

interpreted legal questions in terms of their views on the dimension of judicial power. Then, toward the turn of the century, the predominant dimension of conflict began to shift to more ideological ones focusing on business–labor conflicts, as well as First Amendment claims of the “Individual and Civil Rights” preference dimension. The book also describes well the Court’s transformation of its docket beginning in the 1970s and 1980s by focusing a lot of attention on the “Crime and Punishment” dimension, which correlates with Nixon’s law-and-order campaign, the War on Drugs, and mass incarceration. From an analytical standpoint, perhaps the most impressive finding is how Clark shows that cases would have been decided differently had they been decided along a different dimension of conflict. For example, he finds that in “44% of the Criminal Procedure cases decided between 1950 and 1965—54 cases—the case dispositions hinge [on what dimension is activated]” (p. 243).

The book makes many notable contributions. Chief among them are the detailed analyses of the period before the 1940s. As most scholars know, most Supreme Court studies focus on the post-1945 time period, and this book is one of the first to analyze quantitatively the earlier era of the Court. It also offers a number of detailed and nuanced examples of how case conflicts connect to larger political and social dynamics. A clever example examines the correlation between the size of states’ Communist Party membership and the number of First Amendment cases.

In addition, the book provides a critical piece of evidence demonstrating the need for scholars to start thinking about judicial preferences in multiple dimensions. Although this is not a novel development, the evidence presented here should push scholars in fruitful directions for many years to come. Finally, the book does an excellent job of attributing change to many factors, rather than trying to claim that a single force dominates the evolution of legal doctrine. This is a unique achievement that might otherwise be undervalued by scholars who wish to argue for a singular or more parsimonious approach.

Although the book is an excellent advancement in many respects, it is not without issue. First, from a theoretical standpoint, the book develops the argument about the importance of framing legal disputes along different dimensions without acknowledging the literature on legal framing. Ignoring the work in this literature is unfortunate, because it raises challenging issues for the book’s central argument that would have been useful to confront. For example, although Clark admits that cases can be framed anywhere along each of the six dimensions, what the framing literature has shown is that litigants are already offering competing frames of the same case on the same dimension, not to mention that the Court has to confront other frames (e.g., from the lower courts, amici curiae, and a controlling precedent).

There are three other quibbles worth raising. From a substantive perspective, the book’s findings about the shift away from the “Economics and Business” dimension as being important in terms of the quantity of cases it hears seems at odds with colloquial descriptions of the John Roberts Court making seismic decisions in favor of business. Next, although Clark does a good job of being transparent in picking the number of dimensions, and he makes several defensible decisions, narrowing down the number of dimensions is still an atheoretical exercise. It begs the question of why not fewer or more dimensions. More could be done to address this. Third, the assumption that the median justice determines the disposition of policy, although defensible, raises questions about the robustness of the findings if we were to assume that a different actor controlled the disposition (e.g., the majority-opinion author or the median of the majority coalition). This is important because the literature has moved away from a median-only view.

However, these issues should not take away from the major achievements of this book. It will speak to legal scholars of all types and should generate debate for many years to come. We could not ask for more from a book.

Red State Blues: How the Conservative Revolution Stalled in the States.

By Matt Grossmann. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 200p. \$79.99 cloth, \$24.99 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592720000201

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There’s an old saying that goes, “If you’ve seen one state’s Medicaid program, you’ve seen one state’s Medicaid program.” The same applies to US state politics writ large. However “nationalized” the compound republic becomes, and whatever structural similarities state governments possess, studying subnational politics requires attention to an unwieldy number of variations in the quality of representative government. It also necessitates analytical trade-offs. One approach, best exemplified in Matt Grossmann’s *Red State Blues*, widens the analytical lens to focus on macropolitical dynamics in the states. By forsaking some of the analytical depth of, say, single-policy case studies, Grossmann offers a more encompassing set of insights about who governs the 50 states and to what ends.

The empirical setting for *Red State Blues* is a revolution in the control of state governments. Between 1990 and 2017, a combination of cyclical partisan swings and secular changes in the electorate produced a massive series of political gains for the Republican Party. Despite their increasing ideological extremity, however, Republicans have largely avoided electoral backlash in the states. Outside a small number of solidly “blue” states, Democrats

have had difficulty reconsolidating political control in the face of Republican gains, reinforced by geographic polarization, not to mention extreme partisan gerrymanders crafted after the 2010 Republican sweep of state elections.

