BOOK REVIEWS

Derek Bok. *The Trouble with Government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001. 512 pp. $36.00 (cloth); $19.95 (paper).


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An old joke says that in a Harvard education one learns less and less about more and more until one knows nothing about everything, but former Harvard University President Derek Bok belies the quip in his ambitious analysis of *The Trouble with Government*. Bok identifies large-scale patterns in government policy making that he argues are at the heart of our general, and apparently well-founded, distaste for government performance. He then examines a wide variety of potential remedies. Benjamin Page and James Simmons’s volume *What Government Can Do* considers government performance from the opposite perspective, assessing the effectiveness of policies and programs that address poverty and inequality and concluding that many of them could be usefully expanded to address America’s growing economic inequities. Both books reach a similar conclusion: reducing social and political inequality is critical to improving our national performance.

Bok’s analysis begins with a discussion of Americans’ dissatisfaction with government as measured in public opinion polls and a comparison of the progress of the United States and other “advanced industrial democracies” toward widely shared economic and social goals. He argues that given the U.S. government’s performance relative to that of comparable nations, Americans have good cause to be dissatisfied. Bok’s analysis cannot demonstrate that Americans are cynical about government because of its relatively poor performance. It seems doubtful that Americans asked to evaluate government performance consider whether the Swedes are better off. However, the heart of his argument is that Americans’ sense that government could do better is realistic.

In the chapters that follow, Bok identifies what he argues are the key aspects of government policy making that cause it to underperform and to annoy people. First, legislation is often structurally unsound. Objectives contradict,
deadlines are unrealistic, and funding is inadequate. Second, regulations promulgated nationally often fail to reflect local conditions but are enforced in a command-and-control style that emphasizes the letter of the regulation rather than its spirit. They are often resisted by large businesses, who sue, and ignored by small- and medium-sized businesses, who can be unaware of them, and are unlikely targets of enforcement. Third, poor and “working” people lack a variety of basic social benefits common elsewhere in the world. In the course of his analysis, Bok introduces the reader to a fascinating variety of experimental techniques for improving the creation and performance of various kinds of policies and the available evidence about how well these experiments are working. His story is a hopeful one of government trying to get better and having some success at it, but he argues that important problems remain.

Here again, Bok’s analysis seems on target with regard to government performance but inconclusive with regard to public opinion. While his assessment of why U.S. policies have failed to achieve the results seen in other advanced democracies is persuasive, it is unclear that these are the reasons Americans profess to be fed up with government. If government policies worked better, would Americans like government better? Perhaps, for surely outcomes matter in the evaluation of government, but the quality of information people receive about the performance of their government seems likely to matter as well. In the current American media environment, scandal-plagued and game-framed, would improvements in policy actually register? Could our everyday experiences of the environment, the poor, worker safety, and other issues provide us with enough information to conclude that government policy had improved, even if the media are filled with bad news?

These questions about public opinion matter to Bok’s analysis because he ultimately argues that the heart of the trouble with government is its political culture. The unique institutional structure of the United States refuses to concentrate power in any one branch of government. As Bok notes, this results in fragmented, irrational policy but is unlikely to be changed in part because it was created by people who distrusted political authority in the first place. Regulations are promulgated and enforced in an adversarial atmosphere and written to be lawyer-proof rather than useful. The perceived role of money in politics (regardless of its actual role—about which Bok is somewhat ambivalent) feeds the public’s distrust of government. However, no matter what reforms are instituted, Bok argues, money will never cease to be a factor.

The final chapters analyze the public’s role in policy making and explore alternative ways to enhance citizenship. While his discussion offers an excellent overview of current experimental programs and their evaluation, it is limited in important ways. First, without clear analysis of what produces this cycle of distrust, it is impossible to predict what might break it. Bok himself would probably argue that no remedy will work in isolation. Campaign finance reform is a must, he argues, and other changes need to work in tandem with encouraging citizen participation. To the extent that these troubles are tangled,
however, we are faced with a chicken-and-egg problem: without more enlightened citizen participation, the situation is unlikely to improve. Unless citizens believe that government can be made to work better, they are unlikely to participate.

