Welfare Politics in Congress: Hearings

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Abstract

In the 1990s, the nation radically reformed family welfare. This study analyzes the Congressional politics behind the welfare revolution. We code speakers in Congressional hearings during six episodes of welfare reform from 1962 through 1996. We ask how the witnesses frame the agenda in the sense of the issues stressed, and what position they take on those issues. We posit four such issues, and we track how their relative prominence changes over time. We use the results to assess three theories of why welfare was transformed. We also model the determinants of the agenda and of positions on issues during the hearings.

The results reveal a shift away from ideological combat over the scale of government toward a cooler, more practical debate about how best to arrange welfare reform programs. Less dramatically, opinion also shifts to the right on these issues. Of the three theories of welfare reform politics, elitism appears strongest.

Introduction

In the last decade, the United States carried out the most radical reform of welfare in the history of the program. "Welfare" here means Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the controversial family aid program that defied fundamental change for decades. But in 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) recast AFDC as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The new program ended entitlement (the legal right of all eligibles to receive aid), limited families to five years on the rolls, sharply raised work requirements, and devolved more control of the program to localities. Starting in 1994, the rolls fell by over 60 percent, driven by the new work tests, as well as a good economy and new wage and child care subsidies. Work levels among poor single mothers rose and poverty rates fell, albeit less sharply.[1] The reauthorization of TANF recently approved in Congress changes policy only marginally. Major change in welfare appears to be over for the foreseeable future.

This study offers the first in-depth analysis of the Congressional politics behind the welfare revolution. I show over three decades and in detail the shifts in the welfare controversy that shaped the outcome. To my knowledge, this also is the first research to trace the intellectual basis of any dispute in Congress over so long a time.

Past Research

Past studies of the politics of PRWORA are journalistic. They attribute the reform mostly to Bill Clinton's promise to "end welfare as we know it" when he ran for president in 1992 and to the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994. In PRWORA, the GOP proposed to cut access to family

[1] Lawrence Mead, "Welfare Reform: Meaning and Effects," *Policy Currents* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 7-13; Rebecca M. Blank and Ron Haskins, eds., *The New World of Welfare: An Agenda for Reauthorization and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2001); Greg J. Duncan and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, eds., *For Better and For Worse: Welfare Reform and the Well-Being of Children and Families* (New York: Russell Sage, 2001).

aid and devolve greater control to the states, and Clinton reluctantly agreed.[2] Such accounts are true but incomplete. The welfare issue goes back to the early 1960s, and the earlier episodes conditioned the later debate. Existing accounts also lack substantive content. They relate outcomes to political events, but they do not explain well what the welfare dispute was about.

Research on other aspects of welfare politics shows similar limitations. We have studies of public opinion as it applies to welfare.[3] We have accounts of individual episodes of reform including the Nixon and Carter proposals to liberalize welfare in the 1960s and 1970s as well as PRWORA.[4] But we lack studies that trace the debate over time and that highlight its issue content. Only three recent books cover the whole controversy since the 1960s, and they give the earlier period too little attention.[5]

In this study we code Congressional hearings and debates so as to portray the stakes in the welfare battle and how it changed over more than thirty years. I searched for comparable research by querying academic authorities on Congress. I also searched JSTOR and Robert U. Goehlert and John R. Sayre, *The United States Congress: A Bibliography* (New York: Free Press, 1982). I found remarkably little. There appears to be no published research on welfare politics remotely like this.[6]

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[2] R. Kent Weaver, *Ending Welfare as We Know It* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2000); Jason DeParle, American Dream: *Three Women, Ten Kids, and the Nation's Drive to End Welfare* (New York: Viking, 2004).

[3] Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[4] Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income: The Nixon Administration and the Family Assistance Plan* (New York: Random House, 1973); Vincent J. Burke and Vee Burke, *Nixon's Good Deed: Welfare Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., and David deft. Whitman, *The President as Policymaker: Jimmy Carter and Welfare Reform* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981). For PRWORA, see note 2.

[5] Steven M. Teles, *Whose Welfare? AFDC and Elite Politics* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996); Gary Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality: The Great American Welfare Reform Debate* (New York: Norton, 1998); Weaver, *Ending Welfare as We Know It.*

[6] The nearest parallel is my study is Michael Reinhard, "The Force of Ideas, Problem Definition, Disjoint Policy Change and the Politics of Welfare" (Chicago: University of Chicago, Department of Political Science, September 3, 2003). Reinhard codes witnesses in welfare hearings in 1988 and 1993-4 in terms of words they use that he associates with several dimensions of welfare discourse. However, the words are

More generally, my project appears to be the first to track change in the substantive meaning of *any* issue in Congress over an extended period. I also use a predetermined analytic scheme. Previous research of this type codes witnesses only at one or two points in time, or the analysis is post-hoc.[7] Or it codes over time but uses entire hearings as the unit of analysis rather than witnesses. This is true of the well-known Baumgartner and Jones research on the agenda.[8] Or it codes bill reports or legislation rather than witnesses.[9] I know of only one study that codes floor debates in Congress, but it does so in terms of how program recipients are characterized, rather than the agenda in any broader sense.[10] As one author notes, "Congressional hearings in general are

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counted by computer, the work obligation dimension is missing, and Reinhard does not assess the intellectual structure of arguments as I do. The study covers only part of the hearings for FSA and PRWORA.

[7] The only published studies I found that code Congressional hearings for argumentative content using witnesses were Steven L. Del Sesto, "Conflicting Ideologies of Nuclear Power: Congressional Testimony on Nuclear Reactor Safety," *Public Policy* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 39-70, and idem, "Nuclear Reactor Safety and the Role of the Congressman: A Content Analysis of Congressional Hearings," *Journal of Politics* 42, no. 1 (February 1980): 227-41. These studies set out an elaborate intellectual structure, but it is derived post hoc and based on a single hearing in 1973-4. Lisa A. Bero, Theresa Montini, Katherine Bryan-Jones and Christina Mangurian, "Science in Regulatory Policy Making: Case Studies in the Development of Workplace Smoking Restrictions," *Tobacco Control* 10 (2001): 329-36, codes testimony and public comment about tobacco regulation in Maryland and Washington State for argumentative content, but without a preset analytic scheme and at only one point in time.

[8] Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), codes hearings over several decades, but in terms of numbers of hearings on a subject and, in some cases, whether they were "positive" or "negative" in tone. This approach is also taken in the Policy Agendas Project being run by Baumgartner, Jones, and John Wilkerson. It codes Congressional hearings on many subjects. But as in *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, the unit of analysis is the hearing rather than the witness, and the focus is on how the mix of subjects changes over time. For research using these data, see Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, ed., *Policy Dynamics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Michael C. MacLeod, "The Logic of Positive Feedback: Telecommunications Policy through the Creation, Maintenance, and Destruction of a Regulated Monopoly," in *Policy Dynamics*, ed. Baumgartner and Jones, chap. 3, codes witnesses rather than whole hearings in terms of whether they supported or opposed the AT&T telephone monopoly. But the arguments made are summarized; witnesses are not coded in terms of them.

[9] Paul Burstein and Marie Bricher, "Problem Definition and Public Policy: Congressional Committees Confront Work, Family, and Gender, 1945-1990," *Social Forces* 76, no. 1 (September 1997): 135-68; and Paul Burstein, R. Marie Bricher, and Rachel L. Einwohner, "Policy Alternatives and Political Change: Work, Family, and Gender on the Congressional Agenda, 1945-1990," *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 1 (February 1995): 67-83.

[10] Sandra J. Stein, *The Culture of Education Policy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), chaps. 2-3.

excellent, though underutilized, sources of data for examining ideologies."[11] One expert commented that "There are almost no studies in general centering on the changing dialogue in Congressional hearings."[12]

This study also differs from much recent research on Congress, informed by rational choice, that presents members' positions on issues as arrayed in a single, left-right issue space. That approach helps to model the political maneuvers of members, but it over-simplifies their reasonings. In reality, major policy questions have many dimensions, raising multiple issues that participants must address. The coding of arguments, as in this study, captures more of the intellectual substance behind policy outcomes.

The Welfare Agenda

An improved account must focus on agenda-setting—how the welfare issue took shape within Congress. How do we understand the "agenda"? Kingdon's influential theory of agenda-setting speaks of problem, political, and policy "streams" joining to open "windows" for change.[13] The focus on policy is useful, as the successful evaluations of welfare work programs in the 1980s and early 1990s help explain welfare reform's strong focus on work enforcement. But this approach says too little about the political stream—how the politicians came to frame the issue as they did.

Baumgartner and Jones' idea of agenda setting offers more historical depth. These scholars show how "policy monopolies" are created and then torn down by criticism over long periods.[14] But their approach speaks of support or opposition to policies in general terms, as measured by press

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[11] Del Sesto, "Conflicting Ideologies of Nuclear Power," p. 40.

[12] E-mail from Bryan D. Jones, May 31, 2004.

[13] John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1995).

[14] Baumgartner and Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*; Bryan D. Jones, *Reconceiving Decision-Making in Democratic Politics: Attention, Choice, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

coverage or numbers of hearings. They do not show in any depth how actors in Congress understood the issues or what stances they took on them.

