

American Political Development from Citizens' Perspective: Tracking Federal Government's Presence in Individual Lives over Time

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Although scholars of American political development (APD) have helped transform many aspects of the study of U.S. politics over the last quarter-century, they have barely begun to use the powerful analytical tools of this approach to elucidate the relationship between government and citizens. APD research has probed deeply into the processes of state-building and the creation and implementation of specific policies, yet has given little attention to how such development affects the lives of individuals and the ways in which they relate to government. Studies routinely illuminate how policies influence the political roles of elites and organized groups, but barely touch on how the state shapes the experiences and responses of ordinary individuals. As a result, we know little about how governance has influenced citizenship over time or how those changes have, in turn, affected politics.

Presumably state development influences many different aspects of citizenship, each of which is critical to the state's legitimacy, authority, and power. Different periods of governance might affect the extent to which individuals possess a sense of civic obligation and duty or a claim to specific rights. In some political eras, citizens may derive their identity from the state; in others, they may do so in opposition

to the state. Given disparities in the ways policies may affect different groups of people, governance could create separate forms of status and stratify the citizenry; alternatively, some policies might foster a sense of social solidarity even among those who are situated differently in terms of class, race, or gender. The form taken by governing arrangements across time is likely to shape citizens' attitudes about and levels of support for government generally and for particular policies. Perhaps most significant, distinct regimes may mobilize citizens to participate to varying degrees, in different ways, and for diverse purposes. Each of these relationships lies well within the domain of American political development and thus APD scholars ought to be able to explain much about them.

Yet, such concerns remain on the margins of APD scholarship, typically discussed briefly—if at all—in the final chapters of books or conclusions of articles. In effect, APD scholars have ceded the study of individual political behavior to behavioralists and rational choice scholars. Unfortunately, neither group employs the analytical tools necessary to grapple effectively with the questions posed above. Behavioralists tend to conduct their analysis from a society-centric starting point, considering political institutions and policies only as an endpoint of political behavior rather than potentially as a formative influence upon it; rational choice scholars, conversely, typically assume how institutions influence

The authors wish to thank Sarah Byrne for her masterful work in preparing our graphs for publication and two anonymous reviewers who provided helpful comments on an earlier draft.

political behavior without engaging in empirical investigation of such dynamics. Neither group, furthermore, does much to consider how the dynamics of historical processes—change over time, and matters of timing and sequencing—can influence political behavior. By contrast, APD scholars, being deeply engaged in questions about institutional development and historical processes, are well equipped to illuminate much about the relationship between citizens and government. The problem is that, to date, they have largely refrained from doing so.

We suspect that the hesitation of APD scholars to venture into this terrain might derive in part from the lack of readily available data. Scholars of political behavior typically use cross-sectional data on political attitudes and behavior but rarely conduct their analysis in a manner that is attentive to the particularities of the moment in time from which such data are drawn. They often treat their findings as if they are indicative of general patterns of political behavior when, in fact, such outcomes can be generated largely from historical circumstances and the relationship between government and society at that particular juncture in time. The National Election Studies Cumulative File has certainly prompted consideration of change in political attitudes and behavior over time, but only rarely has it been analyzed in light of transformations in governing institutions and how they might influence such outcomes.¹ Longitudinal datasets are more likely to permit such analysis, yet they are relatively scarce.² More problematic for APD scholars, each of these kinds of data typically lacks indicators of individual citizens' experiences of government: in only two years, for example, did the National Election Studies ask respondents whether they had benefited from any of a few different public programs;³ surveys do not even reliably ask respondents basic questions of civic status such as whether they are veterans.

At a more basic level, neither do we have data that measures government's actual presence in individual lives across time through major public programs. Surprisingly, such data have simply not existed in any

coherent, organized, and comprehensive fashion. Some studies of individual policies have assessed their scope among the citizenry in particular time periods, but we have had nothing approximating an inventory of state development as citizens have experienced it. While such data would not permit the same kind of individual-level analysis as rich survey data, nonetheless it would offer an indispensable means for scholars to probe how variation in governance across time has affected citizenship.

As a first step in addressing this void, we have amassed data that begin to measure the timing and extent of U.S. federal government's presence in citizens' lives historically. We present these data in this research note in an effort to help facilitate a bridge between scholarship on American political development and the study of mass political behavior. We have cast the net broadly, encompassing a wide array of major policies that have influenced citizens' economic security and well-being from the 1860s to the present, as listed in Table 1. Although the government-citizen relationship can be studied through other lenses, including the qualifications for legal citizenship, civil rights, or voting rights,⁴ or the terms of conscription for military service, we choose to focus on the coverage and benefit rates of major programs through which government offers financial assistance, goods, and/or services directly to individual citizens or families or otherwise directly affects their standard of living. In addition to such obvious choices as social insurance and public assistance programs, we consider a wide array of programs including agricultural subsidies, veterans' educational benefits, and tax deductions for home mortgage interest. Nonetheless, we do not pretend to be comprehensive in this treatment; indeed, it is our hope to provoke a conversation among scholars about additional policies that *should* be included in such an assessment.⁵

Our basic task has been to *quantify* the extent and timing of the federal government's presence in individual lives through these public programs. For each program, we sought to find both the number of beneficiaries served annually and the average dollar amount of benefits for each recipient by year.⁶ This

1. A classic example is Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

2. The four waves of the Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study, collected by Kent Jennings, Gregory Markus, Richard Niemi, and Laura Stoker, offers an example of rich data that has permitted scholars to probe change in political behavior over time. Scholars of American political development would do well to use such data, analyzing them in light of political institutional change. These data are available at: <http://webapp.icpsr.umich.edu/cocoon/ICPSR-STUDY/04037.xml> (accessed 18 Dec. 2006).

3. The two years were 1982 and 1992. Some analysis of the data from both years is presented in Suzanne Mettler, "The Transformed Welfare State and the Redistribution of Political Voice," in *The New American Polity: Activist Government, the Redefinition of Citizenship, and Conservative Mobilization*, ed. Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

4. For example, see Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

5. One anonymous reviewer pointed out that we could also include assessment of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Family and Medical Leave Act; however, we did not see these as meeting our criteria of affecting citizens' standard of living.

6. Readers should be aware that we are not focusing on changes in the overall size of such government expenditures, a theme that has been explored extensively elsewhere. For example, see Robert Higgs, *Crisis and Leviathan: Critical Episodes in*

Table 1. Coverage and Benefit Rates in Selected Major U.S. Social Programs, 1862–2000

Policy	Policy Type	Direct v. Via Tax System	Year Began, and Changed or Ended	Year or Period of Peak Coverage	Percentage Population Covered at Peak	Year of Peak Average Benefit Rates	Peak Average Benefit Rate (2002 dollars)
Veterans' Pensions (Civil War–Present)	Patronage, Redistributive by 1920s	Direct	1865	1893	1.93	1945	\$7,551/yr.
Homestead Act	Patronage	Direct	1862–1986	1885–1886	1.55 ¹	NA	NA
USDA Programs	Patronage	Direct	1862+	1862–1930		NA	NA
Sheppard-Towner Act	Patronage	Direct	1921–1928	1921–1928	12 ²	NA	NA
National Labor Relations Act	Regulatory	NA	1935	1953	25.5 ³	NA	NA
Minimum Wage, Fair Labor Standards Act	Regulatory	NA	1938			1968	\$8.28/hr.
Unemployment Insurance	Redistributive	Direct	1935	1975	1.85	1972	\$244/mo.
Old Age and Survivors' Insurance	Redistributive	Direct	1935/1939	1991, 1993	14.3	1999	\$1,717/mo.
Disability Insurance	Redistributive	Direct	1956	1999	2.4	1982	\$3,788/yr.
Old Age Assistance, Supplemental Security Income	Patronage, Redistributive by 1974	Direct	1935/1974	1950	1.83	1967	\$378/mo.
Aid to Dependent Children, AFDC, and TANF	Patronage, Redistributive by 1960s	Direct	1935/1996	1993	5.50	1968	\$871/mo. ⁵
Food Stamps	Redistributive	Direct	1962	1994	10.54	1981	\$144/mo.
GI Bill, Education, and Training Benefits	Redistributive	Direct	Separate Versions Began in 1944, 1952, 1966, 1967, 1984	1944–1951	5.17 ⁶	WW II version	Covered full tuition /fees, any college/training program, and subsistence allowances
Medicare ⁷	Redistributive	Direct	1965	1993–1995	10.4	1997	\$6,441/yr.

TABLE 1. Continued

Policy	Policy Type	Direct v. Via Tax System	Year Began, and Changed or Ended	Year or Period of Peak Coverage	Percentage Population Covered at Peak	Year of Peak Average Benefit Rates	Peak Average Benefit Rate (2002 dollars)
Medicaid	Redistributive	Direct	1965	2000	15.0	1997	\$3,999/yr.
Pell Grants	Redistributive	Direct	1972	1992	1.57	1975	\$2,468/yr.
Home Mortgage Interest Deduction	Redistributive	Tax System	1913	1987	31.4 ⁸	1996	\$2,406/yr. ⁸
Earned Income Tax Credit	Redistributive	Tax System	1975	1995, 1996, 1998	16.4 ⁸	2000	\$2,023/yr. ⁸

Notes: 1. Total percentage of white male adult population who had obtained land under Homestead Act between 1862 and 1900.
 2. Total percentage of households reached during the program's seven-year duration (3 million households).
 3. Total percentage of workforce unionized. In 1953, this amount was equivalent to 14.6 percent of the population.
 4. Widowed parent and two children.
 5. Average benefit rate per family.
 6. Total percentage of individuals who benefited from 1944 to 1951.
 7. Hospital insurance and/or supplementary medical insurance for aged persons.
 8. Based only on data since 1980. Coverage indicates percentage of all taxpayers who received benefit.

task required us to consult a surprisingly large number and wide array of primary and secondary sources. We then calculated the number of beneficiaries in each year as a percentage of the total U.S. population (unless noted otherwise). We also converted all individual or family benefit amounts into constant 2002 dollars, using the Consumer Price Index-All Urban Index (CPI) from 1850 to 2002.⁷

We also give some attention to *qualitative* dimensions of policies such as basic design features and administrative arrangements, given that these may also influence citizens' relationship to government in significant ways.⁸ We observe variation in the form of rules and procedures governing eligibility, coverage, and financing arrangements, as well as the terms of authority over such matters. For instance, we note whether eligibility is defined by standardized rules and procedures, as an entitlement to those who meet certain criteria, or whether administrators or lower levels of government retain authority or discretion for defining the parameters of inclusion.⁹ We consider whether programs are structured as direct payments to individuals, through highly visible policies, or whether they are hidden by their form of delivery—as in the case of tax expenditures.¹⁰

As a means of categorizing policy design with respect to citizenship, we adapt Theodore J. Lowi's classic typology that identifies public policies according to the form of political relationship that they

would be expected to foster. Whereas most applications of Lowi's framework focus on the relationship policies foster with interest groups or organizations and public officials, we use it to classify relationships with mass publics. *Distributive* or *patronage* policies, the type that dominated during the nineteenth century and which still exists today, provide resources in order to encourage particular behavior; they do not involve citizens in a directly coercive relationship. They are disaggregated and dispensed unit by unit, to units in isolation from each other.¹¹ Beginning in the late nineteenth century, national government also established *regulatory* policies, which control the behavior of actors in the private sector through general rules, using sanctions to enforce standards of conduct, such as in the case of occupational, safety, wage, and environmental standards. Some such policies—especially those adopted in the New Deal and thereafter—offer rights to citizens by restricting the behavior of firms in a directly coercive manner. *Redistributive* policies, created primarily in the New Deal and decades following, affect the entire environment of conduct, treating individuals and firms alike in a coercive manner. They alter the status of individuals and social groups, either by shifting large amounts of money from one group to another or by managing the money supply in other ways. Classic examples include social security and income tax policy.¹² We use these distinctions to group and characterize the nature of the relationships that government programs establish with citizens.

