



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act, 1965- 1990. by Chandler Davidson; Bernard Grofman

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According to Chappell, Albany, Georgia, differed from many sites of movement success because the white community remained united, and because the city's wily police chief, Laurie Pritchett, employed a non-brutal response to African American protestors. Without a crisis of law vs. disorder, which necessitated federal intervention for its resolution, movement leaders dependent upon publicity failed to achieve their goals.

Much is admirable in Chappell's work. His examination of the white moderates in each community (and in national political circles) is appropriately unsentimental. Certainly, his assessment of national Democratic leaders reveals a cravenness and callousness towards African Americans that would shock, were the story not so familiar to students of these issues. His research is thorough, and he has consulted many of the major collections on the matter.

But there are a few problems in this book. Given the spectrum of political commitments among movement leaders and followers, Chappell's characterization of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as "radical" and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 as "revolutionary" (pp. 189 and 208) seems bizarre and incomplete. Likewise, his dismissal of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee as given to "impossibilism" (p. 219) in its goals and campaigns reminds one of a (much) older generation of social movement researchers who chose to believe that all power rests in the hands of elites, rather than in those of the local people who test the limits of any political system and who redefine politics in the process.

Dickinson College

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Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act, 1965–1990. Edited by Chandler Davidson and Bernard Grofman. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, c. 1994. Pp. xii, 503. Paper, \$24.95, ISBN 0-691-02108-2; cloth, \$75.00, ISBN 0-691-03247-5.)

This volume seeks to offer the most comprehensive survey and analysis to date of the means by which the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has revolutionized black participation in southern electoral politics.

Eight of *Quiet Revolution's* thirteen chapters concern individual southern states—Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas—which have been subject in whole or part to Voting Rights Act coverage. All multi-authored, the state-by-state chapters are generally of commendable quality, with those on Alabama (by Peyton McCrary, *et al.*), North Carolina (by William R. Keech and Michael P. Sstrom), and South Carolina (by Orville V. Burton, *et al.*), standing out as the most impressive contributions. Only an embarrassingly brief (eleven pages of text) chapter on Mississippi treating only city council elections mars this portion of the book; a citation to lead author Frank R. Parker's comprehensive and prize-winning *Black Votes Count: Political Empowerment in Mississippi after 1965* (Chapel Hill and London, 1990), seeks to excuse why "We do not discuss the impact of the act on other governmental structures, such as congressional, state legislative, and county redistricting . . ." (p. 136). While thereby understandable, the brevity and incompleteness of the Mississippi analysis is especially glaring in light of the far stronger chapters that surround it.

One of the greatest strengths of the state chapters, especially with regard to the statistical tables that each offers, is the explicit success the co-editors have had in requiring their contributors to employ identical measures and calculations, thus allowing interested readers to make easy and dependable state-to-state comparisons.

The co-editors have been similarly well disciplined in mandating that their contributors focus exclusively on (1) black (and, in Texas, Hispanic) voter enfranchisement both before and after 1965; and (2) the structural conditions that have characterized the election of hundreds of new black elected officials across the South since 1965 and especially since the Voting Rights Act was dramatically strengthened in 1982.

These emphases in turn account for two of *Quiet Revolution's* most distinctive features, which readers of varying backgrounds may well evaluate differently. Social scientists likely will welcome Davidson and Grofman's insistence that their contributors limit their analyses to that electoral information most susceptible to precise measurement or specification (Davidson is a sociologist, Grofman a political scientist). Historians, however, may be disappointed at how the co-editors instructed their contributors to "resist speculation" about more richly textured but less objectively measurable changes, such as "how well minority officials have become incorporated into the political decision-making processes of the bodies to which they were elected, and what the social and economic policy consequences of increased minority representation have been" (p. 386). Davidson and Grofman concede at the outset that "some readers of this volume will charge us with not having addressed the question of whether the act has made a difference to ordinary southern blacks and Latinos" (p. 14), and, while such a charge might be unfair, it would, as the co-editors acknowledge, nevertheless be accurate.

