

Jacob S. Hacker, Suzanne Mettler, and Joe Soss

Chapter 1

The New Politics of Inequality: A Policy-Centered Perspective

Compared to the generation that grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, Americans coming of age today confront a world of greatly expanded possibilities. The overt forms of discrimination that plagued women and racial minorities since the nation's founding have now been mostly rendered a thing of the past. The American public has become more tolerant of diversity and more comfortable with group differences. And status in American society is now less closely tied to race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation than it was even a few decades ago.

Yet this era of new possibilities has also turned out to be a time of deepening disparities. As older forms of hierarchy have receded, economic inequality has intensified sharply. The equalizing trends that prevailed in the decades after World War II reversed course in the 1970s. Since that time, most Americans have seen their incomes grow only slowly, while the assets and incomes of the very richest have spiraled upward to new heights. Alongside this growing inequality, Americans have also learned to live with greater economic insecurity, as jobs and families have changed in ways that undercut traditional sources of income protection and intensify social risks. Although those disadvantaged by growing inequality and insecurity defy simple characterization, historically marginalized groups remain disproportionately represented among the impoverished and insecure, despite the expansion of civil rights.

Americans today also confront a new world of politics and public policy. Increasingly bitter partisan struggles have produced a broad and deep restructuring of government's role in relation to the economy and society. The welfare reform legislation of 1996, which redefined the purposes of public assistance and ended entitlements for the poorest Americans, is perhaps the most prominent example. Yet it is only the tip of a larger iceberg. Revisions to tax law, labor regulations, and social policies—often made beneath the radar screen of public awareness—have combined to produce changes in nearly every sphere of government action affecting economic inequality and insecurity in the United States. These changes have not had a single or consistent effect. Some have actually increased the generosity of public benefits for the less advantaged and those at risk of economic loss. But, as we shall see, most have reduced government's role as a source of opportunity and security for poor and middle-class Americans, while expanding the scope and size of benefits for the well off.

This book is an attempt to come to grips with these changes—to make sense of them and explore their implications for the future. It is also an effort to put these changes in a larger explanatory context, advancing a new perspective on the transformation of the

American polity and economy that places the evolution of American public policy at the very heart of the story.

The premise of this book is that, in the space of roughly a generation, the role of government in the lives of Americans citizens has changed fundamentally, in ways that are not wholly appreciated in contemporary scholarly and popular commentary. The goal of this book is to unearth this broad restructuring and show how it has both reflected and propelled a major shift in the basic economic and political relationships that connect—and, increasingly, divide—Americans. The aim of *Remaking America*, in short, is to explore how recent political and policy changes affect not just economic inequality and insecurity but also the character of democratic citizenship in the United States today.

To pursue this ambitious goal, this book develops a distinctive perspective on the study of public policy—one that breaks sharply with the two most common approaches to policy development. In the first of these approaches, found in standard political analyses, policies are seen mainly as *outcomes* to be explained. In the second approach, standard in policy analyses, policies are seen as *causes* of social and economic outcomes, the forces that affect societal phenomena such as poverty, income inequality, and the like.

This division of labor between political analysis and policy analysis has value. But it comes at a substantial cost. In particular, the prevailing organization of scholarship has discouraged attention to the *political consequences* of public policy. On both sides of the divide, scholars routinely fail to ask how policies, once established, become part of the political process and transform it by their presence. Thus, in most efforts to understand inequality and democracy in America today, we find little attention paid to the ways in which policies shape the resources and capacities of citizens or affect the content and articulation of public concerns. Policies are seen as the endpoint or starting point of analysis, rather than as a fulcrum connecting changes in American politics to trends in inequality and insecurity. The prevailing division of scholarly labor has thus become a serious obstacle to making sense of what we call “the new politics of inequality” in the United States.

This volume bypasses this common division of labor to advance an alternative approach that we believe yields a clearer picture. We call this approach a “policy-centered perspective” because it places the relationship between policy and politics at the center of analysis and uses this relationship as a lens through which to bring the new politics of inequality into sharper focus. In this perspective, policies are examined as more than just political outcomes or tools of social and economic regulation. They are also strategies for achieving political goals, structures shaping political interchange, and symbolic objects conveying status and identity. Policies, in short, must be grappled with as both products and producers of politics.

The chapters in this volume all take up this challenge. Although they differ in emphasis and topic, every chapter treats public policies as crucial arenas of, tools for, and constraints on political action that in turn create distinctive social and economic consequences. As the chapters unfold, we learn how specific features of American public policies affect opportunities for effective political influence, how they shape the distributions of political resources, how they create (or retard) possibilities for political coalition, and how they influence agendas and ideas for policy reform. In doing so, these explicitly policy-centered analyses not only illuminate our present moment and the path we took to it; they also provide a valuable road map for thinking about how the policy choices that are made today may affect political possibilities in the future.

These chapters also provide a distinctive window into the development and health of American democracy. Public policy and democracy are often considered in isolation

from each other—the former is frequently envisioned as the technical resolution of specific public problems; the latter as the larger ideals upheld by a political order. The chapters to come explode this distinction, showing how the character and effect of public policy powerfully shape the quality of democratic institutions and practices. Politics and policy have combined in recent decades to transform basic features of American democratic processes—from the quality of political representation to the depth and distribution of citizen engagement to the capacities of civic groups to participate in the exercise of power. Thus, this book is not just about the politics of inequality in the United States. It is also about the changing nature of American democracy, and the changing meaning of American citizenship.

THE NEW POLITICS OF INEQUALITY AND INSECURITY

The first section of this chapter surveys some of the key changes this book investigates. The second section lays out the policy-centered approach, previewing the chapters to come. Finally, we use this framework to begin to explore the implications of recent policy changes for American democracy.

Rising Economic Inequality and Insecurity

The expression “A rising tide lifts all boats” offers an apt description of how the strong American economy of the mid-twentieth century operated. Earlier in the century, American society had exhibited a pyramid-shaped social structure: a small wealthy elite; a modest-sized middle class; and a large, disadvantaged class of industrial and agricultural workers (Leuchtenburg 1973, 48; Picketty and Saez 2003). Then, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the ranks of the middle class swelled, changing the social structure from pyramidal to diamond-shaped (Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto 2005, 71). Economic historians have described this era as the “great compression”—the most egalitarian, in economic terms, of the twentieth century (Goldin and Katz 1999; Goldin and Margo 1992). White men enjoyed historic rates of upward mobility, landing jobs with significantly higher status than those held by their fathers. Educational attainment increased, and those who attended college gained well-paid positions in the growing ranks of white-collar employment. Those with less education found manufacturing jobs that typically offered strong wages and health and pension benefits, permitting them to enjoy a middle-class lifestyle (Featherman and Hauser 1978, 48).

By the 1960s, the promise of economic progress finally began to extend to African Americans as well. Until then, the persistence of legalized racial segregation and discrimination in labor markets had stymied blacks’ opportunities for upward mobility and reinforced a large racial income gap. In the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that disparity began to diminish rapidly (Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto 2005, 49). By the early 1970s, economic opportunity also began to seem within the grasp of women. Thanks in substantial part to legal and policy changes, professions such as law and medicine became more accessible to women, and women in many sectors of the economy realized substantial gains in pay.

