

Gaining Voice: The Causes and Consequences of Black Representation in the American States. By Christopher J. Clark. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 264 pp. \$74.00 (cloth)

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Christopher Clark's engaging book explores both the causes and consequences of black representation in American state legislatures. Unlike much previous work, his focus is on examining "black descriptive representation from a collective perspective" (p. 8), rather than in a dyadic sense. In so doing, he ably bridges two political science literatures in need of greater conversation: first, the literature on black descriptive representation, which has largely focused on members of Congress and dyadic, district-level representation; second, the literature on state legislative politics, which brings to bear all the wonderful demographic and institutional variation of the American states. By the conclusion of his book, Clark has presented compelling evidence about both the sources of black representation and its subsequent consequences for substantive representation of blacks' interests and for black political participation—perhaps most important, however, is that through these state-level analyses Clark demonstrates the crucial interaction between political institutions and demographics in shaping policy outcomes and political behavior in the United States.

Gaining Voice does not center around a single theoretical claim, but instead focuses in each chapter on separate claims about the causes and consequences of black representation in state legislatures. While Chapter One spends time directly justifying the study of black state legislators, the purpose of the full book is, in some sense, just this—through demonstrating the causes and consequences of electing black state legislators, the book demonstrates just how important studying them is. Chapters Two and Three explore the causes of black state legislative representation, focusing on how demography and state legislative institutions shape both the absolute number of African Americans elected to state legislatures, and their share of representatives relative to the state's population. After offering explanations for *how* it is that black representatives arrive in

states' legislatures, Clark turns to what they do once they are there: Chapter Four focuses on two key policy areas, school and welfare funding; Chapter Five, co-authored with Ray Block, examines the effect of black state legislators on political involvement by African Americans in the electorate; Chapter Six explores how electing blacks subsequently affects blacks' attitudes toward electoral reform. Each of these chapters is relatively self-contained, developing and testing theoretical claims more or less specific to the particular topic of that chapter. The chapters are distinct, but collectively coherent: the book does not feel disjointed, but the self-containment of individual chapters will be valuable to instructors seeking to assign part(s) of the book relevant to their lessons. The chapter on black caucus formation, for example, could stand on its own very capably in a reading assignment about collective action and group formation; the chapter on the consequences of black descriptive representation on policy outcomes would fit nicely in a lesson on either education or social welfare spending.

The methodological approach is consistent throughout the book, matching relevant outcomes to state-level predictors, most notably the share of state legislative seats held by African Americans. Analyses rely on cross-state variation in institutions and demographics to generate estimates. Both linear and generalized linear models are used, depending on the nature of a given outcome variable, but Clark carefully explains each model and visualizes key results. Indeed, one of the book's greatest strengths is its presentation of empirical results: full regression tables are presented for the interested, but plots of predicted values are used to great effect, creating consistency across models in interpretability. Moreover, Clark is careful to contextualize the results, offering concrete examples of the meanings of different coefficients in light of the model being estimated. Throughout the book, Clark carefully explains the functions of various control variables—and generally includes very reasonable, thorough collections of them. That said, the book's focus on collective representation and comprehensive focus force Clark to rely on cross-state variation in order to draw inferences, making causal inferences possible only under strong, difficult-to-validate assumptions. Moreover, many of the causal mechanisms that Clark suggests are, in principle, testable. The book therefore provides a valuable jumping-off point for future research, which could—and should—further explore the book's topics using narrower cases to strengthen causal inferences.

The stand-out chapter of the book is that on the creation of state legislative black caucuses. This chapter “provides the first systematic analysis of when black caucuses are created” (p. 50), offering a unique opportunity

for systematic quantitative analysis of group formation. The discussion of the incentives that black state legislators face in deciding whether or not to create a caucus—including information dissemination, coordination, and psychological benefits—are clearly discussed, the data and analysis are appropriate, and the conclusion, that “once around 17 blacks serve in the legislature, black caucuses are more likely to exist than not” (p. 65), important. While the chapter shares its structure with the others in the book, this chapter, standing alone, is an important contribution to political scientists’ understanding of collective action in general and black caucuses specifically.

Ultimately Clark’s book represents a valuable contribution to a number of sub-fields in the study of American politics. For scholars of race and ethnic politics, *Gaining Voice* articulates clear theory and presents evidence for the importance of black representation in state legislatures for important policy concerns, and for how black descriptive representation can shape the political activity and beliefs of African Americans in the electorate. These latter results, in particular, offer a clear basis for prioritizing research on and advocacy for descriptive representation in state legislatures. For scholars of state politics, *Gaining Voice* serves as a valuable reminder of the centrality of race in American politics and the importance of state-level institutional variation for shaping the opportunities that less-advantaged groups have both for gaining political power and effecting meaningful policy change.

***Latinos and the Liberal City: Politics and Protest in San Francisco.* By Eduardo Contreras. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. 328 pp. \$45.00 (cloth)**

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Eduardo Contreras’ *Latinos and the Liberal City* is a welcome new addition to the history of Latino politics in California. In this timely study, we learn that not only were Latinos politically active early in the twentieth century,