

Work Welfare and Partisan Change

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We examine Americans' attitudes toward work and welfare, focusing specifically on the pivotal cohort of people who graduated from high school in 1965. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with some of the participants in the 1965-1997 Political Socialization Panel Study, now in their early seventies, we explore the role of work in shaping people's identities, the impact of personal experience on their attitudes toward work and welfare, and how they navigate the difficult trade-off between wanting to provide for people's needs and wanting to encourage self-reliance. Our interviews reinforce evidence from the original surveys suggesting that Republican partisanship has been both a cause and an effect of changing attitudes toward government involvement in ensuring jobs and living standards over the past half-century. The interviews also reveal fervent concerns about immigrants' and African-Americans' reliance on welfare, echoing a significant racialization of attitudes toward government provision of jobs and welfare between 1982 and 1997.

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Political Lifetimes: The Class of '65 and Political Change in America

Larry M. Bartels and Katherine J. Cramer

Chapter 7

Work, Welfare, and Partisan Change

In the introduction to his masterful oral history *Working*, Studs Terkel remarked on “the happy few” who find “a meaning to their work well over and beyond the reward of the paycheck.” But he also noted a more universal significance of work:

To earn one’s bread by the sweat of one’s brow has always been the lot of mankind. At least, ever since Eden’s slothful couple was served with an eviction notice. The scriptural precept was never doubted, not out loud. No matter how demeaning the task, no matter how it dulls the senses and breaks the spirit, one *must* work. Or else.¹

In our conversations with members of the Class of '65, it was not uncommon to hear views about work and welfare that resonated with both aspects of Terkel’s account. On one hand, many have clearly found meaning in work. Indeed, the frequency with which they described their upbringings and their life courses in terms of the jobs their parents or they themselves have held suggests that it is not just “the happy few” whose identities are bound up in work. On the other hand, many are engrossed by the conviction that “one *must* work,” and their political views are strongly shaped by concerns that someone, somewhere, is evading the scriptural precept to “earn one’s bread by the sweat of one’s brow.”

In this chapter, we explore the Jennings respondents’ views about the meaning of

¹ Terkel (1974: xi, xii).

work and about government efforts to improve the living standards of the poor. We find considerable antipathy to welfare programs, especially among the people whose own identities seem most bound up in work. Their concerns are often rooted in personal experience, especially contrasts between the “hard-working people” they grew up among and people today who “assume that somebody’s going to come and give us whatever we need.” These concerns are often reinforced by second- or third-hand accounts of indolence and welfare abuse, especially involving immigrants and African-Americans.

As always, our account of our interview material reflects what people told us much more than what they didn’t tell us. In reviewing the interviews, we observed a marked asymmetry in the apparent salience of work and welfare in our respondents’ worldviews. Those who, over the course of their working lives, had favored a strong government role in ensuring jobs and incomes often had rather little to say about these issues in the course of the hour or two we spent talking with them. In contrast, those who emphasized the importance of letting each person get ahead on his own often circled back to these topics repeatedly over the course of our conversations. It was not just that work played a major role in their sense of themselves, where they’d come from, and what they’d accomplished in life. Their own work experiences also seemed to color their political outlooks much more strongly than for other respondents. While their views are probably not entirely representative of the Class of ’65, much less of all Americans, they provide vivid insights into the thinking underlying a crucially important strand of American public opinion.

The meaning of work

One telling indication of the importance of work in our respondents’ worldviews is the frequency with which it was mentioned in responses to our first, very general question about their upbringings: “So let’s just start at the beginning. What do you

remember about your childhood that you think is important for the person you've become?"

Patricia Myers replied, "It was really pretty—I'd say pretty normal. A normal childhood. I can't think of any things that stand out. I mean, I had a mother and father. Both worked."

Barbara Jones: So, my daddy was a very hard worker who was a cattleman, is what he was. He wasn't a farmer. He was a cattleman. ... My mother was a stay-at-home mom that worked beside his side all day long and then came home and cooked, made their meals. I never saw a sandwich until I was in high school.

Don Peyton: My dad was a taxi driver, so he met a lot of people. I would ride with Dad a lot of times, especially on a Saturday, and listen to the radio, and that's how I started singing, was listening to the radio and singing along with him. My mother worked in a factory and then she owned a café, so I got to meet a lot of people.

Sometimes these stories flowed directly into accounts of the respondents' own early experiences with work.

Walter Howe: My dad was a butcher his whole life after he got out of the military, so he worked in local meat markets. And that was back in the day. If you come in and you wanted a piece of ham or something, you had to pull the ham out and get the whole knife out and cut it. ... So during school, I pretty much—my dad, he got me and my brother to work at the one he was at. ... We worked Saturday and I think it was 7:00 to 7:00. So we worked 12 hours and we got paid \$4 a day, and me and my brother hated it. He would only hire one of us to pull. So we'd alternate every other Saturday working, so I was making \$2 a week.

