The Oxford Handbook of Populism. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 704 pages. ISBN 9780198803560. Hardback, 110 GBP. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy. 2017.

The rise of populism especially in Latin America and Western Europe has affected not only the direct political configurations among these countries but also the social scientific theories that map its developments. Populism, as a global phenomenon, challenged prevailing assumptions about democratic practices and even expectations from the people supporting populist candidates. Although many scholars have attempted to provide explanations on how populists win elections, defining populism has been a difficult task. This review maps the most important insights from *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (henceforth referred here as the *Handbook*). More specifically, this review provides some of the most important claims about populism and how these can be used in analyzing gender issues, problems, and challenges amidst the rise of populist forces.

This review is divided into three parts. First, this review will lay down the primary approaches to populism discussed in the volume. Second, I will unpack the relevant claims regarding the relationship between populism and gender (and identification in general) by the various contributors in the volume. Big questions such as the following will guide this section of the review: Do gender norms affect the rise or kind of populism in a particular polity? Is there resistance to or support for populism from the gender movements? To what extent do gender theories capture the challenges and opportunities presented by populist regimes to gender-related issues? Is there gendered support for populist leaders? And lastly, this review will draw insights from the volume to reflect on the study of gender and populism in the Philippines.

CONCEPTUALIZING POPULISM

Since the entry of populism to the political science mainstream as a result of the growing influence of populist forces around the world (p. 16), the *Handbook* demands scholars to build on the existing work about populism and the other debates accompanying it. It provides the state of the art by exploring the different aspects of studying populism and to not confuse the commonly held traits of populism with other concepts associated with it such as democracy, authoritarianism, or demagoguery. The volume discusses populism through four main transversal themes: Concepts, Regions, Issues, and Normative Debates. As the volume progresses, it deepens the examination of populism from case studies to a more philosophical discussion. The "Regions" section contains nine chapters that discuss populism within select regions and countries (e.g., Africa, Australia and New Zealand, Central and Eastern Europe, East Asia, India, Latin America, Post-Soviet States, United States, and Western Europe). The "Issues" section dedicates one chapter for each concept that is usually related to how and why populism emerges— political parties, social movements, technocracy, nationalism, fascism, foreign policy, identification, gender, religion, the media, and causes of and responses to populism. Lastly, the "Normative Debates" section tackles the philosophical implications of populism. These chapters explore populism and its relationship with popular sovereignty, hegemony, liberal democracy, majoritarianism, constitutionalism, idea of the people, praxis, cosmopolitanism, and socialist aspirations. This review, however, will focus only on the "Concepts" section and some relevant chapters from the other sections that address gender and identity.

The opening section of the *Handbook* explores the theoretical approaches and strategies to conceptualize populism (Mudde, Weyland, and Ostiguy's respective chapters). For Cas Mudde, to enable comparative and empirical studies on populism, an ideational approach is appropriate (p. 28). This approach asserts that populism constitutes a set of ideas portraying a moral antagonism between two homogeneous groups—the people and the elite. It has four main sub-concepts— ideology, the people, the elite, and the general will. Populists thrive as they capitalize on distinction and division between the "evil elites" and

"true people." Within this approach, populists underscore genuine representation of the "good people" and express their will against the evil elites. Elitism and pluralism are considered to be the opposite concepts of populism. This approach has been the most widely adapted because of its ability to be used in other cases outside traditional single-country contexts. However, as an ideology, not all populists focus on such Manichean division.

Using a different starting point, Kurt Weyland offers what he called as the political-strategic approach. Here, the "strategic element of populism" is considered most important (p. 49). In this approach, populism does not really empower the people. In fact, populism "delegates this popular sovereignty to a personalistic leader—and thus effectively disempowers the citizenry . . . which revolves around top-down leadership" (p. 53). What makes populism different from other modes of leadership is how its leaders associate with the constituents. Populists effectively identify with the people by using rhetorical appeals to them. For Weyland, populism is a strategy of appealing to the people that culminates to a "personalistic, plebiscitarian leadership" (p. 54). Thus, politicians employ populist strategy to be the central figurehead of the nation. However, even this approach is challenged empirically—how to establish exactly how "populist strategy" is practiced.