A second weakness dogs the book as a whole but is understandable, given the sheer complexity of the task Bok assigns himself. To his credit, Bok considers the political viability of the reforms he describes, but his analysis may trouble readers. In some cases, a degree of political opposition causes him to dismiss reforms as potentially useful but politically unlikely. In other cases, opposition is not considered fatal to a proposed reform. While it is unreasonable to demand some kind of quantitative measure of political viability, an explanation of his standards for this kind of evaluation would be helpful. In the case of enhancing citizenship, Bok acknowledges that elected leaders are reluctant to promote political equality for its own sake, especially if it means engaging previously apathetic and therefore unpredictable citizens. However, he does not further evaluate the political viability of the proposal. Recent evidence shows this to be more than just a hypothetical concern: In the Florida voting controversy during the 2000 election, neither party advocated a complete recount of all votes. Each party argued in court for a selective recount it saw as enhancing its own likelihood of winning. Issues of political equality never entered the equation. This raises a fascinating and critical question: How might elected leaders negotiate the trade-off between the viability of the system that gives them power and their personal political fortunes?

If Bok sounds like a pessimist with his title, Page and Simmons appear optimistic with theirs. After demonstrating that the degree of economic inequality in the United States is large and rising, they set out to demonstrate that the welfare state is not nearly as ineffective and anticompetitive as critics have made it out to be. They make three key arguments. First, government can create and implement antipoverty programs that are effective. Second, those programs need not create disincentives for individuals to be productive either because they receive benefits or because they pay for them. Third, those programs need not place the United States at a competitive disadvantage in the global marketplace. Indeed, some programs, such as education and job training, have the potential to improve global competitiveness and cost taxpayers less in the long run. With few exceptions, such as the possible further development of charter school programs, most of their recommendations involve fully funding or expanding the client base of existing programs that function well. Page and Simmons do not specify exactly how far government should go in promoting economic equality; rather, their point is that government could do far more than it does without harming economic growth or productivity. At some point, such programs could have anticompetitive effects, but Page and Simmons argue that we are far from that point.

A great strength of Page and Simmons’s work is their clear explication of
some truly complex issues. They present a brief but illuminating tour of critical areas of U.S. domestic policy, including Social Security, Medicare, education, and the daunting complexities of the U.S. tax code—federal, state, and local. While the authors themselves regularly reassure readers that they may skip material they find dull or confusing, in fact the prose is remarkably accessible. In addition to explaining how the policies themselves work, the authors sketch the political and public opinion climate that surrounds them.

Page and Simmons’s conclusions reassure liberals defending the welfare state against arguments that it is ineffective at best and likely to fail altogether in the face of global competition. Indeed, many conservatives who rejected the welfare state for economic reasons may wish to reconsider their position in light of the analysis presented. While some redistributive programs may be doomed to fail (like the corporate income tax), others seem laughably simple (would those who earn more than $75,000 per year even notice if they had to pay Social Security tax on all of their income?). Further, the authors find little evidence that the dole is a disincentive to work and plenty of ways to make sure that remains the case.

Yet, if the question involves not just feasibility but the value judgments behind the welfare state, Page and Simmons have more trouble making their case. They argue that equality of opportunity is impossible to distinguish analytically from equality of result. There is no “starting point” for the competition implied by the concept of equal opportunity, so allowances for misfortune must continue throughout people’s lives. The alternative value of personal responsibility plays a relatively minor role in their argument. But is there no point at which we can hold people responsible for their own poor judgment? The heart of the paradox their argument ultimately reaches in light of these values can be seen in the instance of parents and children. Children cannot be held responsible for the circumstances to which they were born, but surely their parents can.

Redistributive policies also involve the complex value of fairness, which is especially evident in the compensatory aspects of some of Page and Simmons’s proposed reforms. At the outset, they note that a strong contributor to inequality is the tendency for wealth to pass down through families. Later, they argue that disadvantaged children will require not just equal educational opportunities but better education than their middle-class counterparts to reduce disparities of wealth. What parent would agree to spend more to educate other children than they spend to educate their own? A similar argument could be made with regard to progressive taxation. The wealthy receive more services than the poor under the current system, and Page and Simmons’s explanation of declining utility curves (another dollar has a greater impact on the less affluent) makes sense. However, the wealthy in a compensatory system may ask why they pay more and get less.

Page and Simmons, like Bok, observe that a key element to making their proposed reforms political reality is enhancing the political involvement of
the poor and working-class people who would benefit most from the programs. Like Bok, they run into a chicken-and-egg problem. Political equality is a necessary condition for economic equality, which is a necessary condition for political equality.

For public opinion scholars, these valuable books imply important questions about American political culture. We know that Americans are cynical about government, but we do not know as much as we need to about why. What makes them believe, for example, that government cannot be trusted to do the right thing? Is it the role of moneyed interests, or general incompetence, or both (and how much of each)? And how do Americans balance between competing values? The language of individualism creates unresolvable paradoxes in our political culture, so how do Americans balance between compassion, fairness, and personal responsibility? Do we resist the welfare state for economic or value-based reasons? If economic feasibility is the public’s main concern, how can we better inform them? If it is a question of values, no amount of information is likely to move public opinion. Until we understand how the deep structure of American political culture is connected to current political dilemmas, we will remain uncertain how to fix what is broken in our democratic system or how to promote the political equality it both promises and requires.


