

INTRODUCTION



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THE SPREAD OF democracy arguably is the single most significant political phenomenon of the past one hundred years. The Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen reports that when pressed to identify “the most important thing that had happened in the twentieth century,” he considered several alternative possibilities, but he “did not, ultimately, have any difficulty in choosing one as the preeminent development of the period: the rise of democracy.” Sounding a similar note, Freedom House issued a report proclaiming the twentieth century “Democracy’s Century.”

There are good reasons for embracing pronouncements such as these. The spread of democracy may be a good in itself, but it also promises other goods. Theorists posit that people who live in democracies are freer to express their preferences and that officeholders are more likely to respond to these preferences; that in democracy there is more room for meaningful debate and deliberation; and that under the proper conditions democratic decisionmaking will produce fair and just social outcomes. Empirical research suggests that people who live in democracies, on average, earn higher wages, are freer to form organizations, enjoy a broader range of public services, are less likely to go to war or to suffer famines, and enjoy more responsive governments than do those who live under nondemocratic regimes. Yet it is clearer today than it has been for decades that the emergence of democracy is less a settled accomplishment than a precarious achievement. It hardly is controversial to say that today we not only witness struggles to establish minimally democratic arrangements in a numerous countries and regions around the world but also observe serious, ongoing struggles to defend democratic institutions from en-

croachment and decline even where they once seemed to have been most firmly established.

One might approach the topic of democracy as an ideal or as a set of behaviors. We have chosen to treat democracy as an institutional configuration that, however imperfectly, embodies ideals and constrains behavior. The simplest way to conceptualize institutions is as more or less centralized sets of rules that emerge from and subsequently structure social and political interaction. They are persistent means, usually combining formal and informal features, of coordinating ongoing social, economic, and political interactions. Typically they have a systemic quality such that in any particular institutional configuration, the composite institutions will hang together in a more or less coherent, if more or less arbitrary, fashion. As a result, the effects an institutional configuration might have on patterns of individual behavior will be complicated and difficult to analyze. It is important, however, to note that institutions often require that individuals act in ways that run counter to their immediate or even longer-term interests, commitments, and attachments. The institutions therefore must specify what can be done, by and to whom, for what purposes, and when, but also what happens when the rules are breached and who decides when they are.

Ours obviously is a broad conception of institutions and how they work. When we turn our attention to the subset of democratic institutions our concern is with whether and how they embody such ideals and principles as competition, fairness, and accountability. We are concerned, too, with the ways they coordinate and constrain the participation of behavior of individuals and associations. In both respects, there are high, and rising, obstacles to full and meaningful democracy, in the United States and in other countries.

This state of affairs raises numerous questions. What kinds of reforms are likely to promote elections that might accurately and legitimately express public preferences, in both new and established democracies? What political coalitions are likely to bring about such reforms? Under what conditions might such coalitions form? How do the mechanics of voting influence electoral outcomes? How can such mechanisms be improved or refined where they are found to hinder rather than facilitate robust participation and accurate counting of votes? What methods for establishing electoral districts avoid extremes of malapportionment and encourage competition? How ought competing notions of representation inform these systems? What is the role, empirically or normatively, of collective actors and organizations such as labor unions, social movements, and corporations in democratic politics? Can democratic institutions be introduced from abroad and flourish in deeply divided societies? Finally, can democratic institutions flourish in societies with few democratic traditions? Each of these key questions is animated by the premise that it is important to mobilize political participation in ways that

contribute to good democratic practices. The questions also stimulate a corollary concern with identifying institutional arrangements that are more likely to productively channel than impede or foreclose this participation. The chapters in this volume focus on this second concern.