An older theory of the agenda is more useful. For E.E. Schattschneider, the agenda meant the way players in the political arena define the division or issue they face. The agenda means the point at issue and also the political division over that issue. Change occurs when positions or coalitions on an issue shift—but also when the issue itself changes. One definition of conflict tends to drive out another, a process Schattschneider called mobilization of bias. In Schattschneider, the definition of the issue and the position taken on that issue become separable dimensions of politics.[15]

This approach finds some echo in the idea that how issues are "framed" or "constructed" affects the politics around them.[16] However, the focus in that literature is more on effects on mass opinion rather than Congressional debate. There is also less sense that each issue definition involves two sides, and that there can be important changes over time.

Schattschneider's idea of the agenda seems helpful for an issue that clearly did change over time. As we will see, welfare was far more of a partisan issue in its early stages than it became later, when more practical disputes took over.. That fact alone goes far to explain the recent policy revolution. Welfare politics is bound up much more in agenda change than in "who won" in any simple sense. For the same reason, the idea of mobilization of bias is useful. When multiple framings of an issue contend for primacy, which one suppresses the others is crucial to the outcome.

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[15] E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), chap. 4.

[16] Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 2 (June 1993): 334-47; Shanto Iyengar, "Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty," *Political Behavior* 12, no. 1 (March 1990): 19-40; idem, "How Citizens Think about Issues: A Matter of Responsibility," *American Journal of Political Science* 33, no. 4 (November 1989): 878-900; Lawrence Bobo and Ryan A. Smith, "Antipoverty Policy, Affirmative Action, and Racial Attitudes," in *Confronting Poverty: Prescriptions for Change*, eds. Sheldon H. Danziger, Gary D. Sandefur, and Daniel H. Weinberg (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), chap. 14; Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*.

Welfare Issues

If existing research offers any theory of the agenda in this sense, it is that welfare is part of the larger partisan struggle over the scale of government, what I call a *progressive* issue. Typically, liberals and Democrats want government to do "more" for various groups, while conservatives and Republicans want it to do "less." In welfare, liberals usually want to raise benefits, extend coverage to new groups, and federalize control of the system. Conservatives typically want to restrict benefits and eligibility while devolving control to localities.[17]

This, however, does not account for all of welfare politics. In earlier, less systematic research on Congressional welfare hearings and debates prior to PRWORA, I saw a more complex debate.[18] There was indeed conflict over the scale of welfare, but it was cross-cut by the question of whether adult recipients should have to work in return for aid, what I call an *obligation* issue. Liberals opposed work tests, fearful that the demands would harm families. Indeed, on this question, conservatives were more statist than their opponents. They wanted to use government to enforce work, while liberals resisted.

A further dispute was over the *opportunity* structure. Was it even possible for the recipients to work? Did a lack of skills, jobs, or child care pose "barriers" to employment? Liberals believed that the obstacles kept most poor adults from working, while conservatives denied it. This was a battle, not directly about welfare, but about the nature of the society. Did a capitalist economy even offer employment to the welfare poor, and did support services allow them to take those jobs?

Finally, some differences were what I call *paternalist*. That is, they concerned the detailed structure of welfare reform programs. How should government best arrange welfare so as to promote work, deter unwed pregnancy, or collect more child support? Liberals wanted a more

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[17] This is the stance taken by the works in note 4, and also by much of the literature on welfare policy at the state level, which focuses chiefly on welfare spending or benefit levels.

supportive regime, conservatives a more demanding one. One issue here was whether the disincentives to work and marry that welfare creates explained the rise of nonwork and unwed pregnancy among the poor in recent decades. Another question was "what works" in promoting work or child support payment in light of evaluations and other research.

The four issues differ in political style and level. The two styles I call scale-of-government versus dependency. The first focuses on impersonal questions of public commitment and values, the second on more personal issues of responsibility and competence. Due to mobilization of bias, the questions raised by each style tend to drive out those raised by the other. Scale-of-government debate is about justice or fairness among citizens whose capacities to get ahead are taken for granted. Conversely, dependency debate is about the proper morals and capacities of citizens, where justice in more impersonal senses is taken for granted. These issues play out on two political levels, basic principles versus concrete conditions. Figure 1 displays the four issues in terms of these two dimensions:

Figure 1: Themes of welfare politics

		Political Style:	
		Scale-of-government	*Dependency*
Political level:	*Basic principles*	Progressive	Obligation
	Concrete conditions	Opportunity	Paternalist

Progressive and opportunity issues share a concern with the role of government; a lack of opportunity is one rationale for more public intervention. But progressivism tends to be debated in terms of broad principles, opportunity in more practical terms, about whether it is possible for poor adults to work. Similarly, obligation and paternalist disputes share a focus on personal responsibility and competence; the question is what the poor can reasonably be expected to do. But

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[18] This research appears in Lawrence M. Mead, *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Free Press, 1986), and idem, *The New Politics of Poverty: The Nonworking Poor in*

obligation is debated in terms of principles, paternalism in terms of the specifics of welfare reform programs, such as child care, work incentives, or child support requirements.

All four issues provoke division between liberals and conservatives, but the positions taken by the two sides shift depending on the issue. On progressive issues, the liberal position favors doing "more" and federalization, the conservative doing "less" and devolution. On obligation, liberals defend entitlement (giving aid based on impersonal criteria and without behavioral conditions) while conservatives demand work tests or "reciprocity." On opportunity, liberals judge that barriers to employment do not permit the poor to work, while conservatives say they do. On paternalism, liberals want the services and requirements in work or child support programs to be more indulgent, conservatives more demanding. The terms of the debate shift as the issue shifts, just as Schattschneider says.

For size-of-government (progressive and opportunity) disputes, the master issue in the background is how far government should intervene in private society to redistribute advantages toward the poor. Liberals instinctively favor a more ambitious regime, conservatives a more limited one. For dependency (obligation and paternalist) issues, on the other hand, this structural issue fades. The master issue is instead the competence to be expected of the poor. Here the liberal instinct is to be protective, the conservative reflex to be demanding. Liberals are cautious about imputing mastery to the poor; hence, they find it unfair to enforce work and impractical to make work programs demanding. Conservatives are more optimistic about competence, so they find work tests to be reasonable, and they want work programs to be more severe.[19]

Theories of Welfare Reform

The use of these issue types permits a deeper political analysis of welfare reform than the existing research offers. What shaped the outcome was not only which politicians did what but the

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America (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

[19] Mead, *New Politics of Poverty*, interprets poverty politics in these terms.

way the issue was framed. Reform meant that conservatives won out over liberals, but in what sense? Several different theories are imaginable.

The dominant theory in the existing accounts is *backlash*. On this view, the key division was the progressive one, and reform meant a movement to the right on that issue—toward smaller government. Traditional welfare had been formed in the liberal era of the 1960s and 1970s. But the rolls grew during these decades, and again in the early 1990s. Finally the public and its leaders lost patience with the poor and their advocates. They elected more conservatives to office. Once Republicans controlled Congress, they restricted aid and, to a large extent, "got it out of Washington." Thus, guarantees of aid that had earlier been extended to the poor were withdrawn. Several prominent interpreters of American social policy take this viewpoint.[20]

The difficulty, however, is that PRWORA did not aim simply to do less for the poor. Aid was time-limited and no longer an entitlement. But in order to promote work, spending on wage subsidies and child care surged. And while control of some welfare policies was given to localities, tougher federal standards were set for work and child support requirements. PRWORA represented conservatism, but of a big-government as much as a small-government variety.[21]

A second theory of reform politics, which I call *enforcement*, centers on these new requirements. In this view, the obligation issue was central. The core dispute was not over the scale of government but whether welfare adults should have to behave well to get aid. A shift to the right on this axis—toward tougher enforcement—generated the enhanced work tests seen in the Family Support Act (FSA) of 1988 and then in PRWORA. While dependency did fall, this resulted chiefly

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[20] Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, updated ed. (New York: Vintage, 1993); Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); idem, *The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001); Theda Skocpol, *The Missing Middle: Working Families and the Future of American Social Policy* (New York: Norton, 2000).

[21] Lawrence M. Mead, "The Politics of Conservative Welfare Reform," in *New World of Welfare*, ed. Blank and Haskins, chap. 7.

from work enforcement and not directly from time limits or denials of aid. My books take this perspective and others give it some attention.[22]

A third theory is *elitist*. It traces reform to changing views among policymakers and their advisors about how best to solve the poverty and welfare problems. In this view, welfare produced a technical debate focused mostly on the opportunity and paternalist issues. The question was whether the adult poor could work, given the environment, and how specific welfare policies might promote this. Movement to the right on those issues generated PRWORA's work tests but also steps toward "making work pay" through new wage and child care supports, all of which drove the rolls down. Several authors note the strong influence of experts on innovation in welfare, from the economists who crafted the guaranteed income plans of the 1960s and 1970s to the evaluators who endorsed the mandatory work programs of the 1980s and 1990s.[23]

Political Dynamics

The three theories explain the welfare revolution quite differently. Each specifies a different political force behind change. With the *backlash* theory, the energy is ideological—the urge to conform welfare to one's image of the proper role of government in the society. Left and right seek to shift the relative power of the public and private sectors. That also affects social values, as it changes the emphasis on community versus individualism in the culture. Such shifts are particularly partisan, because the parties were formed chiefly around the progressive division.

With the *enforcement* theory, however, the impetus is moralistic—to conform how poor adults live to norms of good citizenship. Although some call this a politics of values, the dispute is over

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[22] Mead, *Beyond Entitlement;* idem, *New Politics of Poverty*; Teles, *Whose Welfare*; Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*.

