# *Book Reviews*

*Richard L. Engstrom, Editor*

**Joshua G. Behr.** *Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of City Redistricting: Minority-Opportunity Districts and the Election of Hispanics and Blacks to City Councils*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004. xi, 158 pp. ($57.50 cloth; $18.95 paper.)

According to its author, *Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of City Redistricting: Minority-Opportunity Districts and the Election of Hispanics and Blacks to City Councils*, was written to provide an accounting of the local redistricting dynamics that explain the difference between the theoretical maximum number of minority-opportunity districts drawn and the actual number of opportunity districts adopted. Joshua Behr couples the theoretical with the actual in an unorthodox methodological approach to explain "the election of descriptive representatives" (p. 14) because, he argues, local level inquiries have not answered questions about why some cities adopt minority-opportunity districts while other cities do not. Moreover, the absence of agreement on the particular size of the minority community to elect a candidate of choice varies from city to city; hence, Behr conducts separate analyses for city districts with at least 50, 55, and 60 percent minority voting-age population.

This brief book synthesizes the debate surrounding redistricting and issues related to drawing city districts for the purpose of achieving descriptive representation for Hispanics and blacks. The underlying ". . . assumption of this research is that minority-opportunity districts are a precondition for the election of Hispanics and blacks to city councils" (p.103). The first three chapters are straightforward, as Behr describes and outlines his unorthodox methodological approach, the theoretical background, two general hypotheses (and sub-hypotheses), as well as several traditional redistricting variables. The remaining three substantive chapters describe the data, specify variables and corresponding hypotheses, as well as test models and report findings.

Behr surveys 110 cities with 1990 populations of at least 150,000 that employ single-member district election format exclusively or in conjunction with at-large elections, and tests several hypotheses for the three elections subsequent to the 1990s round of redistricting, though he focuses primarily on testing two general hypotheses. Using a specified selection criterion, cities are selected based on a range of measures, including the theoretical capacity of the city to create minority-opportunity districts, citywide

minority voting-age population and the number of councilmanic districts. Not all of the cities meeting the criteria are included due to either unresponsiveness (i.e., New York City and Chicago are not included, though Behr notes that the unusually large size of their respective councils, relative to other cities in the study, may have been a contributing factor) or because they could not avoid proposing or adopting minority-opportunity districts due to the high overall percentage of minority voting-age population citywide (p. 41-43).

Behr utilizes an unusual approach to conduct his study, and although interesting, it relies heavily on hypothetical examples. The over reliance on hypothetical examples detracts from his general argument, which would be better supported with the incorporation of examples from the actual cities he surveyed. Coupling theoretical examples with several real world examples would have not only strengthened the use of his unorthodox approach, but may also reduce potential questions about whether or not his assumptions, as outlined in the conjectural examples, are universally applicable to the real world of city redistricting battles.

Behr's findings and the ability to infer to the larger universe may not be possible because Behr reports statistical significance for only a small subsample of the original 110 cities surveyed. Though Tables 5.1 and 6.1 each provide data on the number of cities examined and Appendix B lists all of the cities in the study, the individual Hispanic cities and black cities are never identified. In terms of the overall time dimension of the analysis, Behr focuses on the three elections subsequent to the 1990s round of redistricting, yet fails to explain the significance or uniqueness of this time period.

Chapters Five and Six contain a number of simple regression models testing the two general hypotheses, which yield interesting results; however, the separate models fail to capture fully the dynamics of the redistricting process (perhaps due to multicollinearity amongst the independent variables). The use of separate models in explaining the election of minorities to city council is helpful in capturing a slice of the dynamic interplay between various independent variables, but is also limiting because all of the factors are not tested simultaneously at the 50, 55, and 60 percent thresholds. Behr notes that there are several specifying variables that contribute to the explanation of the election of Hispanics and blacks to city council, yet each variable's effect is measured against the intercept and slope coefficient (p. 84) but not each other. The underspecification of models limits the utility of this study.

The concluding chapter re-states the findings from Chapter Six, again, focusing on the two general hypotheses, but also introduces a new question, accompanied by additional analyses that goes beyond what is presented in the earlier chapters. The new data analysis in Chapter Seven examines cities

that have elected minority council members, yet do not have the theoretical aptitude to create a single minority-opportunity district. This secondary analysis detracts and perhaps even undercuts Behr's argument and first general hypothesis that the theoretical maximum proportion of minority-opportunity districts predicts the proportion of minority-opportunity districts actually adopted. However, his overall study is impressive for its breadth of analysis as to why some cities adopt opportunity districts while other cities do not.