Most of the essays focus on the United States. Analyzing the American experience provides insight, but this insight is deepened and broadened by knowledge of how other countries solve similar problems. The United States often is presented as a model for emerging democracies and even for the more established democracies. Yet, as the papers in this volume reveal, the United States often looks considerably less “advanced” when considered in comparative perspective. It has difficulty achieving high levels of political participation, competition, and representation. There are institutional arrangements, developed elsewhere, that seem better at mobilizing voters, representing the diversity of interests within the polity, and enhancing competition. It is a commonplace that prominent institutional features of American politics—registration laws, a legally mandated but highly inconvenient electoral calendar, and reliance on single-member districts—have dampening effects on electoral competition and political participation. This book explores several additional institutional obstacles uncovered by investigations of American politics. It also highlights some research on non-American democracies that raises alternatives and concerns it might behoove American scholars and policymakers to consider.

ORGANIZATION OF INTERESTS

Laws determining who can and who cannot vote and rules affecting the organizational rights and powers of associations, including labor unions, can present steep institutional barriers to democratic participation. Among the defining features of democracy is that nearly the whole adult population is enfranchised. But the word “nearly” belies much variation across democracies in the proportion of adults who have the right to vote.

Consider an example. Today, more than five million people legally are barred from voting in many American states because of their status as convicted felons. Rules governing disenfranchisement vary widely among the states. Maine and New Hampshire have no such restrictions, many others deny the vote to inmates, and several others in the upper and deep South and elsewhere as well deny the vote not only to inmates but also to parolees, probationers, and ex-felons. Overall, no other democracy in the world imposes such stringent limitations on the political participation of former prisoners, with the result that in the United States more citizens are disenfranchised for this reason than in any other democracy, advanced or developing. Moreover, formal disenfranchisement dampens political participation not only directly

but also indirectly. Children who grow up in communities where many adults are barred from voting tend to stay away from the polls themselves, even when they themselves do not face formal restrictions. They simply never come to recognize taking part on Election Day as a norm.

Or consider how the decline of class politics, particularly in the form of organized labor, in the United States and in other democracies tends to depress voter turnout and other forms of political participation. In advanced capitalist countries, relatively high levels of unionization produce greater wage equality, which in turn boosts political participation and encourages more expansive social policy. In the United States, relatively low and, in recent decades, steadily declining levels of labor union membership have institutional roots in labor law. The causal chain is fairly clear: our current regime of labor law affects union density and low union density in turn depresses participation. And this in turn reduces the pluralism of American democracy. Labor unions traditionally have been among the few well-organized groups representing working people, and their voice has in recent decades faded considerably.

This trajectory has been amplified by contradictory trends in the developing world. The third wave of democratization opened the door to unionization in countries where workers were previously repressed. But at roughly the same time, globalization encouraged free market reforms, including the deregulation of labor markets, thereby undermining labor's influence in policymaking. These features of labor's international position have placed additional pressure on American labor insofar as both employment and investment have moved offshore.

There are, of course, other reasons why many Americans who have the right to vote fail to do so. Many individuals and studies—Robert Putnam, Theda Skocpol, the recent APSA (American Political Science Association) Task Force on Inequality (sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation and published as *Inequality in American Democracy*), the APSA Civic Engagement Standing Committee report (published by the Brookings Institution as *Democracy at Risk*), and many others—have linked the decline of political participation to the decline in certain forms of associational life. We build on those projects but consider additional impediments to inclusion, both associational and institutional.

Of particular interest to the contributors to this volume are the institutional arrangements affecting the political participation of minorities and other traditionally disenfranchised groups. In later sections of the book, we consider the role of gerrymandering and redistricting in dampening democratic participation. Here we look at the kinds of institutional arrangements that might actually promote participation. This is where our comparative focus not only reveals alternatives to American practice but

suggests institutional reforms that could be adopted in democracies worldwide.

The authors of the four chapters in part I investigate how institutions and strategies shape political participation. In each case the authors seek to redirect our attention away from common preoccupations and settled perspectives. The first two chapters, “Mobilizing Institutions and Class Bias in U.S. Electoral Politics, 1964 to 2004,” by Jan Leighley and Jonathan Nagler, and “Barriers to Participation for Whom? Regulations on Voting and Uncompetitive Elections,” by Shaun Bowler and Todd Donovan, examine participation in American elections. Leighley and Nagler explore how the strategic decisions of political elites can either boost or depress mobilization. Bowler and Donovan highlight the particular ways regulatory barriers to voter participation reduce turnout. Whereas Leighley and Nagler, tacitly and explicitly, urge us to attend to the political effects that nonelectoral institutions have on what are primarily extrapartisan organizations, Bowler and Donovan prompt us to appreciate the ways that electoral institutions encourage or discourage competitiveness, rather than asking how they influence political access.