Changes to the economic distribution were especially dramatic in the 1960s. In the course of little more than a decade, the ranks of the poor were halved—from around one out of four Americans in 1959 to less than one in eight by 1973 (U.S. Census Bureau 2003). The growth of income and wealth at mid-century was strong at all levels of

income, but particularly strong where it had historically been weakest: from the middle to the bottom. Between 1947 and 1973, the real median income of families essentially doubled, and the percentage growth was virtually the same at every point on the income ladder (Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto 2005). The standard of living for Americans was fundamentally transformed.

In the mid-1970s, these trends began to slow and, in some cases, reverse. Economic inequality began to increase sharply. Real wages deteriorated in value, particularly among men without a college degree. Deindustrialization and technological change undermined traditional manufacturing employment, with its high wages and good benefits for less-educated workers. Increased workforce participation rates by women helped cushion the resulting loss of family income, but families in the middle and lower ranks of the economy saw meager rates of economic growth over the next few decades. After doubling in just a quarter century, real after-tax income grew by only 21 percent between 1979 and 2004 for the middle 20 percent of American households, and roughly three-quarters of this growth was a result of the increased work hours and earnings of women (see Sherman and Aron-Dine 2007; Bernstein and Kornbluh 2005).

At the same time, the nation's poverty rate, which had been declining, escalated once again. The overall rate peaked at 15 percent during the mid-1980s and again in the early 1990s. The face of poverty changed, too. Poverty among the elderly was greatly reduced, but poverty rose among the most vulnerable of Americans—children. Among those eighteen and under, as many as 23 percent lived in poverty, and nearly 34 percent were either poor or “near-poor” during the 1980s and early 1990s (U.S. Census Bureau 2003; National Center for Children in Poverty 2006)—the highest rate in the advanced industrial world (Smeeding and Rainwater 2003). The strong economy of the late 1990s helped drive down poverty, but in recent years, poverty has been growing again. As of 2005, almost 13 percent of Americans, and almost 18 percent of children, lived in poverty.

Meanwhile, the ranks of affluent Americans ballooned, as highly educated Americans found that the market offered a large and growing premium for their skills. Families with highly educated earners, especially dual-earner professional couples, continued to enjoy strong rates of income growth and pulled further and further away from the median (Burtless and Jencks 2003). Although the booming late-1990s economy improved conditions for low- and middle-income families, these gains proved fleeting, and inequality has continued to grow in the twenty-first century.

The greatest concentration of income has been at the very top. The after-tax income of the top 1 percent of households (with a minimum 2004 income of around a half million dollars for a family of four) rose by 176 percent between 1979 and 2004, compared with 69 percent for the top fifth as a whole and, again, 21 percent for the middle fifth (see Congressional Budget Office 2006). Meanwhile, the share of national pretax income going to the top 1 percent nearly doubled, from 7.5 percent to 14 percent. This is a larger share of pretax income going to the top 1 percent than at any point since 1937, except the peak stock-market years of 1999 and 2000. And income is highly skewed even among the top 1 percent. The share of national pretax income held by the top 0.01 percent (the top tenth of 1 percent)—a group of roughly fourteen thousand households with an average income of more than \$14 million—rose from 2.7 percent in 1979 to 8.6 percent in 2004. At the very top, the hundred highest-paid CEOs had an average pay of \$18.5 million in 2003, 475 times the average American salary, having increased from 3.6 million in 1979, 105 times the average salary (see Piketty and Saez 2003, appendix tables, accessed at <http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/saez/TabFig2005prel.xls>).

As a result of these trends, the United States now exhibits a much wider income dis-

tribution, not only in comparison to the United States of the 1970s but also in comparison to other affluent nations. It is tempting to see this change as symptomatic of a general economic deterioration. But although the economy grew more slowly over the post-1973 period than previously, overall economic and productivity growth remained relatively strong, especially in the 1990s. The biggest shift was in who was receiving the gains. Between 1966 and 2001, only the richest 10 percent of earners received wage and salary increases as great as the overall increase in economic productivity, and median earners saw their wage and salary income rise by only 0.3 percent a year over the entire period (Dew-Becker and Gordon 2005). What is more, rising income inequality does not appear to have been accompanied by an increase in income mobility, which might have allowed more Americans at the low end of the economic ladder to climb to its increasingly lofty upper rungs (“Meritocracy in America: Ever Higher Society; Ever Harder to Ascend,” *The Economist*, December 29, 2004).

Inequality in wealth tends to be more skewed than inequality in income, and also to be more stable over time and across generations. (Wealth includes property, stocks, retirement savings, mutual funds, and other assets.) As of 2001, the top 1 percent possessed 20 percent of household income but 33.4 percent of net worth and 39.7 percent of net financial assets—in each case, a substantially larger proportion than a generation ago. By contrast, the bottom 90 percent earned 54.8 percent of income and represented only 28.5 percent of net worth and owned 20.2 percent of financial assets (Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto 2005, 279).

In short, the United States now possesses a small class of very rich Americans who are much richer than other Americans, than the affluent of other nations, and than American elites in historical perspective.

For the vast majority of Americans, however, income and wealth data alone fail to capture fully the scope of change in their lives. First, families are devoting considerably more hours to paid employment than in the past, and women’s increased workforce participation accounts for most of the increased time on the job. Within the middle-income range, for instance, families worked the equivalent of 12.5 more full-time weeks per year in 2000 than in 1979 (Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto 2005, 40). This development helps families to maintain or boost income, but it also presents them with the new challenges of what has become familiarly known as the “work-family balance.”

For another, Americans today experience greater income volatility—meaning swings in their income—than they did a generation ago (Hacker 2006). Both white-collar and blue-collar workers have been experiencing increasing problems of job displacement, with rates of job loss now essentially what they were in the early 1980s, during the deepest recession since the Great Depression (Farber 2005). Families are more frequently headed by single parents, at least for a period of time, which places obvious strains on family income. But even two-parent families have seen a decline in their economic security. During an era in which the number of Americans filing for bankruptcy has risen from less than 300,000 in 1980 to more than 1.5 million in the early 2000s, married parents are twice as likely to file for bankruptcy as other adults (Warren and Tyagi 2003).

Finally, the United States’ employment-based framework of economic security has eroded dramatically (Hacker 2004, 2006). Workers, especially less-educated workers, are less likely to have access to health insurance and company pensions today than was the case just a couple of decades ago. The share of workers covered by employer-sponsored health insurance is down from 69 percent in 1979 to 55.9 percent in 2004 (see Economic Policy Institute 2006), and the number of Americans without health insurance has increased dramatically (U.S. Census 2003). Meanwhile, employers have shifted away from

providing a guaranteed income in retirement (so-called defined-benefit pension plans) toward allowing workers to set aside their own money for retirement, perhaps with a company match, in so-called defined-contribution plans, such as 401(k)s. Although defined-contribution plans serve some workers well, they have substantially increased the degree of risk that workers bear in planning for their retirement (Hacker 2006). Careful projections suggest that younger workers are much less likely to enjoy a secure retirement than their parents were (see Center for Retirement Research at Boston College 2006).

