

the identities and commitments of Black women political actors who are outside the economic, social, and elected political parameters centered in *Sister Style*? More research is needed to understand these voices as well. This book starts an important conversation by highlighting the theoretical, methodological, and ethical value of Black women's voices in political science research. Ultimately, *Sister Style* requires us to reflect on the institutional, cultural, social, economic, and political makeup required for all to perform in this country.

Stable Condition: Elites' Limited Influence on Health

Care Attitudes. By Daniel J. Hopkins. New York: Russell Sage

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— Jake Haselswerdt , University of Missouri
haselswerdtj@missouri.edu

Over the past decade and a half, few if any policy issues have attracted as much political or scholarly attention as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2010. Although the real-world impacts of the law on health coverage and other important outcomes have been substantial, scholars, politicians, and commentators have given considerable attention (perhaps more attention) to what the public *thinks* of this important law, the most substantial health coverage law since the establishment of Medicare and Medicaid in the 1960s. Both academics and practitioners have considered the law as a prime example of the power of rhetoric and framing, the ability of policy to reshape politics (“policy feedback”), and the enduring importance of race to the politics of American social policy. In his new book, *Stable Condition: Elites' Limited Influence on Health Care Attitudes*, which builds on some of his previously published research, Daniel J. Hopkins effectively asks, “What if it wasn't?”

Drawing on a wealth of existing and original ACA public opinion data gathered between 2009 and 2020, Hopkins concludes that the efforts of political elites to reshape public opinion, whether through messaging (including racially charged rhetoric) or policy change, had little effect. Specifically, he demonstrates that policy feedback (chaps. 4 and 5), racial prejudice (chap. 6), and elite messaging or framing (chap. 7) are not comprehensive explanations for opinions about the ACA, even in combination. The book instead paints a picture of stable and durable public opinion on the law (established in chap. 3), both at the individual and aggregate level, with the only significant shift coming after the election of Donald Trump and Republican majorities in the 2016 election. This led to an immediate boost in ACA support, which Hopkins characterizes as a case of thermostatic public reaction against the priorities of leaders in office.

In response to a rhetorical question of why the book's findings differ from the arguments of so much established scholarship, Hopkins offers “a straightforward, two-word answer: effect sizes. Prior research has often framed its core questions in binary ways, asking questions about the direction of effects such as ‘Are there positive policy feedbacks?’ or ‘Can framing move attitudes?’ Here we... ask not just about the existence of effects but about their substantive magnitude and political import” (p. 7). A related issue is that existing scholarship is focused on *changes* in attitudes, whether over time or in response to randomized experimental treatment on a survey, and thus is poorly positioned to explain the deeper roots of public opinion, particularly when it is stable. On the racial politics of the ACA for example, Hopkins concludes, “To the extent that racial divisions shape white Americans' ACA views... these divisions operate at a distance, shaping ACA attitudes through their long-run influence on partisan divisions and on the narratives through which the public makes sense of social policies. Racial divisions set the stage more than they act the parts” (p. 143). When research is too narrowly focused on testing discrete causal hypotheses, particularly in a cross-sectional or short-term context, it is not well positioned to uncover and explain these foundational aspects of public opinion.

There is a lot to admire about Hopkins's approach in this book. His focus on explaining the values of a key dependent variable (ACA support or opposition), rather than on testing specific causal hypotheses, allows for an appropriately broad view of a major case in policy opinion and makes the substantive size of effects a central concern rather than the usual afterthought. At the same time, the book presents a wide range of hypothesis tests, effectively engaging with the relevant literatures on their own terms even as the author takes a more comprehensive view. The result is a book that reads more like a good-faith attempt to engage with and understand the facts than an exercise in motivated skepticism. This is a book that scholars of health policy, political behavior, and policy feedback, me included, should take very seriously.

In terms of data and methods, Hopkins avoids the pitfalls of some prior work by considering a wide range of data gathered over the entire 12-year period covered by the book, including numerous original cross-sectional surveys through various firms, the Kaiser Family Foundation's Health Tracking Poll (a repeated cross-sectional survey), and original panel survey data, as well as survey experiments and even a field experiment (pp. 172–74). He also makes use of thousands of open-ended survey responses captured over time, pairing them with data on press releases from politicians, to assess the relationship between elite and mass understandings of the ACA, a technique that has promise for the study of elites' influence on mass opinion on issues beyond health policy.