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In the foreword to Framing Public Life, the noted sociologist William A. Gamson—perhaps the most-often cited figure in the production, power, and interpretation of frames, a concept brought to the fore by Erving Goffman (1974)—notes that this edited volume provides a collage rather than a portrait of the extant body of knowledge on media framing. His metaphor is indeed a precise description of the chapters contained herein—that is, a common theme exists, but the shapes, colors, and textures incorporated vary considerably.

The volume evolved from a 1997 conference on framing held at the University of South Carolina, and many of the chapters are extensions of work presented there, as the preface notes. Grant organized the conference, with Reese and Gandy providing keynote and postnote addresses, respectively.

The book comprises three parts, featuring groupings of papers presented
at the conference. The first part is on theoretical and measurement approaches, the second deals with “observations from the field,” and the third focuses on the “new media landscape.” The chapters in each part provide disparate case studies and, in turn, frames of reference (if you will) for understanding framing. Summaries are not offered, nor are explanations for the grouping of the various chapters into these parts. Rather, the organization seems to rely on the topic of the issue being framed or the medium in which frames are studied. This is the structure of *Framing Public Life*, and perhaps it is in part the reason that the volume presents as many conundrums as connections.

In the prologue, Reese presents his working definition of framing, which reflects primarily the content—verbal, visual, and symbolic—of frames. It is a comprehensive, parsimonious summary of what constitutes a frame. Particularly interesting is Reese’s summary that “a frame is a moment in a chain of signification” (p. 15); this nicely captures the multidimensionality of framing, as it develops from sender to journalist (medium) to text to receiver. To fully understand where those frames originate or emerge, though, is another story, and one that serves as a site of contention throughout the book.

Like their colleagues in communication, political science, and sociology over the past decade and more, the scholars writing for this volume continue to grapple with the fundamental definition of framing. A continuing disconnect is apparent between scholars who conceptualize framing as a process and those who consider it manifest as content. It is patently unfair, however, to criticize the authors and editors for reiterating this disconnect because their work merely reflects the state of the discipline. Nonetheless, organization by frame conceptualization might make for a slightly more coherent volume.

Framing as process acknowledges but seldom questions an inherent societal power structure. For example, framing as process “involves political actors making sense of an issue and participating in public deliberation” (Pan and Kosicki 1993, p. 59) or “an ongoing process in which journalists and contending stakeholders interact” (Miller and Riechert, p. 120). Pan and Kosicki’s chapter provides an excellent extension of their often-cited 1993 article, which explicitly states the role of political actors in structuring discourse via frames. Miller and Riechert’s chapter attempts to build a bridge between these policy actors and journalists as sites of frame construction with their notion of a “spiral of opportunity,” in which they argue that policy actors seize the chance to shape journalists’ and, subsequently, the public’s view of an issue. A conceptually related chapter by McCombs and Ghanem notes the similarities between agenda setting and framing in that certain groups exert political or societal power to make certain issues salient, though they argue that frames represent “macroattributes” containing both cognitive and affective elements as opposed to the cognitive emphasis in agenda setting.

Other chapters provide a critical approach to the study of framing as a whole by calling for an examination of why and how the media select frames. Indeed, Maher’s chapter, while further discussing the convergence and the
difference between framing and agenda setting, compellingly argues that the need for both paradigms lies in examining the “why” rather than the result. In considering why some frames are favored over others, Durham places the construction of frames for the most part on the media’s shoulders, in that they rely on tried-and-true social narratives rather than attempting to include frames (or voices) that lie outside traditional ideological boundaries. Fuglsang’s chapter also maintains it is journalists who rely on “ritual, myth, and metaphor” (p. 185) to develop frames. Nelson and Willey’s chapter is a study of values as an integral component of framing race and crime that implicitly reinforces the argument that frames are vestiges of dominant ideology.

A strong argument and exemplar of how best to combine the notion of the inherent power structure with the critical arguments comes from Hertog and McLeod, who approach frames as “cultural structures with central ideas . . . that carry extensive meaning to culturally articulate individuals” (p. 141). Apparently, the Hertog and McLeod chapter was placed in the “observations” section because it does offer a case study; I would argue that it should be near the forefront of the theoretical section.