Chapter 3, “Mobilizing Political Engagement and Participation in Diverse Societies,” by Susan A. Banducci and Jeffrey A. Karp, and chapter 4, “Ethnic Invention: A New Principle of Institutional Design in Ethnically Divided Democracies,” by Kanchan Chandra, focus on the institutional determinants of political representation and participation in ethnically diverse societies. Like Banducci and Karp, Chandra clearly introduces a much-needed comparative perspective. Together these two chapters direct our attention to matters of electoral diversity and how institutions can not only accommodate it but perhaps even actively promote pluralism.

Leighley and Nagler discuss what they see as a systematic problem in the literature on mobilization: a preoccupation with the mobilization efforts of political parties and a parallel neglect of the extensive efforts of nonparty political elites to mobilize voter turnout. In this chapter, they move beyond this party-centered approach and assess the effects of party and nonparty organizations on the class composition of the electorate. In so doing they demonstrate how class bias has changed over the past forty years. Their evidence indicates that although party mobilization has not become more skewed in class terms over the past four decades, it remains significantly more class-biased than nonparty organizations. Leighley and Nagler provide some hope in the context of the persistent class bias in partisan mobilization of this period. They argue that the recent trends (most notably in the 2004 election) toward using “down-ballot” issues such as gay marriage and affirmative action as a stimulation for greater voter turnout might persuade the political parties that “money is not the only game in town.”

Bowler and Donovan study how regulatory barriers to participation affect

voter turnout, and offer some surprising results. They employ an interest-elasticity theory of voter participation to assess the effects of removing such barriers on voting. An interesting feature of their model is that it simultaneously accounts for the effects of uncompetitive elections on turnout. They assume that elections themselves affect levels of political interest, which they take to be a prerequisite for participation.

Bowler and Donovan argue that electoral reforms have differential impact across political constituencies, depending on the levels of political interest they exhibit *ex ante*. When voters perceive elections as uncompetitive, their interest diminishes and so does the probability that they will vote. For example, reforms that simply remove or lower regulatory barriers may increase the likely turnout among high-interest voters but have little or no impact on turnout among low-interest voters. Institutional reforms aimed at rendering elections more competitive have the opposite effect. They tend to increase the likelihood that people whose levels of political interest are relatively low beforehand will turn out but have less impact on constituencies characterized by high levels of political interest *ex ante*. Having drawn this contrast, Bowler and Donovan argue that reforms aimed at making elections more competitive—and thus politically interesting—may have the potential to provide a more significant boost to electoral participation in the United States than reforms that make it easier to register and vote, for the simple reason that the latter may have little success in mobilizing voters with low political interest.

Banducci and Karp bring a comparative perspective to bear on the question of how the representation of ethnic minorities influences political support and engagement in democratic societies. Analyzing data from twenty-two ethnically diverse democracies, they identify a significant causal chain from political and electoral institutions to substantive measures improving access and representation to greater political participation of ethnic minorities. Their findings lend support to the view that the shape of institutional arrangements has a differential impact on ethnic minorities and non-minorities in terms of their relative levels of political engagement and political support. Specifically, Banducci and Karp find that institutions such as single-member plurality electoral systems tend to widen the gap in participation between whites and minorities. Limited access to political power also increases this gap. These differences are reduced in countries that have special accommodations for ethnic minority representation.

