Clinton change levels of political engagement for racial, ethnic, and gender groups? Finally, Simien expands the theoretical capacity of intersectional research and links this type of research directly to electoral outcomes and political behaviors. In doing so, she methodologically explains not only how but also why individuals participate in the American electoral system, especially when given a choice to vote for candidates from marginalized groups.

Methodologically, Simien draws upon a rich array of scholarly sources, campaign speeches and advertising, voter turnout reports, and national telephone surveys. Her diverse methodological approach, which includes large data sets and archival research, will aid scholars in their own research, as well as present diverse ways to teach black politics and gender politics in the classroom. Equally important, Simien’s use of multiple data sets clearly shows the importance of black women as key voters for the Democratic Party. In doing so, she provides detailed accounts of black women as bridge leaders and the electoral backbone for twenty-first-century Democratic politics.

The shadow of Donald Trump and the recent 2016 election both loom over Simien’s groundbreaking analyses. In many moments throughout the book, published in 2015, I asked myself whether or not her theories hold in Trump’s America. That is, can we transpose her theory onto the wildly unconventional Trump candidacy, which included racialized dog whistles aimed at white Americans in the twenty-first century, directly following the nation’s first and only African American president? Might we see Trump, too, as engaged in an attempt to target and incorporate a group of individuals who see themselves as marginalized and looking for a symbolic candidate who can empower them and alter their political behaviors? The election of 2016 and Trump’s symbolic candidacy, founded on bringing back the “glory” days of America, also motivated previously nonparticipatory citizens and empowered them to head to the voting booths (we will temporarily suspend stories about the dissolution of the Voting Rights Act and possible international interference in the 2016 presidential election). As much as the author’s scholarship focuses on the importance of Chisholm and Clinton as well as on Jackson and Obama as the lens by which we can evaluate gender and racial politics, respectively, at the presidential level, her work also implores us to look at the ways in which unconventional white candidates are using their gender and race to serve as a catalyst for white Americans in the voting booths.

Due to the reality of a Trump presidency just one year after publication of Historic Firsts, I found Simien’s work operating on multiple levels. The book provides detailed historical analysis and demonstrates the political importance of previously marginalized symbolic candidates in Chisholm and Jackson. She also expands our understanding of intersectional politics by using Obama and Clinton as examples of the ways in which candidates negotiate complex marginal identities, that is, Clinton as a white female candidate (dominant and nondominant identity) and Obama as a black male candidate (nondominant and dominant identity). In Chapter 4, “One of Our Own: Hillary Clinton and the Voters Who Support Her,” the author meticulously lays out how voters perceived the racial and gender impacts of Clinton’s 2008 candidacy. One cannot help but wonder why the Clinton campaign did not use such data and evidence, so clearly laid out by Simien, as the canary in the coal mine of her candidacy. Had they read this book and digested Simien’s analysis, which clearly articulates the fact that white women were not overwhelming supporters of Clinton in 2008, perhaps the Clinton campaign would have adapted a somewhat different strategy to appeal to, and ultimately capture, white women at the ballot box in 2016.

Lastly, some scholars may not initially observe this fact, but one of the most important contributions of Simien’s work is her attention to the work of several female scholars and scholars of color. There are a growing number of recently published books that have been highlighting the work of forgotten or ignored scholars from marginalized communities. Simien’s inclusion of so many diverse scholars should not be ignored. As our understanding of presidential politics, intersectional politics, and institutions continues to expand, we must as a discipline recognize and highlight the work of scholars at diverse institutions who are laying the groundwork for the inclusion of even more subsets of American politics.

Historic Firsts is a timely and necessary contribution that should be mandatory reading for any scholar interested in the presidency, electoral politics, and African American presidential history and politics more broadly. Simien concludes that black electoral politics has implications for intersectional politics, American political development, and race and gender politics writ large. She argues that the lasting consequences of “unsuccessful” campaigns include long-standing effects on marginalized communities and their political participation and efficacy. She finds that racial and gender categories are not uniformly positioned and that one identity (race or gender) often gets privileged over the other. The book leaves readers to think about the futures of a growing number of blacks desiring increased electoral participation and marginalized politicians seeking executive office, as well as the history (and future) of presidential politics across the country for black voters.