Hence, a relational approach was offered by Ostiguy focusing on the "performance and praxis" of politicians (p. 74). In this approach, "populism is defined as the antagonistic, mobilizational, flaunting in politics of the culturally popular and native, and of personalism as a mode of decision-making" (p. 84). Populism becomes a technique for politicians to muster and garner support by doing gestures deemed by the people as typical, relatable, and authentic. For Ostiguy, thinking about populism is considering two aspects of politics: the socio-cultural and the political-cultural. The former refers to the "manners, demeanors, ways of speaking, and dressing, vocabulary, and tastes displayed in public" (p. 78) of the politicians while the latter pertains to their "forms of political leadership and preferred modes of decision-making in the polity" (p. 81). Ostiguy then categorized populism within the "low" realm of these two aspects. For him, populism, as a strategy,

aims to make the relationship between the leader and the people more direct and closer by being proudly exhibiting the culturally low traits and means of connection.

The different contributors in the *Handbook* have utilized these conceptualizations of populism in varying degrees—some using a particular approach in its totality and some making modifications for more precise country applications. Because of its ability to travel throughout cases and capacity for empirical tests, many contributors preferred the ideational approach. Those who analyze how personality and behavior of the leaders relate to their appeal to people tend to choose the socio-cultural approach. Others who are more critical of anti-democratic tendencies of populism usually study it as a political strategy— how a leader frames his or her importance as the direct embodiment of people's will (see De La Torre's chapter). Clearly, these chapters only used historical data and references in making their conceptual claims. There are no direct mentions of differences in populist ideology, strategy, or style between a male or female populist leader. How does a female populist express a populist ideology? How do gender activists and feminist groups react to a populist leader? Would there be a difference in rapport style between a male and female populist leader? How does having a female populist leader affect people's expectations and political energy? These are big questions that can guide other studies given the conceptual foundations provided by the *Handbook*.

POPULISM AND GENDER

What is the relationship between populism and gender? How does the *Handbook* address this relationship? The relationship between populism and gender is assumed as an issue of political identification. In Francisco Panizza's chapter, he argued that "populism is a mode of identification that constructs and gives meaning to *the people* as a political actor" (p. 406). These identities, like gender, become political as social positions and expectations are put into question, reflection, and challenge. The success of populism, for Panizza, is a result of populist challenge to traditional politics. Populists offer alternative modes of identification

and relationship between the people and the center of power. Hence, "populism can be construed as an expression of identity politics" (p. 409). To what extent this assertion is true, however, is another point of discussion worth pondering upon. Questions regarding what or which identities are brought or represented by the populists, such as masculinity or femininity, can also be challenging since populists refer to the people usually as a homogeneous unit.

Ernesto Laclau has a large influence in this mode of thinking. Important in this aspect is the concept of politics of equivalence. Here, various and differing political demands are articulated as traits of the people to whom populists appeal to (Laclau, 2005, p. 74). Populists attempt to unify these demands by articulating these grievances or desires as the people's desire even though such multiplicity of meanings attached to this signifier is problematic. Indeed, "populist leaders appeal to those who feel politically excluded by having no voice in the political system and making them feel recognized as holders of sovereignty" (p. 414). Do women voters feel the same way in this populist upsurge? Do they feel represented and sovereign with populists in power? Are gender and women's issues in particular compatible within populist politics?

The *Handbook*, unfortunately, has dedicated only one chapter to populism and gender. Yet this kind of intervention is still crucial especially since "studies of populism have generally overlooked the way in which populist discourse frames female populist leadership" (p. 426). Written by Sahar Abi-Hassan, the aim of this chapter is to explore practices of populism in relation to gender. The following questions guide the discussion in the chapter: "Is there a specific gender dimension inherent to populist politics? Is the populist support base gendered as well? . . . How does the issue of gender interact with the primacy of personalization in populist discourse and subsequent policies?" (p. 428). The chapter focused on three major intersections where populism and gender meet: the nature of populist supporters, gender representation in populist regimes, and subordination of gender identity in populist discourse. For Abi-Hassan, analyzing gender issues under populism is highly dependent on its context—the prevailing national

mood on gender issues, openness of populist leaders in discussing or implementing gender-sensitive policies, how gender is used within political conversations of leaders, etc.

Abi-Hassan's contribution to the *Handbook* analyzes populism and gender and its interaction with formal, descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation. She uses Hannah Pitkin's categories (or modes) of political representation, which pertain to the rules allowing representation, resemblance of leadership structure to the real society, sensitivity to constituents, and emotional support of the people for their elected leaders. With this in mind, Abi-Hassan argued that "the ability of female populist leaders to become viable political representatives and the gender-related discourse . . . could generally be traced back to each context specific . . . model of representation" (p. 433). Indeed, contextual factors and partisan attachments affect the gendered representation in populist politics.

