Some questions about the effects of anger relative to other emotional reactions remain unanswered in the book. While prevailing wisdom holds that the racial attitudes of white Americans are rooted in feelings of fear and anxiety, Banks finds only limited evidence of anxiety in shaping attitudes on race. To show anger’s powerful influence relative to the modest effects of anxiety is intriguing, but more could be said about why anxiety does not play a role. Even if people hold less uncertainty about racial politics (such that anger has come to replace anxiety for some), it is not clear why feelings of fear and anxiety held by white Americans seem of such little consequence. Banks suggests that disgust also has an important place in feelings about race. While modern racism is best defined by anger, feelings of disgust are intertwined with a belief in old-fashioned racism. It is a captivating argument, particularly given the limited attention that political psychologists have given to thinking about feelings of disgust, but the argument deserves greater elaboration. How do feelings of disgust play out in politics? How do feelings of anger come to replace feelings of disgust in the domain of race?

Overall, Banks offers an exceptionally original take on how feelings of anger can lead political choices to become racialized. If anger and symbolic racism are fused in the minds of many white Americans, it suggests that racial prejudices will remain a persistent influence in American politics for years to come. In speculating about how this link might be severed, Banks suggests that education might help erode the connection between anger and racial attitudes, and that feelings of shame and guilt might help counteract the effects of anger as well. But perhaps the more likely routes to a less race-biased future will be through those cases where Banks fails to find support for his main mechanism: in issue domains where feelings of equality and fairness are less salient (like foreign policy) or in political environments where candidates are less likely to prime feelings of anger in politics.

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What roles do sex and gender play in American politics? Contemporary conventional wisdom and a large body of previous research suggest that sex is an important cleavage in American politics. Men and women political officials act

1. I use *sex* to refer to biological characteristics and *gender* to refer to masculine and feminine characteristics; see Hatemi et al. (2012).
differently; they campaign differently; and voters think about them differently. But what if one were to rigorously and empirically test these assumptions? He or she would find that, while sex and gender are still important in American politics, blunt differences between what men do and women do and what is expected of them fall away. In Deborah Jordan Brooks’s theoretical language, women are “leaders not ladies,” judged on the basis of expectations for political leaders first and foremost, and gender—at times—a distant second.

Brooks’s new book, He Runs, She Runs: Why Gender Stereotypes Do Not Harm Women Candidates, is a welcome addition to the literature on political campaigns. It develops theories—many taken from the business literature—about how men and women are expected to behave. Brooks contrasts the “double standards” theory, that men and women are viewed differently, with women being held to a higher standard than men, with her “leaders-not-ladies” theory, that “women politicians will be evaluated by the public more as politicians than as women” (29). Brooks argues that there are three theoretical reasons why women may not be disadvantaged: Although gender stereotypes may be pervasive, women running for office will be put in a different category from ordinary women; information about candidates other than gender will minimize the use of stereotypes; and more women in politics may reduce the reliance on stereotypes.

In making her argument, Brooks distinguishes between descriptive stereotypes, ideas about how men and women act, and prescriptive stereotypes, ideas about how they ought to behave. Campaigns may be disadvantaged from the start if individuals view candidates through negative descriptive stereotypes and/or they may be disadvantaged by having to overcompensate for perceived violations of prescriptive gender norms. For example, women candidates may be seen as weaker than men simply because they are women. But they may be penalized by the electorate when they act in ways that confirm or disconfirm those stereotypes: women who cry during a campaign event or act too tough, for example.

Brooks relies on a series of six experiments executed by YouGov. Respondents were asked to read an article similar in every way except the sex of the candidate (Karen or Kevin Bailey). The articles were manipulated along dimensions commonly assumed to reward or penalize candidates based on gender: experience (high or low); emotions (anger, crying); characteristics (tough, lack of empathy); and knowledgeability. The control group read an article that contained the background content but did not include the experimental dimension. Brooks evaluates whether candidate sex has an effect on perceptions of men and women candidates for overall outcomes (favorability, likely Senate effectiveness, and likely presidential effectiveness) as well as more specific measures ranging from ability to handle issues (domestic, economic, international crises), to personal characteristics (honesty, knowledgeability, intelligence, and 11 others), to situational attribution (whether the candidate responds to a particular context or whether it is an aspect of personality). Brooks analyzes her data using analysis of variance (ANOVA).
The results of the experiment are striking and consistent: Americans do not hold men and women political candidates to different expectations along any of the six dimensions Brooks analyzes. Women candidates do not need more experience (chapter 4); they do not “face different penalties on Election Day if they cry or get angry” (chapter 5, 107); they are penalized neither for being too tough nor for lacking empathy (chapter 6); and they are not disproportionately punished for knowledge gaffes (chapter 7) compared to men candidates.

Still, the puzzle remains: If women are not disadvantaged when they run for office, why are there so few women elected leaders? Brooks addresses this question in chapter 8, when she evaluates alternative explanations for the lack of parity: disparities in fund-raising, media bias, glass ceiling, incumbency advantage, and recruitment bias, all of which she finds unconvincing. Instead, building on Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox’s work on political ambition, Brooks argues that the misperception that women face an uphill battle may actually create a climate where fewer women want to run.

With these conclusions, Brooks offers important takeaways that speak to political science at the same time she offers a fork in the road for a new agenda to study political campaigning in the United States. Her larger insights include some fundamental points:

1. *Just because a belief is widely held does not mean it is accurate or true.* Conventional wisdom is pervasive and may drive the recommendations and behavior of campaign officials. But because experts in the field believe it to be true does not mean that it is. If Brooks is right, inequalities in gender representation in American politics are not driven by structure or belief but by misperception.

2. *Academics ought to make a difference by investigating widely held beliefs and educating Americans about their findings.* Although the volume is heavy on academic terminology, the point is not just to speak to an academic audience. Brooks notes that “a key step that should be taken by those who care about improving the representation of women in politics is an information one: specifically, an effort to ensure that all women have accurate information about the nature of the challenges associated with running for office” (165). Her book offers the data, analyses, and findings for that key step.

3. *Change may come from null results.* Brooks’s findings and recommendations are built on a foundation of null results. The lack of significance in her ANOVA results offers a striking contrast with the substantively significant and the important findings.

If there is a weakness in this volume, it is that the book is dedicated mostly to empirically establishing no difference between expectations for men and women at the expense of greater development of the implicit feedback model that runs throughout this work. Candidates, consultants, the media, and
Americans speak as if it is harder for women (compared to men) to campaign and win office. Because of these pervasive beliefs, women are less likely to campaign for, and therefore win, elective office. Although Brooks presents extensive experiments (no small feat), she bases evidence for this pervasive misconception on a series of anecdotal stories. But where do ideas about the double burden come from? More systematically, how often is it mentioned and by what types of media sources? Are campaign consultants equally likely to hold these beliefs? How about individuals?2

These suggestions offer an opportunity to change the research agenda for the women and politics and political campaign literatures. Rather than comparing what “men do” to what “women do,” scholars can experiment with what happens to folks when they learn Brooks’s (new) information. Do campaign consultants change their advice? Do media sources reduce the coverage they give to women’s double burden? Do Americans change their stated beliefs? And, perhaps most importantly, are women candidates more likely to run?

Deborah Jordan Brooks’s book is required reading for anyone interested in women and politics or political campaigns; it has much to offer graduate students studying methods. But it also challenges scholars of all stripes to tie their work to questions and problems that matter.

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References


2. Brooks cites Fox and Lawless (2010).