Opting Out of Congress: Partisan Polarization and the Decline of Moderate Candidates. By Danielle M. Thomsen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 202p. $99.99 cloth. doi:10.1017/S1537592717003140

— Soren Jordan, Auburn University

We have learned a great detail about polarization in the last decade. Scholars have provided sophisticated evidence
Two mechanisms are at play: replacement (when moderates are replaced electorally by more extremists) and conversion (when the same members grow more ideological). But these mechanisms alone do not explain why certain members are replaced instead of others, especially those who do not run for reelection.

Danielle M. Thomsen provides a refined answer to this question. In *Opting Out of Congress*, Thomsen illustrates how the benefit of being a member of Congress depends on *party fit*: whether the party stands for policies that the legislator or potential legislator prefers (p. 31). A (potential) member’s party fit affects his or her ability to achieve policy goals, advance an agenda in Congress, and enjoy daily life in the institution. Members who fit the ideology of the party accomplish more of these three goals. Accordingly, as the parties grow more polarized, moderates fare worse with party fit, see less benefit from a seat in Congress, and abstain from running altogether, creating a problem in the supply of moderate candidates.

The evidence here is voluminous. Thomsen uses a variety of ideological scores, including those not based on roll-call voting (which allow the comparison of nonmembers), in order to measure how well a member fits the ideology of party leadership. She also gives serious attention to the pool of potential moderate candidates, especially those in state legislatures, the strongest traditional pool of candidates for higher office. We learn that moderates who do not fit with party leadership are statistically less likely to run for higher office, particularly in the U.S. House, than are ideologues (p. 90). This is especially true of open seats, where ideologues are more likely to run. Perhaps most importantly, Thomsen illustrates a potential driver of asymmetric polarization, where Republican ideologues are much more likely than Democratic ideologues to run for open seats (p. 111). Conversely, once in Congress, moderate members are more likely to retire, even if their electoral margins are still relatively safe (p. 130).

Thomsen employs a variety of data, but a real strength of her work is the subtle context afforded by elite interviews. She uses anonymous interviews with former (moderate) members of Congress to demonstrate that the day-to-day life of a congressperson who does not fit the party is at best personally unpleasant and at worst politically unrewarding. Most of the 22 elites she interviews share a common course to their congressional careers: being a moderate in politics was tolerable, even rewarding, in the 1990s, but they “got tired of it” (p. 135) as polarization pushed them out of step with their party. The context of these direct interviews also helps us remember the person in politics. Too often, it is easy to lapse into thinking of congresspeople as single-minded seekers of reelection who are not also human beings with feelings and personalities. But seeing the words of former moderate members reminds us that a polarized, confrontational Congress might be an unpleasant workplace on a personal level.

This connection is especially interesting given other recent work in the field. In *More Than a Feeling* (2017), Adam J. Ramey, Jonathan D. Klingler, and Gary E. Hollibaugh illustrate how polarization is related to the Big 5 personality scale. Thomsen’s own analysis and interviews supplement this idea, especially when she notes that “moderates tend to be pleasant, genteel people” (p. 134). Already flustered by the lack of fit within their own party, such moderates might look at the abrasive culture created by a partisan environment and shun a career beyond state or local office altogether. As the political environment becomes more conflictual, on personal as well as policy lines, only those with a taste for combat in their personality might be driven to seek and retain office.

This insight is especially important when we consider polarization moving forward. Thomsen suggests that moderates “kept the parties anchored at the center” (p. 50), but if certain personalities are more driven to seek party leadership positions (which dole out the benefits that underscore the importance of party fit), and those same personalities are more likely to adopt relatively extreme ideologies, it will not be enough to simply elect moderate members and expect a decline in polarization. The author makes the point clear: Party fit is important because of the potential influence of the member in the policymaking process. As long as leadership is dominated by outspoken personalities with a penchant for ideological conflict, day-to-day benefits are unlikely to be distributed to moderate members, causing moderates not to run.

The influence of personality might also help answer the question of “party fit” that Thomsen does not ask: Extreme ideologues face the same problem of not fitting their party ideology. What causes these individuals to increasingly be drawn to a career in Congress? Personality also provides an alternate explanation to the party-specific and gender-specific stories Thomsen uncovers, as both party identification and gender are associated systematically with personality.

Some unanswered questions remain. Party fit is the main yardstick by which candidates measure the utility of a career in Congress, but polarization causes the scale of the measure for party fit to be asymmetric by party and vary over time (p. 107). If a party polarizes, the possible range of values of party fit is naturally going to grow, as the party grows more extreme. Yet this will only occur in the “negative” direction: A polarizing party can never cause moderates to fit that party better. Unfortunately for us, this means that if one party polarizes asymmetrically, our models might reveal that one party plays an exacerbated role in polarization overall, simply because the independent variable in that party has more variation temporally. Interpretation is also difficult: Thomsen interprets the
empirical results from a pooled model, in which several years’ worth of potential “party fits” are mixed, as a cohesive unit, as if “party fit” means the same thing in 2000 as it does in 2010 (for instance, at p. 91), which we know not to be true. Future work might consider the more explicit introduction of time dynamics in these models.