[23] Daniel P. Moynihan, "The Professionalization of Reform," *The Public Interest*, no. 1 (Fall 1965): 6-16; Michael Wiseman, ed., "Research and Policy: A Symposium on the Family Support Act of 1988," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 10, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 588-666; Leslie Lenkowsky, *Politics, Economics, and Welfare Reform: The Failure of the Negative Income Tax in Britain and the United States* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986); Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon, 1989).

enforcement rather than the values themselves. The values enforced, such as the work ethic or law-abidingness, are not themselves contentious. The dispute rather is whether welfare adults should have to live by these norms despite their disadvantages. Whereas backlash politics seeks to minimize dependency in the name of self-reliance, enforcement politics seeks to promote employment in the name of good behavior.

For the *elitist* theory, in contrast, welfare reform reflects, not a crusade for either smaller government or civility, but what Hugh Heclo called political learning.[24] Elites in and out of government struggle to overcome poverty and dependency. Those problems present puzzles to them. Through experience and research, more than political combat, they work out what does and does not work. In this account, what defeated liberal versions of welfare reform was not so much their cost or lack of work tests as their failure to solve dependency or nonwork among the poor. Experience and evaluations suggested that guaranteeing people an income reduced work effort, while conditioning aid on employment raised it. That evidence led toward work enforcement.

The political pressures behind change, according to the three theories, ultimately reach beyond welfare. The rightward partisan shift spoken of by the backlash theory reflects in part the general conservative movement in politics stretching back to the late 1960s. The insistence on orthodox behavior specified by the enforcement theory reflects a populace that is aging and becoming less tolerant of social disorders than it was in the 1960s and 1970s. The problem-solving cited by the elitist theory reflects the rising influence of higher education and technical expertise in a meritocratic society.

The three theories also specify quite different political patterns. In *backlash*, welfare reform arises from a conventional political movement against big government. Both public opinion and elite opinion shift to the right. Politicians take the lead. They campaign against welfare, earn a

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[24] Hugh Heclo, *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden: From Relief to Income Maintenance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), chap. 6.

mandate from the public, then take office and restrict aid. The key figures are elected politicians and the appointees they name to change policy, either in Washington or state capitals. One argument for this theory is that partisan elites have polarized in recent decades. Although the public is less divided, its voting patterns have tended to polarize in response to the elites.[25]

In *enforcement*, in contrast, only elite opinion changes. Public opinion may be divided and changeable about the scale of government, but it is remarkably unified and stable concerning welfare. Most voters wish to aid needy families generously while also demanding that welfare adults work.[26] Traditional welfare failed to expect work. Reform occurred when public insistence on work finally broke through the Beltway and forced government to comply. Then the public at last obtained the work tests in which it always believed. Leadership will come not from national political elites, who focus chiefly on progressive issues, but rather from governors and local leaders, who are typically less partisan. The latter also have more responsibility to address the moral issues raised by welfare than do federal politicians. The plausibility of this theory is suggested by recent efforts by the religious right to promote "traditional" values that it says Washington has neglected.

In the *elitist* theory, finally, elite opinion is again what changes, but without pressure from the hinterland. Rather, policymakers and their advisors shift their views rightward on the opportunity and paternalist issues as experience and research dictate. They decide that it is possible for the poor to work, and that welfare should become more demanding. Here the key leaders will be researchers and evaluators who justify these shifts in terms of "what works." In the background is the extensive research and experimentation on antipoverty programming that Washington has helped finance over the past forty years—the same era in which welfare has been at issue.[27]

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[25] James Q. Wilson, "Reflections on the Political Context," in *Agenda for the Nation*, ed. Henry J. Aaron, James M. Lindsay, and Pietro S. Nivola (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2003), chap. 15.

[26] Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, chs. 2, 8.

[27] Robert H. Haveman, *Poverty Policy and Poverty Research: The Great Society and the Social Sciences* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); David L.Featherman and Maris A. Vinovskis, eds.,

None of the theories easily accommodates the idea that the dominant issue could change over time, although change is thoroughly in tune with Schattschneider's approach. Just as one issue framing drives out another, so the dominant issue can shift as conditions and political forces change.

The Current Study

As mentioned, past research on welfare politics mostly favors the progressive reading of the welfare issue and the backlash theory of the politics behind welfare reform. On these accounts, the principal purpose of reform was to limit access to aid by needy families.

But in my earlier research on Congressional welfare reform politics, again, the issues of obligation, opportunity, and paternalism were also apparent. These themes seemed to grow over time, and to drive change. Neglect of work requirements was the principal reason why liberal plans to expand welfare were defeated, while expert endorsement of mandatory work programs led toward work enforcement. From the progressive viewpoint, reform was a denial of aid. To the other agendas, in contrast, reform chiefly changed the terms on which aid was given.

In the current study, I and my research assistants are more rigorously mapping changes in the welfare agenda from the 1960s through the 1990s. Based on the earlier work, we hypothesize that over time:

- *All issue types appear*, not just the progressive controversy over generosity to the poor and federalization stressed in most existing research.
- *Debate shifts to the right*: On all four types of issue, positions become more conservative—although the meaning of "conservative" shifts across the four issue types.
- *Debate focuses more on dependency.* Size-of-government concerns (progressive and opportunity) fade while dependency issues (obligation and paternalist) grow more prominent.
- *Debate focuses more on concrete conditions* (opportunity and paternalist issues) and less on basic principles (progressive and obligation issues).
- *The shifts are general*, seen in all the groups involved in the debate (politicians, advocates, experts, etc.), not just some of them.

Social Science and Policy-Making: A Search for Relevance in the Twentieth Century (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

- *These shifts parallel welfare policy changes.* The policy decisions at issue during each stage of welfare controversy will reflect the debate at that stage. Over time, changes of policy should parallel changes in the debate. This is a check that the opinion we are tapping was the operative influence on policy.

My earlier inquiry allowed hypotheses to be framed based on contact with the evidence, rather than theory or past literature, as is more usual in academic research. The verdict on the three theories of welfare reform will hinge on the patterns that we find:

- *Backlash* is supported if there is a rightward shift yet progressive issues remain dominant. Change should be led by national political figures (members of Congress, presidents, and their appointees).
- *Enforcement* is supported if the conservative and dependency shifts occur. That is, obligation and paternalist issues come to dominate, and opinion shifts rightward on them. Leadership should come from governors and others outside the Beltway.
- *Elitism* is supported if shifts toward conservatism and concrete conditions occur. That is, opportunity and paternalist issues come to dominate. Change should be led chiefly by experts.

Methodology

We are testing these hypotheses by coding the hearings and floor debates in Congress during the six principal episodes of national welfare reform to date:

- *The social service amendments (SSA)* of 1962, which built up federal funding for services intended to forestall dependency, such as social workers and child care.
- *The Work Incentive (WIN) amendments* of 1967, which instituted the first work requirements in AFDC, as well as stronger work incentives.
- *The Family Assistance Plan (FAP)* of 1969-72, the Nixon proposal to cover the "working poor," raise benefits, and partially federalize AFDC. The plan was defeated in Congress.
- *The Program for Better Jobs and Income (PBJI)* of 1977-8, a similar Carter proposal to expand, liberalize, and federalize welfare. This plan, too, was defeated in Congress.
- *The Family Support Act (FSA)* of 1986-8, which required two-parent coverage in AFDC, expanded mandatory welfare work programs, and strengthened child support enforcement.
- *The Personal Responsibility Act (PRWORA)* of 1994-6, which ended entitlement, time-limited aid, toughened work tests and child support enforcement, and devolved more control of welfare to the states.

At each of these moments, the administration of the day proposed serious change. The debate was shaped by its proposal, but the possible change was great enough to spur wide debate, in and out of Congress. That gave all the issues in welfare politics a chance to appear.[28]

We code statements by witnesses during committee hearings on welfare reform; later we will code members of Congress speaking during floor debates on the major reform bills. We limit the project by covering only hearings held by the principal committees with jurisdiction over welfare—Ways and Means in the House and Finance in the Senate--omitting hearings by other committees.[29] We also code only hearings about the principal reform proposals, listed above, omitting other hearings. The hearing witnesses numbered 49 for SSA, 57 for WIN, 160 for FAP, 119 for PBJI, 155 for FSA, and 284 for PRWORA, or 824 in all. For the floor debates, we will code only the principal debates on passage of each reform measure, not other debates.

What we code is speakers' oral statements to the committee or on the floor. We omit witnesses' written statements (because they are less candid and pointed) and their colloquies with committee members (to make it more definite what is coded). Statements made by committee members are not coded. For floor debates, we will code all speeches actually made on the floor, omitting statements entered for the record but not orally delivered (which are less personal).

In the hearing coding, we record, as open-ended responses, what each witness thought the main welfare issue was and the position he or she took on it. We also code witnesses in terms of the following measured variables, permitting quantitative analysis:

- The stage of the welfare debate in which they appeared.
- Whether they appeared in a hearing in the House or Senate.
- The type of group or organization they belong to or represent.

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[28] We omit the important changes in welfare that occurred in 1981, when Ronald Reagan persuaded Congress to cut AFDC eligibility and allow states to create more demanding welfare work programs. These changes arose as part of omnibus budget legislation. Thus, they occasioned too little debate in their own right to permit coding. I do not plan to code the recent reauthorization of TANF, as the policy changes made are too marginal to justify it.

[29] To my knowledge, welfare reform legislation was not importantly shaped by the other committees.