Chandra asks an array of important questions about the effects of political institutions on social and political relations in ethnically diverse societies. She sets out an ambitious agenda: to outline a general principle of institutional design in ethnically divided democracies. Scholarship on this subject proposes a number of different principles that should be instantiated in political institutions. She argues that these different proposals agree on a common

goal: political “inclusion,” loosely defined to mean that the representatives of all significant ethnic categories in a democracy should have a share in political power. The conventional view is that the best way to realize this goal is by preventing or containing ethnic majoritarianism.

Chandra proposes a new principle that should underlie the design of institutions in multi-ethnic democracies: ethnic invention. Proponents of ethnic invention share the basic goal of the existing literature—inclusion—but propose a different mechanism for achieving that goal. Rather than seeking to contain ethnic majoritarianism, Chandra’s proposed designs would encourage the emergence of multiple-ethnic majorities. Her proposal rests on a distinctive conception of ethnic identity. Whereas the conventional scholarly view is that ethnic identities are “fixed” and “single,” Chandra assumes that “ethnic identities can be fluid, multiple, and endogenous to institutional design.” The implications of this new proposal are significant. The principle of ethnic invention entails substantially different types of institutional reform for ethnically diverse societies, including American society, than are to be found in the existing literature.

THE BOUNDS OF MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Among the most daunting obstacles to a fuller democracy, in the United States and around the world, is the way electoral districts and constituencies are delineated. Much is at stake in how district borders are drawn, and these borders always entail trade-offs in partisan, racial, and ethnic representation. In the United States, two aspects of redistricting that present substantial problems are partisan gerrymandering and majority-minority districts.

PARTISAN GERRYMANDERING

The most recent example of gerrymandering was an unusual, unprecedented, and successful effort by the Republican majorities in the Texas legislature to redistrict the state’s congressional seats between the normal decade reassessments. Texas Republicans favored a plan that shifted a crucial handful of seats from the Democratic to the Republican column, pointing out that the existing districting scheme allowed Democrats to win many more seats than their share of the state’s two-party vote would otherwise warrant.

And so it is with most of America. The prevalence of partisan gerrymandering raises troubling questions about the practice of democracy in the United States. The vast majority of American legislative elections are non-competitive. We can confidently anticipate that the 2008 general election will have only about forty truly competitive House elections—general elections

where the partisan outcome is uncertain. This lack of competition is partially attributable to the power of incumbency and its attendant electoral advantages, but in critical ways it is also driven by the prevailing approach to the drawing of legislative districts.

Gerrymandering has a long history in the United States—and one with important implications for democracy. As we already have noted, lack of competition may severely reduce the incentives to vote and drive down overall voter turnout. Lower turnout is unlikely to influence the outcome in the district (which, in many districts, was ordained when the lines were drawn) but could be of intense importance in “up-ballot” elections and on initiatives and referenda, where turnout often shapes outcomes.

Partisan gerrymandering also can both encourage polarization and subvert representation within constituencies. Electoral districts with heavy partisan advantages shift the locus of competition to the primary, where ideologues and strong partisans hold greater sway. The result of this practice is an electoral system where legislators from neither of the parties have significant incentive to seek support among centrist voters, producing a membership with few moderates and little basis for cooperation on important policy matters. Additionally, gerrymandering seriously erodes the representativeness of our institutions by preserving partisan legislative majorities, even for parties with a minority share of the actual vote. (This was the allegation made by Texas Republicans against their Democratic colleagues and the existing district lines.) But the virtual elimination of competition is very likely to continue creating such distortions, since a noncompetitive electoral system can become ossified, ensuring that it is less responsive to partisan or ideological change and thus virtually guaranteeing a mismatch between votes cast and seats held.

MAJORITY-MINORITY DISTRICTING

Closely related to the practice of gerrymandering is the special case of majority-minority districts. In the United States, many of these were created in the wake of the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act (VRA). Majority-minority districts are supposed to provide an opportunity for politically marginalized minority groups to elect their candidate of choice, an opportunity denied to them when white majorities engage in racially polarized bloc voting. These districts have been vigorously contested in the courts, and, in 1993, the Supreme Court ruled in *Shaw v. Reno* that drawing districts on the basis of race was a per se violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The logic of the case, arising out of a North Carolina case, was subsequently applied to Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas in separate decisions.

