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The Political Battle of the Sexes: Exploring the Sources of Gender Gaps in Policy Preferences. By Leslie A. Caughell. Baltimore, MD: Lexington Books, 2016. 168 pages. \$75.00 (hardcover).

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Leslie A. Caughell's book explores gender gaps in U.S. public policy attitudes and develops a theoretical framework to examine the roots of these gaps. It provides a look at contemporary gender gaps on a wide range of foreign and domestic policy issues and updates the literature on these changes in gender differences over time up to 2008.

The first chapter is a review of the literature on gender gaps in policy attitudes in the United States and begins to delve into the scholarship on how the gaps emerge. Caughell goes deeper into this literature in chapter 2 and develops an original theory about the sources of gender gaps. Rightly noting that they are not always distinct factors, the theory contends that there are four interrelated explanations for gender gaps: biological factors, socialization, feminist values, and political knowledge. This "cumulative theory" proposes that biological characteristics are most influential on bedrock principles, while the other factors are more likely to shape attitudes toward "labels/issues of the day."

Chapter 3 examines gender gaps in policy positions over time using data from the American National Election Studies. This chapter documents that men have moved closer to women's positions on civil rights while women have become more skeptical about the role of government, moving closer to men. Women have become more liberal over time on many questions of social and foreign policy, and thus gaps have increased. Chapter 4 is the first test of her theory and explains the operationalization of each factor that may explain gender gaps. Caughell finds that biological factors, feminist consciousness, and political knowledge are most closely associated with foreign policy attitudes. The analysis also shows that the

predictors of these attitudes do not differ sharply between women and men. In chapter 5, Caughell examines domestic social policy attitudes. This analysis demonstrates that all four of these explanations are related to opinion on different social policies, but in the aggregate, feminism and the acceptance of traditional gender roles are the most powerful indicators. The final chapter provides a summary of these findings.

Caughell's objective to provide an overarching theory to explain gender differences in public opinion is laudable. Indeed, most analyses of gender gaps focus on either a certain set of policies, or on voting or partisanship, and she attempts to explain a wide variety of attitudes under a single theory. However, I was not persuaded that this book provides this theory. Instead, Caughell lays out a set of predictors of gender gaps and demonstrates that there is not a single explanation for gender differences. She does not connect the four explanations into a single theory. For example, it is not clear why we should expect gender socialization to have an impact on domestic social policy attitudes but not much influence at all on foreign policy beliefs.

Caughell spends a good portion of chapter 2 defining the concept of biology as she deploys it to explore its effects on public policy attitudes. She conceptualizes "biology" as the combination of one's biological characteristics — for example hormone levels or DNA — and their environment, particularly resources and threat perception. In chapter 4, when she discusses her analysis, we see that it relies on survey data, and therefore no biological characteristics, as she defines them, enter into her analysis. "Biological considerations" are, then, measured with income and eight questions about a person's perception of threat from crime and terrorism. It is problematic to call these measures "biological." In other chapters, she refers to this measure as simply "threat," "responses to the material environment," and a "resource-threat index." Any of these terms is more accurate. Understanding that this indicator is measuring resources and threat perceptions of crime and terrorism helps to explain why it would be closely associated with foreign policy attitudes and less important in shaping domestic policy attitudes. For example, women with higher incomes and higher threat perceptions are more likely to approve of using torture in interrogations. Because they view the world as a more dangerous place, they are more accepting of any means of protection. There is no reason to expect threat perceptions or income to influence attitudes about abortion or school prayer.

Caughell should be applauded for the interdisciplinary approach, for she covers a wide range of literature from evolutionary biology, sociology,

psychology, and political science. The coverage is not as thorough for each explanation as it could be. The section on biological explanations, for example, is more than twice as long as that on socialization; yet, the vast majority of women and politics scholarship begins with the assumption that the gender gap is a function of childhood socialization. She does not explain, for example, how “gender role socialization leads children to believe that women should be cooperative and nurturing” (26). For that, Caughell should examine more of the literature in social psychology, particularly social role theory. In *Democrats/Republicans and the Politics of Women’s Place*, Kira Sanbonmatsu (2004) demonstrates there is significant ambivalence about women’s roles in society. As such, Caughell should consider multiple measures of gender roles. The other four indicators are measured with an index of several items, but the socialization explanation relies on a single indicator.

Caughell’s book is a valuable update of contemporary gender gaps and tests of their roots. I would have liked to see more on differences in attitudes among women. At different parts of the book, Caughell notes that women are not a monolithic group and that there is great variety among women in their political attitudes. An analysis of gender gaps between married women and men and between married women and single women, or differences between black women and men and black women and white women or Latinas or Asian women would have been a valuable addition to our knowledge of gender gaps.

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