

of a prescription for change does not add much to that realization.

Yet despite faltering a bit at the end, *The Constitution as Social Design* represents a significant contribution to the field of American constitutional development. At a meta level it brings to the fore one of the most troubling (and oft-repeated) historical paradoxes: that the American constitutional scheme—still the model for so many constitutional framers around the world—not only permits but also furthers the systematic marginalization of entire populations from participating in the civic discourse. Ritter's scholarship points out that men are still capable of crafting the common good—that is, fully participating as civic members of the polity—whereas women are still seen as connected to the dialogue only in less obvious ways. What is troubling is that America's Constitution is largely to blame.

**Where Women Run: Gender and Party in the American States.** By Kira Sanbonmatsu. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006. 264p. \$70.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070417

— Tracy Osborn, *Bridgewater State College*

In recent years, scholarship in the subfield of women and politics has met with a puzzling trend. The percentage of women in state legislatures, once steadily growing, has leveled off and even decreased in recent years. It is from this puzzle that Kira Sanbonmatsu's book begins: Why is the growth of women's representation in the state legislatures slowing down, and what do political parties have to do with it? Sanbonmatsu's argument is thoughtful, detailed and compelling, and she generates a bounty of information for scholars of women and politics, state politics, and political parties.

The author's analysis focuses on whether stronger political parties will attempt to influence the prenomination process in order to draw women candidates into office, thus increasing the representation of women in the state legislatures. On the one hand, Sanbonmatsu expects that parties may enhance women's representation by acting as recruiters who find more women candidates to run in the primaries. On the other hand, parties may act as gatekeepers by making their preferences known in the primaries through endorsements, financial assistance, or discouragement of potential opponents. Because of assumptions about women as candidates, this gatekeeping function could stifle women's candidacies and lower the number of women in office. She tests these alternatives using three main data sources: in-depth semistructured interviews with state and legislative party leaders, state legislators, and other actors, such as interest groups in Alabama, Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Ohio; a mail survey of state party and legislative leaders and Ohio state legislative candidates; and a quantitative analysis of women nominees for major parties.

Contrary to her expectations, Sanbonmatsu finds that strong parties do not facilitate, and in fact can hinder, the development of a deep pool of women candidates. In Ohio, for example, where party recruitment is strongest, legislators report that potential women candidates are often not on the radar of party leaders when they recruit; rather, they recruit from informal social networks that some legislators refer to as "good ol' boy" networks. Conversely, in Alabama, weak parties do not offer women opportunities to be self-starters; lack of confidence in women candidates by interest groups and state public opinion remain enough to suppress the draw of women to the candidate pool.

One of the most significant contributions of Sanbonmatsu's research is her analysis of perceptions among potential candidates and party leaders. Interviews with women and men legislators reveal that there is a substantial gender gap in perceptions about the nomination process; for instance, 78% of men candidates think the party is equally encouraging of men and women candidates, but only 34% of women believe this (p. 139). Moreover, stereotypes that have been dismissed in scholarly literature, such as campaign finance differences between men and women, are perceived as quite real by the legislators she interviews. There seems to be an interesting disconnect between what political scientists find in research about women candidates and what party leaders perceive about women candidates, indicating that understanding perception can be as important in research about women candidates as analyzing the realities of outcomes.

Sanbonmatsu's analysis also sheds interesting light on our knowledge about political parties. In Chapter 3, she notes that legislative campaign committees in the states often engage in more political recruiting than do state or local party leaders. Though congressional work has identified the influence of Hill committees in the congressional campaign, this reveals a trend toward the increasing power of these committees at the state legislative level as well. Additionally, it is clear that parties vary widely in their attempts to control nominations. Some, like the Massachusetts Democrats, have such a majority that they give recruiting and gatekeeping little thought; others, like both parties in North Carolina, engage in a sort of preprimary intended to weed out candidates and avoid competition in a primary. Sanbonmatsu's interviews with party elites in the states are among the most in-depth sources of knowledge about party organization at the state level.