In the new era of rising economic inequality and insecurity, the old pecking order in which women and minorities were always on the bottom has been replaced by one in which lines of class and education loom much larger. Racial minorities and women who have become educated professionals have seen major economic gains. Nonetheless, the rise in inequality and insecurity has undermined some of the major gains of the rights revolution, particularly for the poorest members of these groups, who still fare extremely poorly on indicators of economic well-being. In 2003, for example, 29.4 percent of women earned poverty-level wages compared to 19.6 percent of men (Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto 2005, 126). Among African Americans, nearly one quarter still live in poverty, and unemployment rates are twice the national average (U.S. Census 2003). In 2004, about 33 percent of black children lived in poverty compared to 10 percent of white children (National Center for Children in Poverty 2006). The racial wealth gap also remains large: the net worth of the typical white family is \$81,000, compared to \$8,000 for black families (Shapiro 2005, 47). The growth of economic inequality, in short, has not wholly eclipsed old inequalities of race and gender. Rather, it has reintroduced some of these divisions through new mechanisms that divide groups less cleanly than older forms of explicit discrimination did.

The Restructuring of American Public Policy

It is now well accepted that the egalitarian economy of the mid-twentieth century was in important part a product of specific public policies (Hacker, Mettler, and Pinderhughes 2005). A progressive tax system and an array of social and labor policies that had been established during the New Deal, coupled with support for labor unions and the successful implementation of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, with its strong minimum-wage guarantee—all helped spread the gains of economic growth broadly (Mettler 1998; Mettler and Milstein 2007). After World War II, the G.I. Bill granted returning veterans extensive unemployment benefits, low-interest mortgages, and higher education and vocational training at government expense (Behrman, Pollack, and Taubman 1989; Fligstein 1976; Mettler 2006). Support for home ownership and advanced education was extended to the civilian population as well, through the expansion of subsidized mortgages and the creation of new education grants, loans, and work-study programs. The federal government also generously subsidized private employment-based health and pension benefits through the tax code and regulated their operation, encouraging their extension to previously excluded blue-collar workers (Hacker 2002).

To be sure, mid-twentieth-century public policies also exacerbated inequalities. Jim Crow segregation laws persisted, and key New Deal policies continued to exclude most African Americans on the basis of occupational restrictions until the 1950s (Katznelson 2005; Lieberman 1998). As a result, African Americans experienced far fewer of the gains of economic growth than did whites. It is clear that if blacks had achieved civil-rights gains earlier, they would have made greater progress climbing into the middle class before the economic shifts of the 1970s started to reverse positive trends (Mettler 2006).

Nonetheless, New Deal and postwar public policies still played a major role in ensuring that more and more Americans shared in the fruits of a growing economy.

What role has American government played in shaping and responding to more recent economic trends? Inequality of labor earnings and capital income has risen in most Western industrialized economies over this period, though not to the extent that it has in the United States. In most nations, however, government tax and transfer programs have substantially mitigated the increases in inequality these trends have produced (Brandolini and Smeeding 2006; Hacker, Mettler, and Pinderhughes 2005). The United States, by contrast, has done much less, reducing inequality only slightly through policy (Brandolini and Smeeding 2006) and actually redistributing income less than in the past (Hacker 2004).

Indeed, as the economy slowed in the United States in the 1970s, the central focus of American policy changes became the reduction of taxes and government social spending. These efforts have had mixed effects. The components of the welfare state that provide security to senior citizens—notably, Medicare and Social Security—have remained intact and strong, if in places more threadbare. In contrast, the scope and effectiveness of many other components of the American welfare state, and of tax-subsidized private workplace benefits, have deteriorated.

This has happened in part because key social benefits and regulatory policies have not kept pace with the rising cost of critical goods and services. Unlike Social Security, most policies for the disadvantaged increase only if policymakers take action to raise benefits, allowing policymakers to scale programs back simply by failing to take action. As a result of such policy “drift” (Hacker 2004), the value of average benefits has withered to varying degrees in Unemployment Insurance and Food Stamps. Pell Grants for higher education have fallen dramatically as a share of public and private college tuition, as the costs of higher education have skyrocketed. Benefits for Aid to Families with Dependent Children, often known as “welfare,” diminished in real terms by more than half between the 1970s and 1990s, and have continued to do so under its successor, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Mettler and Milstein 2007). Similarly, lawmakers have permitted the minimum wage to decline from \$8.28 in real dollars in 1968 to \$5.15 in 2006—the lowest real level in a half decade (though as this volume goes to press Congress is attempting to raise the level to \$7.25 over a two-year period).

Some programs have become less inclusive, too. New restrictions on the receipt of cash welfare benefits and unemployment insurance provide one set of examples. Many states have tightened eligibility for unemployment insurance, particularly for low-wage workers, and this is one reason the overall proportion of unemployed workers receiving benefits has declined, dropping a third in recent decades.

Social benefits have also become more restrictive because of shifts in their context, rather than changes in the terms of benefits themselves (Hacker 2004). Although states have trimmed unemployment benefits, the most important reasons why fewer unemployed workers receive benefits are the decline of manufacturing and unionized employment and rise of the service sector and part-time work, and the shift of employment to states with less generous programs.

The same process has played out in many areas, as relatively stable benefit rules interact with a rapidly changing (and increasingly unequal) economy. Tax breaks for employer-provided benefits are now more skewed toward the highly paid, because the likelihood of receiving benefits has fallen most sharply among less-advantaged workers. The G.I. Bill still exists, but its impressive capacity to extend social opportunity to a vast portion of young Americans was undermined when the nation transformed the military into

the much smaller, all-volunteer force beginning in 1973. By the same token, the National Labor Relations Act remains intact, but its ability to strengthen workers' leverage has diminished as union membership has substantially declined (Mettler and Milstein 2007). In each of these ways, public social and economic policies have become less visible and consequential in the lives of middle-class and lower-income Americans.

To be sure, there are some significant exceptions to this story, even among programs for the non-elderly. The largest is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which provides low-wage workers with substantial refundable tax credits and is now the nation's largest antipoverty program. During the 1980s and 1990s, policymakers also acted to expand the benefits and rights of the disabled and to extend Medicaid benefits to pregnant women and children in low-income families. And while the welfare reform law of 1996 imposed strict work requirements and time limits, it also gave states more freedom to provide supplementary services, such as child care and worker training, that had previously been unavailable to most welfare recipients.

These expansions are exceptions to the general pattern, however, and have been swamped by the broader changes in the economy and public policy just described. Most of these policy expansions, moreover, have been at odds with the policy approach of the postwar years. Although they involve significant new commitments of federal spending, they emphasize sharply different principles than programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and the G.I. Bill, which were designed to be broad and inclusive, open to all citizens who qualified regardless of income level. These new initiatives are targeted toward the poor or working poor; they are "means-tested" (limited to those with low incomes and limited assets); and many are structured to limit or direct the behaviors of those they reach—an approach sometimes called "the new paternalism." Finally, many of these initiatives (such as the EITC) are specifically designed to be invisible in the lives of citizens. It is not clear, therefore, whether they foster the same positive images of government and civic capacities among beneficiaries that many New Deal and postwar programs did (Mettler 2006; Campbell 2003; Hacker, Mettler, and Pinderhughes 2005).

Equally important, few of these policy initiatives have responded to the new and intensified social risks that have emerged from social, economic, and demographic changes over the last generation (Hacker 2004). Despite the growth of dual-earner couples and single-parent households, for example, the nation has failed to respond with new policies to help increasingly insecure families balance work and family. While private health coverage has declined, expansions of Medicaid have only covered a small share of those without coverage, and hence the ranks of the uninsured have grown markedly. And even as higher education has become more vital and tuition costs have skyrocketed, policymakers have done little to broaden access to college for less affluent students.