- Any of the four issue types they raise as they describe what is at stake in welfare reform.
- Of the issue types they mention, which one they treat as most important, which second, etc.
- The position they take on their leading issue and other issue types they mention, whether left or right. These terms are understood differently for each issue type (see above).
- The position they take on a scale thought to underlie the scale-of-government style of welfare politics (progressive and opportunity issues); if this can be determined. Witnesses may favor larger or smaller government.
- The position they take on a scale about the competence of the poor that is thought to underlie the dependency style of welfare politics (obligation and paternalist issues), if this can be determined. Witnesses may favor lower or higher competence.

Coding of the floor debates will use the same categories, and we will also record members' party and state and how they voted on passage of the legislation.[30]

In content analysis, such as we are doing here, the categories used for coding should reflect prior, less structured research. They should be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and derived from a single principle. The classification of each case (here the witness or speaker) should be independent of the classification of the next.[31] All these rules are satisfied here except for the derivation of the coding scheme from a single principle. My four issue types differ in two dimensions—political style and level. This simply seems necessary to capture the full range of welfare discourse.

The results reveal which issue types bulk largest among witnesses or floor speakers at each stage of the welfare controversy. Secondarily, we can show how liberal or conservative the speakers are on each issue at each point in time. We can show changes in the agenda (that is, the dominant issue) and in opinion about issues over time. We can show results in general and for various types of witnesses (e.g., Administration spokespersons, interest groups, academic experts, etc.).

One might question whether this procedure captures the full national debate on welfare, because it omits the public. But about welfare, the significant debate has been among elites. As

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[30] The coding instructions are available at www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/faculty/mead/Research_page.html.

[31] Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), chap. 5.

mentioned above, public opinion about welfare is remarkably unified and stable over time. Most voters seek to combine generosity toward needy families with demands that welfare adults work. It is politicians, advocates, and experts who tend to divide over welfare, along any of the four issue types I have defined. This elite debate is what our coding taps.

One might also question whether the groups called to testify in Congress fully represent elite opinion. However, witnesses are chosen by partisan staffs working for both sides of the committees. The speakers are typically prominent figures within the poverty issue network. When I testify in these hearings, the other witnesses are the same experts I encounter at conferences outside government. A wide range of opinions is represented. The debate before the committees is much like the wider national debate, at least at an elite level.

One reason the hearings feature diverse witnesses is that, throughout most of the reform period, Congress was seriously divided over welfare and other poverty issues. During the 1960s and 1970s, both parties were diverse ideologically. During the 1980s and 1990s, each became ideologically more cohesive, but there were now greater differences between the parties, and different parties usually controlled the two chambers. These divisions ensured that a wide range of witnesses was called to testify. As results show below, most witnesses were left of center in their politics, even during the conservative 1980s and 1990s. Wide representation appears to have prevailed even during PRWORA, when a militant new Republican majority controlled the process.[32] To support this conclusion, Table 1 shows how many of each of the fourteen types of groups we code in the study appeared in the hearings during each of the six reform stages. Representation of groups of all kinds was extensive, even groups known to be left of center, and this was true even during PRWORA.

Table 1: Groups represented in welfare reform hearings

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[32] Pamela Winston, *Welfare Policymaking in the States: The Devil in Devolution* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), chap. 3.

Type of group	*SSA*	*WIN*	*FAP*	*PBJI*	*FSA*	*PRWORA*	*Total*
Administration	2	3	8	10	9	9	41
Members of Congress	6	8	20	8	38	80	160
Local and state government	5	9	26	17	22	17	96
Social welfare agencies	29	22	28	22	27	39	167
Academics	0	1	5	6	8	17	37
Think tank	0	0	6	6	9	30	51
Labor union	2	3	13	8	4	3	33
Business	2	2	12	1	3	7	27
Activist	2	4	14	23	28	59	130
Civil rights	0	2	4	2	0	2	10
Ideological	0	1	2	2	0	1	6
Religious	0	2	13	5	5	10	35
Advisory	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Other	1	0	7	9	2	10	29
Total	49	57	160	119	155	284	824

The RAs first code a stage independently, following my instructions. I then calculate how closely their codings agree on each variable and advise them in general terms where agreement is low and high. For the second cut, they review their codings, especially for variables where agreement was low, but still working independently. For the third cut, they work together, debating codings and adopting the same ones where they agree, although they may still disagree. [33]

The study began in 2001 and has run for four years, funded chiefly by private foundations. The work has taken more time and money than expected, but otherwise there have been no serious

[33] The current study builds on two earlier efforts. In the first, I had to revise the coding and start over. In the second, there was insufficient agreement between the coding done by my research assistant and a sample of witnesses that I coded. I consulted Youssef Cohen, a colleague in the Politics Department at NYU, and Gary King, a former colleague here who is now in the Government Department, Harvard University. The principal improvements were to use two coders rather than one and have them code sequentially. I also clarified coding instructions, simplified the coding scheme, and trained coders more thoroughly. The current results are much more robust.

problems. The coders have been loyal and industrious. One of the RAs I hired in 2001 is still with the study. The other worked for two years, and his successor has done very similar work.

Intercoder agreement is high. Table 2 shows the results achieved in the hearings coded to date. Agreement is highest about whether progressive, obligation, or opportunity issues are present. It is somewhat lower about whether paternalism is present, because this category is less sharply defined than the others. In the hearings completed to date, the coders have typically reached agreement about whether an issue type was present, and on the leading issue, on over 90 percent of witnesses on the third cut. Equally important, the differences between coders appear random, not based on any systematic differences about the meaning of the categories or how to apply them. For this reason, I take the third cut of coding as the most reliable, and it is these results I largely report below.[34]

Table 2: Intercoder agreement in welfare politics study (percent)

Stage	*Cut*	*Issue present?*	*Average*	*Leading issue*
SSA	1st cut	65-98	85	90
	2nd cut	67-100	86	88
	3rd cut	98-100	99	94
WIN	1st cut	58-95	80	77
	2nd cut	83-97	89	70
	3rd cut	98-100	100	97
FAP	1st cut	64-91	75	77
	2nd cut	62-91	76	76
	3rd cut	89-96	94	96
PBJI	1st cut	71-81	78	68
	2nd cut	66-83	78	70
	3rd cut	97-99	98	98
FSA	1st cut	76-83	80	68
	2nd cut	79-84	81	61

Table 2 (continued)

Stage	*Cut*	*Issue present?*	*Average*	*Leading issue*
FSA	3rd cut	96-97	97	92
PRWORA	1st cut	74-98	86	65

[34] Specifically, I report data from Kendal Elliott's third cut (except first cut for PRWORA), as she is the RA who has coded all stages to date. However, her third cut is substantially a joint product with her partners, Ian Gold and Frank Ortiz. We have since finished the second cut of PRWORA, but it differs little from the first.

2nd cut	78-97	87	70

How the Agenda Changed

Almost-complete findings for the hearings shed new light on welfare politics in Congress and confirm most of our hypotheses. We find, as expected, that the themes of welfare politics are diverse, and the agenda and opinion change as we expect.

Figure 2 show the percentages of witnesses whose leading issue was of each of the four issue types during each phase of the reform debate. The progressive issue was overwhelmingly dominant during the first three stages. In SSA, all witnesses chose the progressive framing, and in WIN and FAP only a few witnesses stressed any other issue type. This partly reflects the fact that in all these stages, the reform proposals on the table would have expanded government's role. FAP and PBJI would also have federalized much of welfare administration. Driven by partisan instincts, witnesses mobilized for or against these changes.

But at the same time, starting with WIN, paternalism grows rapidly as a leading issue, until by FSA it has overtaken progressivism. This reflects the increasing attention given over time to crafting effective work programs for welfare and, also, to enforcing child support, both concerns that generally falls under paternalism. For PRWORA, progressive issues rebound, no doubt due to the sharp changes proposed in the federal role in welfare, a traditionally partisan issue. Paternalist framings, however, decline only slightly and are almost as important. During FSA, the main focus of paternalist discourse was how to improve welfare work programs, while during PRWORA child support and also child care received extensive attention.

