

Jeffrey Lazarus and Amy Steigerwalt. *Gendered Vulnerability: How Women Work Harder to Stay in Office.* University of Michigan Press, 2018. ix, 326 pp. (\$70.00 cloth).

After the January 21, 2017 Women's March, the #MeToo movement, and the historically high number of women running for and winning elective office in the 2018 midterm elections, it might be difficult to remember that women are still a small share of officeholders at the local, state, and national levels, and that they face different challenges than men.

From early on, the women and politics literature has documented these challenges, including reports from female officeholders that they must work harder than men to be perceived as effective and successful. This takes the form of producing more, paying more attention to detail, and delivering higher levels of preparation for daily tasks. Women of color have been especially likely to report such hurdles. Even as the proportions of women in elective office have grown, female officeholders' reports of disparate treatment continue unabated.

One aspect of working harder is providing service and representation to legislative constituencies. Extant studies on women's constituency representation have established that they have been more willing than men to listen to constituents and help them with problems. Women also spend more time on constituent services. This research, however, has relied on self-reports rather than objective data. It is here that Lazarus and Steigerwalt pick up the baton.

Focusing on the 103-110th Congresses (1993-2005), Lazarus and Steigerwalt define attention to constituency broadly and operationalize it in multiple ways. Direct constituency service is measured via the use of franking, assignment of staff to district offices, and members' travel to their districts/states. Bringing home the bacon is measured by individual earmarks in the 110th Congress and bureaucratic awards from the 2009 stimulus package. Legislative representation is assessed by the number and type of bills and resolutions members introduce, co-sponsorship activity, committee memberships, and roll-call votes. Additionally, the authors conducted several interviews in 2013 with current and former members of staff and Members of Congress.

Linking empirical findings with a theoretical framework, Lazarus and Steigerwalt coin the term "gendered vulnerability". They argue that women face multiple manifestations of gendered disadvantages including gender stereotypes, more competition for election and re-election than men, and differential media coverage. Together with the effects of gendered social identities, women face pressure to counter these obstacles both in themselves and in society. Their answer is to work harder than men. Doing so helps convince women that they are "qualified" for office and convinces voters that they are good at their jobs and have earned support.

Overall, Lazarus and Steigerwalt's findings show that, in most cases, women simply produce more than men. First, in terms of direct constituency service, women in both chambers took more trips to the district, sent more franked mail, and placed more staff in the district than their male counterparts.

Second, in terms of bringing home the bacon, women of the House and the Senate brought in more earmarks and earmarks that were worth more money. Women in the House also secured more stimulus money allocated from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Perhaps even more impressively, as the level of poverty of districts increased, female House members secured a greater number of stimulus projects and more funding than men. No such gender differences in ARRA funds were in evidence in the Senate, however.

Third, analysis of direct legislative representation shows that women in the 103-110th Congresses introduced more bills and resolutions and co-sponsored more legislation than men. But, what about legislative success? Here, the picture changes. Weighting all bills equally, Lazarus and Steigerwalt find that women moved fewer of their bills through each stage of the legislative process than men. They explain this anomalous finding by asserting that women introduced more “messaging” bills than men. Such bills are not meant for focused legislative attention and passage; they are meant to take a position in line with constituent expectations. However, tests of the messaging explanation withstand scrutiny in the House, but not in the Senate.

Next, the authors offer three sets of findings to buttress the “messaging” conclusion: (1) Monte Carlo simulations indicating that female legislators’ committee assignments were more consistent with constituent preferences than those of men; (2), comparisons of bill introductions in five policy areas (agriculture, crime, labor, health care, and defense) to a measure of constituent demand showing that women of the House introduced more bills in specific policy domains as the level of district demand increased. These findings were not, however, replicated in the Senate; (3) roll call voting behavior models showing that women of the House and Senate deviated less from constituent preferences than men.

In summing up the implications of their research, Lazarus and Steigerwalt assert that, in many ways, women are better representatives for their constituents than men, and that this is due to gendered vulnerability. To close, the authors expand the discussion of effective representation to consider the theoretical and empirical pluses and minuses of mirroring constituent preferences.

Overall, this is an excellent volume that contributes much to the literatures on women and politics, legislative politics, and American politics. By situating the questions of how women legislators attend to their constituencies in both well-grounded theory and wide-ranging empirical evidence, the authors expand our understanding of women officeholders appreciably. And they have done so with care, ingenuity, and skill.

A shortcoming of Lazarus’s and Steigerwalt’s work pertains to an uneven assessment of their findings. The results from multivariate models used to explain gender differences in bill passage and the policy-specific bill introductions analysis are two examples. Each set of findings holds in one chamber only (the House) and, together, they render the messaging hypothesis less than wholly persuasive.

Additionally, although the range of data-gathering and analysis in *Gendered Vulnerability* is impressive, there is one area for which additional investigation would be welcome: the finding that women pass fewer bills than men throughout the legislative process. Even though this result is at odds with most other findings of the volume, Lazarus and Steigerwalt do not unpack it. Further examination by type of bill – as measured by constituent demand, policy domain, scale of proposed policy changes, or costs of the proposals – would fit into the authors' approach. Indeed, in another section, they analyze bill introductions by policy type and constituent demand. Using the suggested measures or others may yield insights into legislators' pursuit of policy goals and help explain the stark differences between women and men.

It is in these few weak points of *Gendered Vulnerability*, though, that scholars find fertile ground for continuing the work to understand how women and men behave in legislatures and why. One of the biggest gifts of *Gendered Vulnerability* is that the impressive effort to extend previous research on women's attention to legislative constituencies also results in bridging seemingly contradictory evidence – that, all else equal, female candidates win as often as male candidates – and that the electoral and legislative playing field are still not close to being level. It appears that to succeed, women need only work harder than men and have superior qualifications.

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