So what can we learn about populism and gender from her chapter? Abi-Hassan starts with the populist supporters. Are women predisposed to voting for populists? Even though Abi-Hassan acknowledged that populist voting behavior can be considered as a "radical version" of typical voting patterns in a democracy, she argued that the gender gap does not directly come from populist attempts to emphasize gender-related issues. In fact, women's dissatisfaction with the current workings of democracy does not automatically lead to support for populist candidates. As such, gender gaps do not work as the best explanation for the rise of populists.

In arguing her case, Abi-Hassan uses historical accounts of women who became part of populist regimes in Latin America and Europe. Abi-Hassan saw that throughout these periods of populism in Latin America and even in some European countries with female populist leaders, the position of women in the political development programs had remained inferior to the personalistic program of the populist. For example, women in Latin America were given political offices within the populist administration. However, populists only appropriated women representation only as part of their appeal to the *nation* or *people* (p. 431). Addressing women's issues and gender-related discourses was

instrumental to the populists insofar as women's groups will be part of their support base. Populists also initiated constitutional changes to ensure stable support from women. This constitutional change aims to institutionalize the role of women in their administration. This attempt to manipulate constitutional provisions can have a positive impact for women. But at the same time, it also poses a significant threat especially when populist leaders attempt to create a "unified will of the people" which contradicts plurality and heterogeneity of social and political interests (see Muller's chapter). Moreover, Abi-Hassan argues that women's involvement appears to assume only feminine roles in political work such as "education, and health and food" (p. 435). Women's participation in public office becomes an extension of their "maternal duties" (p. 435).

The presence of female populist leaders also did not have a substantial effect in changing gender expectations, labor privileges, and home duties. In fact, for Abi-Hassan, gender discourses and motherhood have only become tools of populists to extend their popularity (p. 438). By emphasizing feminine traits as helpful to the nation, populists were able to co-opt gender-related conversations in furthering their agenda (p. 437). Female populist leaders also capitalize on their femininity in defining their leadership style rather than translating this into concrete benefits that can be felt by their women constituents.

Finally, Abi-Hassan claims that this weak positive relationship between populism and gender is explained by the subordination of personal identity by the populist politics. Since populists appeal to the people as a whole, gender-related discourses aiming for women's independence and rights tend to be labeled as elitist only because such ideals are outside the leader's immediate agenda. Hence, women's fight for their causes are legitimate only if this can help populists. Otherwise, gender-issues are just a symptom of liberal politics which the people cannot afford in the immediate future.

Alternatively, gender issues also link family and the nation to concerns on immigration and integration (p. 439). For example, "gender relations *of immigrant groups* are constructed as a threat to the nation" (emphasis added). According to Abi-Hassan, populist radical right parties

feed on the notion that immigrant groups have higher birth rates. With a higher birth rate comes a faster increase in population size. Populists then connect culture and identities, thus framing higher birth rates within the increased threat to the cultural purity of the people—the populist rhetoric cry for the "preservation" of the national population. Populist radical right parties also use gender discourse to rationalize their anti-immigration stance. For these parties, gender equality is not shared, for example, by Muslim immigrants. Thus, their integration into democratic communities will be harmful. This distinction of cultures and threats is used by the populists to keep the people and an *Other* separated.

Abi-Hassan concluded that in populism, gender issues are secondary. In Africa, for example, there is no particular relationship between populist candidates and gender groups because "appeals to identities in Africa have been focused only on urban poor, unemployed youth, and rural population based on ethnic identities and religious groups" (see Resnick's chapter, p. 114). Whenever gender-oriented discourse or movements see an opportunity within populism, populists can only give way to them as long as they can help the populist in their political agenda. There has been a puzzling relationship between female voters and populism, i.e., women's vote cannot completely account for the rise of populists. As women become part of populist politics, their involvement has been limited to aspects which are more or less considered "feminine." Very important decision-making roles are limited to men within populism. Lastly, even female populist leaders are trapped between their populist politics and gender politics. Female populist leaders tend to confront expectations of populist activity which are more associated with men. In turn, as these leaders consolidate their support base, their identity remains instrumental in maintaining their leadership style. Women's issues are also positioned under a broad people's program crafted by the populist leader. Calling for autonomy and independence of women is labeled as elitist as this can be seen as an attempt to veer away from feminine roles in public life. Indeed, the relationship between gender and populism can only be found on the "feminization of women's role in society." Populists use gender issues not to actually develop gender

sensitivity and gender-related policies but to further their personal ideological bias on exclusion or inclusion (p. 440).

