

*Introduction to the Special Edition:  
“Gender and Sexuality in Southern Politics”*

Jay Barth, Editor

In the 2006 collection *Writing Southern Politics: Contemporary Interpretations and Future Directions*, Penny Miller and Lee R. Remington issued a call for expanding what was, to that date, scattershot and limited research on gender’s impact on southern politics. Citing the distinctive traditionalistic political culture of the region, accompanied by emphatic gender role expectations, and a one-party tradition, Miller and Remington concluded, “Although the national focus on women is important, a need remains to focus on specific regions as well” (122). In their essay, Miller and Remington also noted what was, to that date, limited work on LGBT politics in the South. This special edition of the *American Review of Politics*—“Gender and Sexuality in Southern Politics”—seeks to partly fill these voids in the study of the politics of the South identified by Miller and Remington.

While “the South” is often employed as a dummy variable in quantitative analyses of gender- and sexuality-related phenomena in American politics to capture some distinctive trait of southern voters or states, this collection seeks to move beyond such a blunt treatment of the region on these important topics. Although the addition to the literature consists of only four articles, the goal here is to add nuance to our understanding of the way that the South grapples with gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. It does so through articles that show topical and methodological diversity.

Two of the articles employ quantitative methods to provide understanding into public policies related to gay/lesbian and transgendered individuals in the South. The first, by Gregory B. Lewis and Reynold V. Galope, uses metanalysis of over 150 surveys to delve into how and why Southerners differ from non-Southerners on a variety of gay-related public policies. Their work shoes the particular power of evangelical religious beliefs in maintaining a distinctive South on this collection of policies. The article also provides insights into the limited power of migration patterns to alter beliefs on this array of issues. Not only have the voters of the South *been* distinctive in

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their attitudes toward these topics, Lewis and Galope's extensive analysis suggests they are likely to *remain* distinctive.

The second, by Jami K. Taylor, Barry L. Tadlock, and Sarah Poggione, examines patterns in laws allowing individuals who are transsexual to amend their birth certificates. Despite the region's conservatism on other LGBT-related policies, the states of the South are actually slightly more likely to allow such birth certificate alterations favorable to transgender individuals. Taylor, Tadlock, and Poggione use sophisticated analysis of policy diffusion patterns to determine that such policies were adopted relatively early, before transgender rights became more closely connected with the gay rights advocacy movement. In the last decade and a half, the policy—crucial to the lives of transsexual individuals—has begun to look like other gay-related policies with southern states which had not previously shifted in a more progressive direction holding onto more conservative stances.

Two other articles effectively employ qualitative methods in their analysis. Angelia Wilson shows interesting connections between the race-based Southern Strategy of the past and current debates over marriage equality. A crucial link across time, according to Wilson's work, is the rhetoric of the Southern Baptist Convention. In her article that makes fine use of a variety of political and religious documents, Wilson argues that "preaching prejudice" is at play in both instances in the religious beliefs of the region's largest religious denomination.

The final piece in this collection analyzes reproductive rights in the contemporary era in the region. Christine Sixta Rinehart and Laura R. Woliver examine the legal landscape on a variety of policies related to reproductive choice in the South. While Southerners are now as likely as non-Southerners to use birth control and abortion, the legislatures of the South are decidedly more likely to adopt restrictive measures in this area of policymaking. Rinehart and Woliver attempt to explain this divergence in a piece that also makes the case for the especial power of the region in shaping national reproductive choice policymaking at the state level.

Just as Miller and Remington argued several years ago, much more work should be done to understand how the voters and policymakers of the South deal with the complex issues tied to gender and sexuality. However, this fine collection of pieces helps us get a few more steps down that path.

## REFERENCES

- Miller, Penny, and Lee R. Remington. 2006. Writing About Women in Southern Politics. In *Writing Southern Politics: Contemporary Interpretations and Future Directions*, eds. Robert P. Steed and Laurence W. Moreland. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.