This broad overview of trends in the relationship between national government and citizens offers a sweeping tour of the changing landscape over time. We peruse shifts in governance from the patronage and particularistic policies of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; to the rise of standardized regulatory and redistributive policies in the mid-twentieth century; to a hybrid combination of reinforcement and retrenchment of such programs and the simultaneous bolstering of the hidden welfare state over the last three decades. This inquiry offers a starting point for examining the role of the American state in shaping citizenship and for considering how the relationship between government and citizens has changed historically.

the Growth of American Government (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

7. The CPI is a geometric mean formula that reflects changes in the cost of living and consumption of consumer goods and services over time. While there are various disputes among economists over which is the best CPI to use, we have chosen the one used by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. John J. McCusker, *How Much is that in Real Money?: A Historical Commodity Price Index for Use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 2001). Dollars for each year (current dollars) were converted to 2002 dollars (constant dollars) using the following formula: $(X) * (Y/Z_1)$ where X = the dollar amount from a particular time in the past that we are seeking to convert; $Y = 179.9$, the CPI for 2002; and Z_1 = the CPI for the year from which X is derived.

8. As Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider have argued, policy design conveys important messages to citizens about "what government is supposed to do, which citizens are deserving or undeserving, and what sort of participation is appropriate in democratic societies" (Ingram and Schneider, "Constructing Citizenship: The Subtle Messages of Policy Design," in *Public Policy for Democracy*, ed. Helen Ingram and Stephen Rathgeb Smith (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1993), 68).

9. Suzanne Mettler, "Social Citizens of Separate Sovereignties: Governance in the New Deal Welfare State," in *The New Deal and the Triumph of Liberalism*, ed. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 231–71.

10. Christopher Howard, "The Hidden Side of the American Welfare State," *Political Science Quarterly* 108 (1993): 403–36; Paul Pierson, "When Effect Becomes Cause," *World Politics* 45 (1993): 595–628; Jacob S. Hacker, *The Divided American Welfare State: The Battle Over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

11. Theodore J. Lowi, "Four Systems of Policy, Politics and Choice," *Public Administration Review* vol 32 (July/August 1972): 298–310; Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory" *World Politics* 16 (1994): 677–715.

12. Lowi, "Four Systems of Policy," 300–302. In distinguishing between patronage and redistributive policies, we treat those which are not automatically available to all individuals in the targeted group as patronage and those which are as redistributive. As shown in Table 1, some policies, such as welfare, began as patronage in actual delivery style, but evolved into redistributive policies over time. Suzanne Mettler is grateful to Theodore Lowi for discussing these matters with her and helping her to arrive at these conclusions.

While our primary goal here is to suggest avenues for future research and to provide data that will assist scholars in that research, our survey of these data already suggest a finding that should be of interest to APD scholars generally: an alternate *chronology* of political development. When the role and presence of the state is viewed from citizens' perspective rather than in relation to the role of political elites and interest groups, a different periodization becomes apparent and eras that have received relatively little attention from scholars appear to be pivotal. APD scholars have focused particularly on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; however, the presence of federal government in citizens' lives across that period—while noticeably greater than it had been previously—pales in comparison to what emerged later on. Even within that timeframe, surprises emerge: the most massive growth in Civil War veterans' pensions, for example, was engineered neither by the Reconstruction Congress nor by Progressive Era policymakers, but by lawmakers in 1890.¹³ Likewise, the premier New Deal policies reached relatively small portions of the population in the 1930s and 1940s; rather, major expansions of such programs occurred in the 1950s, a period rarely identified as a crucial period for state-building, and in the 1960s and 1970s, not only through well-known Great Society state-building efforts but also through lower-profile legislation such as the Social Security Amendments of 1972. And although the 1980s and 1990s are identified primarily with retrenchment, this overview also highlights important amplifications of government in the lives of some citizens over this period, for example, through the expansion of Medicaid and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).¹⁴ Considering American political development from citizens' points of view implies, therefore, that greater scholarly attention should be directed to these less obvious but critical periods of state-building.

As Americans gained social benefits from government, they did so initially on the basis of particular political identities that were recognized as being worthy of government largesse. This survey will be presented according to such categories, therefore, until later periods when our attention will shift from the effects of new programs to the sustainability of existing programs.

13. Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 110–11, 120–30.

14. On such recent expansions, see Christopher Howard, *The Welfare State Nobody Knows: Debunking Myths About U.S. Social Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Jennifer Erkulwater, *Disability Rights and the American Social Safety Net* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

PROMOTIONAL GOVERNANCE, 1862–1934

In the early republic, American citizens found their rights and obligations to be defined primarily at the state and local levels, while the federal government occupied itself with a relatively narrow set of functions involving the promotion of commercial activity, territorial expansion, and the protection of boundaries. Between the Civil War era and the present, the American state underwent massive transformations, gradually becoming a critical force in the workings of the economy, relations in society, and, not least, in citizens' lives. In the late nineteenth century, the federal government's relationship with citizens became more apparent through the distribution of economic benefits. These programs featured government in the role of promoter or facilitator of economic development, but refraining from coercive intervention or the establishment of widespread national standards.¹⁵

Veterans

The American tradition of providing benefits to “citizen-soldiers” began after the Revolutionary War.¹⁶ The initial policy for Civil War veterans, established in 1862, offered strictly war-related pensions: they were granted only to veterans who had suffered a disability in military service and to widows whose husbands had war-related deaths. By 1890, Congress expanded the benefits to veterans who suffered from any infirmities, regardless of need or whether such disabilities were incurred during military service, and to widows of veterans regardless of whether their husbands' death was service related.¹⁷ The only eligibility requirements were that the veteran had served at least ninety days and was too incapacitated to perform manual labor.¹⁸ By the turn-of-the-century, such pensions had become fairly large and widespread.¹⁹

15. Richard L. McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 204–27.

16. Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 102–51.

17. Kenneth T. Kato, “Veterans' Benefits: An Overview,” in *The Encyclopedia of the United States Congress*, ed. Donald C. Bacon, Roger H. Davidson, and Morton Keller, vol. 4. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 4:2037–40; Mary R. Dearing, *Veterans in Politics: The Story of the G.A.R.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952).

18. Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 152–53.

19. Theda Skocpol estimates that “18 percent of all U.S. residents aged 65 and over were pensioners in 1910, including 28.5 percent of all elderly men, along with approximately 8 percent of all women, who were included on the survivors' pension roll.” The value of such benefits—worth 25 to 30 percent of average annual earnings—compared favorably to the value of benefits for elderly citizens granted by European nations at the time (Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 132, 134–35).

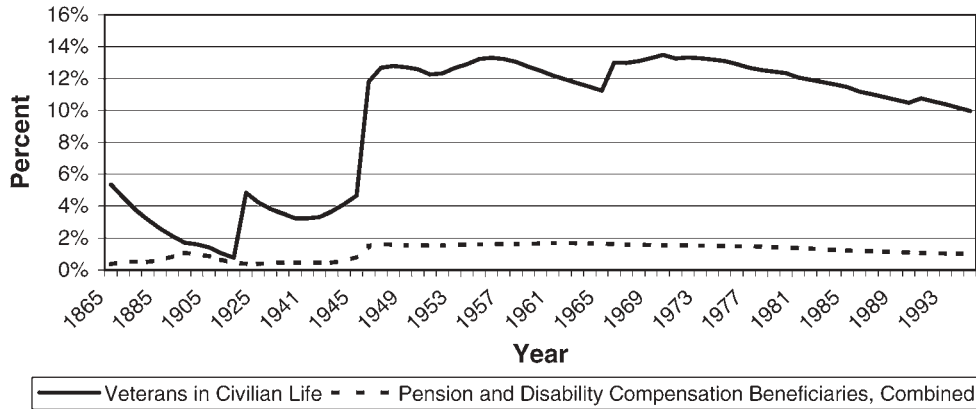


Fig. 1. Veterans and Veteran Pension and Disability Compensation Beneficiaries as Percentage of U.S. Population, 1865–1995.

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970, Pt. 2* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), 1145, 1148–49; National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, Department of Veterans Affairs, *Trend Data: Fiscal Years 1970–1995*, “Table 1 - Estimated Number of Veterans in Civilian Life,” and “Table 15 - Veterans Receiving Service-Connected Disability Pension,” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2002); Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), 316.