The second and most substantively central feature of *Quiet Revolution* is the co-editors' concern with definitively depicting how it has been the dramatic south-wide replacement of multimember council and legislative districts with single-member seats rather than any evolution in white voters' electoral behavior, that has largely, if not exclusively, accounted for the remarkable increase in the number of southern black elected officials since the mid-1980s. Southern districts employed various mechanisms in an attempt to dilute minority voting strength including submerging particular populations in at-large or multimember districts, or gerrymandering district lines (p. 3). The 1982 strengthening of Section 2 prohibited any election practice that resulted in minority voters having "less opportunity than other members of the electorate . . . to elect representatives of their choice" (42 U. S. C. 1973), opening such contrived districts to court challenge.

Readers familiar with voting rights literature may well feel that Davidson, Grofman, and company have deployed the research equivalent of the 82nd Airborne in order to swat a gnat and prove the obvious, but the co-editors' and their contributors' footnotes document how their scholarly hackles have been raised by the published declarations of Voting Rights Act debunkers who claim that the 1982 provisions are unnecessary and/or iniquitous. Readers who are well up-to-date on southern voting rights statistics likely will be disappointed with *Quiet Revolution's* general reliance on data from 1989 and 1990 that is now five years old; particularly frustrating is the manner in

which Lisa Handley and Grofman's chapter, "The Impact of the Voting Rights Act on Minority Representation: Black Officeholding in Southern State Legislatures and Congressional Delegations" (p. 335) often appears to rely upon statistics from 1985 that are now a full decade out of date.

The final composition of *Quiet Revolution* unfortunately preceded both 1993's heavily publicized political tussle over the voting rights view of Clinton Justice Department nominee Lani Guinier and the Supreme Court's five-to-four ruling in the high-profile North Carolina congressional districting case of *Shaw v. Reno* (113 U. S. 2816), which presented fundamental and difficult questions that reappeared before the High Court in the 1995 Louisiana case of *United States v. Hays* (#94-558). Hence only in *Quiet Revolution's* second-to-last paragraph do the co-editors broach one of the questions that lies at the center of Guinier's scholarship ("Are single-member-district plans, as distinct, say, from limited voting or proportional representation schemes, necessarily the best remedy for at-large vote dilution?" [p. 387]). Only in a footnote do they speak to the issue that has divided the High Court: "We have sought to eschew discussion of the complicated normative issues involved in deciding what the conditions are under which race-conscious districting is permissible or required" (p. 447n60). Thus while *Quiet Revolution* is an exceptionally valuable work of social science scholarship, it does not directly and decisively address the voting rights controversies that remain "front burner" political issues even as celebrations mark the 1965 Act's thirtieth anniversary.

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Southern Baptist Politics: Authority and Power in the Restructuring of an American Denomination. By Arthur Emery Farnsley II. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, c. 1994. Pp. xvi, 151. \$29.95, ISBN 0-271-01001-0.)

Arthur Emery Farnsley II takes a hard look at the politics behind the 1980s fundamentalist takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to illuminate the changing nature of American denominations in general and those indigenous to the South in particular. Farnsley builds on the recent sociological and theological studies by other Baptist scholars, notably Paul Harrison (*Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition* [Princeton, 1959]) and Nancy Ammerman (*Baptist Battles* [New Brunswick, 1990]), "to explain the 'political' nature of this conflict by reference to both secular and ecclesiastical polity" (p. xi). While Farnsley provides a clear explanation of the complexities of Southern Baptist politics, this volume reveals little evidence of in-depth research in primary sources.

Farnsley concludes, after a brief look at the history of the denomination, that, from its inception in 1845, the SBC had been united in name only. Southern Baptists were repeatedly hampered in organizing this largest of Protestant denominations because of their dual commitment to a democratic laity and to local autonomous churches. Fiercely independent congregations granted their "messengers" (p. 7) (the term "delegate" implied too much authority) the right to voice their concerns only as individual Baptists and not on behalf of their home churches. This loose association between the central offices and the local congregations worked because the yearly convention