices that have been criticized in previous scholarship—such as the framing of women using war metaphors or discussion of their family lives—are not, in Trimble's book, automatically seen as liabilities if mediated legitimacy is enhanced or unaffected. If we look at *Ms. Prime Minister*'s career-stage design, Trimble's work makes clear that simply doing the job of prime minister can boost the mediated legitimacy conferred by media. The method through which the party leadership and the prime ministership were acquired by women politicians likewise plays a role: easy leadership transitions that were supported party-wide (Shipley, Campbell) conferred the most mediated legitimacy, while hard, "coup"-like transitions (Clark, Gillard) the least, at least initially.

In closing, the book will be a central work for scholars of women, gender and political communication, as well as an instructive model of effective research that harnesses comparative design for theoretical advancement.

Panser le Canada : une histoire intellectuelle de la Commission Laurendeau-Dunton

Valérie Lapointe-Gagnon, Montréal : Les Éditions du Boréal, 2018, pp.413

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La Commission royale d'enquête sur le bilinguisme et le biculturalisme, communément appelée Commission Laurendeau-Dunton ou Commission BB, a soulevé bien des passions depuis sa mise en place par le gouvernement libéral de Lester B. Pearson en 1963. Pourtant, mis à part un numéro double de la revue *Mens* en 2014, peu d'études savantes ont été consacrées aux travaux de cette importante commission. L'excellent ouvrage de Valérie Lapointe-Gagnon, qui enseigne à la Faculté Saint-Jean de l'Université de l'Alberta, vient donc combler une grave lacune historiographique.

L'ouvrage possède un aspect narratif, mais ce n'est pas une histoire évènementielle. L'auteure a plutôt choisi d'écrire une histoire intellectuelle de la Commission Laurendeau-Dunton. Elle s'intéresse aux intellectuels qui ont animé la commission, à leurs trajectoires et à leurs idées concernant le Canada et son avenir. André Laurendeau et Frank Scott font l'objet de commentaires particulièrement développés. Leurs visions respectives du Canada, du

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