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civic responsibility and to collaborate on political and civic projects. As Levinson passionately reflects on her own teaching in a predominantly African American school in Atlanta, action civics enabled her to connect students with their own history and culture and to strengthen their efficacy, and made “the historical and literary record more inclusive than it had been in the past” (p. 7).

However, action civics faces implementation challenges when guided experiential civic education has to compete for time and attention with the mandated, standardized curriculum in the current climate of high-stakes accountability. The quality of semester-long action civics projects often relies on external partnerships and internal support from teachers and principals. In other words, the civic gap can be perpetuated by the capacity gap in our public schools.

Recognizing schools’ limited capacity, many reformers advocate for mandatory civics curriculum and assessment as a practical way to ensure implementation. Levinson takes a different stand. She is concerned that high-stakes civic assessment will widen the learning gap and that schools with limited capacity will respond to the mandates with less-meaningful instruction. Instead, she supports an accountability system that resembles the national curriculum in England, where local schools enjoy discretion over 30 to 40 percent of the students’ learning time. Civic education can then be collaboratively constructed among educators and stakeholders.

Notwithstanding Levinson’s cogent argument, action civics may encounter broader policy challenges. Our decentralized education system suggests the need to build local political support so that local school boards will endorse action civics as part of the district curriculum. Further, faculty in higher education institutions would have to integrate action civics into their teacher education programs. Finally, policy reformers, including those who are supportive of action civics, will want to see reliable data that connect this relatively new instructional approach to student learning outcomes. Clearly, Levinson’s book provides a useful perspective in guiding us toward a more complete agenda in policy and research on civic learning.

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Becoming a Candidate: Political Ambition and the Decision to Run for Office by Jennifer L. Lawless. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2012. 296 pp. Paper, \$27.99.

Elections in a democratic system depend upon the willingness of citizens to put themselves forward for political office with no assurance of success. If the

pool of possible candidates becomes too self-limiting, then the quality of representation is imperiled. Political ambition or progressive ambition, the driving force that differentiates office seekers from everyone else, has been the focus of extensive study by political scientists. Jennifer Lawless takes the tack that the decision to even consider running for office, nascent ambition, is a subject in need of greater understanding.

Most social science research focuses primarily on external structural factors that impact the individual's choice to run or not run. For example, is it open seat, does the district heavily favor/oppose the individual's political party, or what is the likelihood of strong financial support? On the basis of an extensive review of the political ambition literature, Lawless makes a strong case that the decision-making process is two-stage and that the first stage, entertaining the thought that running for political office is a possibility, has been a neglected area of research.

The Citizen Political Ambition Survey, conducted by the author and Richard Fox, provided the empirical data for analysis of nascent ambition. The sample included individuals in law, political activism, business, and education. The first-wave survey was done in 2001 and a second wave in 2008. In addition to the analyzing responses to the survey, the author also conducted extensive open-ended interviews to provide some qualitative context.

The analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, highlights four factors affecting nascent ambition—minority status, family dynamics, professional circumstances, and the role of political parties. Women are less likely than men, regardless of race or ethnicity, to even consider the possibility of running for office, and women who do have nascent ambition are much less likely than are men to take the next step and run for office. Individuals growing up in families in which politics pervades family interaction, who have spouses/family members that are supportive of a political campaign and have new family members are more likely to have nascent ambition. Lawyers and activists are much more likely than are business people and educators to consider running, though, as income goes up, there is a decrease in nascent ambition. In addition, individuals with experience interacting with government and politicians are more likely to think about running, while self-perception as a quality candidate also impacts the decision. Encouragement by political party officials had a positive impact on nascent ambition, but cynicism about the political context had a negative impact.

This is a thoughtful and important contribution to the study of political ambition. The analysis draws on an excellent data set and an extensive set of oral interviews. A major finding is that women, regardless of race or ethnicity, are much less likely to exhibit nascent ambition or, if they do, take the next step to run for office. The lack of female candidates has a negative impact on the overall

quality of representation in government at all levels. Lawless rightly suggests that future research on political ambition should focus on factors shaping the different paths of men and women toward nascent ambition.

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Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal by Cybelle Fox. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2012. 416 pp. \$35.00.

Cybelle Fox provides a fascinating comparative analysis of welfare policies as they evolved from the Progressive Era through the New Deal in the United States. Fox considers the fates of three groups—European immigrants, African Americans, and Mexicans and Mexican Americans—as those who defined and implemented relief policies for the poor and aged and grappled with tensions over race, labor concerns, and politics. She finds that contrary to the prevailing contemporary belief that the immigrant ancestors of white Americans helped each other privately and did not rely on public assistance to get ahead, European immigrants received a variety of forms of assistance distributed through both public and private institutions, forms of assistance available at best in only limited ways to the other two groups. She also shows that the experience of Mexicans and Mexican Americans did not track the experience of either African Americans or that of European immigrants. For each of these groups, their racialized identities, their place in the labor markets in which they were regionally and occupationally concentrated, and their level of political incorporation shaped how private, state, and federal relief programs addressed (or did not address) their needs.

While Fox's analysis is national in scope, she narrates through a regional lens, acknowledging the concentrations of European immigrants in the Northeast and Midwest, African Americans in the South, and Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Because the perceived problems of these populations had significant local impacts, she provides more-detailed local analysis of the politics of welfare policy in a few large cities, most notably New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Throughout the book, her analysis seamlessly addresses policy adoption and implementation through multiple governmental levels.

Fox's comparison of these groups unsurprisingly shows that race mattered in how these policies were conceived and implemented. Her story, however, is more-nuanced because of her attention to how marginal groups fit into the context of labor and the extent to which they were able to leverage some political