The Civil War pensions can be characterized as “patronage” or “distributive” policies. They were delivered through the decentralized patronage system of party politics, which permitted a high degree of discretion to local politicians to control the timing and targeting of benefits for political purposes.²⁰ Over time, reformers came to associate such benefits with corruption; therefore, policymakers eventually sought an alternate—and much more minimal—approach. In creating policies for World War I veterans, they de-emphasized pensions and offered medical and hospital care and vocational training to disabled veterans only; non-disabled veterans were offered little more than the opportunity to buy low-cost insurance.²¹

Figure 1 offers an historical perspective on veterans as a percentage of the general population. Veterans comprised over 5 percent of the population at the end of the Civil War, and then their presence gradually receded until World War I, when comparable levels were reached once again. Figure 1 also tracks veterans’ pension and disability compensation beneficiaries, combined, as a percentage of the population. Prior to World War II, the presence of government through veterans’ pensions was most evident from about 1890 to 1920, when beneficiaries composed over 1 percent of the population. It then diminished—even when the percentage of veterans grew—due to the more restrictive post-World War I approach. Yet Figure 2 shows that while disability and pension benefits in the early twentieth century hovered around \$3000 per veteran in 2002 dollars,

they then rose considerably in value after World War I. Thus, although relatively few individuals gained benefits in the 1920s and 1930s, those who did so received payments that were generous in historical perspective.²²

Settlers and Farmers

At the same time as federal government rewarded those who had responded to the call of military service on behalf of the nation, it also offered land to those who would settle the West.²³ Several different land policies allowed “squatters” to become land-owners. For example, the Homestead Act of 1862, passed by the Reconstruction Congress, granted free homesteads of 160 acres to settlers who would occupy the land for five years, or, alternatively, allowed them to purchase the land at \$1.25 per acre after six months.²⁴ To be eligible, the law required only that individuals be at least 21 years of age and the head of a household. If, after five years, a homesteader had built a home and improved on and farmed the land, he or she was granted a patent for the land, signed by the President of the United States. Over time, 10 percent of U.S. land was claimed and settled under the Homestead Act.²⁵

22. We have not included benefits for veterans’ survivors, though these also became quite extensive in the early twentieth century.

23. Laura Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

24. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 29.

25. Everett Dick, *The Lure of the Land: A Social History of the Public Lands from the Articles of Confederation to the New Deal* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), chap. 10.

20. Ibid., 118–20; 143–48; McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 157; Dearing, *Veterans in Politics*.

21. Kato, “Veterans’ Benefits,” 2038–39.

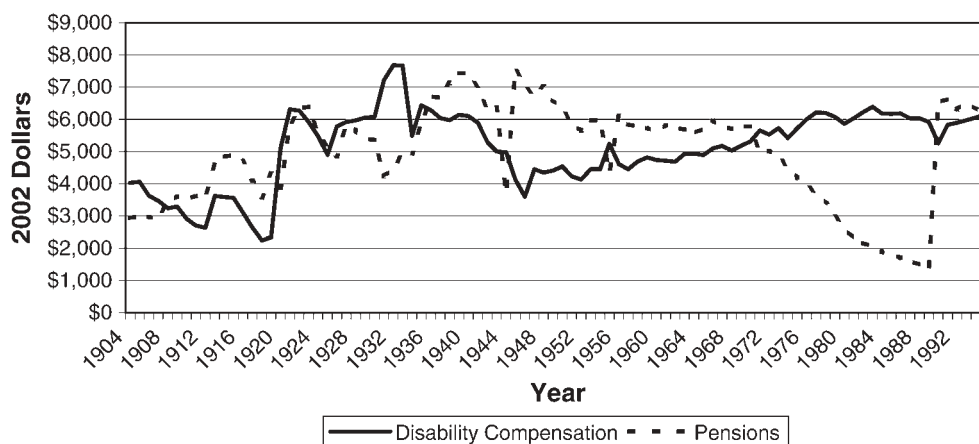


Fig. 2. Average Annual Veterans' Benefits per Recipient, 1904–1995 (2002 Dollars).

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970, Pt. 2* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), 1148–49; National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, Department of Veterans Affairs, “Table 15 - Veterans Receiving Service-Connected Disability Pension” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2002).

The administration of the Homestead Act and other land policies came to be regarded, however, as a dismal failure. Contrary to the hopes of its framers, the program fell under the control of large landholders—timber barons, railroads, and mining companies—and was interpreted differently across localities.²⁶ This style of delivery exemplified that of distributive policies as administered under patronage-era politics. As a result, by 1900, only 600,000 homesteaders—1.55 percent of the white male adult population at that time—had obtained land under the auspices of this act.

The federal government also involved itself with citizens as farmers, primarily through the activities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), created in 1862. Such policies bore the potential to reach a large proportion of the citizenry: as recently as 1880, 44 percent of the U.S. population lived on farms.²⁷ Initially, the USDA relied primarily on patronage-style policies, providing services to farmers by dispensing seeds, testing soil, and tracking weather patterns. In 1914, the Smith-Lever Agricultural Extension Act established a system through which land-grant colleges shared practical expertise about farming and home economics with farm

families.²⁸ Such responsibilities likely made federal government a perceptible presence in farm communities.²⁹ As the agency grew more effective, however, the farming population diminished considerably, falling steadily to about 25 percent of the population by the onset of the Great Depression.

Mothers and Infants

The beginning of the twentieth century also witnessed the emergence of a “maternalist” welfare state, characterized by social and labor policies that targeted women in their role as mothers. Most such policies, such as mothers’ pensions and protective labor laws, were enacted at the state level. Eligibility and procedural rules were dependent on locality, and the programs were typically underfunded given the constraints on states’ abilities to raise revenues during that period. A noteworthy exception to this pattern was the Sheppard-Towner Act, the premier federal grant-in-aid social program, which aimed to improve maternal and infant health. During its brief lifespan (just seven years in the 1920s), the program is reputed to have had an impact on 3 million homes—12 percent of all households at that time.³⁰

This overview of the broad contours of pre-New Deal governance reveals that, by the early twentieth

26. John Opie, *The Law of the Land: Two Hundred Years of American Farmland Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 65–69; Dick, *Lure of the Land*, 154; Daniel P. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862–1928* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 57.

27. United States Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970, Pt. 1*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1975): 457; United States Department of Agriculture, *Census of Agriculture, VI, Geographic Area Series, Pt. 51*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1997), 10; George Thomas Kurian, ed., *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2005*, (Maryland: Bernan, 2001), 221–22.

28. Carpenter, *Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, chaps. 6–7; Sanders, *Roots of Reform*, 391–94, chap. 9.

29. As Carpenter has demonstrated, the USDA also developed impressive scientific research capabilities and expanded its repertoire to numerous regulatory functions such as forest conservation, pure food and drugs, and meat inspection. Arguably, these functions, though profoundly important for the political economy, touched citizens’ lives less directly and visibly than the programs we have mentioned (Carpenter, *Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, chaps. 6–7).

30. Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, 481, chap. 7–9 passim; *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 43.

century, the federal government played a role in many citizens' lives. While APD scholars have focused particularly on transformations in this formative period of state-building, government's role in most citizens' lives nonetheless remained relatively small to nonexistent. Although veterans' pensions and the Homestead Act reached their peak levels of coverage during this time period, the former did not reach even 2 percent of the population in a given year, while the latter had covered an even smaller percentage across the full span of four decades. Given the size of the farming population, USDA programs likely reached far more Americans than either of these; however, we have not found any data to demonstrate program coverage. In any case, in none of these programs were benefits granted in the form of rights to individual citizens—they were not guaranteed—and their delivery was highly particularized and contingent upon local administrative procedures.³¹ Although American governance had come to affect the daily lives of some categories of citizens quite dramatically, its largely distributive form gave it an arbitrary character, far removed from the rights-bearing traits that emerged subsequently.

REDISTRIBUTIVE GOVERNANCE, 1935–1975

The New Deal ushered in new forms of governance, both regulatory and redistributive, that eventually grew to affect the lives of American citizens in a far more widespread and consequential manner. The new programs departed from the old both in terms of their ability to reach far greater portions of the population and in the more systematic, routinized way that they applied to individual citizens and families. Studies that focus on the origins of policies emphasize the importance of the 1930s. Yet, although the relief programs of the early New Deal signified strikingly new forms of national government activity, they were only temporary. Meanwhile, the more enduring programs of the New Deal, though enacted in Congress and upheld by the Supreme Court through well-known dramas of the 1930s and early 1940s, became far more significant in citizens' lives in subsequent decades than they were at their

31. One possible exception, deserving of greater scrutiny, is the postal service. Already by the mid-nineteenth century, the delivery of mail was “the great event of the day” that likely exemplified federal government in action in citizens' lives (Catherine Sedgwick, “The Postoffice,” *Grahams's Magazine*, 23 [1843]: 65, qtd. in Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995], 148). It was offered in a manner that transcended class and geographic boundaries, with free mail delivery in cities by 1863 and to far-flung rural areas by 1898, with the commencement of the Rural Free Delivery service. Richard John cautions against assuming vast inclusivity even in this domain, noting that visits to the post office reaffirmed the notion of the “citizen as free, white and male,” with others marginalized (John, *Spreading the News*, 168).

inception. From 1950 to 1975, policymakers gradually fortified existing policies by making benefits both more generous and more inclusive. They also created new programs that further extended economic security and well-being.³²

Workers

The law that represents the “first constitutional revolution” most centrally is the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, the regulatory policy that sanctioned the right of workers to organize and engage in collective bargaining. No longer, as Karen Orren explains, would workers be subject to the belated court-governed feudalism that had long defined workers' place—and lack of rights—vis-à-vis employers.³³ Although the famous Supreme Court decision upholding this law, *National Labor Relations Act v. Jones and Laughlin Steel Corp.*, was handed down in 1935, the full impact on citizens was not immediately realized.³⁴ As Figure 3 demonstrates, although the law stimulated union organizing, it was not until after World War II that union membership climbed to more than 20 percent of the labor force. The next few decades represented the zenith of American labor, with close to one-quarter of all workers unionized—or about one out of seven members of the general population.³⁵ In historical perspective, American workers had greater leverage in negotiating contracts during the mid-twentieth century than before or since, and unorganized workers benefited similarly from the higher standards of pay and working conditions that unions demanded.³⁶

The New Deal also introduced national labor standards, regulatory guarantees established by the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. The law included minimum wage guarantees, maximum hours provisions, and stipulations regarding overtime pay.

32. Julian E. Zelizer, *Taxing America: Wilbur D. Mills, Congress, and the State, 1945–1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

33. Karen Orren, *Belated Feudalism: Labor, the Law, and Liberal Development in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

34. 301 U.S. 1 (1937).

35. Even then, government support for labor, always weak by international standards, grew more tepid with the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, followed by right-to-work laws in numerous states during the 1950s. See Nelson Lichtenstein, “From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era,” in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, “Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933–1950,” *Political Science Quarterly* 108 (1993): 283–306. For measures of the percentage of the employed population, see U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population: 1940 to Date,” <http://stats.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat1.pdf> (accessed 19 Dec. 2006).

36. Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and Heather Boushey, *The State of Working America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 189–96.