The book is engagingly written and strikes a nice balance between being accessible to smart lay readers and speaking to a scholarly audience. Although the occasional regression table and discussion of *p*-values may puzzle readers unfamiliar with quantitative methods, this is a book that one could reasonably assign to an advanced undergraduate class on health politics or public opinion. At the same time, it is unmistakably a work of serious academic research.

My chief criticism of *Stable Condition* is that Hopkins continues the questionable tradition of studying overall favorability toward the ACA (also known as the “health reform bill...signed into law in 2010” in surveys) while knowing full well that this evaluation has little relationship with how Americans feel about the actual policies included in the legislation (pp. 59–60). This isn’t to say that a person’s overall impression of the ACA as a political symbol is not worth understanding, but I wish the book had given more attention to specific health policy beliefs as important dependent variables. After all, the notion of the ACA as a unified whole to be preserved or repealed has

become more and more disconnected from real policy decisions as time has passed, with the ability of states (and, in some cases, voters themselves) to decide on Medicaid expansion as a stand-alone issue, the repeal of the hated individual mandate in 2017, and the expansion of ACA marketplace premium subsidies initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic and extended by the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. Hopkins considers aggregate predictors of vote shares in favor of Medicaid-expansion ballot initiatives in Maine and Oklahoma (chap. 4) but only as a test of self-interest arguments about the ACA. Otherwise, the book is focused on understanding holistic evaluations of the law to the exclusion of more specific beliefs.

The good news is that Hopkins has demonstrated a solid model for future research on public opinion on all sorts of policy issues, whether related to the ACA or not. I recommend this book not only to my colleagues in the health politics and policy spheres but also to anyone seeking a better understanding of American public opinion on public policy.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Voicing Politics: How Language Shapes Public

Opinion. By Efrén Pérez and Margit Tavits. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022. 232p. \$120.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper.
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— Justin H. Gross , University of Massachusetts Amherst
jhgross@umass.edu

Voicing Politics, by Efrén Pérez and Margit Tavits, offers readers something remarkable in two respects—one intended and one presumably unintended. The authors bring their respective bodies of expertise in political psychology (Pérez), comparative politics (Tavits), and the politics of racial, ethnic, and gender identities (both) to shed light on the narrow but profound matter of how the language one speaks may shape or constrain one’s worldview and one’s opinions on politics and policy. It is, on the whole, an impressive work that pushes the authors’ research agendas forward substantially. Although *Voicing Politics* deserves to be read by those with an interest in its core topics—language and politics, comparative public opinion, and identity politics—it also merits a far wider audience as an exemplar of rigorous, yet accessible, social-scientific writing. Pérez and Tavits offer a master class in the iterative process of multimethod research and how to write a book that weaves together a set of individual studies into a coherent narrative. Dissertation advisers take note: this book makes an excellent gift for graduating doctoral students

about to be lectured by publishers on the difference between a dissertation and a book manuscript!

Pérez and Tavits grapple deftly with a topic that could be viewed as having niche appeal but that deserves appreciation by a broad audience. Their introduction and first chapter assume no special expertise beyond perhaps a social or behavioral science orientation. Recognizing that most readers will have little background in linguistics or cognitive psychology, they motivate interest through an exciting general-interest science writing style while also managing to catch us up to speed as scholars. Nonlinguists—even those who speak multiple languages—may not appreciate just how widely languages vary in grammatical structures and prominent features such as gendering and time/tense. As an early example, the authors note the tendency of English speakers to use a transitive construction for accidental actions (“*Jeremy spilled the coffee*”), whereas Spanish speakers more often use a passive sentence construction, even omitting the agent (“*The coffee got spilled*”). One can imagine the potential implications for politics, where the interplay of individual agency, relative power, and institutional constraints forms the basis for much of what we understand or wish to understand.

The theoretical foundations of the book, laid out in the first chapters, derive from the marriage of the linguistic and political behavior literatures, particularly Dan Slobin’s “thinking for speaking” (“Thinking for Speaking,” *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 1987)—whereby one’s language shapes the mental associations on which one relies not simply to