A notable problem in this research is both a testament to the author's research skill and a detriment typical of state legislative research. Explanations abound in the existing literature for the shallow pool of women candidates: Public opinion in a state is not conducive to women's success, women perceive less of a chance to win and therefore hesitate to run, or women do not run because of disproportionate responsibility in the home. Each of these

explanations has merit to a degree, and Sanbonmatsu is clear and candid in pointing out instances in her six cases when these explanations seem to be pertinent. However, the confluence of variables and possible explanations for the differences among the six cases can become overwhelming in relation to the party influence over nominations. She is to be commended for using an alternative data source, the quantitative information about state legislative recruiting practices found in chapter 6, to test her conclusions from the six case studies and try to alleviate this problem to some extent. Nevertheless, her work serves as a reminder that within the richness of variation among state legislative practices can be frustration over the myriad differences among the states.

Two additional problems characterize the research here and are both acknowledged by the author. First, social desirability is likely an issue within the interviews; for instance, she notes that both Democrats and Republicans indicated that their party offered more opportunities for women candidates (p. 113). Several quotations from women legislators suggest that they may have felt more comfortable expressing doubts about the recruitment of women candidates to a female interviewer than men legislators would be. Second, the analysis here is based largely on one point in time, and therefore does not capture how changes in party involvement in the nomination process or concerted efforts to recruit women candidates (such as Iowa's Women in Public Policy, p. 142) may increase or decrease the number of women running for office in a state. Future studies could examine these changes, as well as how party influence (or the lack thereof) on the nomination process structures women's behavior once in office.

Overall, Sanbonmatsu's work is a substantial contribution to our knowledge about why more women candidates do not run for political office. The interview evidence she uses is so rich with observation about women, parties, and state politics that a short description of the central question here cannot do it justice. *Where Women Run* is a must-read for scholars in these areas of American politics.

**Black Feminist Voices in Politics.** By Evelyn M. Simien.  
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. 196p. \$71.50 cloth,  
\$23.95 paper.  
DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070429

— John C. Berg, *Suffolk University*

Evelyn M. Simien makes three major contributions in this book. First, and most important, she uses insights derived from a black feminist theory that is largely literary to inform hard, number-crunching empirical research. Black feminist theorists from Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth to Kimberlé Crenshaw and bell hooks are used to derive operational definitions and testable hypotheses.

Those seeking unity in the discipline would do well to study this book.

Her second contribution, derived from the first, is to show that black feminism is something different from the additive combination of black race consciousness and feminism. As Simien puts it, “just because a citizen has a strong gender and race identity does not necessarily mean that person will recognize the unique situation faced by African American women” (p. 36). Conversely, black feminists may not identify with the women's movement because of a perception that it concerns itself only with the problems of white women.

Simien derives her own six-item scale of black feminist consciousness from questions included in the National Black Politics Study of 1993–94, supplemented with analysis of data from the National Black Election Study of 1984–88. Rather than asking separately about race and sex, these items asked whether race and sex discrimination were linked, whether black feminist groups help the black community, and whether black women should share in political and church leadership. Having derived this independent measure, Simien is able to conclude that black feminist consciousness is strongly correlated with race consciousness, but only weakly, if at all, with feminist consciousness. She contends that these “bolster the claim that items designed to tap feminist identification among white women are problematic because they yield a measurement of support for white feminism among black women—not black feminist consciousness” (pp. 50–51). She also concludes that support for black feminist consciousness is greater among black men than among black women—although additional analysis suggests that this may be more a matter of political correctness rather than of underlying beliefs (pp. 54–60).

Simien's third major contribution is the development and implementation of the National Black Feminist Study, a survey of 500 African Americans who were eligible to vote, conducted by telephone between November 2004 and January 2005. This brief survey makes it possible to measure change in several items from the National Black Political Study of 10 years earlier. She concludes that black feminist consciousness remains high among both men and women, and that such consciousness is now a stronger determinant of political activity—especially of voting—than it had been earlier.

Unfortunately, the last conclusion is not well-founded because of two methodological problems, one specific to this comparison and one much more fundamental. First, race consciousness is included among the determinants of black political behavior in Simien's analysis of the 1993–94 survey (p. 111), but omitted from the analysis of the 2004–5 survey (p. 149). Because race consciousness is strongly related to black feminist consciousness (p. 86), this omission itself may explain the greater apparent importance of black feminist consciousness in the latter study.