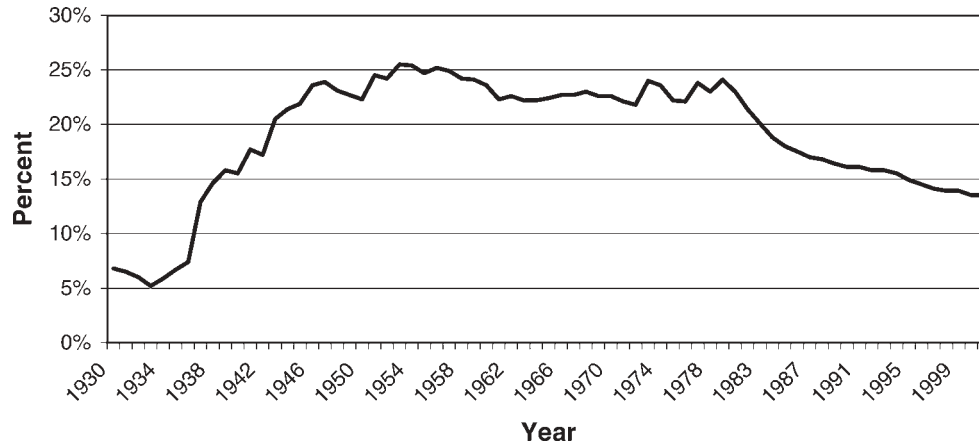


Fig. 3. Union Membership as Percentage of the Labor Force, 1930–2001.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics 1975–Reference Edition* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), 389; Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., *Union Membership and Earnings Data Book: Compilations from the Current Population Survey* (Washington, DC: BNA PLUS, 1997), 10; U.S. Data Book Series, *Handbook of U.S. Labor Statistics: Employment, Earnings, Prices, Productivity, and Other Labor Data*, 6th ed. (Lanham, MD: Bernan Press, 2003), 378–79.

Note: Missing data from 1982.

Initially, the law covered only about 34 percent of the work force, and the vast majority of those who could have benefited from the provisions—especially women and men of color—were exempt.³⁷ Policy-makers gradually expanded the law's reach, however, such that by 1974 nearly all workers were covered.³⁸ Similarly, they boosted the minimum wage rate several times between 1949 and 1969, as revealed by Figure 4. Its real value crested \$6.00 per hour in 1956, and peaked at \$8.28 in 1968, then remained high by historical standards until 1980.

Workers also gained federally administered unemployment compensation, included within the Social Security Act of 1935. The percentage of the population using the benefits has varied over time with the unemployment rate, with beneficiaries averaging about 1 percent of the population in the postwar era.³⁹ Paralleling the growth in unionization rates and the value of the minimum wage, the value of average monthly unemployment insurance benefits also rose dramatically from about \$552 in 1938 to \$977 in 1972, as seen in Figure 5. In each of

these ways, government became an increasingly influential force in elevating the well-being of nonaffluent, non-elderly citizens.

The Elderly, Disabled, and Survivors

The most sweeping, generous, and enduring component of New Deal governance has been the part of the Social Security Act (SSA) that became synonymous with its name. Old Age Insurance was implemented in 1935 as a contributory social insurance program for retired workers, and subsequently expanded in 1939 to include payments for wives and widows of primary beneficiaries, as well as for surviving dependent children.⁴⁰ Like the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the program initially omitted many categories of workers from coverage; however, amendments in 1950 extended it to the self-employed and employees of nonprofits, and in 1954, to agricultural and domestic workers.⁴¹ These expansions, paired with the aging of the population, meant that by 1973 more than 12 percent of the population collected program benefits, as seen in Figure 6. Beginning in 1956, Congress also expanded coverage to disabled workers, benefiting 2 percent of the general population by the 1970s.⁴² Thus, by the mid-twentieth century, 14 percent of Americans were receiving Social Security benefits that were guaranteed as rights and administered according to

37. Mettler, *Dividing Citizens*, 199. In fact, some of the groups initially covered, especially in the clerical and service sectors, became excluded in 1949. Louis Weiner, *Federal Wage and Hour Law* (Philadelphia: American Law Institute, 1977), 8, 62–64, 73–74.

38. Weiner, *Federal Wage and Hour Law*.

39. Council of Economic Advisors, Economic Report of the President, “B-45. Unemployment Insurance Programs, Selected Data, 1969–2000,” <http://w3.access.gpo.gov/usbudget/fy2003/erp.html>, (accessed Feb. 2003); U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Social Security Bulletin Annual Statistical Supplement and Bulletins, 1939–1972* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973); Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics, Pt. 1*, 354.

40. Mettler, *Dividing Citizens*, chap. 4; Robert C. Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

41. Martha Derthick, *Policymaking for Social Security* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1979).

42. Deborah A. Stone, *The Disabled State* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1984).

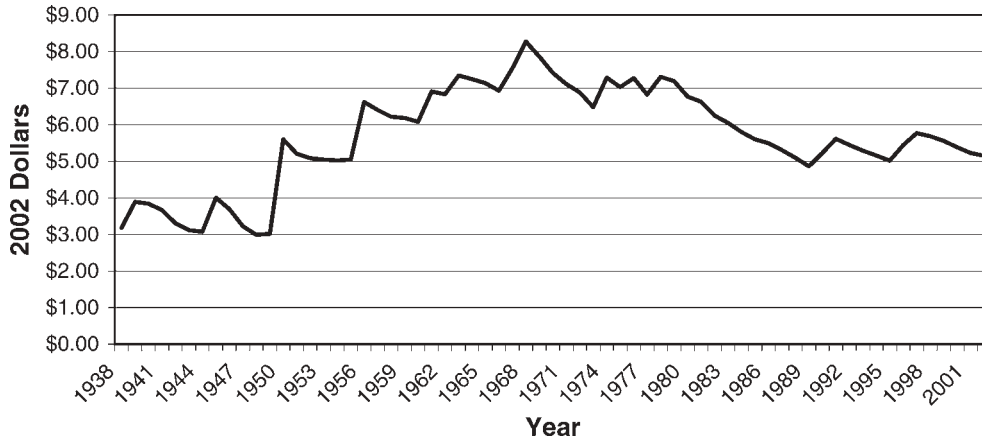


Fig. 4. Real Value of the Minimum Wage, 1938–2002 (2002 Dollars).

Source: Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington D.C., Social Security Board, U.S. GPO, 2000), 123; Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: The National Data Book* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1980), 439.

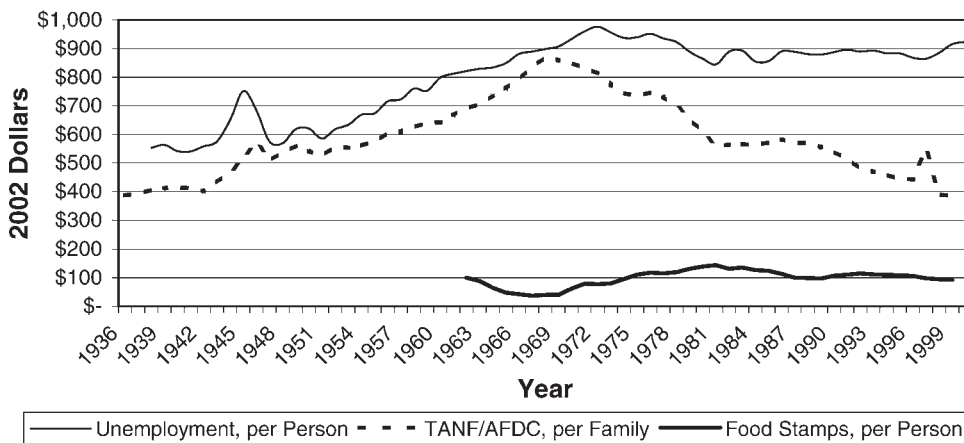


Fig. 5. Average Monthly Public Assistance and Unemployment Insurance Benefits, 1936–1999 (2002 Dollars).

Source: Council of Economic Advisors, “Economic Report of the President, B-45. Unemployment Insurance Programs, Selected Data, 1969–2001,” <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy03/sheets/b45.xls> (February 2003); Social Security Administration, *Social Security Bulletin Annual Statistical Supplement and Bulletins, 1939–1972* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973); Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970, Pt. 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), 354; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1959), 76, 124–25; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* “Table 9. G: TANF/AFDC and Emergency Assistance,” <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2001/9g.pdf> (2001); Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* “Table 9. H Food Stamps,” <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2001/9h.pdf> (2001).

Note: According to the Department of Health and Human Services, the spike in the AFDC line for 1997 is a result of the fact that AFDC was replaced by TANF that year, and the federal government had to rely on states to provide benefits data. The new reporting system led to some overlap in reporting, due to the accounting shift from quarters to calendar years. Conversation with Evelyn Mills, November 3, 2004.

standardized procedures. A half-century prior, in a system in which eligibility and delivery were far less assured, slightly more than 1 percent of Americans had collected veterans’ pensions. The development of Social Security, therefore, represented an immense transformation in the size, scope, and form of government’s role in the guarantee of social citizenship.

Old Age, Survivors’, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) benefits became known for their relative generosity, especially after Congress passed automatic cost-of living adjustments (COLAs) in 1972.⁴³ Figure 7 shows that benefits climbed from

43. Derthick, *Policymaking for Social Security*.

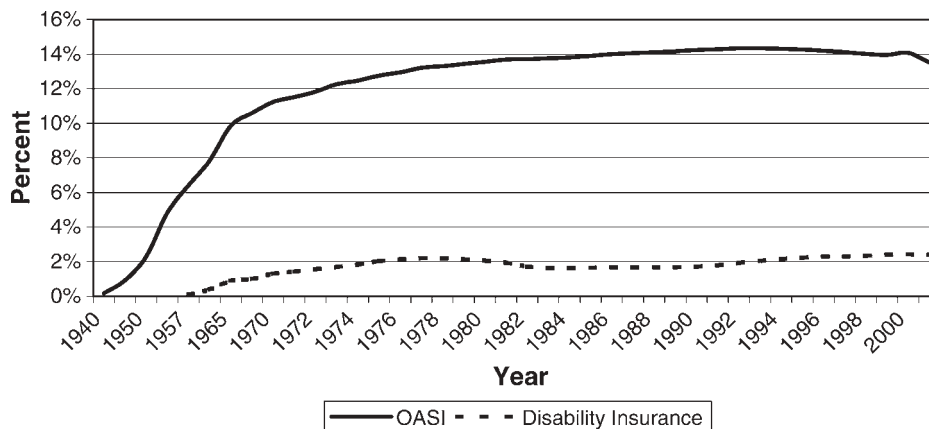


Fig. 6. Social Security Beneficiaries as Percentage of U.S. Population, 1940–2002.

Source: Social Security Administration, “Number of Beneficiaries Receiving Benefits on December 31, 1970–2006,” <http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/STATS/OASDIbenies.html> (February 2003); Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), 173.