Another exception to the overall story of policy retrenchment (one much less frequently noted than the expansion of the EITC and health benefits for the poor) is the expansion of tax breaks that benefit the privileged. The "hidden welfare state," as such policies have been dubbed by Christopher Howard (1997), permits citizens who meet specific criteria to pay less in taxes than they otherwise would. Perhaps half again as large as direct social spending and growing, the hidden welfare state grants its most lavish rewards to those who receive generous health and pension benefits (an increasingly narrow group) or who own costly homes. Not only do these tax breaks generally bestow their greatest benefits on well-off citizens; they also reduce the amount of revenues the nation can collect for other purposes (Sammartino and Toder 2002; Gitterman and Howard 2003). Despite these drawbacks, tax expenditures have served as the template for nearly all new so-

cial policy initiatives in recent years, from child tax credits for families with children to expanded 401(k) retirement plans and Individual Retirement Accounts.

Finally, any effort to understand how public policy affects inequality in America today must come to grips with the stunning recent rise in incarceration. Between 1970 and 2000, the prison population of the United States increased six times over (Western and Pettit 2002). Today, the number of Americans who enter prison for parole violations alone is equal to the total number of prison *admissions* in 1980 (Travis 2005, 40). American incarceration rates are not only much higher than in the recent past; they dwarf levels of incarceration in other affluent democratic nations. This astonishing growth in imprisonment had little to do with changes in crime rates; it was driven almost entirely by changes in criminal justice policies (Travis 2005). Moreover, the effects of rising incarceration have been concentrated among poor blacks and Hispanics (Western 2006). Incarceration rates for blacks are now about eight times that for whites, and by age thirty-five, fully 59 percent of black men without a high school degree can expect to have been imprisoned (Western and Pettit 2005). Even after serving out their punishment, felons are often barred from voting—one in four black men cannot vote because of a felony conviction (Manza and Uggen 2006)—and many find it impossible to gain employment with a criminal record. Because of these deep and pervasive effects, rising incarceration rates have a strong influence on poverty and inequality in the United States today.

In sum, the pattern of policy development over the past three decades has been complex. On the one hand, there has not been a wholesale retrenchment of the welfare state. On the other hand, there has also not been the kind of concerted response to inequality and insecurity seen in other nations—or the United States' own past. American social policies remain generous toward senior citizens (Lynch 2001), but they do comparatively little to reduce poverty and inequality among the non-elderly (Smeeding 2005). A good deal of United States social spending is channeled toward the most advantaged through tax expenditures and private social benefits (Hacker 2002; Howard 1997), and this skew has increased even as the gap between the rich and the rest has widened. The poorest Americans now confront more diverse but also more conditional forms of aid, as their communities grapple with the distinctive burdens arising from mass incarceration. Even as inequality and insecurity have grown, American government has substantially withdrawn from its mid-twentieth-century role of bolstering equality and security among working-age Americans.

The Transformation of American Politics

Rising inequality and insecurity and the policy changes that have contributed to these trends are often viewed in exclusion from politics. Yet both flow directly from a series of fundamental political changes over the last generation.

The most fundamental of these recent shifts is the one that we most frequently take for granted: the rise of an aggressive, well-organized, and politically powerful conservative movement. Conservatism was on the defensive in the 1960s and early 1970s, as vividly confirmed by Barry Goldwater's crushing defeat by Lyndon Johnson in 1964. In the wake of the repudiation of Goldwater, however, conservatives regrouped and re-fashioned their strategies. Mixing a libertarian emphasis on free markets and limited government with the more authoritarian prescriptions of America's emerging social conservative movement, the Republican Party and its grassroots backers roared back in the late 1970s, particularly in the South, where the national Democratic Party's support for civil rights drove a stake through the heart of its once-dominant one-party regime.

With voting patterns forged during the New Deal finally loosened, Republicans crafted a new electoral and governing coalition that was able to capture the White House in every election but two from 1980 on—and which finally took Congress in 1994.

The essence of this shift is a sharp movement of Republican political elites to the right. Much analysis and commentary calls attention to the “polarization” of American politics, but that term is misleading, inasmuch as it implies that both parties have moved away from the center of American politics at equal speed. In fact, Republicans have moved substantially further to the right of the political spectrum than Democrats have moved to the left (Hacker and Pierson 2005; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). Moreover, the reasons for the shift differ: Republicans have moved right because nearly all Republican politicians are more conservative than Republicans of a generation ago. Among Democrats, most of the shift to the left has occurred because conservative Democrats in the South have lost office to conservative Republicans (Theriault 2006).

The inference most analysts take from this rightward shift is that American voters as a whole have grown more conservative. Popular concerns did indeed spur GOP political gains in the late 1970s. But according to the weight of the evidence, most Americans have not grown more conservative since the early 1980s (Fiorina 2004; Hacker and Pierson 2005). James Stimson (2006), for example, has developed a comprehensive measure that shows that Americans are more *liberal* today than they were in the early 1980s. Given the difficulty of coming up with consistent measures of public opinion that are not simply reactive to present circumstances, these results should be viewed with caution. But they do suggest that the shift of the Republican Party to the right, during an era in which the GOP was the dominant force in American politics, is not driven by a general public shift to the right.

Nor does the rise of a more conservative American political establishment seem to reflect an eclipse of economic concerns by “moral issues”—which might be thought to explain why in an era of rising insecurity and inequality, voters have not turned against the increasingly dominant Republican Party. Instead, voting has become *more* class-stratified—with low-income voters tending to vote Democrat, and high-income voters tending to vote Republican—than it was immediately after World War II (Stonecash 2000; Bartels 2006). At the same time, economic issues appear to have become *more* important in motivating voter choice (Bartels 2006), and a more prominent part of the platform of both parties. In short, the conservative ascendance does not signal that economic issues have faded in importance as a source of partisan conflict or motivator of voter choice.

Indeed, many of the most important changes in American politics have occurred at the level of political organization, rather than that of voter opinions. The decline of organizations that once represented middle- and working-class voters on economic issues, such as unions and fraternal societies (Skocpol 2003), has been accompanied by the rise of a well-networked and politically savvy conservative movement, organized at the grassroots level through churches and local business organizations and at the national level through think tanks, expanded business lobbies, and GOP-affiliated political action committees. With the major exception of Christian conservatives, mass membership organizations with true grassroots presence have atrophied in favor of Washington-based advocacy groups with mailing-list memberships, including so-called “Astroturf” organizations that purport to be broad-based but are run by industry organizations and have few actual members.

These organizational shifts have not pushed consistently in one ideological direction. New “public-interest” organizations, organized around the environment and other sin-

gle-issue causes that are associated with the left of the political spectrum, have proliferated (Berry 1999). But these groups have neither coordinated their activities as effectively as conservative organizations have, nor focused their attention on the economic issues that have continued to motivate voters and drive party conflict.

Thus, while the net effect of these organizational shifts is not one-dimensional, they have clearly weakened the political voice of ordinary citizens on economic issues. Voting appears to have grown more skewed by income, with declines in voting among lower-income voters driving much of the overall fall in American electoral participation (Freeman 2004). Mass-membership organizations representing the economic interests of voters from the middle to the bottom of the economic ladder, always weak, have atrophied further. Perhaps most important, money has become much more important as a political resource, as the cost of campaigns has skyrocketed and lobbying efforts have grown more extensive and expensive.