While Abi-Hassan provided very significant insights on gender and populism, her chapter lacks substantial evidence to support her claims. Her historical accounts do not include direct narratives or stories from women who have been part of populist politics. The chapter has a tendency to view populism and gender from the populist's perspective. Taking these narratives into account can provide direct insights from women about the opportunities and challenges they face as they participate within populist politics.

The claim that gender is subordinated to populism also begs the question of how to respond to it. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser's chapter suggests that populism has an ambiguous relationship with democracy and responses to it need to account for both the positive and negative implications of populism on democratic processes. With the rise of populism, people and groups who have felt abandoned can now have a voice making democracy more responsive to the people. Populism challenges the competence and relevance of political parties today. A "political space for populism is opened by the failure of established parties to effectively represent salient interests or sentiments in the body politic" (see Roberts' chapter, p. 287). Populism offers a solution to the crisis of representation experienced by democracies. Populist discourse also appears to be oppositional to liberal ideals of checks and balances and minority rights as populists muster their support and popularity to be a one-man rule for the people (p. 492). Here, we can see that addressing gender issues cannot be so fundamental especially if populism works as a political strategy. Gender issues need to be transformed into a demand that is palatable to the general people for the populists to exploit them. This may also result from the populist perspective that the people are a "homogeneous community with a shared collective identity" which opposes the liberal belief of "irreducible plurality, consisting of free and equal citizens" (see Rummens' chapter, p. 554).

BEYOND GENDER AND POPULISM

Aside from discussing how populism appears across regions, the *Handbook* also provided discussions of populism in relation to other political phenomena and normative issues. It sheds light on the conditions that can contribute to the possibility of populists in power. For example, a backlash against regime transition or dissatisfaction against the current governing elite has affected populism in Central and Eastern Europe (see Stanley's chapter). Weak enforcement of rule of law and lack of strong political parties can also be factors in the continuing influence of populism in Latin America (see De La Torre's chapter). In the United States, populism has become more of a mode of persuasion than an exact way of doing politics (see Lowndes' chapter). Here, emotions, positioning racial identities, and demand for a leader's decisiveness have been important aspects of this populist persuasion. In the Philippines, these factors could also play a role in conjunction with the predisposition to treat the national leader as a "father figure." Using Abi-Hassan's intersectional themes, studies can subject populist President Rodrigo Duterte's relationship with gender groups in terms of his relationship with his supporters, his inclusiveness towards women in his administration, and how he frames gender in his policies and rhetoric. More importantly, a grounded approach can revisit how his supporters perceive the current performance of the administration in policy areas of reproductive health issues, maternal employment, anti-discrimination measures, same-sex marriage amidst his misogynist and sexist rhetoric.

The contributions from the *Handbook* may suggest that there is a weak relationship between how populism and gender interact. From Abi-Hassan's chapter, a unique populist approach to gender issues may be lacking. This means that gender issues do not receive significant attention from the populists' side. However, the increasing battle for identification and appeal to political correctness demands such approach be studied further. The chapter on this subject addressed historical instances where women became part of populist leaders' agenda. However, this chapter did not address concrete narratives from the women who played their part as bureaucrats for the populist leaders, for example. Clearly, a chapter

dedicated to gender in the *Handbook* is significant. However, the *Handbook* misses how gendered rhetoric and the outright sidelining of women's issues and their bodies are crucial in the populist leaders' performance of masculinity and portrayal of a strongman image. The discussion on populist discourses on women also needs elaboration by including accessible data. These data can further the debates on how exactly populists determine the issues regarding women and LGBTQ+ (Mayer, Ajanovic, & Sauer, 2014). It also treated gender issues as primarily "women's issues" without considering the increasing presence of LGBTQ+ movements that can pose a challenge to populism. Moreover, the *Handbook* did not provide a discussion on women's agency on their participation in populism. Whether their involvement is a product of manipulation or exchange for material concessions needs to be studied deeper. In this case, future research can investigate the conditions that affect gender-oriented groups' decisions in participating or challenging populist rule.

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