Figure 2: Lead issue cited by witnesses in welfare reform hearings

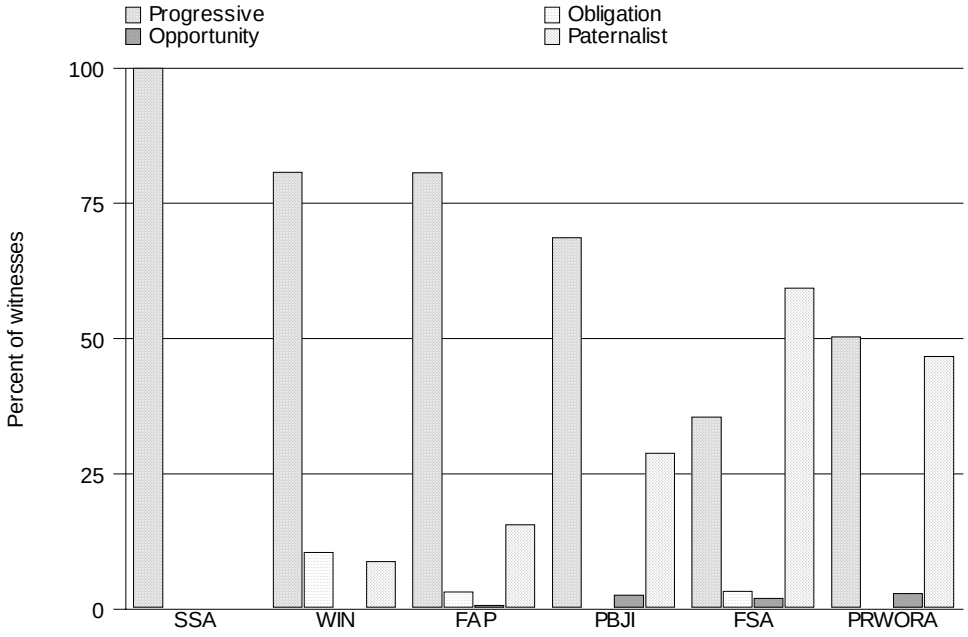
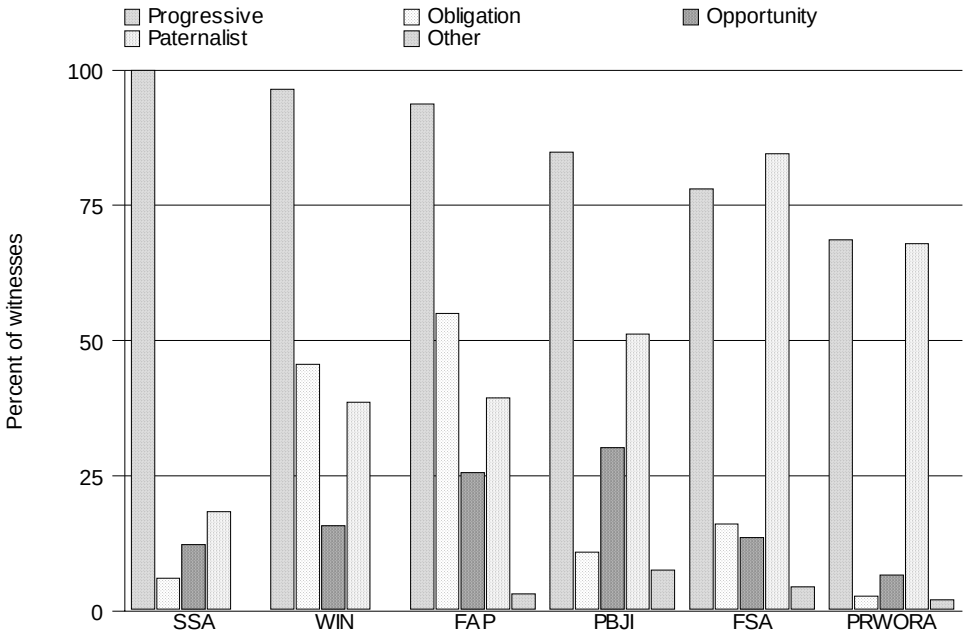


Figure 3 shows the percentages of witnesses who mentioned any of the four issue types, as leading issue or otherwise. This distribution is more even. All four issues are voiced at every stage of the hearings, at least to some extent. While progressive disputes again dominate SSA, the other issues grow in salience in the later stages, peaking when one would expect. The obligation framing crests during WIN and FAP, reflecting intense debate during those stages over proposals for work requirements. The opportunity issue peaks during PBJI, when the question whether the poor could work was heated. In the late 1970s, the economy was ailing, and PBJI included public jobs to make work more feasible. Paternalism grows at every stage until, with FSA, it becomes more common than progressivism. In PRWORA, the two are virtually equal. Thus, it was difficult, even at the earlier stages of the debate, to discuss welfare reform without some reference to questions other than "how much" government should do, even if the progressive issue still dominated.

Figure 3: Issues cited by witnesses in welfare reform hearings

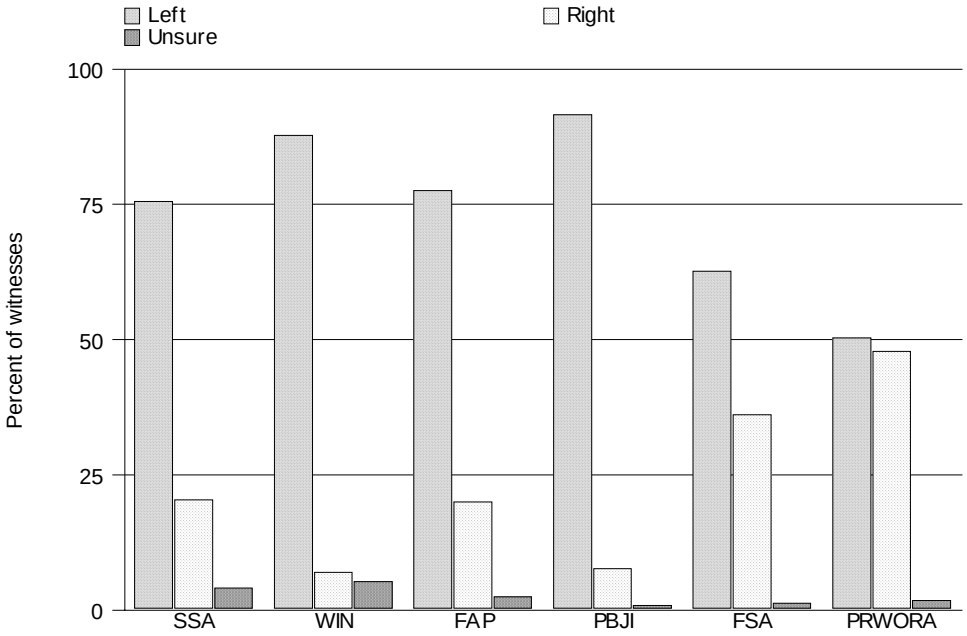


It is also notable that only a handful of witnesses—27 out of 824—mention any issue type other than progressivism, obligation, opportunity, or paternalism. These few cases often concerned questions of management or organization. Thus, our four main issues capture the lion's share of what welfare politics is about.

How Opinion Changed

Opinion about issues also changed, although less dramatically than the agenda. Figure 4 shows the position witnesses took on the lead issue they cited, whichever that was. Whether witnesses were left or right of center is our best measure of ideological position. Left or liberal positionings overwhelmingly dominated. This reflects the fact that social politics was strongly liberal during the 1960s and 1970s. Among groups likely to testify in welfare hearings, opinion remained liberal even into the 1980s, after electoral politics had turned rightward. Nevertheless, right or conservative stances grow over the six stages, until in PRWORA they are almost as prominent as liberal positions.

Figure 4: Position taken on lead issue by witnesses



How did positions on the individual issue types change? Table 3 shows the percentages of witnesses who raised each of the four issues during each of the six reform stages, consistent with Figure 3. Under each issue type are the percentages—also of all witnesses—who took positions left or right or center on those issues. Again, the meanings of left and right change with the issue type. It is clear that progressive issues fell in frequency while paternalist issues rose, although the latter trend reversed slightly with PRWORA. It is apparent that left progressive stances decline over time, while conservative paternalist positions grow. The overall balance of liberal and conservative opinion shifted more subtly. On progressive and opportunity issues—the issue types that fall within the scale-of-government style—liberal views dominate throughout. On obligation and paternalist questions—which fall under the dependency style—there is a clearer shift toward conservatism. Overall, the agenda changes more clearly than opinion on the issues.

Coders were instructed to gauge "left" and "right" according to a single scale stretching over all the hearings, not with reference to what seemed liberal or conservative at any one stage. Possibly the scale shifted, damping measured change over the stages. More likely, the majority of groups

testifying tend to be liberal, and they tend to maintain their positions in left-right terms, particularly on progressive issues, which are closest to their self-definition. But despite this the agenda changes—away from ideological combat and toward a more paternalist, more managerial discourse.

Table 3: Incidence of issue types and proportions of witnesses who were left or right on each (percent):

	SSA	*WIN*	*FAP*	*PBJI*	*FSA*	*PRWORA*
Progressive	*100*	*96*	*94*	*85*	*78*	*69*
Left	76	88	75	80	60	47
Right	20	5	16	4	18	21
Obligation	*6*	*46*	*55*	*11*	*16*	*3*
Left	2	40	43	8	4	0
Right	4	5	13	3	12	3
Opportunity	*12*	*16*	*26*	*30*	*14*	*7*
Left	12	14	25	30	14	7
Right	0	2	1	0	0	0
Paternalist	*18*	*39*	*39*	*51*	*85*	*68*
Left	12	35	24	46	50	20
Right	6	2	13	5	34	47

Note: Base for percentages is all witnesses in that stage. Position figures may not add to total for issue type due rounding or unsure cases, which are omitted.

Figure 5 shows the position witnesses took on the scale thought to underlie the size-of-government style of welfare politics (progressive and opportunity issues), as judged by the coders. A preference for larger government initially dominates, then declines during FSA and PRWORA. A preference for smaller government does not clearly grow. The picture is muddied by a rising proportion of cases where there was insufficient evidence to judge. Perhaps attitudes toward government are clearest when the discourse is most ideological. Later, as the debate turns away from progressivism toward paternalism it also becomes more technical, and some witnesses no longer reveal their underlying assumptions. No-evidence cases dominate, however, even during PRWORA when progressive dispute returned to prominence.