In striking contrast, some, such as Robert Entman (1993), who emphasizes the presence of key words and phrases while recognizing that those are largely polysemic, analyze framing primarily as content of discourse. Rather than focusing on the policy actors or other sources who affect media framing (although recognizing their existence), the issue is what information is privileged in presentation to audiences. The content notion is evident in several chapters. Tankard’s chapter is a primer on analyzing frames via content analysis, though he notes that this is difficult to do without a clear, theoretical definition of framing. Many of the case studies focus on examining manifest content rather than questioning the dynamics of how that content came to be. For example, Dickerson’s study of political correctness incorporates textual analysis as well as story placement, headlines, and length. Bantimaroudis and Ban’s chapter incorporates analysis of U.S. and British newspapers in framing the 1991 Somalian crisis but, again, relies primarily on content. Paterson’s chapter on the use of news feeds as frames in global television, however, suggests that international power discrepancies will require that comparison of international coverage must include frame sources.

The case-study section is particularly rich in topics and approaches, however, and its studies would serve as a fruitful point of departure for many theoretical and methodological discussions. Messaris and Abraham’s analysis of the role of images in building frames is an innovative step into unexplored framing territory, at least in the field of traditional framing studies, though cultural studies work has long incorporated visual imagery. The extent to which the news media can be self-reflexive, or how media evaluate their own framing, is the subject of a fascinating qualitative analysis in Zoch’s chapter. In an unusual turn, Wiggins’s chapter removes the power to frame from either political actors or journalists and cedes it to a newspaper audience, as readers
“frame” via letters to the editor. Shah, Domke, and Wackman’s chapter employs an experiment in which frames are manipulated in terms of their cultural-moral values to determine whether this alteration affects readers’ political reasoning, and, fortunately for the framing paradigm, they find that frames do affect audiences.

A final section considers the impact on framing mechanisms of recent technology, such as the effect of online groups and how to apply framing concepts to the new media landscape, including hypermedia news and global television. Fredin’s chapter creates frame databases (FDBs) that would allow individuals to select frames in hypermedia news and provides an intriguing example of how such FDBs might affect readers’ understanding. Similarly, the chapter by Engel on interactivity and its influence offers a plethora of new framing variables with which to contend. Both Pavlik’s and Mabry’s chapters suggest that new technology may provide the means of challenging the traditional policy actors and power structures influencing news framing. The greatest contribution of this section to our understanding of framing, however, is perhaps that new media will face the same basic challenges as traditional media and intersocial communication do in privileging, disseminating, and shaping the interpretation of frames.

Finally, Gandy’s epilogue calls for the need to revisit the sources of frames and the force of societal power that inherently defines and prioritizes them—a recognition that is considered in several chapters but omitted in most. Perhaps one reason that Gandy’s essay is an appropriate end for the volume is that the authors predominantly view framing from a U.S., largely empirical perspective. The inclusion of chapters by British cultural scholars such as Cynthia Carter and Stuart Allan (see Carter, Branston, and Allan 1998), among others, would result in a more satisfying amalgam of discussion of the mechanisms underlying and linking power, news, and discourse.

In all, though, *Framing Public Life* is a much-needed compilation of the current state of communication’s thought regarding framing. The volume makes clear that although framing research is not quite the fractured paradigm that Entman alleged in 1993, much work still lies ahead in determining exactly what constitutes frames, who or what has the power to influence them, and how diverse audiences interpret them. The book would be an excellent addition to graduate theory-building courses, and it should be on the bookshelf of anyone who considers him- or herself a framing scholar.

References


Political, public administration, business, and scientific scandals in several democracies have more than doubled over the past 3 decades. Political scandals in particular have taken a great variety of forms: illegal donations to parties and politicians, surveillance of competitors and collaborators, lies to the public and the parliament, manipulation of election outcomes, abuse of office for private purposes, and sexual misconduct. This colorful spectrum, however, is not the topic of the book by Larry J. Sabato, Mark Stencel, and S. Robert Lichter. Rather, using well-documented case studies involving more than two dozen politicians, the authors analyze the editorial decisions behind major news stories. As the authors indicate (p. 3), their evaluative analyses follow 12 guidelines first published by Sabato in 1991, which precede the book’s five chapters dealing with various aspects of scandals, among them the “motives” of newspeople and the role of “unindicted coconspirators” in politics. Of special importance is the emergence of the Internet and of alternative newspapers, which not only threaten the once unique position of traditional mass media as gatekeepers but also increase the competition between them and alter the decision rules within their newsrooms. As a result, the authors identify a downward spiral of editorial standards yet characterize it as more or less inevitable. They accept justifications put forward by editors to cover sexual misconduct if an incident that dates back 20 years can be linked to a politician’s statement in present time or if a local incident has relevance for national politics or raises the interest of readers of national publications.