This state of affairs places legislators in an inescapable bind. The VRA re-

quired them to create opportunities for politically excluded groups to elect candidates they prefer. States covered by section 5 must prove they have done this in documents they submit to the Justice Department for pre-clearance. But the courts have rendered any steps states might take for such purposes constitutionally suspect. Perhaps most ironically, in the case of *Bush v. Vera*, the Court held that the materials submitted to demonstrate compliance with section 5 constituted prima facie evidence that the state was engaged in impermissible activity. That is, by doing what is directed by the legislation, under executive branch enforcement, the state runs afoul of the judicial branch. States could ensure minority representation in a variety of alternative ways, but these alternatives are by and large incompatible with single-member districts. Ironically, in the case of *Hunt v. Cromartie*, in North Carolina, the Court did allow racial districting, as long as the central justification was to protect an incumbent and ensure partisan balance.

BALANCING INDIVIDUAL EQUALITY AGAINST GROUP RIGHTS

The task of drawing electoral districts highlights yet another challenge: discovering ways to reconcile the principle of individual equality with legitimate demands for group representation. Treating individuals as political equals normally means creating electoral districts of equal population size, so that the value of the vote each citizen casts is the same, no matter where he or she votes. But ensuring individual equality can produce unequal representation for the groups to which they belong, especially when these groups are geographically concentrated. How might democracies design institutions that simultaneously address both the principle of individual equality and a concern for group representation? Should they institute a more equal division of power between the two houses of a bicameral legislature? If so, how might they prevent deadlock? Should they encourage direct individual participation by strengthening civil society and devolving power to local levels of government, at the expense of groups? Should they impose group quotas in legislatures, allocating the same value to the vote of each individual but restricting the candidates individuals can elect on the basis of geographical region or race or gender? Or is it better to restructure party organizations rather than legislatures, requiring political parties to produce a slate of candidates representative of group interests?

The four chapters in part II examine the implications of electoral redistricting on various aspects of politics in the United States. The first two chapters, "Evaluating the Impact of Redistricting on District Homogeneity, Political Competition, and Political Extremism in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1962 to 2006," by Thomas L. Brunell and Bernard Grofman, and

“Redistricting Institutions and Competition in U.S. House Districts,” by Michael P. McDonald, present quite different perspectives on the question of whether gerrymandering has affected political competitiveness in elections in the U.S. House of Representatives. McDonald undertakes a general analysis of the determinants of competitiveness in U.S. House districts; Brunell and Grofman focus on the specific effects of electoral redistricting on political competition in general and on the growth of political extremism in particular. Chapters 7 and 8, “An Evaluation of the Electoral and Behavioral Impact of Majority-Minority Districts,” by David I. Lublin and Gary Segura, and “Gerrymanders as Trade-Offs: The Coevolution of Social Scientific and Legal Approaches to Racial Redistricting,” by David L. Epstein and Sharyn O’Halloran, take up the specific problem of guaranteeing adequate political representation for ethnic and racial minorities. Lublin and Segura provide an overview of studies of how majority-minority districts shape political representation and participation among African American and Latino voters. Epstein and O’Halloran join the debate about the best way to enhance minority political representation by rethinking the criterion to be used in assessing redistricting under the Voting Rights Act.

Brunell and Grofman study the relationship between electoral redistricting and political competition in the United States. By analyzing data from U.S. House races during the period from 1962 to 2006, they test the often posited claim that electoral redistricting has produced greater political homogeneity, which has in turn led to a decline in district competition and an increase in political extremism. Their analysis confirms certain empirical components of this view, mainly that district homogeneity increased during this period and that there is a positive correlation between greater homogeneity and declining district competitiveness. Nevertheless, Brunell and Grofman argue that the commonly accepted inference that these factors account for the rise of political extremism is overstated. They point out that in the period from 1962 to 2006, district competitiveness and ideological extremism are at most very weakly correlated, for either political party. They point out, too, that it is possible to identify similar polarizing trends in the U.S. Senate, despite the fact that there have been no significant analogous changes in the level of political homogeneity in the states. They conclude that redistricting does not afford a satisfying explanation for the rise of political extremism in the United States.

