

These quibbles aside, all of the chapters in *Women's Reproductive Rights* are on the right track. The final section of the book raises important ethical and politically relevant questions about what constitutes choice, about "owning" bodies, and ultimately about what *reproductive rights* might mean. Sirkku Hellsten's concluding essay addresses these questions by focusing on the ways that the semantics of reproductive rights "may actually create and justify inequality among women globally" (209). Her essay, as well as others in this volume, recognizes that sometimes the contestation over "reproductive rights" is not just a struggle between women and the state, or over ethical values about creating or "improving" life. Sometimes it is also about reproducing cultural, economic and gender hierarchies. This volume is commendable for raising these vexing questions about reproduction, rights and individual choice.

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Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics. By Susan J. Carroll and Richard L. Fox, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xv, 223 pp. Hardcover \$65.00; paper \$22.99.

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Susan Carroll and Richard Fox came up with a great idea: publish an undergraduate textbook on women, gender, and elections in the U.S. that draws upon the talents of the most respected political scientists in the field, that is tied directly to the most recent election years, and that will be updated accordingly (every four years). And they pull it off very well. *Gender and Elections* provides not only the most current assessments of political science research, but also rich and engaging illustrations and examples drawn from the most recent election cycles. Thus, political science is informed by current events and current events gain new significance when presented in the context of political science. This artful balance and effective synthesis of anecdotes and analyses is precisely what many instructors are looking for: a way to educate students by sparking their interest. The authors and editors leave no doubt that the questions and issues surrounding gender and American elections are relevant, interesting, and important.

This edited volume has several other attributes that make it particularly effective and useful, especially in the classroom. First, it is quite thorough. Georgia Duerst-Lahti begins with a discussion of presidential elections as “gendered space” dominated not only by white men but also by masculinized expectations about presidential leadership and persona. Susan MacManus provides a fascinating glimpse at the most recent trends in voter mobilization efforts targeted at women, all of which attempt to capitalize on the fact that millions more women than men have been willing and able to go to the polls. Susan Carroll provides an excellent primer on gender gaps in vote choice, partisanship, and issue positions — including insightful and nuanced analyses of how both the causes and effects of these gender gaps are intricately related to the power of women in politics and society. Richard Fox effectively tackles the perennial question of why there are still so few women in Congress, highlighting the most recent and revealing research on why so few women run for Congress in the first place. Wendy Smooth provides “an opportunity to examine the extent of America’s progress toward political inclusiveness along both race and gender lines” (p. 118) by focusing on the history of and current trends in African American women’s participation in electoral politics, particularly as candidates. Barbara Burrell provides a detailed look at how and why the political parties and various women’s organizations have both helped and, to a lesser extent, hindered women’s candidacies over the years. Dianne Bystrom’s chapter on the media examines both similarities and differences in how female and male candidates present themselves to voters (via TV ads and web sites), how they inevitably confront gender stereotypes, and how the news media cover them and their campaigns. Finally, Kira Sanbonmatsu’s in-depth analysis of women’s fortunes in state-level elections offers new insight into both the “why so few/why so long” question and the political geography of women’s descriptive representation.

Each chapter is very well written. It helps too that they all follow the same basic format. Each begins with one or more illuminating or puzzling observations of the 2004 election cycle, immediately followed by a statement of the author’s primary objectives and an outline of the chapter. Each author then provides some historical context in which readers can place current trends. There are a good many tables and figures throughout the chapters, and almost all of them are easy to read, useful additions. Finally, every chapter concludes with a summary of the information and arguments, and most add some speculation about future trends as well as ideas or advice for future research.

I was impressed with how well the editors and contributors deal with complexity and diversity — on two fronts. First, the authors generally avoid oversimplifying the state of the research. With few exceptions, they are clear on what researchers know and don't know; they do not hesitate to present the research as mixed or unclear when it is, in fact, mixed or unclear. Similarly, all authors are careful to acknowledge varying patterns of progress, stagnation, and backlash; no one is overly optimistic or overly pessimistic. Second, the volume does not just pay lip service to the diversity among women (and men) or the variable, socially constructed nature of gender and its interlocking relationships with other dimensions of political identity. Discussions of race, ethnicity, and class, for example, are neither relegated to a single “token” chapter nor awkwardly added in as an afterthought. Women are never portrayed as a monolithic, uniform group; nor are men for that matter. Partisan and ideological differences play prominent roles in just about every chapter. Gender is presented in its various, contextually dependent, and dynamic forms. The issue is not simply whether gender matters in American electoral politics, but how and under what conditions it matters, and how its roles have changed over time.

Given the strengths of this first installment, I look forward to future, updated editions of *Gender and Elections*. I would offer a few suggestions, however, for further improvement. First, even more attention to race, ethnicity, and class is warranted, especially given the growing presence of Latinas in electoral politics and current controversies over immigration and the renewal of the Voting Rights Act. Current events also suggest that the editors and authors will need to pay greater attention to issues of sexuality, gay rights, and heteronormativity. Second, I would like to see more of the authors' own, original scholarly research more explicitly incorporated into the discussions. Doing so might enable students to learn a good deal more not only about gender and elections, but also about how to ask and answer their own questions.

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