Money, of course, has always been the most unequally distributed of political resources. Every American has the vote; many have the time and inclination to participate in collective political activities. But few have the resources to influence today's costly campaigns and lobbyist-dominated policy battles—and politicians know it. In 2000, an eighth of American households had incomes greater than \$100,000, yet these fortunate households made up 95 percent of those who gave a thousand dollars or more to a campaign that year (Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy 2004). The parties now contact between a quarter (Democratic Party) and a third (Republican Party) of the wealthiest of Americans directly during campaign seasons, up from less than 15 percent of these high-income voters in the 1950s (Campbell forthcoming).

Thanks to rising gains at the top, moreover, wealthy Americans are more numerous, and much richer, than they used to be. And while they can be found at all points on the political spectrum, they have distinctive policy preferences. Unfortunately, few surveys reach enough truly rich Americans to form reliable inferences about the political preferences of the extremely well off. But what evidence there is suggests that the rich are more conservative economically—less supportive of economic redistribution and measures to provide economic security—and vastly better informed about policy than ordinary Americans. One survey regarding the 2003 tax cuts, for example, found that the wealthiest were both more supportive of and more informed about the dividend and capital gains tax cuts, which primarily benefit upper-income Americans (Hacker and Pierson 2005).

The growing influence of money also has distinctive consequences for the two major parties: It generally reinforces the GOP's low-tax, limited-government message, but it introduces major cross-pressures into the Democratic Party. To appeal to affluent voters and organized groups as sources of campaign money, Democrats have had a strong incentive to reduce their focus on issues of redistribution and economic security.

All these shifts in the American political landscape are closely linked to the changes in policy and society that this chapter has detailed. For the last quarter century, American political debate has been dominated by conservative critiques of government. Conservative elites have sought to privatize existing programs so as to increase personal responsibility and individual exposure to risk. They have emphasized greater control over individual behavior as an alternative to expanded redistribution or insurance. They have argued for a shift away from progressive taxation. Meanwhile, growing partisan conflict over the direction of American policy has reduced the chance that political majorities will come together to support the maintenance or improvement of increasingly threadbare programs, or to fill the growing gaps left by the erosion of private workplace benefits, or to counter the growing concentration of income at the top. Instead, the rising level of disagreement

between the parties has led to stalemate in many policy areas, abetting the “drift” of key policies away from their original goals.

It is against this backdrop that our authors have come together to reflect on the state of democracy, inequality, and public policy in America. The aim of this volume is to clarify how the three streams of change that we have just traced—rising economic inequality, the reconfiguration of public policy, and the transformation of American politics—fit together and how they are transforming citizens’ lives in America today.

A POLICY-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE

To pursue this project requires an analytic framework—a lens that is capable of linking seemingly unrelated changes and clarifying their connections. The authors in this volume employ a variety of theories and differ in some of their basic assumptions about politics. Yet as a group, the chapters exemplify what we term a “policy-centered perspective” on the politics of inequality and poverty.

The hallmark of this perspective is that it uses public policy as a standpoint for analyzing how political processes operate. In other words, policy serves as the focal point for a broader analysis of how political forces shape governance and how government actions reshape the society and polity.

Policy-centered analyses offer a refreshing counterpoint to the disciplinary divides that typically organize the study of public affairs. Because they do not approach politics from the perspective of any particular actor (such as a legislator, voter, or advocate) or institution (such as a legislature or court), they help to draw connections between the substantive findings and analytic insights generated by different subfields. By treating public policy as an analytic fulcrum, researchers focus attention on the dynamic constellations of social, economic, and political forces that surround specific domains of public action.

There is, of course, a large body of existing scholarship where readers can discover important insights into “the politics of public policy” (see Kingdon 1995; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Van Horn, Gormley, and Baumer 2001). In most of this literature, however, policies figure primarily as outcomes to be explained. By contrast, our authors begin from the assumption that policies are, not just products of politics, but also active forces in the political transaction itself.

In this regard, the present volume clearly builds on the growing body of research into “policy feedback effects,” which emphasizes the potential for policies to play a causal role in politics (see Skocpol 1992; Pierson 1993; Lieberman 1998; Hacker 2002). By introducing the alternative term “policy-centered,” we aim to connect this kind of causal analysis to other modes of political scholarship that place an equally strong emphasis on public policy. Thus, policy-centered political analysis can be found not just in causal studies of policy feedback, but also in constructivist analyses that put policy at the center of symbolic political transactions (Schneider and Ingram 1993) and in studies that use policy observations as a basis for interrogating key political concepts such as participation (Fung 2004; Soss 1999), power (Hayward 2000), justice (Shapiro 1999; White 2000), and citizenship (Mettler 1998; Mead and Beem 2005).

Indeed, a key goal of this volume is to highlight the diversity of roles that policies may play in politics and the variety of ways that policy-centered analyses can enhance the study of politics. Consider, for example, Lawrence Jacobs’s chapter on Medicare (chapter 4). To build his political analysis, Jacobs wends his way through party politics, legislative dynamics, public opinion processes, interest-group strategies, and a host of other topics usually kept separate in the subfields of political science. Jacobs’s analysis, however, does

not stop with an explanation of how this rich constellation of factors operates. It pushes further to show how existing policies conditioned reform strategies in the 1960s and how the passage of Medicare ultimately restructured health politics in the United States.

As this example suggests, public policies command attention in this volume partly because they function as structures organizing political action. In any political conflict, some set of policies already exists as historical facts on the ground. Thus, politics unfolds on an existing landscape where policies may already have fostered coalitions, set agendas, defined incentives, given rise to interests, shaped popular understandings, and so on. In this sense, policies can resemble political institutions, structuring social experience, organizing group competition, and channeling political participation. They can structure experience, organize competition, and channel political participation. They can impose obligations, create incentives, and define the paths of action available to governments (Pierson 2004; Hacker 2002). They can supply cognitive categories for interpreting events and populations (Schneider and Ingram 1993) and establish the balance of rhetorical and ideological resources available to political actors.

These sorts of structuring roles are emphasized by a number of authors in the volume. R. Shep Melnick (chapter 3), for example, shows how a categorical social policy regime invited litigation campaigns in the United States after the 1960s and then protected this political strategy during an era in which powerful actors sought to undercut its material and statutory bases. Andrea Louise Campbell (chapter 6) examines this same policy regime, showing how its design differences structure state-citizen relations and influence citizens' interests, beliefs, and patterns of political participation. Likewise, Richard Freeman and Joel Rogers ask how politics is restructured when policies devolve authority to lower levels of government and suggest that such policies may yield surprising new possibilities for egalitarian politics and innovative policymaking.

What the chapters in this volume make clear is that public policies matter not just as structures, but also as tools of agency that actors use to pursue political goals. Whatever their intended effects on social and economic problems, public policies often have secondary functions as instruments of political conflict. As proposals and as accomplishments, policies can be potent tools for mobilizing or placating political constituencies. They can be used to defund opponents and reward allies, to create crises that force difficult policy choices onto the agenda, to obscure which groups are benefiting or being harmed, to change perceptions of who deserves what and who is a member in full standing. In the iterative game of politics, policies are a crucial means for achieving both long-term and short-term strategic goals—in short, for human agency.