Therefore, the main topic of the book is captured by its title. Readers might not complain about its limited content. But because of its limited focus, the authors miss much of the problem: they do not ask why politicians’ sexual misconduct causes scandals in the first place, how coverage must be constructed to transform grievances into scandals, and what the latent functions of professional norms are in scandals. According to the authors, sex scandals are not primarily constructed by those with vested interests inside and outside the media who try to frame private misconduct in order for it to fit successful formulas of scandal. Rather, a scandal seems to be driven by the pure facts
themselves: if these facts exist, they have to be published, and thus scandal will be inevitable.

A comparative view of the coverage of sexual (mis)conduct in the United States and other countries offers a more differentiated picture. For example, during the German general election of 1998, no major German news media outlet played up the fact that Gerhard Schroeder, after separating from his third wife, was having an affair with a female journalist while still being married. Despite general disapproval of adultery, news about Schroeder’s broken marriages and the background of the new affair most likely would not have caused a scandal, even if the evidence had been overwhelming. And if a serious newspaper had tried to scandalize this affair, it would have risked its own reputation more than the reputation of candidate Schroeder because it would have been regarded as a violation of professional journalistic norms.

Grievances are a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of scandals. Yet why is it that in some societies or time periods, some grievances become scandals and others do not? Why is it, for example, that in the United States sex is more likely to become the topic of scandal, whereas in Germany pollution is more likely to evolve into scandal? A possible answer may be that the two underlying issues—protection of dependent women and protection of endangered species, respectively—have made a strong career in the media system of one country but not the other. The visibility of each issue may stem from different reasons, but the consequences are similar: because of the extensive news play that they receive, the issues are of major concern to the respective country’s general public, although the underlying problems were much more critical 3 decades ago than they are today. In each country, the mass media have contributed to establish and prime norms whose violation they now successfully attack.

The authors also seem to assume that the mere publication of facts per se causes the indignation that characteristically accompanies scandals. This assumption, however, is far from reality. Facts are inevitable conditions of scandals, but one also needs to consider how these facts are framed and the extent to which these facts have been covered by the media. A content analysis of the coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal provides evidence to support this argument; the book even touches on it at various places but does not elaborate on it. Fascinated by the manifest function of facts—to find the truth—the authors disregard their latent function—to establish a frame that transforms a grievance into a scandal. Therefore, they neglect a basic question: To what degree are facts misused to establish a frame that generates distaste, indignation, and aversion? Did U.S. viewers and readers really need lively details about specific goings-on in the Oval Office to recognize that their president had an affair? That would be a case hard to make.

Finally, the authors seem to assume that the mass media play only a passive role in scandals. Satisfying the needs of the audience by searching for truth, news media outlets seem to become victims of competition, which regretfully
forces them to lower their standards. This may be the case in the United States but not in Europe. But would Americans also accept the pharmaceutical industry lowering their quality criteria because of competition? Competition might explain much, but it does not justify everything. At least in Europe, some of the most respected and powerful media outlets play an active, autonomous role. At times, European media attempt to create scandals or play them up for political, economic, or selfish motives. Moreover, they certainly would use the same arguments as their U.S. counterparts to justify their behavior. But who takes these arguments at face value?

Though it speaks little to a theory of scandals or the relationship between media and politics, *Peepshow* is an excellent textbook for journalism students in the United States and is full of examples, careful reflections, and good practical advice.


**Joel S. Fetzer.** *Public Attitudes toward Immigration in the United States, France, and Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 272 pp. $55.00 (cloth); $20.00 (paper).

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As political scientist John David Skrentny rightly insists, polemical work too often dominates academic as well as public discussion of race and immigration. Skrentny’s collection of careful empirical studies on affirmative action policies, practices, and attitudes, as well as Joel Fetzer’s fact-filled cross-national study on public opinion about immigration, are welcome antidotes to this tendency. Both of these books often surprise, even astonish, and ultimately ought to lead Americans of every political stripe to reconsider cherished assumptions about these charged issues.

For the uninitiated as well as experts, *Color Lines* offers a comprehensive overview of affirmative action’s myriad facets and its often unintended consequences. The introduction by Skrentny provides additional historical background, building on his earlier, pathbreaking *The Ironies of Affirmative Action* (University of Chicago Press, 1996). For a collected volume, *Color Lines* hangs together remarkably well, with virtually every chapter offering detailed cross-references to others in the book.