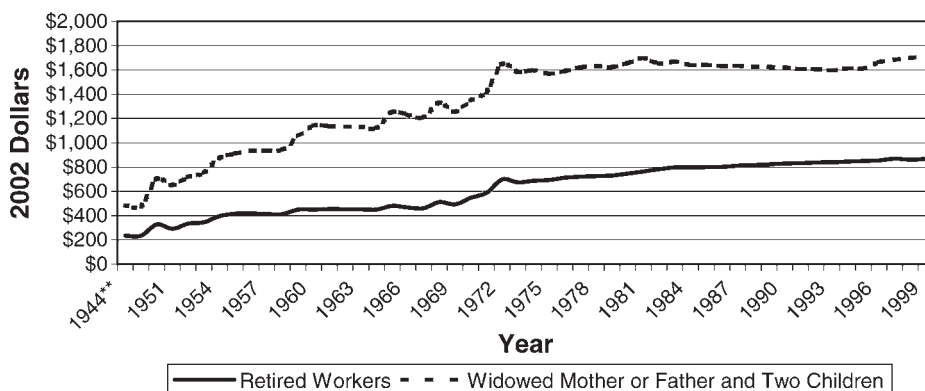


Fig. 7. Average Monthly Social Security Benefits, 1944–1999 (2002 Dollars).

Source: Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 27; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), 48; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), 95; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1981), 103; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991), 189; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), 124, 191.

an average of about \$235 dollars per month for retired workers in the early 1940s to nearly \$700 per month in the early 1970s, and from \$484 per month to more than \$1,600 per month for a widow and two children. Thus, the mid-century Social Security system offered beneficiaries about as much in one month as beneficiaries of veterans’ pensions in the early twentieth century had received in one year.⁴⁴

44. Besides social insurance for the elderly, the Social Security Act of 1935 also included Old Age Assistance (OAA), a joint federal-state, grant-in-aid, means-tested public assistance program for older individuals who failed to qualify for the contributory program. In its early years, OAA supported more than 1 percent of the population, at rates comparable to those offered by OASI. By 1950, coverage

Low-Income Citizens

Through the creation of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), also part of the SSA, the federal government extended its reach to low-income single mothers and their children. Policymakers fashioned ADC as a joint

rates declined as more and more individuals qualified for the contributory program. The value of benefits grew slowly and gradually to over \$350 per month in the 1960s. In 1974, policymakers replaced OAA with Supplemental Security Income, a program for the elderly poor, as well as for low-income blind and disabled individuals. Unlike OAA, SSI operates according to national standards and mandatory cost-of-living increases, features more akin to social insurance.

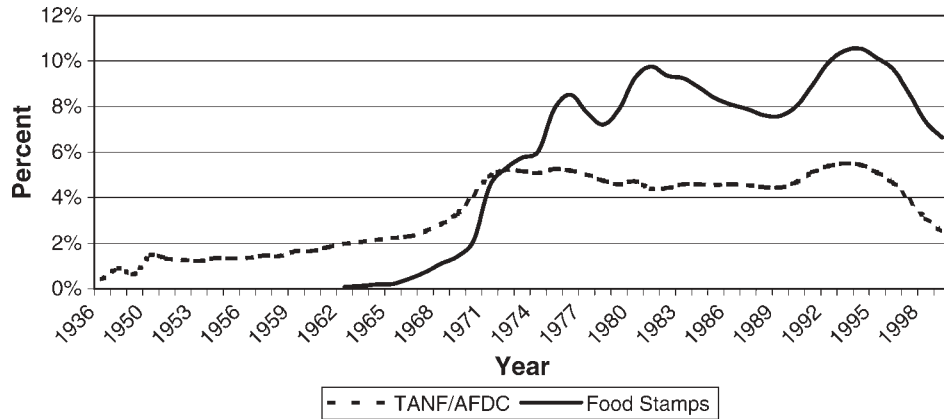


Fig. 8. Public Assistance Beneficiaries as Percentage of U.S. Population, 1936–1999.

Source: Social Security Administration, *Social Security Bulletin Annual Statistical Supplement* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1959), 76, 124–25; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement*, “Table 9.G: TANF/AFDC and Emergency Assistance,” <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2001/9g.pdf> (2001); Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement*, “Table 9.H Food Stamps,” <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2001/9h.pdf> (2001).

federal-state grant-in-aid program, built atop the existing state-level mothers’ pensions. States retained more authority over eligibility standards for ADC than for any other program in the SSA. While state officials routinely granted benefits to widows and their children, women who became single parents for other reasons were less likely to gain coverage. In addition, many states enforced work rules, which limited access.⁴⁵ As seen in Figure 8, those covered by the program in its early years amounted to less than 1 percent of the population. After 1950, when mothers themselves gained benefits as well, coverage increased only slightly. Not until the several key Supreme Court decisions forced states to abandon suitable home rules, residence requirements, and other exclusionary tactics in the 1960s did the program reach more than 2 percent of the population. At this stage, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), as the program was renamed in 1962, finally began to approximate an entitlement, a benefit assured to those who fit nationally uniform, standardized eligibility criteria.⁴⁶ Coverage rates grew dramatically: by the early 1970s, slightly more than 5 percent of the general population benefited from the program at any given point in time. Benefit levels varied considerably from state to state, as noted in Figure 5, but gradually increased

from average monthly rates per family of \$387 in 1936 to \$774 in 1973.⁴⁷

In 1962, the United States initiated the food stamps program, an in-kind benefit program for low-income individuals administered by the USDA.⁴⁸ As seen in Figure 8, the program reached less than 2 percent of the population until the early 1970s, when coverage began to increase rapidly, expanding to 8.5 percent of the population by 1976. As illustrated in Figure 5, the value of food stamps over this same period began at an average of \$99 per month per individual, fell to less than half that value by 1970, then rebounded and surpassed its original value by 1975. These benefits could be used in combination with other means-tested programs, such as AFDC.

As these examples illustrate, in the mid-twentieth century, national government assumed new responsibilities for income maintenance among less advantaged Americans below retirement age. A more

47. Comparing average AFDC monthly benefits per family to family coverage rates under OASI in Figure 9, we notice that both began with fairly similar rates of coverage—around \$400 and \$500 per month, respectively. By the early 1970s, however, benefits in the contributory program surpassed those given to families in the public assistance program by a two-to-one ratio: \$1,600 per month compared to \$850.

48. An earlier experiment with food stamps had been tried during the New Deal. On this and the origins of the program in the late 1950s and early 1960s, see Ronald F. King, *Budgeting Entitlements: The Politics of Food Stamps* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), chap. 3. Although begun as a means to distribute surplus farm products, the food stamps program evolved into a program to provide support for the purchase of food by allowing beneficiaries to purchase stamps at less than face value, at rates that depended upon their income. On this, see Kenneth Finegold, “Agriculture and the Politics of U.S. Social Provision: Social Insurance and Food Stamps,” in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, ed. Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 217–31.

45. Suzanne Mettler, “States’ Rights, Women’s Obligations: Contemporary Welfare Reform in Historical Perspective,” *Women and Politics* 21 (2000): 1–34.

46. R. Shep Melnick, *Between the Lines: Interpreting Welfare Rights* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1994); Blanche D. Coll, *Safety Net: Welfare and Social Security, 1929–1979* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

complete accounting of such programs could also measure the reach of housing subsidies, school lunch programs, and special health and feeding programs for pregnant women.⁴⁹

Veterans

After World War II, the veteran presence in the population grew to more than 12 percent, as seen in Figure 1. As before, disabled veterans—1.5 percent of the population in the post-World War II years—qualified for pensions and compensation. However, unlike in the earlier period, nondisabled veterans now also gained significant benefits: those contained within the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, otherwise known as the GI Bill. The Bill included a loan guarantee program, used by 29 percent of veterans, that aimed to assist in the purchase of homes, farms, or businesses; generous unemployment benefits, which 14 percent used in their entirety; and educational and training benefits, used by 51 percent of all veterans—7.8 million individuals—to attend college or vocational school or obtain job training at government expense.⁵⁰ Unlike the veterans' pensions at the turn of the century, the GI Bill's educational provisions were administered as social rights: they were available to any veteran with an honorable discharge who had served for at least ninety days, and could be used at any institution to which a veteran gained admission through the standard procedures.⁵¹ The benefits—up to \$500 per year—covered all tuition and fees at any university in the country, and veteran students also received monthly subsistence payments. All told, by the mid-1950s, 5 percent of all Americans had benefited from the World War II Bill's education and training provisions.⁵²

The GI Bill quickly gained popularity and served as a template for subsequent policymaking. Congress extended comparable benefits through the Korean GI Bill (Public Law 82-550) in 1952, the Cold War GI Bill (Public Law 89-358) in 1966, and the Vietnam War GI Bill (Public Law 90-77) in 1967, although each version extended educational and training benefits on some-

what less generous terms than its predecessor.⁵³ Given the smaller numbers of veterans of each conflict and lower program usage rates, 1 to 2 percent of the general population benefited from these later versions.⁵⁴ The policy served as a powerful, highly visible means of allocating government benefits and boosting social opportunity among men across class lines throughout the mid-twentieth century.

College Students

Following on the success of the GI Bill in expanding access to college among veterans, between 1958 and 1965, Congress provided assistance to civilian students as well through the creation of student loans, grants, and work-study. Next, the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 included "Basic Educational Opportunity Grants" (later renamed "Pell Grants" in 1980 in honor of their sponsor, Senator Claiborne Pell [D-RI]). This program came to be the primary source of federal aid for undergraduate students with financial needs.⁵⁵ The program reached more than .5 percent of the population by 1975, and, as seen in Figure 11, offered average awards of \$2,546 per recipient.⁵⁶

Ill and Infirmed

The final major mid-twentieth century innovation in the relationship between government and citizens involved health care provision for seniors and low-income people. Medicare, which covers those who qualify for OASDI and is administered on a federal basis, includes hospital insurance and coverage of some home health care services, supplementary medical insurance for doctors' bills, and diagnostic and outpatient services.⁵⁷ Payments began in 1967, and by the late 1970s, as seen in Figure 9, the program covered 6 percent of the population; the inclusion of the disabled in 1972 added an additional 0.5 percent of all Americans. Targeting low-income individuals, Medicaid is organized as a federal-state program: states set eligibility criteria, and they must pay as much as one-half of expenses. From early on, it reached more of the population than Medicare, covering 10 percent by the mid-1970s. Medicare granted average benefits of \$3,192 per beneficiary when it

49. For example, see Barbara Devaney, "The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children," in *Social Programs That Work*, ed. Jonathan Crane (New York: Russell Sage, 1998), 184–200.

