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POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

Volume 123 · Number 1 · Spring 2008

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Political Science Quarterly

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increasing religious diversity, it is politically difficult for school officials to impose particular religious views. One of the most interesting parts of the book is Dierenfield's description of the *Engel* school district now. Once nearly all white and primarily Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish, it is now half Asian and represents 12 different religions. The school calendar acknowledges a variety of faiths, including Islam, Hinduism, and the Baha'i faith, and school officials are far more sensitive to religious diversity than was the case in 1962. This suggests that *Engel* did not so much change America as prepare it for changes that were the inevitable result of other forces.

THOMAS HEALY
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The Racial Logic of Politics: Asian Americans and Party Competition
by Thomas P. Kim. Philadelphia, PA, Temple University Press, 2007.
208 pp. \$22.95.

The scholarship that addresses Asian Americans in relation to electoral politics is still small, though growing. Thomas Kim's book is a welcome addition to this literature. Kim poses a question about election year 1996: Why did Asian American political elites who appeared poised to realize gains in political influence in the presidential election season find themselves not only marginalized but also vilified by both Democrats and Republicans as agents of Communist China? The short answer, according to Kim: Asian American political elites fundamentally misunderstood the possibilities for attaining political power in the two-party system. Using the campaign finance scandal of 1996 as his main example, Kim argues that the two-party system creates structural incentives, indeed imperatives, for both parties to exclude Asian Americans and to treat them as a racial bogeyman that must be kept at bay. With Asian Americans racialized as perpetual foreigners working as agents of foreign powers, party leaders engage in a rational calculation that tells them that the political costs of bringing Asian Americans into the party outweigh the benefits. Party leaders need not be racist or hold prejudiced attitudes, Kim emphasizes; they need only behave strategically for this dynamic to hold. Destined to remain at the gate looking in, Asian Americans should turn their attention, Kim avers, to community-level political work and give up on attaining power in the national electoral arena.

This book has several notable strengths. Most importantly, Kim's argument about how parties are incentivized to respond to the racialization of Asian Americans is reasonable and compelling. It casts doubt on the conventional understanding of party competition as a dynamic that brings ethnic groups into the system. It offers a bracing and much-needed challenge to the conventional understanding that a racial or ethnic group's growing numbers and money are likely to translate into meaningful political power. Further-

more, Kim is right to try to bring constructivist writings on race into dialogue with analyses of electoral and institutional rules—and he is one of the few to attempt such a task. These two types of scholarship have been mutually exclusive despite the fact that both cultural constructions of Asian Americans and the institutional context of political assertion shape the trajectory of Asian American politics. The book includes a nicely detailed analysis of the campaign finance scandal of 1996, a pivotal moment in the political experience of Asian Americans, as well as informative discussions of several legislative accomplishments on the part of Asian American elected officials and political elites.

The book also raises several questions that go unanswered. How does one compare the dilemma of Asian Americans to the “electoral capture” of African Americans described by political scientist Paul Frymer? Kim acknowledges his debt to Frymer’s work but does not clarify the relationship of his argument to it. What role does the nonpartisanship of many Asian Americans play in exacerbating this dilemma? If Asian Americans start to lean Democratic, will they then be subject to “electoral capture” as African Americans are? If the dilemma of Asian Americans vis-à-vis the two parties is the result of enduring structural forces, why does the hostility shown to Asian Americans by the two parties fluctuate considerably over time? Do structural imperatives really constrain party leaders’ behavior in a deterministic fashion, or are the latter more able to defy these imperatives than Kim acknowledges? How generalizable is Kim’s argument? Does it apply to Latinos or other immigrants? Finally, what are “Asian American political interests” anyway? Who defines them? What would their fulfillment look like? Kim begins to problematize the notion of a unified Asian American political voice, but only briefly, and at the end of the book. The fact that the media is improperly linking the unfolding Norman Hsu scandal to the events of 1996 suggests just how timely this book is.

CLAIRE JEAN KIM
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Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City by Mary Pattillo. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 2007. 400 pp. \$29.00.

In “The Talented Tenth,” W.E.B. Du Bois proclaimed that “the Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men” (in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day*, New York: J. Pott & Company, 1903, p 75), which gave rise to the idea that the black elite bore the social and moral responsibility to give back to the poorer members of their race. Scholars such as William Wilson (*The Truly Disadvantaged*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987) have argued that the “exceptional men” and the African American middle class have abandoned poor,