Agency is the central theme of Frances Fox Piven's analysis of welfare politics (chapter 7), which offers an illuminating contrast to Campbell's chapter. Piven asks how much policy structures truly constrain innovative political actors, emphasizing instead how policies function as tools used by elites to counter mass unrest, reward powerful political backers, and create the conditions needed to pursue cutbacks in popular social programs. Similar themes are sounded in the pair of chapters by Jacobs (on Medicare) and by Joe Soss and Sanford F. Schram (chapter 5, on welfare reform), which analyze liberal efforts to use policy reform as a springboard for political efforts to aid the disadvantaged and achieve more universal social protections. The authors wrestle with why and how these specific strategies fell short and in the process clarify a number of general dynamics related to the political uses of policy actions.

Thus a policy-centered perspective offers a revised view of both structure and agency in politics. By expanding the analysis of structuring effects beyond formal institutions, it provides greater clarity about when change is possible and what form it will

take. Likewise, by alerting us to a broader scope of tools available to actors at a given historical moment, it sharpens our understanding of how political agency works. By bringing policy to the fore, we improve our understandings of the structural constraints on political action and the strategic possibilities at actors' disposal.

Kimberly Morgan (chapter 2) offers a case in point. Morgan shows how highly visible tax policies and low-visibility social-welfare policies combined to create political barriers to social-policy expansion in the United States. Going beyond an analysis of constraint, however, she shows how this combination created opportunities to mobilize a political backlash. The resulting "tax revolt" was organized from above, Morgan contends, but its success depended on the discontent of a public that—because of the structure of tax policy—could see its losses to taxation far more clearly than it could see its gains through social protections. Bringing this analysis full circle, Morgan then shows how tax cutbacks functioned as a tool of political agency in their own right, offering conservatives a way to squeeze the budgets of popular programs and block the development of new protections as a response to changing societal needs.

In addition to themes of structure and agency, this volume also shows how policy-centered political analysis can encompass different yet complementary modes of investigation focused on the material and symbolic dimensions of public policy. More than a decade ago, Paul Pierson (1993)—the author of one of the two integrative essays at the end of this volume (chapter 13)—urged students of politics to remain alert to both the resource and interpretive effects of policy designs. Around the same time, Helen Ingram—the author of the other concluding essay (chapter 12)—and Anne Schneider (1993) argued that policies played a key role in the symbolic construction of social status, political identity, and citizenship. The authors assembled here take both these points to heart. Campbell, for example, in chapter 6 shows how policies that bestow resources on disadvantaged groups can elevate their civic capacity, as in the case of Social Security. Jennifer Hochschild and Vesla Mae Weaver (chapter 8) examine the ongoing interplay of official racial classification policies, patterns of identity, and expressions of political solidarity and demand making. Soss and Schram (chapter 5) use the case of welfare reform to show how a policy's positioning within a broader symbolic landscape can thwart the political strategies of reformers.

As these examples illustrate, a policy-centered analysis does not require scholars to assume that any particular policy has an important political effect. Rather, it encourages scholars to ask whether a given policy plays an influential role in the political process and how, if at all, the policy interacts with other political factors relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Policies, in this view, are political creations that operate as elements of an ongoing political process.

This, in a nutshell, is what we mean by a "policy-centered analysis." Readers will find in this volume a variety of constructivist and institutionalist arguments, consensus and conflict models, assumptions regarding structure and agency, quantitative and qualitative techniques, and so on. Similarly, while some of our authors conclude that policies functioned as crucial political factors in the areas they examine, others conclude that policies were of limited importance. The thread that connects these diverse chapters is that they are all empirically grounded, theoretically informed analyses that make it a priority to specify how public policies fit into and matter for ongoing political processes.

REORGANIZING DEMOCRACY

Working from a policy-centered perspective, the chapters in this volume invite readers to ask hard questions about how democracy operates in the United States today. They do so

not only in the descriptive sense of investigating what is occurring and in the explanatory sense of asking why, but also in the normative sense of contemplating how we should evaluate our polity's current operation in light of aspirations for a just and democratic society. Indeed, this bridging of explanatory and evaluative agendas is the final signature of policy-centered political analysis. Once policy is moved to the analytic foreground, efforts to study the "is" of politics almost inevitably find themselves in close proximity to the "ought" of democratic theory. Moreover, once one acknowledges that policies shape politics, the question of whether particular policies are changing our political lives for good or ill is seldom far behind.

By our lights, this development is felicitous. The joining of empirical and normative investigations should be welcomed, if for no other reason than because so many of our best studies of politics—such as Robert Dahl's 1961 classic *Who Governs?*—have been forged at this intersection. Explanatory analyses tend to yield deeper insights when they are placed in conversation with, but not overwhelmed by, the concepts and concerns of democratic theory. As Harold Lasswell (1956, 1971) argued, political science is at its best when it is also a "policy science for democracy"—concerned with concrete issues of political debate that have substantial implications for the health of democracy.

In the absence of a dialogue between the normative and the positive, political analysis risks becoming nothing more than a technical exercise—a "flight from reality" that evades the pressing questions of the age and the enduring problems of the human condition (Shapiro 2005). The authors in this volume offer a counterpoint to such bloodless social science. Amid rising inequalities and a rapidly changing American polity, they ask how power now operates and what democracy and citizenship have come to mean. Their analyses point readers toward key insights needed to understand, evaluate, and navigate the emerging landscape of democratic governance in America.

At the same time, these essays demonstrate the value of empirical engagement for efforts to reflect on American democracy. A policy-centered perspective encourages scholars to abandon the safe harbor of abstract theorizing for a closer examination of how principles operate in practice. As Lawrence Mead and Christopher Beem note in *Welfare Reform and Political Theory* (2005, 3–5), whereas "conventional policy analysis is [often relentlessly technical and] limited by its concreteness . . . political theory is limited by its frequent abstraction, its separation from the specifics of politics and policy. Theoretical reflection that focuses initially on policy is an improvement on both counts." Indeed, it is no coincidence that when contemporary theorists seek to strengthen the empirical foundation of concepts such as power, justice, citizenship, and democracy, they so often turn to the study of public policy rather than to some other empirical domain of political science (see Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Shapiro 1999; Hayward 2000; White 2000; Fung 2004). Policy designs present us with "operational definitions" of crucial normative concepts (Mead 1986), both creating and revealing the meanings of such concepts in practice.

The core concept whose operational realization is explored in this volume is democratic citizenship. "Democratic citizenship" can be understood as people's abilities to make what they want of their lives by choosing together and by effectively checking arbitrary uses of power (Shapiro 1999, 29–39). But our goal is not to theorize about some idealized form of citizenship. Rather, we aim to explain how American policies have in practice shaped the specific array of rights and obligations and the civic status experienced by members of the polity. The chapters that follow illuminate the lived experience of American citizenship and show how recent changes in American society are reconfiguring that experience.

As these chapters show, democratic citizenship has changed in paradoxical ways.

