

retention of (reformulated) liberal principles. In the text as a whole, Schwartzman is correct to point out that the various modes of abstraction in liberalism serve to reinforce the status quo, characterized by inequality, instead of foundationally calling important systemic aspects of discrimination into question. She is also correct to note that the individualist thrust of most examples of liberalism dis-enables most liberal thinkers from being able to understand the group aspects of social organization. Because oppression as we understand it politically is a power dynamic usually related to membership (or purported membership) in groups, she argues that liberalism is not best equipped to name, analyze, and change oppression in societies as we know them.

Breaking the Political Glass Ceiling: Women and Congressional Elections. By Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon. New York: Routledge. 2006. 248 pp. \$80.00 cloth.

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Why has the pace of electing women to the U.S. Congress been so slow? This is the central question addressed by Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon. Their volume is a welcome addition to the gender and politics scholarly literature and is the first book since Barbara Burrell's 1994 *A Woman's Place Is in the House* to provide a broad overview of the role of gender in congressional elections.

Foremost, *Breaking the Political Glass Ceiling* is clearly written and well researched, and does a wonderful job of weaving together the history of female candidates and officeholders in the United States, with empirical but accessible political science data. The colorful history of women in politics adds a richness and depth to the analysis that empirical political science scholarship often lacks. In this regard, the book is immensely readable and is ideal for students, scholars, and activists.

The foundation of the work is a massive data set of all congressional primary and general elections from 1956 to 2004. This includes an analysis of more than 33,500 House candidates and 4,100 Senate candidates. With this impressive data set the authors provide the most

thorough accounting of women's performance in congressional elections ever presented. And unlike much of the work on gender and politics, Palmer and Simon are very attentive to the intersection of race and gender, as they clearly delineate the experiences of women candidates of different racial backgrounds.

The question of why women's ascension into high political office is so slow has reemerged as a driving question in the study of gender and elections in the U.S. context. By the late 1990s, interest in this question began to wane as empirical research failed to uncover any systematic gender bias in the electoral arena and revealed that female candidates for office fared as well as, if not better than, their male counterparts. Many investigators who set out to study gender differences in victory rate, vote share, and fund-raising only turned up what appeared to be a gender-neutral electoral environment.

Yet the emerging conclusion of a gender-neutral electoral environment proved very frustrating for many analysts, as the number of women serving in the U.S. Congress and other top elective positions remained startlingly low. As of spring 2006, the United States ranked eighty-first in the world in the number of women serving in the national legislature. The relative stagnation and slow pace of women's entrance into high-level politics have led to a new wave of scholarship that has more creatively investigated the role of gender in the electoral process. Palmer and Simon's book certainly falls into this category of important work that is forcing us to rethink the ways that gender continues to play a critical role in elections.

In the early chapters, the authors take us on a journey exploring women's slow move into electoral politics and coming fully to support the primary institutional explanation posited for women's slow ascension into positions of top elective office: the incumbency advantage. The power of incumbency has become an accepted yet simple means of explaining the slow rate of change in the U.S. Congress. Instead of using this as a simple reference point, Palmer and Simon actually show in great detail how redistricting, the paucity of open seats, and increasing careerism converge to make Congress nearly impenetrable.

After establishing a solid historical and theoretical foundation, the authors examine the political ambition of female politicians and, for the most part, determine that women in political life really employ a political decision calculus similar to that of similarly situated male politicians (Chapters 3 and 4). In other words, female politicians behave like politicians.

The most original contributions begin to emerge in Chapters 5 and 6, where Palmer and Simon establish the importance of electoral context. Here, they demonstrate the nuanced ways that gender is affecting the electoral arena. Notably, the electoral environment is more competitive for women on a number of fronts. First, women incumbents are more likely to be challenged in primaries and to have candidates compete to run against them in the opposing party's primary. Second, women incumbents are more likely to be challenged by women. Third, women candidates of all types are more likely to face gender-based challenges in media coverage, voter stereotypes, and campaign strategy. One unfortunate omission here is the possible gender dynamics associated with fund-raising, particularly at the level of primary elections. Regardless, the net result appears to be strong evidence that even if women candidates are just as likely to succeed as are men, they face a more arduous road to success.

Palmer and Simon then get to the finding that will make the biggest splash and is the central scholarly contribution of the book: Across the United States there are woman-friendly and woman-unfriendly congressional districts. To derive this finding, they create indices of four types of demographics: partisan and ideological, geographic, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic factors. As one might expect, districts that are more urban, diverse, liberal, educated, and wealthy are more likely to elect Democratic women, and most of these variables apply to Republican women as well. Ultimately, Palmer and Simon rate only 18 out of 435 House districts as women-friendly districts, but a whopping 153 districts, mostly in the South, as women-unfriendly districts (the rest of the districts have varying degrees of women friendliness). The result of this analysis provides more grim evidence that there will not be dramatic increases in women's representation anytime soon.

The book concludes with the interesting but fairly unrealistic proposition that those redrawing district lines after the 2010 census should make gender a criterion. Taking the authors' conclusions into consideration, apparently it would be possible to redraw district lines to significantly increase the number of those that are women friendly.

As with any work that covers so much information and history, this book leaves the reader wanting more in a few areas. The heavy reliance on demographic predictors tends to obscure some broad cultural questions. Why is there so little concern in the United States about women's lagging success as candidates? What does it say about U.S. democracy that over a third of the country is represented by congressional districts

that are not receptive to women candidates? What are the perceptible cultural differences of women-friendly and women-unfriendly districts? Will rural southern districts ever be women friendly?

Overall, however, this is an excellent treatment of where we stand in the slow march toward gender parity for the U.S. Congress. It will be an invaluable resource in the gender politics subfield.

Women, Quotas, and Politics. Edited by Drude Dahlerup.
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Over the past 15 years, gender quota debates have emerged in national politics all over the world. More than 40 countries have reformed their constitutions or passed new electoral laws requiring that women comprise certain percentages of aspirants, candidates, or legislative seats, while in many other countries, political parties have adopted quotas on their own. This phenomenon raises both normative and empirical questions, ranging from whether gender quotas are appropriate to why countries adopt them and how effective they have been. Drude Dahlerup's edited book addresses these concerns with the first worldwide compilation of gender quota studies. The editor brings together a diverse group of authors who examine quotas in seven regions of the world, and she brackets their contributions with theoretical chapters on quota adoption and implementation. The result is the most comprehensive resource on gender quotas to date.

Dahlerup's introduction provides a necessary framework for the authors to follow, outlining common terminology to describe different types of gender quotas and identifying major questions for the chapters to answer. Existing studies use a wide array of terms to describe any given type of gender quota, yielding no common language with which to discuss quotas. Dahlerup presents a typology of quotas from which clear terminology for describing quotas emerges. She emphasizes that the book's focus is on electoral quotas (quotas specific to the electoral process), and she defines different types of electoral quotas based on how they relate to the recruitment process and who mandates the quota.