Yet Grossmann is less concerned with the roots of Republicans' electoral resurgence in the states than with what Republican governance has wrought. Cross-nationally, conservative parties have traditionally found it difficult to dramatically retrench the size and scope of government activities, especially when those activities generate mobilized political constituencies and institutional support structures. Have state-level Republicans, by and large, been able to make good on their party's increasingly conservative ideological commitments?

The answer, Grossmann finds, is a qualified "no." Since the 1960s, state governments have grown in size, and the policies they adopt have become, by several measures, more liberal. In spite of Republican gains, the size and scope of government in the states have continued to grow. On net, liberal policy initiatives continue to experience a greater level of legislative success than do conservative ones. Nevertheless, Republicans are able to affect policy when they consolidate power *across* branches at the state level. The movement toward conservative policy victories, however, accrues slowly and incrementally over time. Translation: those assuming Wisconsin would become Alabama soon after Scott Walker assumed the governorship may have experienced some measure of disappointment. And when conservatives successfully enacted more extreme policy experiments—as in Governor Sam Brownback's significant tax cuts in Kansas—political backlash (eventually) followed.

Chapter 4 takes up the question of why conservatives have had difficulties converting their electoral victories into policy gains. Adopting a method employed in his earlier work, Grossmann draws on a content analysis of 18 book-length histories of policy making across 15 states. From these histories, he extracts data on 92 major legislative proposals in the states. To complement these histories, Grossmann incorporates interviews with statehouse reporters and detailed case studies of several major policy areas. Several themes emerge from this qualitative analysis. First, conservatives can be constrained by judicial decisions, direct-democracy initiatives, and in some cases, social protest. Second, once elected, Republicans often fail to carry forward their most expansive pledges to reduce the size of government. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the structure of state governments imposes its own kind of institutional conservatism on policy making, because states must balance their budgets and have few tools available to truly transform fiscal policy. The frustration of the conservative legislative agenda perhaps helps explain why the Republican Party and its allies in the conservative legal movement have pursued both legislation and litigation aimed at cabining the powers of Democratic

governors, purging voter rolls, and increasing barriers to ballot-box access. It may also explain why legislatures in some ballot-initiative states have rejected popularly ratified Medicaid expansions and have introduced new legislation to further restrict direct democracy.

Still, do conservative policies—once enacted—have measurable socioeconomic effects? On the whole, Grossmann finds mixed evidence. On the one hand, state welfare reforms decreased the number of people on cash assistance and left the unemployed poorer. On the other hand, published studies revealed conflicting results on these reforms' effects on income. Abortion restriction legislation led to clinic closures and increased incidence of abortion-related travel.

In short, it is reasonable to argue that Republican governance has produced neither a clear bundle of policies nor the coherent set of policy impacts suggested in election-year rhetoric. Still, the effects of political changes on socioeconomic outcomes take a long time to reveal themselves. As Grossmann notes, citing work by Gerald Gamm and Thad Kousser, states with high levels of interparty competition have historically spent more on education and health, which is associated with higher rates of life expectancy and household incomes.

Red State Blues is a valuable contribution to the study of contemporary state politics. In essence, it illustrates the considerable challenges conservative parties face in "moving the needle" on the architecture of social and regulatory policy in the states. To make this case, Grossmann weaves together multiple methodological approaches. This strategy of triangulation should serve as a model for how scholars can approach the unwieldy task of examining politics across the 50 states. It is also worth noting that the evidence marshaled to test his core argument is bolstered by the author's own significant work in establishing the Correlates of State Policy Project, which collates data on more than 900 political, social, and economic variables, with observations spanning longer than a century.

Perhaps because Grossmann frames and executes the study so carefully, *Red State Blues* also raises a series of important questions about how to make analytical trade-offs when studying state politics. The book's centerpiece is its rigorous analysis of how Republican control of government affects policy change. Yet even if the "topline" analysis is that the conservative policy revolution stalled, not all red states are singing the blues. Indeed, the evidence also suggests that the revolution "stalled" to varying degrees across policy areas and across the states. The analysis of why this occurred—contained in chapter 4—is largely presented in the aggregate, however. I was left with an appetite for more detail on how often major policy initiatives were thwarted by direct democracy, the courts, or public backlash. And especially given the limited institutional capacity of many state legislatures, I was surprised to see little evidence focused specifically on policy

developments that play out in the executive branch or, for that matter, through state courts. If, as Gøsta Carlsson puts it, “research is a game against nature in which nature counters with a strategy of concealment,” one of the lingering challenges of studying state politics is that the legislative chambers—where consistent data are more easily recovered—are rarely the only sites of action (“Lagged Structures and Cross-Sectional Methods,” *Acta Sociologica* 15, 1972, p. 323). This is especially true when considering the highly intergovernmental nature of many significant state policies.