50. U.S. President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Veterans' Benefits in the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1956), 275, 300–304. Among beneficiaries, 28 percent attended colleges and universities, 45 percent went to schools below the college level, especially trade and vocational programs, and the remainder used on-the-job or on-the-farm training.

51. Veterans who had served for ninety days qualified for one year of education at government expense, with an additional month of education for each additional month of service, up to a maximum of forty-eight months.

52. U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, *Final Report on Educational Assistance to Veterans: A Comparative Study of Three GI Bills* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973), 161.

53. The Korean and post-Korean versions limited training to a maximum of thirty-six months and permitted veterans to be trained for one-and-a-half times as long as they had been on active duty. Veterans of the Vietnam War had to have served a minimum of eighteen months to qualify for the benefits. U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, *Final Report on Educational Assistance to Veterans: A Comparative Study of Three GI Bills* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973).

54. *Ibid.*

55. Jacqueline E. King, *2000 Status Report on the Pell Grant Program* (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 2000), 7.

56. *Ibid.*, 33.

57. Theodore R. Marmor, *The Politics of Medicare* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1970); Zelizer, *Taxing America*, chap. 7.

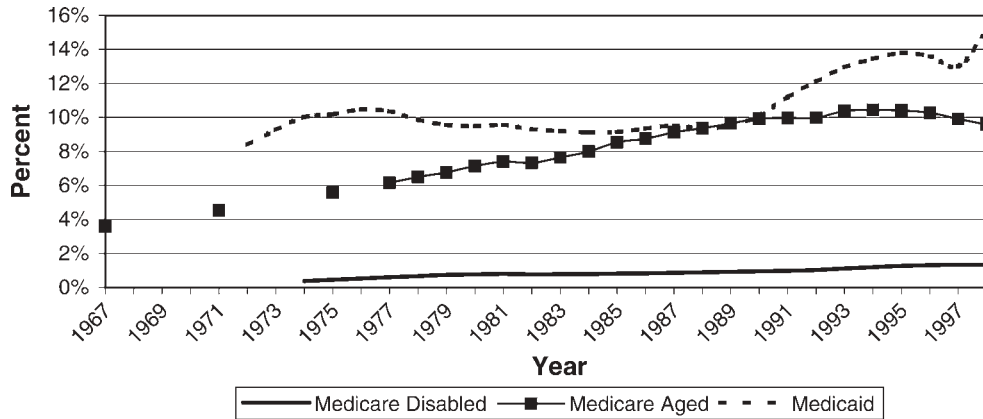


Fig. 9. Medicare and Medicaid Beneficiaries as Percentage of U.S. Population, 1977–1998.

Source: Social Security Administration, "Table 8.B: Medicare Enrollment, Utilization, and Reimbursement," <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2001/8b.pdf> (2001); Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1981–2000); Social Security Administration, "Table 8.E: Medicaid Recipients," <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2001/8e.pdf> (2001).

Note: We have not located annual data for the early years of Medicare and Medicaid.

began in 1967, as seen in Figure 10, while Medicaid recipients received an average of \$1,540 in 1972.⁵⁸

Farmers

In only one major area—agricultural policy—did the federal government's presence recede among the population during the mid-twentieth century—a situation that owed more to the decline in farming rather than to a scaling back of the policy. During the mid-century period, the percentage of the population involved in agriculture diminished sharply, falling from 25 percent in 1935 to less than 5 percent in 1975.⁵⁹

At the same time, new programs for farmers were more successful than their predecessors in bolstering economic security through the implementation of new techniques designed to elevate farm prices and limit crop surpluses. Beginning in 1933, the Agricultural Adjustment Act set marketing quotas and offered farmers payments in return for cultivating less of their land while the Commodity Credit Corporation gave loans to those who would sign production-control agreements. Additional price supports followed in subsequent years, culminating with the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973, which offered subsidies to farmers in order to keep prices low for consumers and sufficiently high for farmers.⁶⁰

58. We have not found data on the earlier years of Medicaid.

59. See fn.26 above.

60. Theda Skocpol and Kenneth Finegold, *State and Party in America's New Deal* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Gail L. Cramer, Clarence W. Jensen, and Douglas D. Southgate, *Agricultural Economic and Agribusiness* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997), 299; John Mark Hansen, *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby, 1919–1981* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Through such programs, federal government support for farm families became increasingly generous. Whereas 30 million acres were idled under New Deal programs in the 1930s, twice as many—as much as 60 million acres—lay fallow at government expense in the years between 1954 through the 1960s. Similarly, the value of Commodity Credit Corporation inventories peaked in the late 1950s and early 1960s, reaching \$25 billion in 1992 dollars, and direct payments to farmers, compensating for low market prices, were twice as high in the later 1960s than they had been at the previous high point in the late 1930s.⁶¹ While such programs did not raise farm income considerably, they did stabilize it and reduced some of the risk and uncertainty inherent in farming.⁶² Given the decline in the percentage of Americans involved in farming, however, such benefits targeted a small and rapidly diminishing portion of the population.

The American State at High Tide

In sum, American citizens likely gained a powerful "sense of the state" in their lives over the course of the mid-twentieth century. Compared to the years between the Civil War and the 1920s, the U.S. federal government's role had shifted tremendously in scope, form, and character. First, in terms of scope, whereas previously only a small proportion of the citizenry had contact with federal agencies, by the mid-twentieth century, we estimate that at least

61. Bruce L. Gardner, *American Agriculture in the Twentieth Century: How It Flourished and What It Cost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 216–19.

62. Bruce L. Gardner, "The Federal Government in Farm Commodity Markets: Recent Reform Efforts in a Long-Term Context," *Agricultural History* 70 (1996): 177–95.

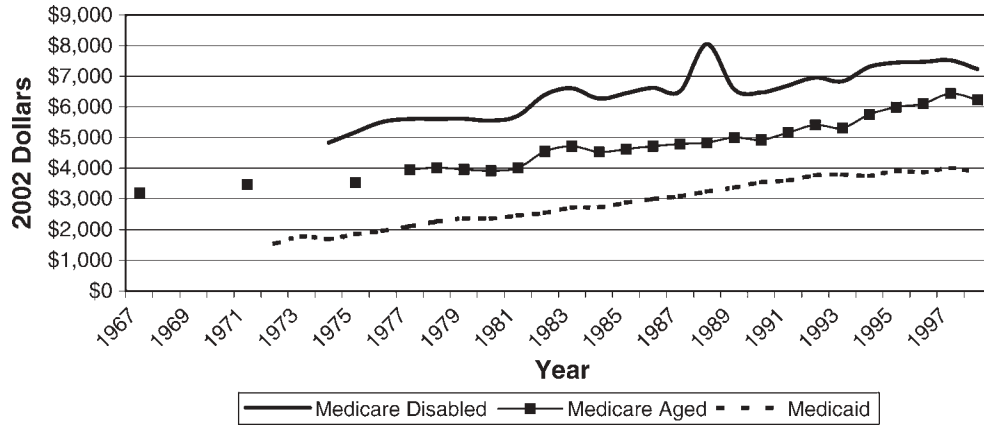


Fig. 10. Average Annual Medicare and Medicaid Benefits per Recipient, 1977–1988 (2002 Dollars).

Source: Social Security Administration, “Table 8.B: Medicare Enrollment, Utilization, and Reimbursement,” <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2001/8b.pdf> (2001); Social Security Administration, Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1981–2000); Social Security Administration, “Table 8.E: Medicaid Recipients,” <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2001/8e.pdf> (2001).

Note: We have not located annual data for the early years of Medicare and Medicaid.

half of all Americans observed the immediate presence of national government in their lives. Furthermore, nearly all were likely to at least have family members who had benefited from government largesse.⁶³ Second, not only did national government reach more individuals than in the past, but also its effects became more discernable, predictable, and systematic. In the immediate aftermath of the New Deal, the experience of such programs was limited primarily to white men, while other citizens tended to be left to programs administered largely at the state level; in latter decades, changes in both extant policies and the workforce meant that increasing percentages of women and minorities also gained coverage in the national programs.⁶⁴ Third, benefit rates in most programs increased dramatically in real terms during this period. As we shall see subsequently, several programs were at their most generous at this time. The character of mid-twentieth century American governance proved highly redistributive, shifting resources toward middle-class and working-class citizens. From 1950 to the early 1970s

economic inequality, the gap between the incomes of the richest and the poorest, had achieved its lowest levels.⁶⁵ Government interventions appear to have played an important role in generating such outcomes.⁶⁶

HETEROGENOUS GOVERNANCE, 1976–THE PRESENT

Governance took a major turn once again over the last three decades, affecting citizens differently depending on their age group, employment status, and income. Although few major new programs were created during this period, the exceptions to the rule prove instructive. Existing policies fared differently, however, depending on both their policy design and on the extent to which policymakers took action to update them or permitted them to be subject to policy “drift.”⁶⁷ Rather than distinguishing by recipient group, this era can be characterized best by distinguishing between three major trends in policy development: (1) the continuation or

63. We cannot offer precise estimates because of our uncertainties about the extent to which recipient populations of particular policies overlapped with those of other policies. Our estimate is the result of first summing together the coverage rates of each of the following policies, on the assumption that recipient groups did not overlap significantly at the same moment in time: union membership, unemployment insurance, Social Security, veterans pensions and disability, Pell Grants, GI Bill, and AFDC. This results in a sum of 42 percent. Our estimate of “at least half the population” accounts for the inclusion of farm families through USDA benefits, minimum wage recipients, and beneficiaries of tax expenditures, but we lack data to offer specific measures of these in the mid-century period.

64. Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line*; Mettler, *Dividing Citizens*, chap. 9; John Skrentny, *Rights Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

65. Claudia Goldin, “Egalitarianism and the Returns to Education During the Great Transformation of American Education,” *Journal of Political Economy* 107 (1999): S65–S92; Claudia Goldin and Robert A. Margo, “The Great Compression: The Wage Structure in the United States at Mid-Century,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 105 (1992): 1–34; Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, “The Returns to Skill in the United States across the Twentieth Century,” NBER Working Paper Series, no. 7126 (1999).

66. Robert D. Plotnick, Eugene Smolensky, Eirik Evenhouse, and Siobhan Reilly, “The Twentieth Century Record of Inequality and Poverty in the United States,” Institute for Research on Poverty, Discussion Paper no. 1166–98 (1998), available at <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/>.

67. Jacob S. Hacker, “Privatizing Risk Without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States,” *American Political Science Review* 98 (2004): 243–60.

enlargement of some direct benefits, especially those affecting the elderly; (2) the attenuation of a wide array of government programs, particularly for non-elderly and less advantaged citizens; and (3) the growth of the hidden welfare state, particularly for more advantaged citizens. We shall examine each of these developments, in turn.