As the title implies, the problems of affirmative action now extend far beyond black-white tensions and the well-worn charge of “reverse discrimi-
nation” against whites. The question for many of the authors is whether affirmative action, both “soft” (outreach) and “hard” (preferences), continues to even help American-born blacks, the original and by general consensus most deserving of affirmative action groups. Hugh Davis Graham sees no logical or just reason for including Latino, Asian, and other immigrants in affirmative action, and he argues that these groups’ inclusion is one of the chief factors driving current public opposition to affirmative action. George La Noue and John Sullivan extend the critique of which groups should rightly be included in affirmative action to the often “over-inclusive” categories themselves. They show the tremendous economic differences among national-origin groups included inside such omnibus classifications as Hispanic and Asian-American. Koreans, for instance, have the highest business formation rate of all white and nonwhite ethnic groups, while Laotians have the lowest.

A major strength of the book is its unblinking analysis of how affirmative action and now “diversity” policies and practices were actually put in place. Graham convincingly shows how affirmative action spread to include nonwhite immigrants, not because they all suffered the same discrimination as blacks, but because of the “inner logic of American interest-group liberalism,” which works to the “benefit [of] organized, advantaged clienteles” (p. 59). Black civil rights groups joined forces with a new generation of Hispanic, Asian, women’s, and disability organizations under the powerful umbrella lobbying organization of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and for a time, as legislative and judicial victories piled one on another, it seemed to be a win-win situation for everyone involved. But evidence is mounting that the economic interests of low-income, native-born blacks are often at odds with many immigrant groups (including foreign-born blacks from Africa or the Caribbean), as confirmed in chapters by Jennifer Lee on retail shops in Philadelphia and New York and by Michael Lichter and Roger Waldinger on a broad range of employers in Los Angeles.

The interests involved in affirmative action extend well beyond ethnic groups to include the “organizational constituencies” that administer the programs. Even after the Reagan administration signaled that it would significantly weaken enforcement during the 1980s, most major corporations continued to keep some form of affirmative action in place. Why? In a real gem of historical institutional research, Erin Kelly and Frank Dobbin highlight the role played by affirmative action “compliance” staffers and consultants. The “diversity” rhetoric that now dominates U.S. political culture thus owes its origins in part to these professionals’ (astonishingly successful) struggle to save their jobs, by redefining their raison d’être in economic efficiency rather than moral or legal terms.

*Color Lines* also performs an important public service by giving voice to the broad range of ordinary Americans who experience and interpret the everyday reality of this “new ethnic order.” In their examination of business owners’ and managers’ attitudes about “managing diversity,” Lichter and Wal-
dinger observe that “diversity was not always understood as intended[:] that a number of respondents used the dubious phrase ‘people of diversity’ or referred to ‘diverse people’ as a category of human beings reveals that diverse has become both a buzzword and a euphemism for nonwhite” (p. 151). Whatever the terminology, many of these managers admitted facing difficulties managing diversity and keeping the peace among a bewildering array of ethnic groups: Filipinos against blacks, Belizeans against Bangladeshis, Mexicans against Puerto Ricans and/or Central Americans, even Mexicans from Chihuahua against Mexicans from Guerrero (pp. 155–59). Workers and customers exhibited a rather constant tendency to prefer interacting with members of their own, usually narrowly defined, social group and to avoid one or more outsider groups (what the authors term “own preferences” and “other aversions”). Moreover, workers, often with the support of their employers, actively created “ethnic niches” that systematically excluded other ethnic groups, particularly blacks. This is not only socially troubling, but as legal scholar Deborah Malamud notes in the book’s closing chapter, probably illegal.

Working with a 1992 Los Angeles County survey that included substantial numbers of black, Asian, and Latino adults as well as whites, Lawrence Bobo’s contribution to the volume goes beyond the usual analysis of “policy preferences” to focus on “perceptions and beliefs about the possible benefits and costs of affirmative action” (p. 192). Controlling for other social and attitudinal variables, Bobo shows that “race matters” more than anything else in determining the level of opposition to affirmative action, which he interprets as support for a “group position or perceived threat” theory of race prejudice as opposed to competing theories of symbolic racism (“fundamentally irrational antiblack feelings”) and principled objections (not racial feelings per se, but general convictions about the “American Creed”). Whites were the most negative toward affirmative action, followed by Asians, Latinos, and African Americans (although white opinion “is neither monolithic nor uniformly negative” and varied according to the kinds of benefits described). After asserting that racial group attitudes about affirmative action vary according to the objective level of discrimination each group has faced as well as the real benefits it stands to gain from affirmative action, Bobo concludes that the driving force is not ideas, either irrational or principled, but the eminently practical and legitimate question of “who gets what” (p. 208).

