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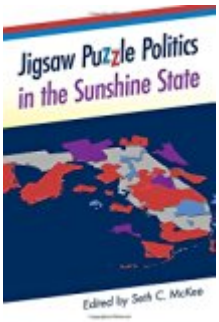

Seth C. McKee, ed.. *Jigsaw Puzzle Politics in the Sunshine State.* Florida Government and Politics Series. Gainseville: University Press of Florida, 2015. 368 pp. $84.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8130-6071-2.

Reviewed by Michael Sanchez

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Commissioned by Jeanine A. Clark Bremer (Northern Illinois University)

Jigsaw Puzzle Politics in the Sunshine State, edited by Seth C. McKee, is a series of analyses on the public approval, implementation process, and aftereffects, both social and political, of the 2012 Florida redistricting process. The 2012 Florida redistricting was a special case because the districts therein had to be drawn in accordance not only with the 2010 census but also with the so-called Fair Districts Amendments, passed by a November 2010 voter referendum. Amendments 5 and 6 now exist as Sections 20 and 21 of Article III of the Florida Constitution.

The book is divided into three parts: "Process," "Politics," and "Effects." In total, the edited collection presents both historical and statistical analyses. While the historical segments are well explained and therefore easily understood, the statistical segments often are missing the information necessary to properly define and situate the data under discussion. Chapters often suffer from both a lack of context and explanations as to why the data are significant. The chapters have varying levels of quality. Some, like the first and fouth chapters, are quite good in both their rigor and explanations of the necessary information for understanding the topic. Others, like the seventh chapter, rest the whole of their analysis on at best nebulous characteristics, making statistical analysis difficult to justify. Overall, the book's quality is mixed, and while the authors should be commended for their ambition, the quality of their presentation is less than stellar. In addition, it is unclear for whom the authors are writing; is the book intended for experienced statisticians or the general public?

Jeffrey W. Ladewig's and Aubrey Jewett's chapters provide a solid historical context, but even here the authors perhaps do not provide as much of an explanation as they should. No less than four Supreme Court cases are mentioned in order to place the 2012 Florida redistricting within a national legal framework, and none of these four have accompanying descriptions—that is, the reader is not told what the effects are or what the constitutional issue was. Several sentences would have been all that was necessary to provide such

meaning. The third chapter, by Mark Jonathan McKenzie, has the same problem, this time with the case ***Vieth v. Jubilrer*** (2004), which is mentioned only on page 4 and in a footnote on page 82. The effect of this case is stated—that is, the Supreme Court decided that no standard to determine whether or not a gerrymander was unconstitutional could be found—but the author does not dwell on why this case is important. Of all the Supreme Court cases, this one would be the most important one to discuss, as it arguably contributed to the political and social problems inherent in the gerrymandering process.

McKenzie's chapter also stumbles with statistical analyses. In table 3.4, he tries to statistically model the idea of political bias. From this table, he concludes that judges' political party affiliations do not affect their rulings on their collections of redistricting cases. This may very well—and should—be the case, if judges are supposed to be impartial arbiters. But there is no way to objectively measure such a trait a person may possess, although it is not for a lack of trying. Table 3.6 comes to the same conclusion as table 3.4, but with more visibly faulty foundations. In table 3.6, the analysis is partially dependent on surrogate measures. Surrogate measures are statistical tools employed when a direct measurement, for example, a bias such as a state of mind, cannot be measured. In effect, the tables in this chapter, and much of the others, are elaborate exercises in guesswork. There are situations in which surrogate measures are a reasonable method for measuring something, but for this chapter the technique is poorly employed.

In the seventh chapter, Cherie D. Maestas and Travis A. Braidwood present what at best is vagueness and what at worst is arguably an abuse of statistical tools. The chapter is spent, in part, on determining whether or not the 2012 redistricting exercise encouraged or discouraged new, less-experienced political candidates to run for office. The starting assertion is as follows: "we focus on the ramifications of redistricting on the emergence of candidates for office, particularly those considered to be strong, 'quality' candidates. By quality, we simply mean candidates with sufficient experience, attractiveness, and/or resources to run an effective, visible campaign regardless of whether they eventually win" (p. 186). The authors do not refine or add any details to further explain what a "quality" candidate might be. Credulity is strained when a statistician or political scientist performs an analysis with these starting conditions. Nevertheless, there are a number of charts and tables operating from this description. There are other data sets operating from the idea of incumbency, which do not have this issue, but overall the analysis is weak. The fifth, eighth, and ninth chapters exhibit similar problems.

The fourth chapter, by Joseph T. Eagleton and Daniel A. Smith, stands as a shining beacon of statistical rigor and correctness when compared to the others. This chapter concerns itself with measuring whether or not voters agreed with the ideas behind Amendments 5 and 6 by analyzing preelection surveying data and postelection voting results. The surveying data is clearly explained as are the voting results. The survey questions submitted to the public are stated. The analysis rests on binary choices—either the person surveyed did or did not believe the amendments would make any difference—and there are several different analyses of the data therefrom. Eagleton and Smith clearly explain all the tables' data, they lay out all the results, and they make clear the significance of the data. The chapter is brief, and although brevity does not equate with clarity, it nevertheless helps the overall presentation that the authors do not add unnecessary information. Overall, it is an outstanding example of the value of what statistics, when properly employed, can bring to political science.

Micah Altman and Michael P. McDonald's chapter merits mention not only because of the topic but also by what is missing. They statistically

analyze gerrymandering plans submitted by the public against state and federal fairness criteria. This is the only chapter in the anthology that analyzes gerrymandering from a mostly, if not entirely, theoretical perspective; for the authors' purposes, the plans' real-world application is only of secondary interest. Although the form of statistics is far more advanced than that of the fourth chapter, the authors nevertheless lay out their methods in clear terms, and arrive at sensible conclusions. To their credit, they admit that some concepts, such as district compactness, are difficult to quantify. Instead, they use reasonable alternatives rather than quantifying the unquantifiable, as in the seventh chapter. Given the theoretical analyses at hand, it is surprising that they do not dwell at length on the idea of using computer programs drawn from openly available statistical concepts to avoid the standard problems of political favoritism and disenfranchisement inherent in human-guided district drawing. They discuss this very idea in their article "The Promise and Perils of Computers in Redistricting."[1] While in "Promise and Perils" they delve into topics more germane to computer science, Altman and McDonald could have strengthened an otherwise strong chapter by discussing this issue.

The authors quickly convince the reader that the 2012 Florida redistricting process requires historians' and political scientists' attention. They also state the uncomfortable, obvious truths inherent to gerrymandering: that the practice of drawing electoral districts can, both in theoretical design and practical application, be used as a political weapon to disenfranchise citizens otherwise eager to participate in the democratic process. Such a political process, pregnant as it is with enormous quantities of quantitative data, practically begs for rigorous analysis, and the stumbling and groping toward the various analyses is not only avoidably frequent but also frequently avoidable. The book should be read with abundant caution, especially for those not well trained in statistics.

Note

[1]. Micah Altman and Michael McDonald, "The Promise and Perils of Computers in Redistricting," ***Duke Journal of Constitutional Law and Public Policy*** 5 (2010): 69-112.

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