Another challenge is less addressed: Very few people run for Congress—not just of a moderate stripe, but of any stripe. More commonly, we might call this a problem of rare events, and we have grown to understand that explaining rare events is much more difficult than explaining events that occur with some frequency. Explaining nonoccurrences becomes easier than explaining occurrences. This is potentially problematic if our theory explains why events do not happen (moderates do not run). Here, positive events—where we successfully explain candidacy—are almost entirely determined by open seats. This predictor, though, is never interacted with the theoretical predictors of party fit and distance. Future work might consider an explicitly rare-events approach, interacting predictors with an open seat, or just looking at open seat races alone.

This work offers an interesting and thorough look at the “supply” of candidates that we often ignore when studying Congress. It moves our understanding of polarization forward by focusing our attention on those individuals actually (not) running for office and the systematic differences between them that lead to polarization.

**Drawing the Lines: Constraints on Partisan Gerrymandering in U.S. Politics.** By Nicholas R. Seabrook. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017. 160p. $49.95 cloth. doi:10.1017/S1537592717003176

— Jamie L. Carson, University of Georgia

Every 10 years, states redraw their congressional district boundaries in response to population changes as reflected by the most recent decennial census. Each state is guaranteed at least one representative in the U.S. House, whereas larger, more populous states like California and Texas have the most representation in the lower chamber. The drawing of district boundaries is left up to individual states, the majority of which engage in a partisan redistricting process designed to create as many “safe” seats for like-minded partisans as possible. Partisan redistricting, or gerrymandering as it is commonly referred to, is often blamed for decreased levels of electoral competition, rising levels of incumbency reelection, and high levels of polarization in Congress.

In his new book, Nicholas Seabrook argues that much of the conventional wisdom about gerrymandering is misplaced. Whereas pundits and political observers are often quick to blame redistricting for many of the country’s woes, Seabrook maintains that partisan control of the redistricting process does not produce the significant and widespread electoral effects that are commonly attributed to it. Additionally, he contends that the consequences of partisan redistricting are not always negative, as many believe. As he describes early in *Drawing the Lines*, partisan redistricting is a fairly constrained activity with limited effects on both bias and responsiveness, especially since plans drawn by state legislatures often have to be approved by individual state governors. The author concludes that “partisan gerrymandering poses far less of a threat to democratic accountability than the conventional wisdom would indicate” (p. 11).

Seabrook’s analysis is organized in the following manner. In the first chapter, he presents his theoretical argument, in which he discusses the various constraints that political actors face in seeking to redraw district boundaries each decade. The fact that state legislatures do not uniformly control the redistricting process makes it more difficult for legislators to regularly implement plans that benefit fellow partisans. Additionally, he notes that any partisan bias introduced into the electoral system is likely to erode over time as a function of intradecade population migration, changing turnout patterns, and election swings, all of which can weaken the linkages between representatives and their constituents. When control of state governments is divided between the parties, he also notes that electoral competition is significantly reduced since both parties are forced to enact redistricting plans that seek to protect incumbents.

In the second and third chapters, Seabrook focuses more explicitly on the legal debates over partisan gerrymandering. Whereas some legal scholars have suggested that the Supreme Court has set too high a legal standard for finding evidence of partisan bias in past cases, the author disagrees. Based on a careful review of past decisions and case studies in both Pennsylvania and Texas, he argues that the main reason the Court has been reluctant to overturn state redistricting plans is that there is little or no evidence of long-term electoral disadvantage to one party or the other. As such, even though a state’s redistricting plan may favor a particular party in the short term, he maintains that such an advantage is often short-lived as a result of existing political constraints discussed in the first chapter.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, Seabrook conducts empirical analyses that test a variety of hypotheses discussed in the preceding chapters. In Chapter 4, he examines whether partisan redistricting creates long-term partisan advantages for one of the two major political parties. Compared with other, more neutral redistricting plans, Seabrook finds that partisan gerrymandering can produce a relatively small bias that favors the party that designed the congressional districts. In Chapter 5, he evaluates the relationship between redistricting and electoral responsiveness and district-level competitiveness.

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