

North America,” and the prospects are unsurprisingly grim, given the preceding chapter analyses. Neoliberal ideology is entrenched, as Bayes wrote in the earlier U.S. chapter: “[T]he gains for globalization’s beneficiaries in the U.S. have often been at the expense of hardships, poverty, and exploitation imposed by the United States and U.S.-led international institutions on peoples in other parts of the world” (p. 170). The authors of the final chapter discuss future immigration, violence against women, and the rise of “Christian Fundamentalists,” although they do not incorporate literature from border studies.

The book is profoundly pessimistic, perhaps a pessimism that is warranted. Yet for all the authors call for greater democracy, readers might wonder whether hope really exists even with deeper, thicker democracy, given the overarching global economy in what some might view as overdetermined analysis. In the meantime, the rich become much richer and the poor (including most women) much poorer, within and between nations.

Challenging Liberalism: Feminism as Political Critique.

By Lisa H. Schwartzman. University Park, Pennsylvania:

The Pennsylvania State University Press. 2006. 210 pp. \$45.00 cloth.

DOI: 10.1017/S1743923X07000116

Marla Brettschneider

University of New Hampshire

In her book, Lisa H. Schwartzman engages several liberal theorists as well as some “postmodernists” from a feminist perspective. She makes use of a number of feminist thinkers to assist her in developing her arguments and clarifying her theoretical alliances. The author agrees with some liberal feminists that liberalism may be able to accommodate many feminist claims. However, she argues that even a reformed liberalism cannot meet the higher standard of being able to root “out problems that stem from systems of oppression” (p. 161). Schwartzman does not find that postmodernism, as she understands it, can meet this test adequately either. She claims, therefore, to offer an alternative method for a liberally informed feminist theory that seeks to end the structural domination of women based in the concrete experiences of women themselves. The book is tightly written and coherently argued. Each chapter is well organized and the prose is clear.

Schwartzman points out that although feminists have often relied on liberal concepts in political struggles, liberalism simultaneously often undermines feminist aims for liberation. Further, the author notes that tendencies of liberalism to undermine feminist aims similarly reinforce other structural forms of bias, maintaining the status quo of race- and class-based hierarchies, for example. She argues that feminist theory can be served by using core liberal concepts such as rights and equality, as the problems with them are not the concepts themselves but the ways that different liberals have both defined and applied them.

In exploring the question of why liberal ideas operate in seemingly contradictory ways, Schwartzman divides the work into three sections: "A Feminist Critique of Liberalism," "Abstraction, Ideals, and Feminist Methodologies," and "Feminist Postmodernism: An Alternative to Liberalism?" She focuses much of her discussion on issues of abstraction and individualism, ultimately finding attempts at neutrality, if that were possible, misguided for liberatory theory, and abstraction itself not necessarily problematic. The argument rests on an investment in alternative feminist methodologies, which, the author claims, "reformulate" rather than dispense with abstraction and individualism. Linked to the reformulation in which Schwartzman is interested is her argument that feminists also situate their work within a critical analysis of women's oppression. Certainly, many feminists see their work as an analysis of sexist oppression, and not all would agree that "women" can or ought to be the subject of feminism. The author does use a variety of feminist thinkers in helpful ways to clarify the contradiction she names, though she employs the notion of feminism in a somewhat limited manner.

In the first section, Schwartzman discusses Ronald Dworkin's notion of distributional equality and Rawls's development and use of an "original position." She makes reference to work by Rae Langton, Catherine MacKinnon, Susan Okin, and Iris Marion Young to explore the problems of abstraction for feminist goals of social transformation. Although claiming to be abstract, both versions of liberalism rely on a host of unacknowledged particular knowledges found in the existing societies of which they are a part. Thus, problematic power relations of concrete societies are built into the so-called abstract theories. Schwartzman is clear that a critical analysis of oppression must be central to political theory.

In the second section, therefore, the author looks at the contributions of two liberal feminist thinkers who include a critical analysis of oppression.

She explains that Onora O'Neill does not find abstraction itself a problem, but that liberalism needs to be more (rather than less) abstract. She uses works by Susan Babbitt and Elizabeth Anderson to frame her critique of O'Neill that normative ideals may be of service to feminist theorizing in ways that O'Neill would not support. In the next chapter, Schwartzman assesses Martha Nussbaum's work, focusing on the notion that liberalism should be more carefully individualistic than it has often been. Although sympathetic to Nussbaum's revised individualism, Schwartzman offers an alternative method. She utilizes contributions by MacKinnon to suggest a nonliberal methodology for liberalism that is explicitly grounded in feminism. This method differs from that used by most liberals who insist that they are seeking to be "nonbiased." The author points out not only that the liberal promise of neutrality is empty but that in order to specifically challenge injustice, political theory should claim its biases and use them to their best potential.

It is Schwartzman's attention to what she refers to as methodology that holds the most potential for more liberatory political theory. Like others, the author is clear that democratic theory requires the conceptualization of equality as a goal still in the process of working itself out, instead of a common presumption in liberalism that equality is the place from which we start. She distinguishes feminism from the liberal-communitarian divide in that it acknowledges groups but does not cast them as necessarily traditional. Although she continues to talk about "women as women" — which she briefly notes has come under a great deal of criticism among feminists — she suggests that instead of appealing to a "deep" liberalism, "attempting to examine social phenomena with an eye toward the collective situation of women in some particular context will be more likely to unearth the sources, causes, and effects of oppression" than liberals' method of bracketing bits of knowledge regarding current power dynamics and social positioning (p. 109). This chapter, as with the others, would have benefited from more analysis generally, and specifically more thorough immersion within the experiences and literatures of feminists who have long utilized this method. It will be interesting to see what Schwartzman may offer, in future projects, by employing the methodology to which she points in this text.

In the final section of *Challenging Liberalism*, the author makes reference again to MacKinnon in order to look at Wendy Brown's critique of identity politics and Judith Butler's analysis of speech acts as examples of postmodernist contributions, which differ from her own

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.

DOI: 10.1017/S1743923X37000128

Richard L. Fox
Union College

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