Utilizing an unorthodox approach, yet relying on traditional redistricting variables, does not necessarily move the quality of the debate forward; yet, his findings at the 50, 55, and 60 percent threshold do contribute an added layer to the on-going dialogue. Behr concludes, for the most part, that "minority candidates will fare better in districts heavily populated with minorities" (p. 112), and the added value of Behr's book is that he demonstrates, at least in a theoretical sense, that minorities can be elected from districts that are less than 65% minority voting-age population across a wide variety of cities. This book will provide useful secondary material for those studying redistricting and interested in the debate at the local level, as it provides a basic analysis of redistricting and the many factors and conditions which determine whether or not a minority-opportunity district is drawn at the local level.

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**Cal Jilson.** *Pursuing the American Dream: Opportunity and Exclusion over Four Centuries*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004. xv, 347 pp. ($34.95 cloth.)

How would you tell the story of the American experience? How would you make sense of the social, political, economic, and intellectual changes that have occurred in America over the past several hundred years? Cal Jilson takes up these challenges in *Pursuing the American Dream: Opportunity and Exclusion over Four Centuries*. Jilson's fundamental claim is that the American Dream, which he defines as the fair opportunity to thrive and prosper, has long been a central part of the American ethos. Consequently, it offers a useful and basically sufficient frame of reference for understanding America's historical development. Jilson's primary concern throughout is how opportunities to pursue the dream have evolved and been extended to previously excluded groups. Overall, the tone of this book is guardedly optimistic. Jilson has faith in the power of the American Dream, but he recognizes that its realization is an ongoing and often difficult process.

Jilson's narrative begins with the first English settlers in the New World and ends at the beginning of the twenty-first century. His book systematically analyzes the changing condition of the American Dream by dividing the American experience into seven conceptually coherent periods. For each period, there is a distinct discussion of: (1) the relevant historical background, including the social landscape and its evolution, (2) how the American Dream was understood and envisioned, (3) how the dream was affected by institutions, laws, and public policies, and (4) the status of certain excluded social groups, most notably African-Americans, Native-Americans, and women. The book concludes by speculating about the future of the American Dream. It considers issues such as work, family, income, education, race, and immigration, to outline policies that may be necessary to maintain and foster this "living inheritance" of all Americans.

To support his account of the American Dream, Jilson ably combines two distinct historical approaches. First, he uses the more traditional, top-down narrative, which emphasizes major figures and events. For example, he frequently quotes leading intellectuals and political leaders to articulate what the American Dream promised and entailed during different periods. He also refers to important events to propel his account and mark important transitions. Second, Jilson uses social history's bottom-up approach, which focuses on the lives of people in the general population. He largely relies on demographic information to illustrate the relationship between the changing nature of the American Dream and the social conditions of people living in America. Consequently, the stories of the working class and marginalized groups are usually told through statistics and generalizations rather than the words of individuals. The inclusion of these "common" voices would have provided an interesting perspective and, perhaps, a more sophisticated appreciation of how the dream was perceived by the masses. Regardless, Jilson capably brings together traditional and social histories to demonstrate how forces from the top and bottom have shaped conceptions of the American Dream and the role of the state in providing access to it.

Jilson notes that a number of books have looked at the American Dream; he maintains, however, that his account is unique. Others have portrayed the dream as a fundamentally contested concept that changes over time. Jilson, in contrast, describes a distinctive dream, which involves individual success and flourishing, that has been "remarkably stable since well before the American Revolution" (p. xii). Throughout his narrative, economic concerns dominate. His account, therefore, suggests that the American Dream was often more about material well being, than psychological fulfillment or philosophical abstraction. For example, during the colonial period, Jilson focuses on how the pursuit of material wealth eroded the original settlers' desire for religious community. In his discussion of the

early American republic, he essentializes the conflict between Jefferson's agrarian ideal and Hamilton's commercial vision. Other historical periods are also characterized as struggles between competing economic ideas such as laissez faire versus state regulation, entitlement versus opportunity, and individual responsibility versus social interdependence. Even though there have been many disputes over what the fair pursuit of the American Dream entails, Jilson maintains that the chance to realize this dream has always been the basic goal.

At least among political scientists, any account of the American ethos is going to prompt comparisons to Alexis de Tocqueville's observations in *Democracy in America*. Consequently, it is somewhat disappointing that Jilson provides little critical engagement with his ideas. He does discuss Tocqueville at length to support the contention that, in the second quarter of the nineteenth-century, there was a significant expansion of freedom and opportunity. This usage is certainly valid. However, the compatibility of Tocqueville and Jilson's characterizations of the period masks a critical difference between the two thinkers: they make very different claims about what motivates the American spirit. According to Tocqueville, equality is the "ruling passion" of democracy. He maintains that other democratic qualities like individualism and materialism are simply byproducts of the equality of conditions. Jilson does recognize the central role equality plays in Tocqueville's thought, but his only remark about it is brief and made in passing (p. 85). A critical reflection on their competing claims—the influence of equality versus the inspiration of the American Dream—would have been very valuable in helping to disentangle what is original about Jilson's study and what can already be explained by Tocqueville's insights.

