


rely solely on descriptive representation or district demographics. Finally, McNally offers several exciting new avenues for future research. McNally argues future research should consider the relationship between legislative reputations and members' legislative effectiveness, campaign promises, and progressive ambition. Additionally, I think future research could consider whether McNally's conceptualization of legislative reputations can be expanded to consider the representation of other groups and whether there are factors other than the advocacy window that cause members to work toward specific reputations. McNally only considers actions taken by members once elected to office in constructing their legislative reputation scores, but future research could consider how members' experiences prior to being elected influence the reputations they pursue. Overall, I believe *Representing the Disadvantaged* should be of interest to scholars of American politics broadly and will likely become required readings for classes on Congress and representation.

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Prisms of the People: Power and Organizing in Twenty-First-Century America

By Hahrie Han, Elizabeth McKenna and Michelle Oyakawa. Chicago Studies in American Politics Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021. 216 pp., \$27.50 Paperback

Jennifer Oser 

Department of Politics and Government, Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva, Israel

How many of us began our paths as social scientists motivated by strong curiosity to better understand the social and political world around us and also to contribute to improving upon it in some modest way? Particularly for scholars of race and politics, and comparative politics more broadly, our scholarship often strives to be genuinely informed by contemporary politics and also to potentially have a positive impact on social and political reality.

Prisms of the People achieves this rare feat by combining deeply researched findings with actionable insights for power-building organizations. Inspired by the observation that the link between democratic participation and power seems broken in contemporary America, the book focuses on constituencies that have traditionally been structurally disadvantaged by economic inequality and racism. *Prisms'* investigation of movement strategies used by multiracial organizations therefore complements recent innovative research on the specific act of protest as a tool for communities that have traditionally been marginalized along racial and class lines (Gause 2022; Gillion 2020; Wasow 2020).

The book is motivated by the main question of how contemporary movement organizations in America successfully build political power. To investigate this question, the authors identify six movement organizations (four core cases and two extension cases) that have received widespread recognition for successfully transforming their resources into meaningful political influence and differ from each other in important ways (e.g., geographic region, political issues, political targets; see Table 2.1, pp. 41–42 for case summaries). The book chapters are structured so that the case selection and methods are informative for both scholars and practitioners in chapters two and three and are accompanied by expertly crafted methods-focused appendices that explain how they integrated multiple data sources, including interviews, surveys, ethnographic observations, and internal organizational databases. Chapters four and five then outline the study's empirically informed insights regarding the core characteristics identified as central to the organizations' status as successful outliers. The closing chapter summarizes insights to inform actionable next steps for both researchers and practitioners who aim to build and rebuild contemporary civic capacities.

The “prisms” metaphor encapsulates the book's main argument that organizations seeking to build political influence through collective action can make meaningful organizational design choices that transform and enhance their political power—just as the internal design of a prism transforms the quality of light. This metaphor guides a four-part argument that details successful movement organizations' design choices: first, that constituency-based organizations work toward political outcomes that are both dynamic and fragile; second, in response to this dynamism and fragility, strategic leaders cultivate various tools to respond to contingencies; third, that organizations' design choices can be expanded by building a base that is independent, committed, and flexible; and fourth, that these design choices prepare constituencies to handle uncertain negotiations for power.

While this four-part argument might seem intuitive at first glance, the authors clarify in various sections of the book that other early expectations were not supported by their research, including activists' expectations that the central challenge is mobilizing people to act; scholars' expectations that context matters more than any organization; an expectation shared by scholars and practitioners of the definitive importance of scale and resources; and the authors' expectations of common patterns in the types of strategic plans deployed by successful organizations.

A central contribution of the book is the innovative conceptualization and measurement of the concept of “power” (Chapter 3). In contrast to a dominant approach in political science and sociology of conceptualizing and operationalizing power shifts through measurable cross-sectional policy wins or outcomes, *Prisms* defines power as an interactional relationship between key actors that requires creative measurement approaches. This definition then motivates three strategies used to measure power across the case studies, namely (1) network surveys, (2) assessments of legislative data, and (3) text-as-data analyses (highlights include a brokerage network map, p. 86; an immigration bill timeline, p. 91; and twitter data, p. 96).

Importantly, along with a research design that focuses on closely analyzing how outlying successful cases build interactional power, a unique voice animates the narrative with a muscular optimism that is keenly mindful of the obstacles faced by the focal organizations. In an observation that brought to my mind the summary

tagline that people are “nasty, brutish, and poorly behaved,” the authors cite the most sophisticated social science research available to vividly describe these obstacles: “Copious well-executed and important research has taught us that humans are racist, petty, short-sighted, self-segregating beings who are impervious to change and more likely to build institutions that instantiate the privilege of certain groups instead of equalizing it.” Then, facing these social science realities head on, the authors build their case: “Our argument does not refute these realities but instead posits that there is value in bringing the tools of social science to understand the alternatives – and that the democratic project desperately needs such insight” (Han, McKenna, and Oyakawa 2021, p. 16).

The limitations of the book are clearly noted by the authors and also point to promising lines of future research. The authors face the familiar challenge of assessing causality in the organizations’ contribution to political outcomes. Yet the authors clarify their focus on assessing organizational practices that indicate *how* organizations can alter power deficits, instead of the binary question of *whether* organizations played decisive roles in political battles. Additional acknowledged limitations include an empirically limited focus on U.S. state-level organizations on the left of the ideological spectrum, as well as a focus on offline activity in an era in which online political participation is expanding rapidly. Finally, the book makes a strong argument for the importance of investing in people as agents in order to rebuild the link between participation and power, without yet pinpointing organizational practices that successfully strengthen their constituencies’ voices. By motivating future research that will investigate these topics and more, *Prisms*’ unique voice of a muscular optimism provides guideposts for advancing the book’s concluding vision of deepening our understanding of “how participation translates into political influence” (p. 166).

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