The first trend, involving direct social programs that have remained strong, is exemplified particularly by social insurance-based programs for the elderly and survivors. Due to both their entitlement status and political support, these remain the most intact part of the New Deal and postwar social contract. As seen in Figure 6, the percentage of the population covered by Social Security benefits for retired workers and survivors has held steady at about 14 percent of the general population. Social Security benefit rates for retired workers and survivors of such workers remained constant over the period, about \$800 and \$1,600 monthly on average, respectively, as seen in Figure 7. In addition, Medicare coverage, shown in Figure 9, has actually expanded over the period from 4.5 percent of the population in 1971 to nearly 10 percent. Reimbursements have grown considerably, doubling their value in real terms between the early 1970s and the present, evidenced by Figure 10.⁶⁸

To the extent that visible benefits for the non-elderly became more expansive during this period, they were directed primarily to those who could not work. Congress made Medicaid more generous in coverage and benefit rates: policymakers included young children and low-income mothers in the program during the 1990s, covering nearly 50 percent more beneficiaries; in addition, average benefit levels nearly tripled in real value.⁶⁹ Benefits for the disabled became more generous through both Social Security disability benefits and Supplemental Security Income.⁷⁰ Overall, programs in this grouping each continued along the trajectories established under postwar governance.

By contrast, many other direct programs, particularly those aimed for non-elderly Americans who are capable of working, have deteriorated. This includes regulatory and redistributive programs affecting workers' well-being. Government support for unions has declined sharply since Ronald Reagan's inauguration in 1981.⁷¹ As seen in

68. Disabled Americans benefited similarly under Medicare: their coverage rates grew steadily, to 1.4 percent of the population. Reimbursements rates for the disabled enlarged, though not as dramatically as those for the aged population.

69. Of course, in the case of both health-related programs, escalating costs in the industry mean that increases in real terms are overstated.

70. Erkulwater, *Disability Rights*.

71. In his first year in office, Reagan threatened to replace 12,500 striking air traffic controllers if they did not return to work in 48 hours. The President held to his word. Subsequently,

Figure 3, unionization rates dropped from 23 percent of the labor force in 1980 to 13.5 percent currently. Meanwhile, Congress allowed the real value of the minimum wage to plummet from \$8.28 per hour in 1968 to \$5.15 per hour, as seen in Figure 4. In addition, unemployment insurance lost some of its real value, as shown in Figure 5. In the early 1970s, the average jobless worker collected \$950 per month in benefits; by the 1990s, average benefits hovered around \$880 per month. The reduced value of this program has been particularly consequential in an era of economic instability and corporate downsizing, in which lay-offs have been considerably more common for workers across class.⁷²

Government benefits extended to citizens on the basis of criteria other than employment have also seen their values decline. Although the percentage of the population receiving Food Stamps remained steady, average benefits declined from \$144 monthly in 1981 to \$91 in 2000. While coverage rates under AFDC held steady until they began to drop during the booming economy of the late 1990s, average benefit levels dropped considerably after 1970, declining to about two-thirds of their prior value by 1996 (Figures 5 and 8). After the creation of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) in 1996, receipt became subject to strict time limits and work requirements, and states gained more control over other aspects of the program. Although the percentage of citizens using Pell Grants grew to 1.57 percent of the population by 1992 as more students pursued higher education, the real value of benefits declined, hovering around \$2,000 per student throughout the period, as revealed by Figure 11.⁷³ This occurred at the same time as tuition escalated more quickly than inflation, making it more difficult for less advantaged students to attend or complete college.⁷⁴

Farmers continued to diminish in their presence among the population over the last three decades, and during this period veterans experienced similar a similar trend. The percentage of the population involved in farming dropped from less than 5 percent in the mid-1970s to less than two percent

private employers routinely replaced strikers, an option that had been viewed as unethical throughout the mid-century. Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone, *The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), chap. 4.

72. Jacob S. Hacker, *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, 2006), chap. 3

73. *Ibid.*

74. Ronald G. Ehrenberg, *Tuition Rising: Why College Costs So Much*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Thomas J. Kane, "College-Going and Inequality," in *Social Inequality*, ed. Kathryn M. Neckerman (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004).

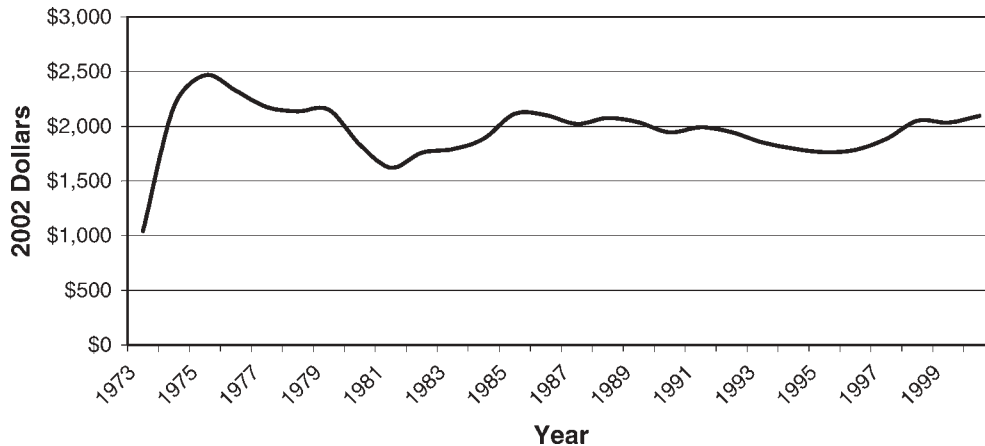


Fig. 11. Average Pell Grant Award per Recipient, 1973–2000 (2002 Dollars).

Source: American Council on Education, "2000 Status Report on the Pell Grant Program," (Washington, DC: Center for Policy Analysis, 2000), 32.

presently.⁷⁵ As a result, although agricultural subsidies continue, they are channeled to a tiny portion of the population, and typical recipients are likely to be owners of far larger and more lucrative enterprises than in the past. The shift to an all-volunteer force, which includes only about 1 percent of the population, and the aging of earlier generations of veterans reduced their presence in the population from over 12 percent in the mid-century to 9 percent in 2001 (Figure 1). Though payment levels for the larger veterans' program, disability compensation, remain fairly constant (Figure 2), the proportion of the population collecting such benefits has fallen to below 1 percent, as seen in Figure 1. In 1984, Congress established the "Montgomery GI Bill" for members of the contemporary military. Unlike the original GI Bill, the 1984 act requires servicemen to make contributions out of their own paychecks to qualify, and only a fraction of 1 percent of the population benefits from it.⁷⁶ Both of these demographic trends, therefore, have exacerbated the disappearance of the state in the lives of non-elderly, non-affluent citizens.

The third major trend affecting the relationship between government and citizens is the growth of the "hidden welfare state" of tax expenditures.⁷⁷ Beginning with its inception in 1913, the federal income tax permitted individuals with particular circumstances to pay less in taxes, giving them channeled to social benefits through a mechanism that

shrouds government's role and significance.⁷⁸ Policymakers initially reduced filers' tax burden according to the amount they paid in home mortgage interest, property taxes, and state and local taxes. Over the years, Congress enacted additional deductions such as those for corporate pensions in 1926, social security benefits in 1941, and corporate health benefits and child and dependent care expenses in 1954.⁷⁹ Since the end of World War II, tax expenditures have become a vital tool of American social policy.⁸⁰ Despite their middle-class image, these programs channel federal benefits especially toward upper-income earners. The home mortgage interest deduction, for example, in 2000 offered 51.9 percent of its benefits to families in the highest income group of \$100,000 or above.⁸¹ The major exception to this pattern is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), created in 1975 to supplement the income of the working poor: in 2000, nearly three-quarters of its benefits were channeled to those with incomes below \$30,000.⁸²

Figure 12 shows trends in three tax expenditures since 1980. While the child care credit's coverage has grown only slightly, reaching about four percent of the population, the EITC's reach expanded tremendously during the later 1980s and early 1990s, going to 14.3 percent of all who filed taxes in 2001.⁸³ The

78. John F. Witte, *The Politics and Development of the Federal Income Tax* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 75–79.

79. Howard, "Hidden Side of the American Welfare State," 422; Joseph A. Pechman, *Federal Tax Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1983), 86–94.

80. Zelizer, *Taxing America*, chap. 9.

81. Hacker, *Divided Welfare State*, 39; also see Howard, "Hidden Side of the American Welfare State," 417.

82. Hacker, *Divided Welfare State*, 39.

83. Christopher Howard, "Happy Returns: How the Working Poor Got Tax Relief," *American Prospect* 5 (1994).

75. See fn. 26 above.

76. Jere Cohen, Rebecca Warner, and David Segal, "Military Service and Educational Attainment in the All-Volunteer Force," *Social Science Quarterly* 76 (1995): 88–104.

77. On the complexity of such arrangements in comparative perspective, see Sven Steinmo, *Taxation and Democracy: Swedish, British and American Approaches to Financing the Modern State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 138–40.

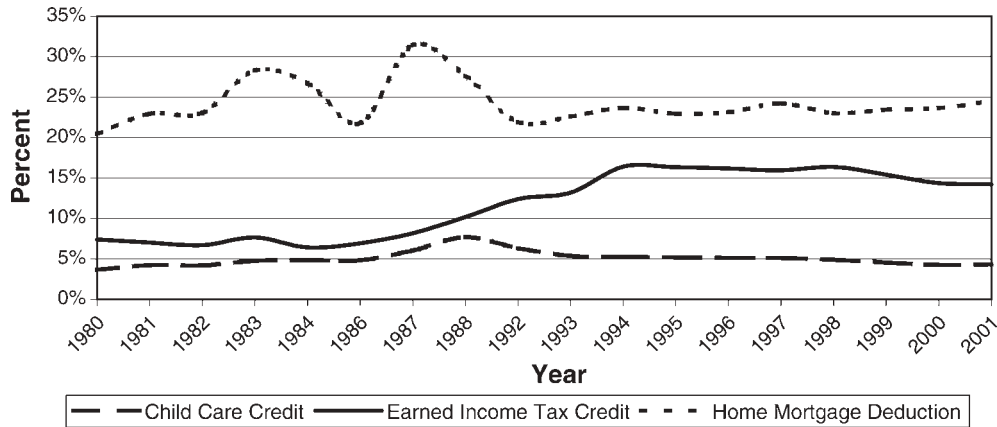


Fig. 12. Claimants of Selected Tax Expenditure as Percentage of Individual Tax Returns Filed, 1980–2001.