A focus group study that likewise includes Latinos and Asians as well as blacks and whites by Carol Swain, Kyra Greene, and Christine Min Wotipka nicely complements Bobo’s survey data. Given the methodological limitations of focus groups, their attitudinal data should be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, surveys ought to follow up on some of their more surprising findings: greater support for affirmative action by Asians than Latinos, the indifference expressed by many of the Latinos and Asians about their inclusion in affirmative action, and consistent support across the groups for class-based affirmative action. The focus groups also highlighted a great deal of confusion
over what is and is not included in affirmative action, including the belief of many respondents that affirmative action is primarily about quotas.

Despite the obvious research advance in adding Latinos and Asians to opinion research on affirmative action, there is a curious gap (which Skrentny admits in a footnote) between the devastating critique of arbitrary race categories in the first half of the book and the unreflective use of these categories by Bobo and Swain et al. Given dramatic intragroup differences, is it not likely that the findings could vary sharply, depending on which particular mix of Asians or Hispanics is included in a sample? Moreover, research reification of these groups contributes to political stalemate and makes it more difficult to dramatically rethink the scope and purpose of affirmative action.

Fortunately, the cross-national comparative chapters in *Color Lines*, as well as the work of Joel Fetzer, help us to see American race categories and policies as the social constructions they are, as only one of many ways of framing and solving problems associated with the labeling and differential treatment of people according to the biological fiction of “race.” Erik Bleich’s perceptive chapter on France emphasizes that nation-state’s explicit rejection not only of race-targeted programs but of race categories themselves. If such color-blind policies may encourage social solidarity, Bleich notes, they have also failed to effectively combat the hostile attitudes and discrimination faced by *beurs*, the second- and third-generation descendants of North African immigrants. From Stephen Teles’s account, Britain’s “positive action” policies seem a reasonable midpoint between France and the United States, especially the emphasis on helping disadvantaged groups meet universal standards rather than lowering the bar to facilitate some rough measure of ethnic parity in employment, education, and so forth. In both cases, whatever success these policies have enjoyed seems clearly linked to the maintenance of universally available social services to reduce economic disadvantage.

If *Color Lines* emphasizes the economic and organized political interests driving public opinion about affirmative action, Joel Fetzer argues that culture ultimately matters more for attitudes toward immigrants. Independent of his impressive statistical analyses, Fetzer will earn the gratitude of countless immigration researchers for his thorough collection of economic, demographic, and public opinion data for three major immigrant-receiving nations. *Public Attitudes* refines and tests three theories to account for public expressions of nativism as well as individual anti-immigrant attitudes: (1) cultural marginality, the notion that immigrant groups that are less similar to the dominant culture will be greeted with greater hostility by the receiving nation and conversely, on the individual level, that being an outsider oneself will lead to greater empathy toward other outsiders, including immigrants; (2) economic threat (both the threat of losing one’s job or of having to pay higher taxes for immigrant social services), either objective or perceived, hypothesized to decrease support for immigrants; and (3) (social) contact, the
hypothesis that close contact with immigrants will increase support while casual contact will decrease support.

In testing these three theories, Fetzer leaves no stone unturned but, unfortunately, usually for just a quick peek. The first half of the book moves breathlessly through overly schematic national histories of nativism and their economic and demographic corollaries, with the unfortunate result that subtle qualitative differences in the cases are given too short shrift. Fetzer makes the most of often limited available data, but at times perhaps too much. In all three cases, Fetzer argues that nativism is closely linked to cultural difference and economic threat but not to social contact. In a time-series analysis that tests only economic and contact theories, Fetzer finds a consistent, statistically significant correlation between percent change in real disposable income and at least one measure of antiforeigner sentiment in each national case.