Since the 1960s Americans have gained greater access than ever before to formal legal and political rights. Yet over the same period, the confident use of these rights to effect political change has withered, particularly among the less-advantaged and the young. Compared to the middle of the twentieth century, Americans have grown much less confident that government is responsive to them and they have much less of a sense of connection to the political system (Hughes and Conway 1997; Orren 1997). Moreover, they are much less interested in and involved in politics (Putnam 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 69–74). While affluent and highly educated Americans continue to make their voices heard, the less-advantaged participate far less today than those at the same point in their life cycle and with comparable education and income, even just a few decades ago (Freeman 2004; Zukin et al. 2006).¹ These developments raise the question of how policies have contributed to this atrophying of active citizenship, particularly among those who are most adversely affected by recent economic trends.

To say that policies make politics is to say that policies have the power to enrich or erode the citizen's role, to deepen or warp the workings of democracy. For all their attention to policy, neither political analyses nor policy analyses have told us much about these possibilities. Because politically minded scholars have addressed policies mainly as outputs, they have rarely asked how policies affect the quality of political life (Mettler and Soss 2004).

In this volume, by contrast, public policies emerge as key factors mediating the relationship between economic inequality and democratic citizenship. Chapters such as those by Melnick and Jacobs show how policies created decades ago have structured and constrained contemporary efforts to address rising inequality. The chapter by Campbell, for example, demonstrates how policy designs define civic status and capacity by positioning societal groups in relation to one another and the state. This analysis is complemented by the contributions of Deborah Stone (chapter 9) and by Hochschild and Weaver, who examine how policies affect citizens' identities and public understandings of civic status. Morgan shows how existing policies can limit democratic decisionmaking by foreclosing political options, and Piven elaborates on the strategic use of policies to press unsuspecting citizens toward undesired choices.

As these and the other essays in this volume make clear, recent policy changes are transforming the meaning of American citizenship. Various policy developments elevate participation in the paid workforce as the role most deserving of civic recognition. Meanwhile, as Stone observes, other responsibilities of individuals—namely, caring for children and other family members—are no longer assigned the civic value they once held. Today, workforce participation—a rationale associated primarily with men's social provision in the New Deal—has been extended to women as the primary measure of deservingness for government benefits. More broadly, the contours of recent changes in American social programs, highlighted by Melnick, reveal that the only new policies geared to adults that are *not* justified on the basis of workforce participation are those targeted to the disabled—a group legally defined as unable to work (Stone 1984).

This emphasis on the work role—the citizen as breadwinner and taxpayer—has largely eclipsed an earlier policy emphasis on the citizen as a participating member of the polity. The earliest major forms of social provision in the United States rewarded citizen soldiers for fulfilling their civic obligation through military service; this pattern held through the creation of the G.I. Bill for returning veterans of World War II and its successors (Skocpol 1992; Mettler 2006). This tradition, while still in effect, has receded in

significance. Similarly, mothers' pensions, the precursor to welfare, were established in the early twentieth century on the rationale that mothers, in raising their own children, were preparing them to be future citizens (Orloff 1991). Such principles could hardly be further from the logic of contemporary welfare reform. Today, relatively few citizens gain access to generous social provision by honoring ties of mutual obligation and fulfilling duties of citizenship that exist outside the marketplace.

It is not simply that contemporary policies place a higher value on market relations than on bonds of citizenship. It is also that these policies at times actually devalue the civic bonds that support and enable participation in the market. Today, Americans who are neither elderly nor disabled are expected not only to work, but also to ensure the conditions necessary for their labor. As Stone observes, government has largely withdrawn support for the caring functions that families fulfill for newborns, children, and adults. These functions have been relegated to "private life" and thus potential workers must find ways, on their own, to "contract" for such services if they are to participate effectively in the labor market. Moreover, growing percentages of families confront these "private" care obligations given that fewer jobs now offer employment-based health and pension benefits.

Even as the new political order stresses individual liberty, however, government has adopted a more muscular, directive stance toward the poor, particularly the nonwhite poor. For these groups, the American state has become more directive, custodial, and punitive. Low-income women seeking welfare are now subject to stringent behavioral rules, as discussed by both Piven and Stone. At the same time, as Josh Guetzkow and Bruce Western report (chapter 11), less well educated men have become nearly three times as likely to be incarcerated as they were in 1980, and the goal of prison rehabilitation has been replaced by a narrow emphasis on punishment. In the mid-twentieth century, disadvantaged Americans came to experience government as a source of economic security and opportunity. Today, though they continue to have access to many benefits and services, they are far more likely to experience the state through programs that coerce behavior, monitor compliance, and implement punishments.

To the extent that we value democratic citizenship, we should care about how policies are affecting it. Indeed, we see such analysis as a crucial civic activity for an engaged social science. To the extent that a policy has demonstrable positive or negative effects on civic practices, we should work to draw attention to these effects.

To do so, we must first understand how our polity is changing, how these changes relate to growing economic inequalities, and how public policies matter for each. The chapters that follow offer a starting point for this understanding. As editors, we hope the policy-centered perspective developed here offers readers a fresh perspective on democratic citizenship in America. We also hope that it furnishes some of the insights and motivations needed to build a more democratic nation.

NOTES

1. Even in the hotly contested 2004 election, when young people voted at higher rates than they had in years, the turnout gap between eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds relative to older voters was still greater than it was in 1972 (19 percent compared to 16 percent). It is also important to note that between 2000 and 2004, the increases in youth voting (ages eighteen to twenty-four) were most impressive among those with some college education, whose turnout increased from 52 to 61 percent, and less so among those without it, whose turnout grew from 27 to 34 percent (Lopez, Kirby, and Sagoff 2005, 10).

REFERENCES

- Bartels, Larry M. 2006. "What's the Matter with What's the Matter with Kansas?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 1(2): 201–26.
- Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.
- Behrman, Jere, Robert Pollack, and Paul Taubman. 1989. "Family Resources, Family Size, and Access to Financing for College Education." *Journal of Political Economy* 97(2): 398–419.
- Bernstein, Jared, and Karen Kornbluh. 2005. "Running Harder to Stay in Place: The Growth of Family Work Hours and Incomes." Washington: New America Foundation. Accessed at http://www.newamerica.net/files/archive/Doc_File_2436_1.pdf.
- Berry, Jeffrey M. 1999. *The New Liberalism: The Rising Power of Citizen Groups*. Washington: Brookings Institute Press.
- Brandolini, Andrea, and Timothy M. Smeeding. 2006. "Patterns of Economic Inequality in Western Democracies: Some Facts on Levels and Trends." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 40(1): 21–26.
- Burtless, Gary, and Christopher Jencks. 2003. "American Inequality and Its Consequence." Luxembourg Income Study, working paper series 339. Luxembourg: LIS (March).
- Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2003. *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Political Activism and the American Welfare State*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- . Forthcoming. "Parties, Electoral Participation, and Shifting Voting Blocs." In *The Transformation of American Politics*, edited by Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. 2006. "Retirements at Risk: A New National Retirement Risk Index." June 2006. Accessed at http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/issues/ib_48.pdf.
- Congressional Budget Office. 2006. "Historical Effective Federal Tax Rates: 1979 to 2004." December 2006. Accessed at <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/77xx/doc7718/EffectiveTaxRates.pdf>.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in the American City*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Dew-Becker, Ian, and Robert Gordon. 2005. "Where Did the Productivity Growth Go? Inflation Dynamics and the Distribution of Income." NBER Working Paper w11482. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research (December).
- Economic Policy Institute. 2006. "Change in Private Sector Employer-Provided Health Insurance Coverage, 1979-2004." Accessed at http://www.epi.org/datazone/06/health_ins.pdf.
- Farber, Henry. 2005. "What Do We Know About Job Loss in the United States?" *Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Economic Perspectives* 2Q: 13–28.
- Featherman, David L., and Robert M. Hauser. 1978. *Opportunity and Change*. New York: Academic Press.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 2004. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Longman.
- Fligstein, Neil. 1976. "The G.I. Bill: Its Effects on the Educational and Occupational Attainment of U.S. Males, 1940–1973." CDE working paper 76-9. Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin, Center for Demography and Ecology.
- Freeman, Richard B. 2004. "What, Me Vote?" In *Social Inequality*, edited by Kathryn Neckerman. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Fung, Archon. 2004. *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Gitterman, Daniel P., and Christopher Howard. 2003. "Tax Credits for Working Families: The New American Social Policy." Discussion paper. Washington: Brookings Institution, Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy.
- Goldin, Claudia, and Lawrence Katz. 1999. "Egalitarianism and the Returns to Education During the Great Transformation of American Education." *Journal of Political Economy* 107: S65–S92.