The purpose of this book is to examine the idea of the American Dream as a driving force in America's social, economic, and political development, with special attention to the gradual inclusion of previously excluded groups. Jilson does an admirable job of carrying out this task by providing an account of the American experience that is theoretically informed and often compelling. His exposition is always clear and very well organized. Political scientists will find in this study an interesting historical analysis of the American ethos. In addition, this book is an ideal supplement for classes on American political thought. It offers a straightforward, easy to understand narrative that places major political thinkers and their ideas in historical context. Jilson's *Pursuing the American Dream*, therefore, makes a valuable contribution to the discipline of political science in terms of both scholarship and pedagogy.

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**Thad Hall.** *Authorizing Policy*. Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2004. xii, 147 pp. ($41.95 cloth; $9.95 CD.)

Close congressional watchers soon realize that much of the institution's agenda is routine—and that the more dramatic legislative measures, such as Medicare reform and drug prescription benefits, that receive much more attention from the mass media are exceptional. Thanks to this interesting, short, book, Thad Hall reminds us that much of the Congress' legislative agenda comprises reauthorizing existing federal programs. Reauthorization—or short-term authorization—is a process that is far from being uninteresting or politically inconsequential, as recent struggles over welfare, education, and environmental protection legislation attest.

Hall locates his analysis of the congressional reauthorizations process within two interrelated bodies of political science research relating to congressional oversight and Kingdon's work on agenda setting. The first part of the book takes the reader on a quick but vital tour through the reauthorization process. Here, he demonstrates how reauthorizations are now much more systematically considered not only by the House and Senate but also by the White House than was the case in the 1950s. In consequence, since the Second World War, reauthorizations have become a major source of policy change as well as providing important opportunities for legislators to realize particularistic benefits (e.g., engage in different types of reelection-oriented activities, develop policy expertise, frame and reframe policy issues that help them politically) as well as generate and improve public policy through oversight and provide important (albeit increasingly weaker) signals to the appropriations committees.

In the body of the book, Hall advances his central thesis that reauthorization—program authorizations for limited periods—and oversight are not ad hoc or serendipitous processes. Rather, the Congress through its authorization committees habitually and purposefully times and confines reauthorizations to specific periods precisely so that the body may preserve its institutional power and discretion. The author then provides an important reminder that the Congress alone may decide and plan *when* reauthorization will occur, in so doing exercising negative power to keep certain policy issues related to specific reauthorizations off its agenda for fixed periods of time, thereby insulating the authorization committees from what might otherwise be constant lobbying activity while exercising control over the timing of policy change. In these respects, then, the Congress helps create policy stability. However, while Hall is able to demonstrate (Chapter 7) that reauthorization provides the opportunity for effective oversight, as other literature also shows, this does not necessarily mean that the Congress always conducts effective and systematic oversight—for familiar reasons, including those to do with legislators' incentives.

Indeed, as recent examples demonstrate, and Hall shows in Chapter 8, in the contemporary era, reauthorization exercises a declining influence on congressional policymaking in a number of significant policy areas that are particularly contentious and where preferences are highly polarized. Since the late 1980s, the number of programs operating with expired authorizations has increased dramatically, especially those within the jurisdictions of the Commerce and Resources committees. Unfortunately, at this point, Hall does not offer us any new explanations for this significant change. Rather, he rehearses those offered by Cox (1996), Krehbiel (1998), and Tiefer (1989) without attempting to interpret his data in light of these or any new explanations. So, the reader is left wondering—especially in light of the Congress' poor record on oversight since September 11—whether the influences previously identified in the body of the book are working to the same extent and with the same effectiveness as the reader was led to believe from the earlier discussion.

The book then is a useful and often intriguing contribution to the congressional oversight and agenda-setting literature. It provides a welcome focus on the reauthorization process and introduces and analyzes valuable data. One would have liked, however, to see a more penetrating analysis of how this process relates to partisan, informational, and pivotal theoretical explanations of congressional decision-making. Further, the author might have provided a more trenchant analysis of what Hall calls "the new policy environment" where more and more authorizations expire, an environment that is highly partisan and highly polarized, heavily circumscribed by a burgeoning fiscal deficit, and, one suspects, one in which greater use is made of the brute powers of the "unilateral presidency."

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**Norman J. Vig and Michael G. Faure,** Editors. *Green Giants? Environmental Policies of the United States and the European Union*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 398 pp. ($27.00 original paperback.)