Figure 5: Position taken by witnesses on size of government scale

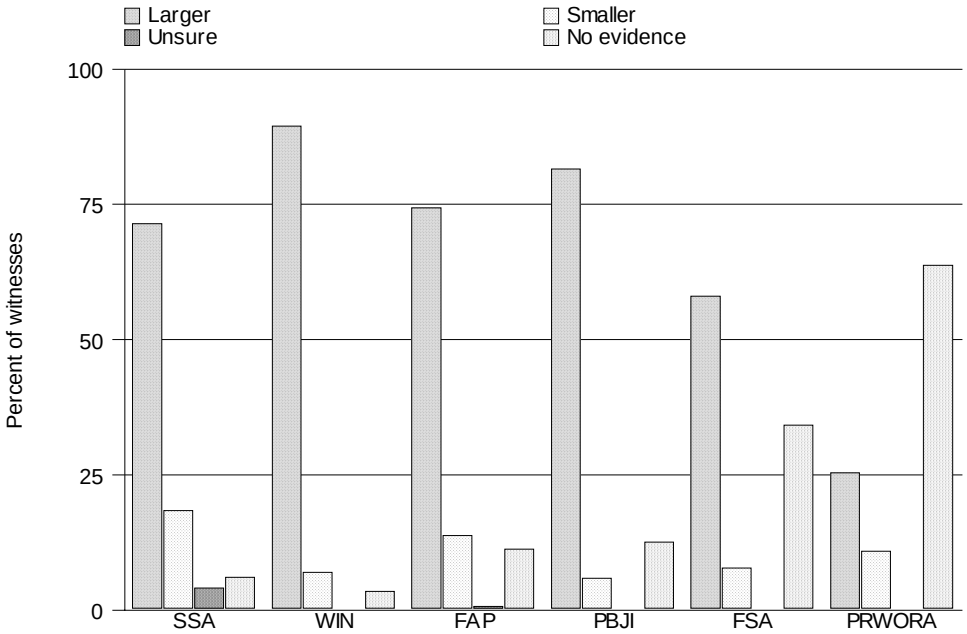
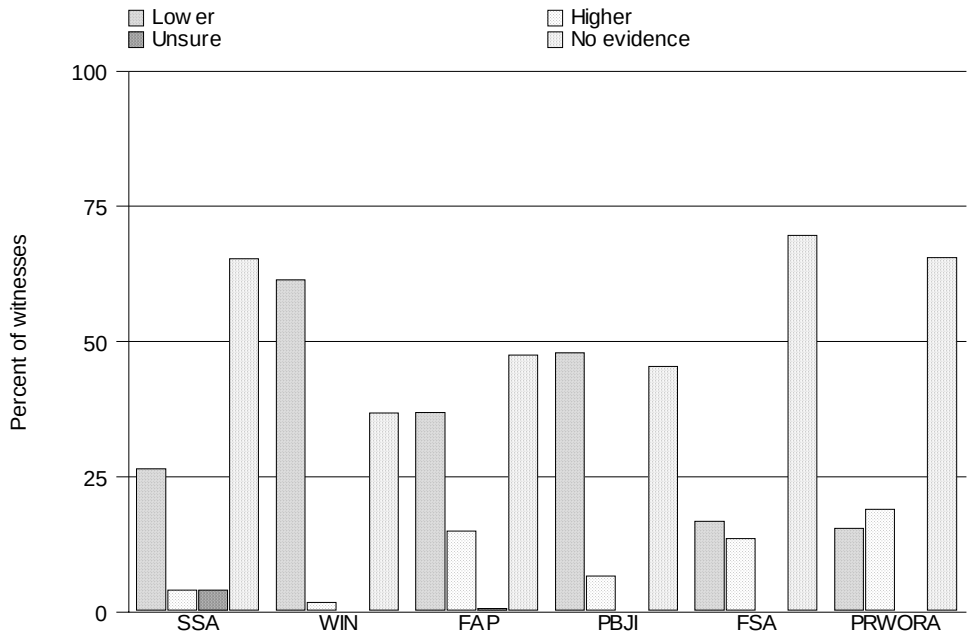


Figure 6 shows analogous positions on the competence scale thought to underline positions in dependency politics (obligation and paternalist issues). Again a change is apparent. A position positing lower competence by the poor, the liberal stance, grows to over 60 percent of witnesses in the WIN stage. Many witnesses said that the recipients could not handle work requirements, a policy first broached during WIN. That again reflects the liberalism of the period. But liberal positions decline to only 16 percent of witnesses by PRWORA. The proportion assuming higher competence, the conservative stance, grows somewhat, but the picture is again muddied by a high proportion of witnesses—over half in some stages—who took no clear position.

Figure 6: Position taken by witnesses on competence scale



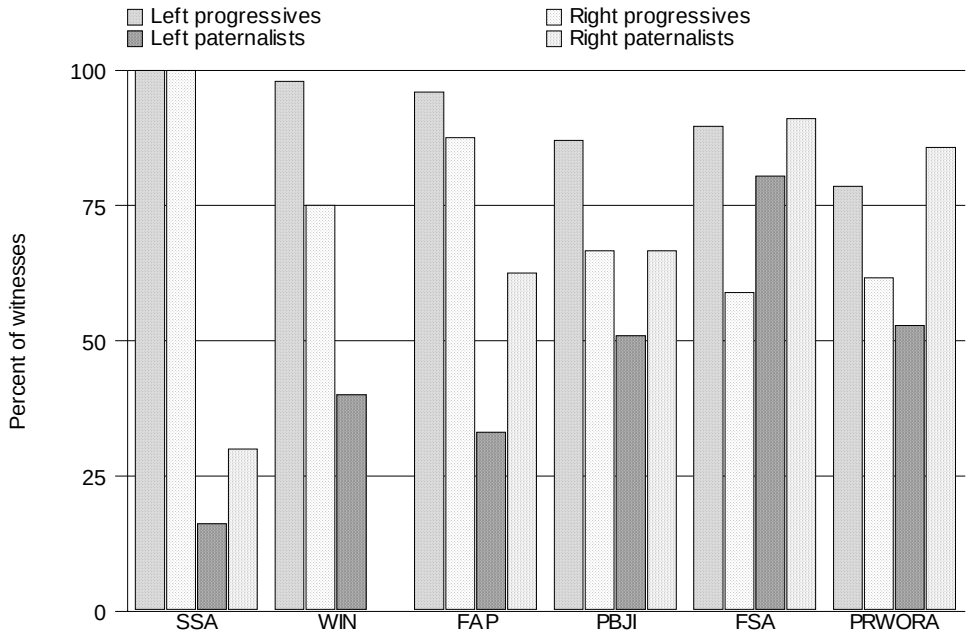
Are the Shifts Uniform?

One might question whether the shift of the agenda toward paternalism was uniform among the witnesses. Many observers of welfare politics think that paternalist discourse is fundamentally conservative. In their view, it operates to suppress more fundamental, structural issues about the nature and fairness of the society.[35] If true, groups with strongly liberal posture presumably kept stressing progressive issues and resisted paternalist discourse, the better to keep the focus on partisan differences. But this does not appear to be the case.

Figure 7 shows the proportion of witnesses who were left and right on their leading issue, whichever that was, who raised progressive and paternalist issues at each stage of the hearings. For both left and right adherents, the focus on progressive discourse falls somewhat, while the incidence of paternalism rises more sharply, just as is true overall. At most, the decline of progressive mentions and the rise in paternalism are both somewhat steeper among witnesses on the right than

on the left. Left paternalism also falls more than right paternalism with PRWORA. Thus, left of center witnesses continue to maintain progressive stances, but increasingly they address paternalistic issues also. Thus, if Schattschneider's mobilization of bias is operating, it does so on left as well as right.

Figure 7: Percentages of left and right witnesses mentioning progressive and paternalist issues.



We also classify speakers by fourteen types of groups that they represent, including the administration of the day, members of Congress (appearing as witnesses before the committee, not committee members), local and state governments, social welfare organizations, academics, think tank experts, labor and business groups, and so on. Table 4 shows what proportions of these groups raised progressive or paternalist issues at each stage of the welfare controversy, compared to the overall trend. The table also shows totals for the numbers of each group appeared in hearings and how many from each group raised progressive and paternalist issues.

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[35] Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*; idem, *Price of Citizenship*; Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*; Sanford F. Schram, *After Welfare: The Culture of Postindustrial Social Policy* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

Table 4: Numbers and percentages of witnesses raising progressive and paternalist issues, overall and by groups:

Group	*No. of Wits.*	*Issue*	*No. wits citing*	*Percent of group citing this issue in: SSA*	*WIN*	*FAP*	*PBJI*	*FSA*	*PRWORA*
Overall	824	Progressive	671	100	96	94	85	78	69
		Paternalist	479	18	39	39	51	85	68
Administration	41	Progressive	34	100	67	88	70	78	100
		Paternalist	31	0	100	100	70	78	67
Congress	160	Progressive	118	100	88	85	63	82	65
		Paternalist	105	33	38	55	63	68	73
Local/state gov	96	Progressive	89	100	100	92	100	86	88
		Paternalist	51	20	33	31	35	91	76
Social welfare	167	Progressive	143	100	100	96	95	70	64
		Paternalist	82	14	27	25	59	96	67
Academic	37	Progressive	21	NA	100	100	17	75	47
		Paternalist	31	NA	100	80	100	100	71
Think tank	51	Progressive	31	NA	NA	100	50	56	57
		Paternalist	35	NA	NA	50	67	89	67
Labor union	33	Progressive	31	100	100	100	88	100	67
		Paternalist	16	100	67	15	63	100	33
Business	27	Progressive	24	100	100	83	100	67	100
		Paternalist	16	0	0	83	0	67	57
Activist	130	Progressive	107	100	100	100	96	82	71
		Paternalist	76	0	50	36	30	89	63
Civil rights/ideol	16	Progressive	16	NA	100	100	100	NA	100
		Paternalist	3	NA	0	0	25	NA	67
Religious	35	Progressive	35	NA	100	100	100	100	100
		Paternalist	18	NA	100	15	60	60	80
Advisory/other	31	Progressive	22	100	NA	89	89	0	50
		Paternalist	15	0	NA	33	44	100	60

Note: Civil rights/ideological, and advisory/other categories are combined due to low N. NA means that this type of group did not testify in these hearings. Base for percentages is all witnesses of that type in that stage. For numbers of groups in each stage, see Table 1.