McDonald’s study grows out of the theoretical notion that electoral competition is an important prerequisite of an effective democracy. In his analysis of U.S. House elections since the 1970s, he investigates the determinants of district competitiveness. Unlike many other studies that operationalize competitiveness in terms of competitive elections, McDonald’s uses a measure that focuses on the competitiveness of districts—the degree of parity in partisan support within a district. He concludes that the key factors deter-

mining the competitiveness of districts are the overall competitiveness of the state in which a district is located, partisan and incumbent gerrymandering, and judicial intervention.

In reflecting on the normative implications of his analysis, McDonald cautions against placing too much faith in the value of perfect competitiveness in democratic elections. He suggests that a country of perfectly competitive single-member districts each of which consisted of equal numbers of Democratic and Republican partisans could well produce perverse effects. For instance, a small national swing in votes might produce a tidal shift in seats in the favor of a single party. He argues that a “middle ground is preferable, with responsiveness closer to one, that is, a one percent change in the vote equates to a one percent change in the number of seats a party wins.” Although, in contrast to Brunell and Grofman, he does find a significant effect of redistricting on competitiveness, he agrees with their conclusion that electoral gerrymandering is not the mechanism that reformers should use to increase competitiveness and, presumably, political responsiveness. McDonald concludes that redistricting alone cannot significantly alter the level of competitiveness in contemporary American politics.

Lublin and Segura review the history of majority-minority districts and assess current scholarship on the question of whether these districts influence political representation and electoral participation. Their analysis of differences in the literatures on African American and Latino voters raises a number of important questions concerning the efficacy of majority-minority districts. They note that scholars have reached conflicting conclusions as to whether majority-minority districts increase minority participation. They pose the possibility that these conflicting results do not reflect real differences between African American and Latino voters but are merely an artifact of differences in the methodologies employed by the distinct studies. Lublin and Segura also highlight some provocative topics for future research. Do increases in minority voter participation depend on minority representatives or does merely running a minority candidate also have an empowering effect, regardless of whether that candidate wins or loses? Does the expansion of minority participation in elections with minority candidates extend to nonlegislative elections? These are some of the questions they encourage future research to take up.

Epstein and O’Halloran turn their attention on the complexities of minority redistricting in the post *Georgia v. Ashcroft* era. This case has become the focal point of recent debates about the latitude that states now enjoy in designing electoral districts under the Voting Rights Act. Epstein and O’Halloran characterize the conventional wisdom as follows: in *Georgia v. Ashcroft* the Supreme Court abandoned a previous test for section 5 compliance, which was based on the election of minority legislators alone, in favor of an “amorphous” concept of substantive representation, a concept that many observers

believe will be difficult to administer. The conventional conclusion is that this new standard will allow states the freedom to enact any redistricting plan that they want.

After suggesting why the pre-Georgia standard, which relied almost exclusively on criteria of descriptive representation, had become increasingly unworkable, Epstein and O'Halloran argue that a criterion of substantive representation need not be viewed as difficult to measure. As an alternative they propose assigning to all representatives a "minority support score": a score that quantifies the "degree of concordance between that member's voting record and the voting records of minority legislators." These scores would be used to assess the effects of various redistricting schemes on the degree of substantive representation of minorities.

In offering this proposal they seek to bridge the divide that has distinguished the pro- and anti- camps. They argue that the real issue in this controversy is over how best to secure substantive representation for all citizens. Epstein and O'Halloran conclude that their proposal is merely the next step in ongoing efforts by scholars to improve our conceptions and measures of substantive democratic representation.

REFORM VIA INSTITUTIONAL MANIPULATIONS: AT WHAT COST AND TO WHOSE BENEFIT?