Source: Joint Committee on Taxation, *Estimates of Federal Tax Expenditures for Fiscal Years...* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1980–2002); U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, *2000 Green Book* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), 813.

home mortgage interest deduction is generally used by nearly twice as many filers and its rate of coverage grew from just over 20 percent in 1980 to 25 percent in 2001. The average deduction accrued to filers through each of these tax expenditures is shown in Figure 13. Benefits under the child care credit have held quite constant, offering slightly less than \$500 annually. The EITC has grown steadily in value since the 1980s to an average value of \$1,701 in 2001. The home mortgage interest deduction's value has increased from \$1,277 on average in 1980 to \$2,011 annually in 2001. A fuller assessment of tax expenditures would include corporate pension and health insurance deductions, the child tax credit, and HOPE Scholarship and Lifetime Learning Credits.⁸⁴

Overall, over the past three decades, it has become increasingly likely that citizens' "sense of the state" varies with age and socioeconomic class. Members of the generation which is now elderly are most apt to see visible evidence of federal government enhancing their social well-being, just as they did in their younger days when they benefited from the GI Bill and other postwar programs. Among the non-elderly, citizens are likely to have different experiences of government depending on their income. Individuals who work in lower-paying jobs might well feel that government has left them behind, that it does not benefit people like them; middle-class individuals experiencing economic insecurity might share similar perceptions. Conversely, privileged Americans may have a sense that government matters for their lives through tax expenditures; however, given the design of such programs the message that emanates from

them might engender very different effects than more direct and visible social benefits.

CONSIDERING IMPLICATIONS

This broad survey of government's relationship to citizens over time enables us to generate questions that lay at the intersection between American political development and political behavior. It beckons us to seek a better understanding of the conditions under which national government became a discernable presence in the everyday lives of a majority of citizens and for which groups of citizens and at which historical junctures a "sense of the state"—to use Stephen Skowronek's term—has been most evident.⁸⁵ It invites us to examine how variation in the relationship between government and citizens shapes the formation of civic identities, attitudes about government, and political interests or preferences, as well as rates of participation in politics. It challenges us to consider how these developments, in turn, influence subsequent politics, and to specify the processes and pathways through which such dynamics occur. We will now highlight some of particular observations that emanate from our survey of the data in this research note and suggest how they could be pursued more fully in subsequent research.

This examination has highlighted shifts, over time, in the political identities that government has elevated as being worthy of public resources or protection. In the first period, government promoted farmers, settlers, veterans, and mothers. Interestingly, only the first two groups gained their status through

84. A more thorough assessment would take into account the wider array of private social benefits provided to citizens through their employees. See Hacker, *Divided Welfare State*.

85. Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3.

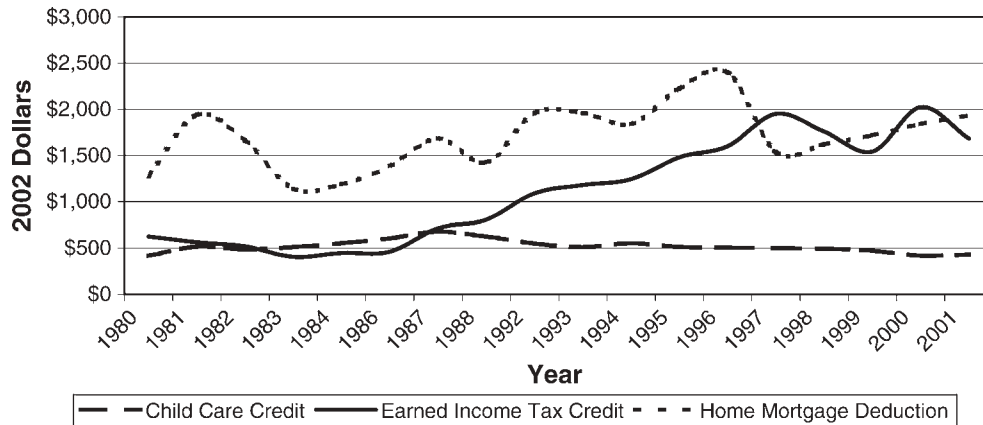


Fig. 13. Average Deduction for Selected Tax Expenditures, 1980–2001 (2002 Dollars).

Source: Joint Committee on Taxation, *Estimates of Federal Tax Expenditures for Fiscal Years...* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1980–2002); U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, *2000 Green Book* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), 813.

roles related to production, whereas the others were recognized for their civic duty, epitomized by military service and the raising of future citizens. In the second period, veterans continued to enjoy a privileged status; however, this era saw new emphasis on citizens' roles as workers, with several social benefits and labor regulations established on that basis, while benefits were channeled to the less advantaged as well. The third period brought a paradoxical pair of developments. On the one hand, most previously established benefits for the less advantaged and for workers were left to wither. This trend is underscored by the fact that the policies that deviate from this trend—such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—are geared especially for older citizens and the disabled, individuals who are not considered capable of working. On the other hand, participation in the workforce became, increasingly, the only route through which able-bodied less-advantaged citizens of working age could establish their deservingness, as epitomized by the adoption of work requirements for welfare and the creation of the EITC. Meanwhile, taxpayers emerged as the most legitimate targets for new social benefits. Forms of civic duty that lay outside of the marketplace—such as motherhood or military service—have vanished and diminished, respectively, as activities rewarded with government aid. Such changes in privileged political identities, over time, suggest important shifts not only in the political status structure among citizens, but also, further, in the basis on which government derives its authority and legitimacy.

Our inquiry offers a basis on which to generate hypotheses about how governments' distribution of social rights may, in turn, affect dimensions of participatory citizenship. Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram suggest that policy designs affect citizens' orientations toward government, their own interests,

others political claims, and the political system, as well as their participation, in terms of the extent of mobilization and the form that it assumes.⁸⁶ Although some studies have found that public programs themselves affect recipients' political involvement, trends over time have yet to be explored.⁸⁷ Conceivably, the waxing and waning of government's influence in citizens' lives, through public programs, could help explain shifts in their patterns of political activity. The data we have presented here could be paired with longitudinal studies of participation in order to shed light on these relationships. In addition, we could use such data to examine the effects of government programs for group formation and associational involvement, over time.

Such analysis has much to tell us about how the development of the American state has shaped the well-being of civic engagement and democratic participation. In the *New American Voter*, Warren Miller and Merrill Shanks document the stunning levels of political participation of those who came of age during New Deal and World War II. Most striking, Miller and Shanks observe, is that, while the World War II generation remained highly active throughout their lives, participation among less-privileged members of later generations declined rapidly. The authors suggest that experiences of government

86. Anne Larason Schneider and Helen Ingram, *Policy Design for Democracy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 140–45.

87. Andrea Louise Campbell, *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Political Activism and the American Welfare State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Suzanne Mettler, "Bringing the State Back In to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the GI Bill for World War II Veterans," *American Political Science Review* 96 (2002); Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), chap. 14.

might be crucial to explaining such differences in political participation.⁸⁸ Our perusal of program developments here suggests that this claim certainly merits investigation. Subsequent analysis could explore the link between the trends in program coverage and benefits and participation trends among selected segments of the population most affected by such developments.

Government programs might also influence citizens' attitudes about government, and fluxuation in programs could help explain changes in such views over time. Citizens' experiences as beneficiaries might affect their trust and confidence in government, their perceptions of their own political efficacy, and the extent to which government is responsive to people like them.⁸⁹ It is possible, for example, that the well-documented decline in citizens' trust in government and political efficacy over recent decades bears some relationship to changes in the value of programs.⁹⁰ In addition, citizens' experiences of instances when government does and does not intervene in their lives could have implications for their attitudes about the appropriate role of government, and may thus shape the political agenda subsequently.

Our exploration also suggests that shifts in government policy could have played a major role in the transformations of American society from the inequality of the Gilded Age to the egalitarianism of the mid-twentieth century, and back to the inequality of the present period. Most policy analysis focuses narrowly on one or two policies at a time, offering only a glimpse into consequences for the relative well-being of income groups in the population.⁹¹ We are impressed by the sheer volume of government intervention across many programs in the mid-twentieth century, a period in which the income gap narrowed so markedly. We are equally struck by the departure of government from the lives of non-elderly, low-income citizens in the latter twentieth century, as indicated by declines in unionization and the value of the minimum wage, food stamps, unemployment insurance benefits, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children benefits over that period. These developments were coupled with dramatic decreases in the proportion of the population comprised by veterans

and farmers, citizens who had typically been beneficiaries of government largesse previously. We urge more detailed investigation of the implications for inequality across time.

This inquiry has focused only on government benefits; a more comprehensive study could also examine shifts in the extent and form of burdens imposed on citizens over time, and changes in the ratio between them. During the earlier periods examined here, male citizens had to respond to the call for military service. Taxation remained relatively low until the post-World War II period, when it began to grow through the progressive income tax system. Gradually, then, a civic obligation associated with honor, duty, and collective effort faded and became replaced with one that highlights government's extractive role and individual obligations to contribute resources. In the most recent period, increasing regressivity in payroll taxes and reductions on the income taxes on the wealthy have shifted the balance in terms of who is most burdened by taxation.⁹² Pairing this line of inquiry with the changing value of government benefits can offer insights as to why some citizens think of government more as a force that imposes burdens on them rather than one that bestows benefits. Scholars might also investigate the significance of the vast increase in incarceration over the last two decades at the same time as social benefits for the least advantaged have diminished, such that government spending among such groups increasingly takes form through the penal system.⁹³

Considering American political development from citizens' points of view offers a rich agenda for future research. Such inquiry requires that scholars interested in state-building and policy development engage with the work of those who specialize in political behavior. The creation of an intellectual bridge between these approaches will enable us to draw on the analytical strengths of each and to proceed in a manner that is theoretically compelling and empirically grounded. In probing transformations in the relationship between government and citizens over time, such research will go far to illuminate the consequences for the well-being and sustenance of democracy.

88. Warren E. Miller and J. Merrill Shanks, *The New American Voter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), chap. 5.

89. Joe Soss, "Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action," *American Political Science Review* 93 (1993): 363–80.

90. John E. Hughes and M. Margaret Conway, "Public Opinion and Political Participation," in *Understanding Public Opinion*, ed. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1997), 191–210.

91. See Plotnick et al., "Twentieth Century Record."

92. Congressional Budget Office, "Effective Federal Tax Rates, 1997–2000," (August 2003), available at <http://www.cbo.gov>; Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, "Abandoning the Middle: The Revealing Case of the Bush Tax Cuts," Paper delivered at the 2003 Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.

93. Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America* (New York: Russell Sage, 2006).

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