- Goldin, Claudia, and Robert A. Margo. 1992. "The Great Compression: The Wage Structure in the United States at Mid-Century." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 107(February): 1–34.
- Gutmann, Amy, and Dennis Thompson. 1996. *Democracy and Disagreement*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hacker, Jacob S. 2002. *The Divided American Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2004. "Privatizing Risk Without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 243–60.
- . 2006. *The Great Risk Shift: The Assault on American Jobs, Families, Health Care, and Retirement—And How You Can Fight Back*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. 2005. *Off Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Hacker, Jacob S., Suzanne Mettler, and Dianne Pinderhughes. 2005. "Inequality and Public Policy." In *Inequality and American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*, edited by Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Hayward, Clarissa Rile. 2000. *De-Facing Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Howard, Christopher. 1997. *The Hidden Welfare State: Tax Expenditures and Social Policy in the United States*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Hughes, John E., and M. Margaret Conway. 1997. "Public Opinion and Political Participation." In *Understanding Public Opinion*, edited by Barbara Norrand and Clyde Wilcox. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Katznelson, Ira. 2005. *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America*. New York: Norton.
- Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2nd edition. New York: Harper-Collins.
- Lasswell, Harold D. 1956. "The Political Science of Science: An Inquiry into the Possible Reconciliation of Mastery and Freedom." *American Political Science Review* 50(December): 961–79.
- . 1971. *A Pre-View of the Policy Sciences*. New York: American Elsevier Publishing.
- Leuchtenburg, William E. 1973. *A Troubled Feast: American Society Since 1945*. Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown.
- Lieberman, Robert. 1998. *Shifting the Color Line*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Lopez, Mark Hugo, Emily Kirby, and Jared Sagoff. 2005. "The Youth Vote 2004: Fact Sheet." CIR-CLE. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. Accessed at http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_Youth_Voting_72-04.pdf.
- Lynch, Julia. 2001. "The Age Orientation of Social Policy Regimes in OECD Countries." *Journal of Social Policy* 30(3): 411–36.
- Manza, Jeff, and Christopher Uggen. 2006. *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Mead, Lawrence. M. 1986. *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*. New York: Free Press.
- Mead, Lawrence M., and Christopher Beem, editors. 2005. *Welfare Reform and Political Theory*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Mettler, Suzanne. 1998. *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- . 2006. "Unfinished Work: American Democratization, Citizenship, and Processes of Political Change." Unpublished Paper. Syracuse University.
- Mettler, Suzanne, and Andrew Milstein. 2007. "American Political Development from Citizens' Perspective: Tracking Federal Government's Presence in Individual Lives over Time." *Studies in American Political Development* 21(1): 110–30.
- Mettler, Suzanne, and Joe Soss. 2004. "The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 2(1): 55–73.

- Mishel, Lawrence, Jared Bernstein, and Sylvia Allegretto. 2005. *The State of Working America 2004/2005*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press/ILR Press.
- National Center for Children in Poverty. 2006. "Basic Facts About Low-Income Children: Birth to Age 18." Accessed at http://nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_678.pdf.
- Orloff, Ann Shola. 1991. "Gender in Early U.S. Social Policy." *Journal of Policy History* 3(3): 249–81.
- Orren, Gary. 1997. "Fall from Grace: The Public's Loss of Faith in Government." In *Why People Don't Trust Government*, edited by Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Picketty, Thomas, and Emmanuel Saez. 2003. "Income Inequality in the United States, 1913–1998." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118(1): 1–39.
- Pierson, Paul. 1993. "When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change." *World Politics* 45(July): 595–628.
- . 2004. *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rosenstone, Steven J., and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan.
- Sammartino, Frank, and Eric Toder. 2002. *Social Policy and the Tax System*. Washington: Urban Institute.
- Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy." *American Political Science Review* 87(2): 334–47.
- Shapiro, Ian. 1999. *Democratic Justice*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- . 2005. *The Flight from Reality in the Human Sciences*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Sherman, Arloc, and Aviva Aron-Dine. 2007. "New CBO Data Show Income Inequality Continues to Widen." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. January 23, 2007. Accessed at <http://www.cbpp.org/1-23-07inc.htm>.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1992. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- . 2003. *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civil Life*. Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Smeeding, Timothy M. 2005. "Public Policy, Economic Inequality, and Poverty: The United States in Comparative Perspective." *Social Science Quarterly* 86(5): 955–83.
- Smeeding, Timothy M., and Lee Rainwater. 2003. *Poor Kids in a Rich Country: America's Children in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Soss, Joe. 1999. "Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action." *American Political Science Review* 93(2): 363–80.
- Stimson, James. 2006. "Public Policy Mood: 1952 to 2004." Graph. In *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings*. 2nd edition. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press. Updated version of graph accessed at <http://www.unc.edu/~jstimson/time.html>.
- Stone, Deborah A. 1984. *The Disabled State*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press.
- Stonecash, Jeffrey M. 2000. *Class and Party in American Politics*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy. 2004. *American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality*. Washington: American Political Science Association.
- Theriault, Sean M. 2006. "Party Polarization in the U.S. Congress: Member Replacement and Member Adaptation." *Party Politics* 12(4): 483–503.
- Travis, Jeremy. 2005. "They All Come Back." Washington: Brookings Institute.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2003. "Poverty in the United States: 2002." Current Population Reports. Accessed at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p60-222.pdf>.
- Van Horn, Carl E., William T. Gormley, Jr., and Donald C. Baumer. 2001. *Politics and Public Policy*. 3rd edition. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press.

- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Warren, Elizabeth, and Amelia Warren Tyagi. 2003. *The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers and Fathers Are Going Broke*. New York: Basic Books.
- Western, Bruce. 2006. *Punishment and Inequality*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Western, Bruce, and Becky Pettit. 2002. "Beyond Crime and Punishment: Prisons and Inequality." *Contexts* 1(3): 37–43.
- . 2005. "Black-White Wage Inequality, Employment Rates, and Incarceration." *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(2): 553-78.
- White, Julie Anne. 2000. *Democracy, Justice, and the Welfare State: Reconstructing Public Care*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Zukin, Cliff, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. Delli Carpini. 2006. *A New Engagement: Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. New York: Oxford University Press.