This volume is part of the MIT Press series on American and Comparative Environmental Policies. Sheldon Kamienieki and Michael Kraft are the series editors. This and other volumes in the series attempt to provide a greater understanding of cross-national environmental policy for a wider audience. Vig and Faure (2004) attempt to address this issue by providing an analytical framework to deal with questions, if not solutions, to dilemmas of comparative environmentalism. Their contributors represent a wide range of

academics and practitioners from both the United States and the European Union. By using the economies of the U.S. and the E.U. along with their concomitant regulatory structures as the units of analysis, their contributors explore the similarities, differences, and confluent strategies for environmental protection in a unique manner.

The editors are concerned that changing values and priorities between the United States and the European Union will continue to weaken the international capacity to deal with the increasing globalization of environmental problems. The U.S. and E.U. are both the largest economic powers and the largest environmental regulators, hence the moniker "Green Giants." However, whereas the Europeans see managing growth and the environment as complementary activities, the U.S. views these issues as an "either-or" proposition, with American politicians frequently making the argument that environmental protection costs people jobs. In fact, one of the contributors, Ludwig Kramer in chapter 2, goes so far as to say that U.S. public institutions are captured by economic special interests, resulting in the stagnation of environmental policies (pp. 53-72). This view is also widely held by American environmentalists.

Vig and Faure's greatest contribution is the idea that comparative environmentalism does not have to be limited to focusing only on individual countries or international agreements. Instead, the E.U. deserves special consideration in its own right as an independent political actor. While this study is an exercise in a "most different" case study design (one is hard-pressed to consider the E.U. a federation, although some of the contributors make this claim), the confederate structure employed by the E.U. when implementing and enforcing environmental regulations illustrates similar policy fragmentation difficulties with that of the U.S., which employs a decentralized system of competing federal agencies and state governments. The constitutional dilemmas in both systems provide a basis for comparing similarities and differences, as well as positives and negatives with regard to litigation and implementing authority.

Some of the contributors to *Green Giants* discuss varying levels of convergence and divergence between the two cases. However, Jonathon Weiner postulates in chapter 3 that this is too simplistic a view and that "hybridization" more accurately characterizes the relationship between the two, arguing that exchanges via the discourse of political economy result in cross-pollination of standards and techniques. In other words, the private and non-profit sectors (NGOs) from the U.S. will act in accord with their European business counterparts in order to maintain good working relationships, in spite of official U.S. government policy, or the neglect thereof.

Another contribution of this volume is the articulation of the "generational" progression of environmental regulatory tools over the past several decades. The first generation is widely seen as having employed "command

and control" solutions to point source degradation. In Europe, the practice of the "precautionary principal," where governments erred on the side of public health and environmental protection, even in the face of shaky scientific evidence, became widespread (Christoforou, pp. 17-51). The second generation involves mixed private and governmental incentives to combat non-point-source degradation. The contributors demonstrate both similarities and differences in how these solutions are implemented by the two cases. The third generation involves the most complex problems and demonstrates the greatest differences between the United States and European Union—that of managing the global commons.

The Bush administration's unilateral foreign policy has exacerbated an already precarious situation between the U.S. and E.U. Key disputes include Bush's pulling the U.S. out of the Kyoto Protocol and the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Vig and Faure demonstrate that the roots of these disagreements date back to increasing U.S. isolationism in the 1990s, and Europe's new orientation "inward and eastward" (p. 3) as they expanded to envelope former Eastern bloc countries and centralized their political economy. As these trends developed, the U.S. government became more hostile to the idea of international cooperation, whereas the E.U. attempted to institutionalize sustainable development as a key tenet of its consolidation. The editors conclude that at some point in the very near future it will be in the interests of both Green Giants to cooperate to resolve the global commons dilemmas, but that they may not recognize the necessity soon enough to make the required sacrifices.

Vig and Faure do not set out to solve the world's problems, but argue "the book can be read as presenting differing perspectives on a series of fundamental questions rather than as an attempt to provide a definitive set of conclusions" (p. 8). However, they provide some rays of hope in the creation of transnational environmental policy networks (p. 362). Whereas the European governments typically subsidize NGOs, in the U.S. they have the more corporate composition that Americans have come to expect from organized interest groups. Nevertheless, these groups represent a nascent international discourse that has the potential to help patch up the Atlantic Alliance: "We believe one of the primary avenues for rebuilding confidence in the transatlantic relationship could be the field of environmental policy" (p. 370). While the book ends on an optimistic note, the road to a happy ending will be difficult and contentious, involving not just the U.S and E.U., but the other 170 states and world powers. Overall, the book is a good read and easy to understand. I plan to assign it to my graduate seminar on Environmental Politics and Policy this spring.

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