Large differences among the groups are not apparent. As is true overall, most show a high level of progressive discourse, declining slightly in the later reform stages. Most also show a rising level of paternalist discourse, usually peaking with FSA and then falling with PRWORA. High proportions of groups with a more ideological identity, such as activist, civil rights, and religious

organizations, do continue to raise progressive issues, but even they pay rising attention to paternalist questions. So the changes in discourse are broad-based.

Determinants of the Agenda

As suggested above, the reasons for the agenda shift ultimately lie outside welfare politics—in trends in national politics and the society. But some correlates of the key framings can be found within the current data. I built models of whether witnesses mentioned progressivism or paternalism as their leading issue, and whether they mentioned these issue types at all. These models made use of several measures of political attitudes, particularly the scale-of-government and competence scales discussed earlier. Tables 5-8 show the results (see Appendix for descriptive statistics on the variables).[36]

Table 5: Model of whether a witness cited progressivism as leading issue:

	Coeff	*Std. error*	*z score*	*P>|z|*
Stage of welfare reform:	-.084	.015	-5.47	.000
Hearing was in the Senate:	-.103	.041	-2.49	.013
Witness was left on leading issue:	.289	.050	5.70	.000
Witness favored larger government:	.183	.048	3.82	.000
Witness favored smaller government	.337	.035	6.43	.000
Witness assumed higher competence:	-.195	.061	-3.19	.001
Witness was from the administration:	-.179	.084	-2.15	.032
Witness was an academic:	-.289	.087	-3.15	.002
N	824			
Log likelihood	-430.2			
Pseudo R^2	.221			

Note: Coefficients are dprobits (Stata) showing the instantaneous change in the probability that Y = 1 resulting from a one-unit change in the independent term.

[36] These models were assembled with limited fitting. I began with the stage of reform term, then added the Senate term, then ideology and the scale-of-government and dependency scales. Finally, I added such witness terms as were significant when added to the terms already in the model. I retained terms significant at .05 or better. Dummy variables were defined as "0" for cases where coders were unsure or could make no judgment.

Table 5 models the chance that a witness adopts progressivism as his or her leading issue. Since a paternalist emphasis seems to grow over the span of the welfare controversy, I interpret the stage of reform as a continuous, six-step variable. That term is significant and negative; progressive leading issues did indeed become less likely as welfare reform proceeded. Senate hearings less often witnessed dominant progressive framings. Perhaps that was because for much of this period the Senate Finance Committee was conservative and resistant to partisan appeals.

Such issues were more probable if witnesses were left on their leading issue and favored larger government. But witnesses favoring smaller government were also likely to favor dominant progressive positions. The adherents of *both* larger and smaller government preferred to argue in progressive terms. Probably that was because these attitudes are those that fit a progressive discourse. This shows that the choice of progressive or paternalist framing is not just a proxy for left and right. How one frames the agenda is largely independent of the position one takes on it, just as Schattschneider suggests. Witnesses assuming higher competence in the poor are less likely to make progressivism dominant, perhaps because they would prefer a paternalist framing, where this assumption is more relevant.

Controlling for these variables, the only witness groupings that were clearly distinct were administration spokespersons and academics, both of which tended to eschew dominant progressive stands. Although most academic experts on welfare are clearly liberal, they are also problem-solvers more than ideologues, so they typically avoid strong progressive stances. That administration witnesses should have done the same is more surprising. One would expect the administration of the day to take a partisan approach to welfare. If they did not, the reason may be that they, too, adopted a problem-solving approach to welfare. Administrations were heavily swayed by the same research and experience that academics spoke about.[37]

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[37] Moynihan, *Politics of a Guaranteed Income*; Lynn and Whitman, *The President as Policymaker*.

Table 6 shows similar results for whether a witness mentioned progressive issues at all. Here the Senate is no longer significant, but the attitudinal determinants are much as before. Representatives from local and state government replace administration spokespersons as a distinct witness grouping, one favoring progressive positions.

Table 6: Model of whether a witness cited a progressive issue at all:

	Coeff	*Std. error*	*z score*	*P>|z|*
Stage of welfare reform:	-.020	.009	-2.09	.036
Witness was left on leading issue:	.089	.032	2.99	.003
Witness favored larger government:	.250	.035	7.69	.000
Witness favored smaller government:	.134	.016	5.85	.000
Witness assumed higher competence	-.129	.047	-3.25	.001
Witness was from local/state gov:	.093	.024	2.69	.007
Witness was an academic:	-.186	.079	-2.97	.003
N	824			
Log likelihood	-282.8			
Pseudo R^2	.285			

Note: See Table 5.

Table 7 is roughly the inverse of Table 5. The chance that a witness adopted paternalism as leading issue is raised if the stage of the hearing is later, the hearing is in the Senate, or witnesses are right on their leading issue. Here witnesses who favor larger or smaller government are less likely to make this issue dominant; presumably, they would prefer a progressive discourse. Those assuming higher competence are more likely to stress paternalism, because this assumption fits that issue type. While witnesses from the administration and academe favor paternalism, religious groups resist it.

Table 8, which models whether a witness mentioned paternalist issues at all, is similar, except that the Senate term and larger government terms are longer significant. Of witness types, academics clearly favor this issue, while witnesses from civil rights or ideological groups oppose it.

Table 7: Model of whether a witness cited paternalism as leading issue:

	Coeff	*Std. error*	*z score*	*P>|z|*
Stage of welfare reform:	.089	.015	5.87	.000
Hearing was in Senate:	.094	.040	2.34	.019
Witness was right on leading issue:	.279	.050	5.67	.000

Witness favored larger government:	-.142	.045	-3.18	.001
Witness favored smaller government:	-.255	.036	-5.16	.000
Witness assumed higher competence:	.158	.059	2.77	.006
Witness was from the administration:	.194	.084	2.39	.017
Witness was an academic:	.215	.088	2.53	.011
Witness was from a religious group:	-.212	.065	-2.27	.023
N	824			
Log likelihood	-413.1			
Pseudo R^2	.223			

Note: See Table 5.

Table 8: Model of whether a witness cited a paternalist issue at all:

	Coeff	*Std. error*	*z score*	*P>|z|*
Stage of welfare reform:	.080	.012	6.60	.000
Witness was right on leading issue:	.259	.044	5.29	.000
Witness favored smaller government:	-.225	.071	-3.12	.002
Witness assumed higher competence:	.277	.048	4.52	.000
Witness was an academic:	.234	.067	2.76	.006
Witness was from a civil rights or ideological group::	-.348	.130	-2.31	.021
N	824			
Log likelihood	-473.2			
Pseudo R^2	.155			

Note: See Table 5.

Although its influence is not strong, the stage of the hearing is significant in all these models, in all cases promoting movement toward paternalism. That is so despite controlling for political attitudes. Thus, the change in the agenda reflects more than the growing conservatism of national politics. It also must represent a changing perception of welfare, probably driven by experience grappling with the problem and research developments. This reflects Heclo's political learning.

As shown above, PRWORA in some ways breaks the trend toward rising paternalism. Progressive controversy returned to prominence. But the models here are not much changed if we exclude the PRWORA stage, or alternatively if we estimate them using only PRWORA data. The

Senate term is sometimes affected, and fewer of the witness group terms are significant, but the attitudinal terms in every case keep their signs and, in most cases, their significance.[38]

Determinants of Politics

I used these same variables to model the political leanings of witnesses in the welfare hearings. Again, my political measure is whether they stood left or right of center on their dominant issue, whichever that was, as judged by coders. Tables 9 and 10 show the results.

Table 9: Model of whether a witness was left on his or her leading issue:

	Coeff	*Std. error*	*z score*	*P>|z|*
Stage of welfare reform:	-.050	.015	-3.36	.001
Hearing was in Senate:	-.102	.041	-2.48	.013
Witness favored larger government:	.413	.040	9.62	.000
Witness favored smaller government:	-.377	.081	-4.84	.000
Witness assumed lower competence:	.159	.042	3.28	.001
Witness assumed higher competence:	-.338	.064	-5.63	.000
Witness was from an activist group::	.172	.035	3.87	.000
N	824			
Log likelihood	-299.2			
Pseudo R^2	.424			

Note: See Table 5.

In the first model, witnesses less often take left positions as welfare reform proceeds and in the Senate. As one might expect, such positions are likelier if one favors larger government in general and less likely if one favors smaller government. Equally, they are more likely if one assumes less competence in the poor, and less likely if one assumes more competence. Since "left" or "right" here might apply to any issue type, results might differ if we substituted left or right specifically on progressive or paternalist issues. The only group variable that clearly improves these results is that for activists; they are more likely to be liberal even controlling for the other terms. Several other

[38] If the two models for leading issue are estimated only for PRWORA, witnesses in Senate hearings are more likely to take dominant progressive stands and avoid dominant paternalist positions, rather than less. That might reflect the more liberal tenor of the Senate compared to the House during PRWORA, whereas in earlier phases it had been more conservative.

witness groups were also significant if substituted for the activist term, but none remained significant when placed alongside it.[39]

In Table 10, which explains right-of-center positions, most of the same variables appear, but with the signs reversed. In this model, three witness groups appear. Representatives of local and state government and of social welfare organizations are more often conservative, activists less often.