The ways people actually vote—when and how, physically, they cast their electoral votes and how ballots are tallied—can represent a surprisingly significant institutional impediment to democracy. The technology of voting can have serious consequences for whose votes are counted. The 2000 presidential election controversy in Florida concentrated attention, both political and scholarly, on the most mundane mechanisms of voting in this country. Do people vote by pulling levers in machines or by pushing holes into cards or by marking X's on a piece of paper? The answers to these apparently trivial questions turned out to be crucial in deciding who would be president of the United States and the subsequent direction of policy in the world's most powerful country. The 2000 presidential election sullied the image of American democracy both at home and abroad, and diminished the ability of our political leaders to claim moral authority as an international champion of democracy. When Secretary of State Colin Powell raised objections to aspects of the 2004 presidential election in Russia, President Putin responded tersely with pointed remarks regarding the quality of the last U.S. presidential contest.

The 2000 election spawned efforts at ballot reform in many states across the country and even national legislation, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). There are heated ongoing debates about the benefits and drawbacks, real and potential, of new voting technologies. The experience of Ohio dur-

ing the 2004 election kept the debate alive and meaningful. Electronic voting systems may promise greater efficiencies but also create worries about computer glitches, hackers, and manipulation.

The ways elections are organized also influences whose votes are counted—and who votes in the first place. Consider the timing of elections. This has become a contentious issue in the run-up to the 2008 presidential elections in the United States as various states compete to hold their primary elections earlier in the season. The stakes are relatively high in this conflict. The timing of primaries can distribute political influence differentially. It can advantage particular constituencies who are informed and interested well before the presidential election itself insofar as it influences candidate and party strategies and the sorts of appeals those strategies sustain.

The three chapters in part III discuss a number of interrelated questions about efforts to influence elections through institutional manipulation. The first, “The Primary Elections ‘Bonus’ in Latin America,” by John M. Carey and John Polga-Hecimovich, focuses on the growing use of primaries to select candidates for public office. The authors investigate the effects of primary contests on the performance of candidates in the subsequent general election. Henry E. Brady and Iris Hui’s “Accuracy and Security in Voting Systems,” evaluates the success of recent reforms in voting technologies. Finally, Charles Stewart III, in “Improving the Measurement of Election System Performance in the United States,” offers the most purely normative essay in the volume, proposing a comprehensive framework for assessing the efficacy of post-2000 reforms in voting procedures in the United States.

Carey and Polga-Hecimovich note that political parties throughout the world have turned increasingly to systems of primary elections as the institutional mechanism for selecting candidates for office. Supporters of primary elections plausibly point to two factors as justification for an increased reliance on primaries: primaries render the process of selecting candidates more open, and primaries also have various salutary effects on the internal dynamics of the parties. Such claims, however, confront a significant difficulty. It is common wisdom among scholars of primary systems that candidates chosen in primaries tend to be less successful in general elections than candidates chosen by other mechanisms. So although there may be good normative reasons for supporting the move to primary elections, there apparently are strong prudential reasons for resisting such changes.

Carey and Polga-Hecimovich explore this tension between principle and prudence. They analyze two data sets in order to assess the effects of primaries on the performance of general election candidates. One data set contains data on voting patterns for every democratic presidential election in Latin America; the second contains the same type of data for the gubernatorial elections in the thirty Mexican states. Contrary to popular wisdom they discover

that nonincumbent candidates enjoy a primary “bonus” in the sense that challengers perform better if they have been selected via a primary rather than by other procedures.

The contested outcome to the 2000 U.S. presidential election prompted widespread demands for electoral reform, and elicited three types of response: legal, administrative, and legislative. The first was litigation initiated more or less directly as a result of the outcome of the presidential race. The second was the creation of state reform commissions that sought to bring about a number of changes in existing electoral law, with special emphasis on registration procedures and the mechanics of voting. The third was the passage in 2002 of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), which mandated several changes in the procedures for federal elections.