These limitations are perhaps natural for a study that aims to capture broad trends rather than contextual details. Yet they also highlight a need for greater institutionalized collaboration between scholars in the fields of federalism and state politics. For example, studying subtler changes in policy implementation over time would likely benefit from the establishment of a scholarly network of the sort pioneered by Richard Nathan and his colleagues at the Rockefeller Institute of Government.

Thus in addition to its own accomplishments, *Red State Blues* hints at the important discoveries that could be made were political scientists to establish a more permanent “observatory” for the study of state-level democracy. Given some states’ recent implementation of voter-roll purges, the emergence of anti-protest legislation, and other episodes of “constitutional hardball,” creating such an observatory seems more important than ever.

Race and the Obama Administration: Substance, Symbols, and Hope. By Andra Gillespie. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019. 256p. \$120.00 cloth.
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Andra Gillespie’s measured and insightful book on the meaning of the election of President Barack Obama in terms of racial equity and progress is a valuable and significant contribution to this ongoing debate. Several books and articles critiquing Obama’s effectiveness as a champion of Black causes—public education, police shootings, health care, and housing—conclude that he was disappointing (e.g., see Melanye T. Price, *The Race Whisperer: Barack Obama and the Political Uses of Race*, 2016; Fredrick C. Harris, *The Price of the Ticket: Barack Obama and the Rise and Fall of Black Politics*, 2012; Tanehisi Coates, “My President was Black,” *The Atlantic*, 2017; “How the Obama Administration Talks to Black America,” *The Atlantic*, 2013; and “Is Obama Black Enough?” *Time.com*, 2007). However, Gillespie parses out the policy issues from the cultural ones and suggests that we adjust our assessments of Obama accordingly,

especially because the executive branch is institutionally weak.

This book is well organized; it begins with reporting data on public perceptions of characteristics of Blacks and Whites, as well as perceptions of which issues citizens deemed most important during Obama’s two terms. These data provide the foundation for the creative and brilliant deployment of descriptive, quantitative, and qualitative data. Gillespie uses multiple methods to try to answer the central question of the book: What good did a Black president do for Black people? Survey data, interviews, and content analysis are used to render an absorbing inquiry into the complex array of triumphs, failures, and nonstarters around issues relevant to racial equity.

Gillespie begins by reminding us that President Obama was elected while the country was still in the throes of the Great Recession. The public was expecting Obama to revive the economy. Concerns about jobs, health care, and government dysfunction quickly followed. Over the first term, she cites evidence from the Associated Press Racial Attitudes Surveys (in 2010 and 2012) that reflect an uptick in racial resentment. This increase in racial resentment is a bit surprising, because Obama ran a deracialized campaign and continued to downplay both his own identity and racial issues throughout his first term. Gillespie highlights an aspect of racial electoral politics that we rarely mention: that Blacks share the “kitchen-sink” concerns of every other citizen, and racial inequalities can take a back seat to other issues such as jobs and health care.

Taking discrete measures of Black progress, Gillespie examines data on homeownership, loans made to small businesses, scores on standardized tests, income, hate crimes, wealth, and health. The conclusion regarding the record on standardized test scores is a bit problematic. She argues that although some postulated that Obama’s election might improve test scores, the data indicate that the racial gap on the SAT has not changed since 1997 and has only slightly narrowed on the ACT. However, it is unclear what these data have to do with the Obama administration unless Gillespie is referring to Claude Steele’s racial threat theory. It would make sense that the racial threat posed by standardized tests would still be relevant in the face of increased racial animus. Conversely, the election of a Black president might boost scores by affecting students’ self-perceptions. Perhaps a short discussion of Steele’s work would have strengthened the connection between this measure and Obama’s presidency. Gillespie also notes that enrollment in colleges and universities rose and fell during both terms. One aspect that she does not discuss is the revitalization and expansion of Pell Grants (Doug Lederman and Paul Fain, “The Higher Education President,” in *Inside Higher Education*, 2017). Changes in the Pell Grants program are part of the story of policies that benefit Blacks and would have rounded out the analysis.