Table 10: Model of whether a witness was right on his or her leading issue:

	Coeff	*Std. error*	*z score*	*P>|z|*
Stage of welfare reform:	.070	.014	5.06	.000
Hearing was in Senate:	.129	.039	3.40	.001
Witness favored larger government:	-.347	.040	-8.61	.000
Witness favored smaller government:	.369	.079	5.25	.000
Witness assumed lower competence:	-.139	.038	-3.07	.002
Witness assumed higher competence:	.345	.063	6.15	.000
Witness was from local/state gov	.130	.063	2.27	.023
Witness was from a social welfare org	.105	.053	2.13	.033
Witness was from an activist group::	-.118	.034	-2.82	.005
N	824			
Log likelihood	-285.3			
Pseudo R^2	.430			

Note: See Table 5.

Overall, witness groups play a larger role in these models than they did in the earlier models for progressive versus paternalist issue framings. That is probably because lobby groups define their identity more clearly around differences on issues than the way issues are framed. They know what they are for and against, and also which groups are likely to oppose them. Thus, group identities add weight to the liberalism or conservatism of witnesses, going beyond the attitudes they express. Groups were less clear about the steady shift in the agenda that occurred over the course of the

[39] These other groups included local and state government, think tank experts, and representatives of activist or ideological groups, or of activist/civil rights/ideological groups. The first two were less likely to be liberal *ceteris paribus*, the others more likely to.

welfare controversy. Some might be surprised to discover how much welfare discourse had changed by the 1990s from what it was in the 1960s.

In both these models, as in those above, results were not greatly altered if one excludes the PRWORA stage or estimates the models only on PRWORA data. The significant witness groups may change, but the significant attitudes hardly do.

Conclusions

The hypotheses I set out above are verified, at least in most respects and at least in the reform hearings. All the issue types appear, as do the expected shifts. Debate does turn more conservative, although liberal positions predominate, even during PRWORA, and the change is clearer for progressive and paternalist issues than obligation or opportunity. More clearly, the agenda changes. There is a shift away from the scale-of-government style of welfare politics (progressive and opportunity issues) toward the dependency style (obligation and paternalist issues). There is also more focus on concrete conditions (opportunity and paternalist issues) as against basic principles (progressive and obligation). The shifts also seem general to all the witness groupings, although to some extent administration and academic spokespersons lead the way.

The main surprise was that obligation and opportunity issues play a smaller role than expected. Principally, the shift is from a progressive issue definition toward paternalism. Disputes over work tests and the possibility of recipients working were heated during the middle stages of the controversy. But overall, most witnesses appear to have accepted, at least tacitly, that most recipients should work and could work. By FSA, those premises are no longer seriously disputed. As one expert writes, ". . . after 1992 the debate was about the amount of work required, the specific conditions of work, and the consequences for individuals and states of not working"—all in my terms paternalist issues—"rather than on whether recipients should be required to work."[40]

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[40] Ron Haskins, "Liberal and Conservative Influences on the Welfare Reform Legislation of 1996," in *For Better and For Worse,* ed. Duncan and Chase-Lansdale, p. 17.

Finally, the shifts in the agenda do correspond with changes in policy, either proposed or enacted. Progressive debate is hottest when major changes in the scope of welfare are proposed, while obligation issues peak when the work issue is hottest during WIN and FAP. Opportunity dispute is prevalent during PBJI when the adequacy of private employment and need for public jobs were at issue. Paternalism dominates FSA, when major expansions of work programs and support benefits were decided. During PRWORA, progressive and paternalist themes are virtually coequal. That mirrored the act itself, which combined contentious changes in the federal role with work and child support reforms that aroused a much more paternalist discourse.

Of the three theories of welfare reform politics, *elitism* emerges as the strongest, simply because this is the best way to explain the upsurge of paternalism. *Backlash* gains some support from the strength of progressive dispute during the early stages and PRWORA and from the conservative shift, and also from the importance of the scale-of-government terms in the multivariate models. But this theory cannot account for the overall cooling of partisan passions. While administration spokespersons play leading roles in the hearings, they favor a paternalist more than progressive style, just as academics do. *Enforcement* is also important, but chiefly in the middle stages, when it helped to defeat proposed expansions of welfare. Like strong progressive divisions, passionate dispute over work tests clearly faded by FSA. Thus, the most persuasive theory of welfare change shift somewhat over time.

The results demonstrate that the determinants of the agenda are separable from those of political positions. That is shown by the fact that the agenda changes more clearly than political positions, and that the determinants of the agenda include attitudes associated with both left and right. Schattschneider was correct: The framing of the issue in politics is a different and more important question than the position one takes on that issue. The growing paternalism of the discourse does not simply mean growing conservatism under another name. Rather, the agenda shifts even though most of the participants remain left of center, particularly on progressive issues.

The results to date question the dominant view of welfare politics as a partisan battle over the scale of government. While progressive dispute strongly shaped the early stages of reform, and returned to prominence in PRWORA, it is far from the whole story. National politics moved to the right, but more important, policy experience and research encouraged a more practical and less ideological stance toward poverty. The political class refocused its attention on how to move more adult recipients into jobs, and also on how to improve child support payments. These were the chief goals of the paternalist discourse that dominates FSA. They lived on, these results suggest, even through the more partisan fires of PRWORA.[41]

The shallow historical depth of the existing accounts of PRWORA misses the way the earlier stages laid the groundwork for the radical 1990s. Despite PRWORA's loud progressive rhetoric, what the act principally did was toughen work and child support requirements. That behavioral focus reflects the dependency style of welfare politics, not progressive divisions. The change emerged from the earlier welfare battles going back to the 1960s, and even the Republican partisans of the mid 1990s had to accept this. Even under a Republican Congress, it was far easier to move welfare to the "right" in paternalist than in progressive terms.

The floor debates in Congress still remain to be coded. I expect that members of Congress will exhibit the same shifts in opinion and in the agenda seen in the hearings. The small number of members who testified in the hearings already shows this (see Table 4). On average, members should also be more conservative than hearings witnesses. Most groups that testify in Congress ask government to do more to solve social problems. Members of Congress represent taxpayers as well as program clients and staffs, so they will probably be more moderate.

A likely conclusion is that welfare politics finally rebuked the ideological claims of both left and right. Liberal hopes to expand welfare were defeated, but so were hard-line conservative plans

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[41] This view is also supported by Reinhard, "Force of Ideas," which is based on a comparison of FSA and PRWORA more limited than my own. See further discussion of this study above.

to abolish aid. In the end, scale issues were mostly set aside in favor of pursuing the work goal, which the public strongly favored. Most groups involved in advising Congress shared in that change. Welfare became less of an ideological battle and more of a problem to be solved.

As another example, whether government should use welfare to promote marriage was one of the most divisive issues during PRWORA. The question remains inflammatory among commentators, yet among policymakers it has largely been sidestepped.[42] Under PRWORA, pressures on states to promote marriage were very limited, and under TANF reauthorization new marriage funding is confined to the development new programs. The government is now building and evaluating marriage programs much as it did welfare work programs in the 1980s and 1990s. Again, a sober, paternalistic style is displacing ideological combat.

This study should promote a more mature understanding of welfare politics in the intellectual world. Most scholars interpret the recent shift toward work requirements as partisan, driven by Republican ascendancy and signifying reduced commitment to the poor. My findings suggest rather that the movement toward these policies is more enlightened and broader-based. The recent vogue for paternalism reflects learning among policymakers of many viewpoints. In some ways it expands public commitments to the needy. This appreciation should promote more realistic advocacy as the nation rebuilds its aid system around work after PRWORA.

Appendix

Descriptive statistics on variables used in Tables 4-9:

Variable	*Obs*	*Mean*	*Std dev*	*Min*	*Max*
Stage of welfare reform	824	4.37	1.56	1	6
Hearing was in the Senate	824	.417	.493	0	1

[42] Marriage issues are generally classified as paternalist in our coding scheme. Admittedly, during PRWORA they could be more heated than this issue type usually connotes. They played no serious role in the earlier stages.

Witness chose progressive as leading issue	824	.607	.489	0	1
Witness cited progressive issue	824	.814	.389	0	1
Witness chose paternalism as leading issue	824	.347	.476	0	1
Witness cited paternalist issue	824	.581	.494	0	1
Witness was left on leading issue	824	.675	.469	0	1
Witness was right on leading issue	824	.296	.457	0	1
Witness favored larger government	824	.563	.496	0	1
Witness favored smaller government	824	.103	.304	0	1
Witness assumed lower competence	824	.284	.451	0	1
Witness assumed higher competence	824	.133	.340	0	1
Witness was from administration	824	.050	.218	0	1
Witness was from local/state gov.	824	.117	.321	0	1
Witness was an academic	824	.045	.207	0	1
Witness was from an activist group	824	.158	.365	0	1
Witness was from a religious group	824	.042	.202	0	1
Witness was from a civil rights or ideological group	824	.019	.138	0	1

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