Brady and Hui offer a detailed assessment of the effect of the reforms that emerged from these legal, administrative, and legislative channels. They focus on the effectiveness of these reforms as measured by the residual vote standard. In short, how effectively did these measures reduce overvotes, spoiled votes, and undervotes? They concentrate on California elections, for which they have reliable data, but they draw out the implications for the reform process more generally.

In chapter 11, Stewart proposes a comprehensive framework for assessing the effectiveness of voting procedures in the United States. He offers a systematic account of the various components of the standard electoral process in the United States and discusses how the post-2000 reforms have affected its different aspects. He then advances a framework for assessing the effectiveness of these reforms at each of the stages of the process. A distinctive feature of Stewart’s proposal is his careful discussion of the types of data about contemporary elections that researchers must gather before they can reach any significant conclusions about the effectiveness of any particular voting system.

CONCLUSION

This volume does not promise to provide an all-inclusive assessment of the institutional factors that impede democratic mobilization in the United States, to say nothing of in other nations. Taken together, however, the chapters offer several lessons, some rather obvious, others perhaps less so. Our authors demonstrate the importance of not taking the American form of democracy as a standard and instead, of situating American politics in a comparative context. They demonstrate the importance of careful empirical research as the underpinning of any proposal for or assessment of institutional reform.

And, taken together, the chapters remind us that institutional designs have

implications, intended and unintended. Institutions often embody and perpetuate past privileges, instantiating the power of those who put them in place. Sometimes, however, they can produce outcomes contrary to what reformers sought. Alternatively, institutions may make no difference at all if they are imposed without consideration of the particularities of timing and context. To understand what consequences institutions will have requires implied and, even better, explicit comparisons across countries and eras that allow us to analyze the conditions in which democratic institutions work—when, where, and for whom. Such insights result not just from large-scale studies but from the kinds of detailed investigations of particular rules and practices undertaken by many of the contributors to this volume. We must then encourage the conversation among scholars and across studies that enables us to make further social scientific progress. This volume is a step in that direction.

This volume's chapters also demonstrate the importance of focusing not just on this or that institution but on what we earlier called institutional configurations—the complex ways that institutions hang together, and the equally complex ways that a set of institutions can influence democratic mobilization in the United States and elsewhere. This point may become clearer if we consider some of the routes a casual reader might take through this book. If noncompetitive elections present a massive barrier to political participation, then it is crucial to determine whether and how redistricting for purposes of incumbent or partisan advantage influences competitiveness. Likewise, insofar as institutional reforms aimed at enhancing competitiveness will require support from reasonably broad political coalitions, it is crucial to determine with some confidence what effects, say, relying on competitive primaries to select candidates might have on the subsequent prospects of those candidates. In this respect readers might start with Bowler and Donovan and find resonances of their argument not only in the chapters by Brunell and Grofman, and McDonald but also that by Carey and Polga-Hecimovich.

Alternatively, a reader might begin and conclude elsewhere. She might start with the arguments by Banducci and Karp or Chandra concerning the ways institutions in India or elsewhere accommodate or encourage pluralism, and she might then make ready connections to the essays by Segura and Lublin or Epstein and O'Halloran, each of which discusses the vicissitudes of establishing and sustaining racial and ethnic pluralism in the America political contest. From there a reader might move on to the issues raised by Brady and Hui and by Stewart insofar as ballot design and voting technology are crucially important in ensuring basic access to minority voters. Here, as on the first route, a reader might take the reverse path through the chapters or start in the middle and work in either or both directions.

Reading across the essays in these or other ways can induce in most read-

ers a mix of assurance and humility with respect to the potential uses of careful political inquiry. Such careful inquiry can indeed generate important, even surprising, insights. At the same time, the complexities our authors reveal may well induce humility in the face of the many things we do not know, or at least do not know with great confidence.

Both what we do know and what we remain uncertain about can become key components of public—political and scholarly—discourse. In that sense the chapters of this book afford extremely instructive examples. They provide the sort of analyses that might allow readers to critically challenge “reforms” that, as far as the evidence shows, give little promise of providing productive consequences. And they suggest several new, creative, and possible directions that reformers concerned to strengthen democracy might explore.