But these over-time findings are not entirely convincing for a number of reasons. In his nonquantitative historical chapters, nativism is never clearly defined or operationalized. Such disparate phenomena as restrictionist government policies, spontaneous anti-immigrant riots, single incidents of immigrants being murdered, anti-immigrant press editorials, and formation of immigration restriction organizations all are given equal weight as indicators of nativism. Causal arguments are sometimes grounded in only anecdotal evidence. For example, to prove that U.S. immigration restrictionism was culturally driven during the mid-1990s, he cites just two conservative writers, ignoring Kitty Calavita’s and Herbert Gans’s more systematic data on the prevalence of antiwelfare discourses. Although synthesizing and summarizing such a welter of data is no mean task, Fetzer’s summary statements sometimes contradict his own evidence. For example, he claims that “immigrants whose backgrounds diverged mostly widely from inlanders’ cultural ‘norm’ almost always suffered the most severe hostility from the native-born during any given period” (pp. 141–42). Leaving aside that he never clearly operationalizes “cultural difference,” there are numerous instances in his histories when the most culturally or physically different immigrants were arguably not the most persecuted—for example, Asian immigrants in post-1965 America, and vice versa, instances in which culturally more similar immigrants are treated with greater disdain than others—for example, Polish immigrants to Germany, ranked in a 1994 poll as less desirable neighbors than Vietnamese, Turks, and Africans (p. 124).

At other times, Fetzer makes strong claims whose validity depends on rather flexible notions of appropriate time lags. He argues that economic crises explain French anti-immigration backlashes, citing anti-immigrant violence in 1973 and 1974, just as the French economy stalled. Yet between 1973 and 1982, even as unemployment rose from 2.7 percent to 8.1 percent, the Far Right made little headway in promoting its anti-immigrant views. Conjunctural political events (whose importance he acknowledges in the
German case), such as the reconfiguration of the French electoral landscape after the socialists came to power in 1981, were crucial factors to convert nascent French unrest over immigration into anything resembling widespread nativism. Indeed, once surveys started asking regular questions about the Front National (FN) in 1984, there is a strong, significant correlation between changes in real income and support for the FN. But as Fetzer notes elsewhere (p. 81), such findings may in fact be due to perceptions of the economy as elite (and media) discourse magnified and attached a particular significance to changing economic indicators.

Finally, there is the problem of using national aggregate measures of economic threat (unemployment) and contact (foreign-born percentages and immigration flows), when both variables can and do vary enormously from one region to another. Perhaps one solution would be to gather data just for those subnational regions where anti-immigrant backlashes have been the most common (e.g., California).

In contrast to the historical findings that highlight economic as well as cultural factors, Fetzer’s cross-sectional analysis most strongly supports the cultural marginality thesis—that more culturally marginal individuals are less likely to be anti-immigrant in their sentiments or political positions. For the U.S. case, the strongest correlations are with Latinos and university graduates, both of whose proimmigrant attitudes are probably not due to marginality (the author’s claim that university graduates somehow constitute a marginal class [p. 20] is highly dubious, except perhaps for the case of Ph.D.s!). Immigration advocates and opponents will both find ammunition in Fetzer’s findings that African Americans tend to have positive feelings about immigrants yet are also more likely to see immigrants as an economic threat. Overall, the cultural marginality argument is most convincing in relation to religious affiliation: for example, all other things equal, (minority) Catholics are proimmigrant in the United States, while (majority) Catholics are anti-immigrant in France. And conversely, (majority) Protestants are anti-immigrant in the United States, while (minority) Protestants are proimmigrant in France.

Despite the rich empirical virtues of both books, one wishes sometimes for more theoretical ambition. In Color Lines, Kelly and Dobbin do an excellent job in explicitly linking their findings to the institutional theories of Philip Selznick and John Meyer et al., but otherwise there are few attempts to speak to an audience beyond immigration and race scholars. Another notable omission, although perhaps not that curious given the vagaries of disciplinary boundaries, is the lack of any sustained attention to the news media despite the fact that virtually every author, at one point in his or her text, acknowledges (but never elaborates on) the role of the press.

If neither book could be accused of raw polemicism, constructive recommendations following from one’s analyses are always welcome, and Fetzer actually manages this task better. Skrentny clearly hopes to influence the public debate, yet his principled refusal (at least in this collection) to stake a clear
position makes the book more politically paralyzing than energizing. After reading chapter after chapter that demonstrate affirmative action’s increasing failure to help those most in need, one yearns at the end for at least tentative answers to the question: What is to be done? Fetzer, on the other hand, concludes his dense statistical analyses with straightforward recommendations. Based on his conclusion that “cultural marginality” is the primary factor shaping attitudes, he argues for educational campaigns about historical patterns of immigrant integration (to reassure nativists that differences will quickly fade anyway) and for efforts to help people recognize their own past or potential marginality. He also endorses political and discursive efforts to elide the distinction between natives and foreigners. Fair enough, with this major caveat, however: that indeed, if immigration is largely driven by global economic inequality, as Fetzer concedes in his introduction, then simply changing attitudes—finding ways to “reduce public hatred of immigrants”—can never be the whole solution.