Work also figured prominently in responses to two questions we asked near the end of most of our interviews—one about the meaning of good citizenship and the

other about advice to today's high school seniors on how to live a successful life.

KJC: How would you describe a good citizen in this country these days? What kind of things do you think are most important for a person to show they are a good citizen?

Mary Anderson: Follow the law, work, be productive.

KJC: How would you describe a good citizen in this country in this day and age?

Dennis Jansen: How would I describe a good citizen?

KJC: Yeah. Or what kind of things about a person are most important for showing—

Jansen: Values, good work ethic. ... The work ethic is large in my view, and I've instilled that in my kids.

KJC: Imagine that you're giving advice to a high school senior right now. So, someone who is about your age back in 1965. What advice do you give to that person about how to go on and have a happy, healthy, prosperous life?

Linda Mitani: Wow. That's a big—what would you say to someone? Get a good education, work hard.

KJC: So this question is, imagine you're talking to a high school senior. What advice do you give to that person about how to go on and have a happy, healthy, meaningful life?

Walter Howe: To a high school senior? ... I would say find a trade, something that you enjoy doing. Everybody has a different aptitude. And find a trade and pursue that instead of trying to get in debt with a college education. 'Cause there's not going to be free college I don't think, even though everybody is pushing for it. But what you get in college now is worthless as far as I'm concerned. So I'd find a trade and pursue it, and work hard. Don't expect

anybody to give you anything because there's no free rides out there. You've got to go out and earn it.

Even some of the most liberal people we talked with grounded their convictions about the government's responsibility to provide help in hard times not in terms of universal rights or basic human needs, but as what is due, specifically, to hard-working, taxpaying citizens. One of these is Carol Ford, the California divorcee who lost her retirement savings in the Great Recession.

Carol Ford: There was nobody, there was nothing there for people. People just went down the tube. ... So I felt like, what do you pay your taxes your whole life for? What are you paying them for? And I still feel that way. I felt like an absolute fool that you toe the line, you do this, you do that, you be an upstanding citizen, you work hard, you do this. And in the end, when you really need it, where's your government? Where are they? They're nowhere. There was nobody, there was nothing.

Of all the people we talked with, the one who most eloquently conveyed the meaning of work is Curtis Clark. We spoke with Clark at the kitchen table in the small, well-tended California tract house where he lives with his wife. He is a polite, soft-spoken man who paradoxically exudes both toughness and deep feeling. The vital importance of work is woven through his recollections of his family and upbringing, his life experiences, and his political views.

Clark grew up on a 50-acre farm in the rural Midwest. "We sold milk," he recalled. "And then we had pigs, chickens. We had about five acres in garden, because there were five boys that they raised on that farm." His father was a factory worker who "always had a dream of having a drive-in restaurant." At one point he managed to buy a small place, but his attempt to run it while carrying on at the factory was too grueling to last.

Curtis Clark: He would get home from [his shift] and clean up a little bit and go into the restaurant that my mother had worked all day in. He'd get there a little before 6:00, relieve her, she'd come home, and he would stay and close up about 1:00 in the morning every day.

KJC: Oh, boy.

Clark: Then he'd get up at 4:30 to go to work at [the factory] again.

KJC: Oh, my.

Clark: That lasted about a year and a half, and they had to sell the restaurant.

KJC: Yeah, that sounds really hard.

Clark: They'd be burning candles at both ends. It catches up.

Clark's father conveyed the importance of work not only by example, but also by providing shrewd incentives for his sons to earn their own money.

Clark: My dad raised five boys. When we turned 16, he bought us our first car. Well, my oldest brother, he just turned 80, his first car was a '47 Studebaker. He paid \$50 for it. Dad paid for it. But it cost my brother \$250 to get it running enough to get it home. That was his thinking: 'Here's your car. Now, if you want to drive it, repair it, license it, insure it, then you're going to get off your dead butt and work for [it]. Otherwise, it's just going to sit.' And that was his way of teaching that you had to work for what you got.

But for Clark, work is not just a way to keep the Studebaker running or to provide for one's family. It is—literally—a matter of life and death.

Clark: I can remember as a kid, I had an uncle that operated a grain elevator out in the country for the farmers who'd bring their corn in to be grinded up.

KJC: Yeah.

Clark: They had a house in Florida and one in Indiana, and they'd spend their winters in Florida. At age 45, he retired and turned the business over to his son. And all he would do is sit and listen to the radio for the Cubs games out

of Chicago and watch the stock market. And by 48 or 49, he was an invalid. They went to the Mayo Clinic. Every doctor they [could] think of, they could not find anything physically wrong with him.

KJC: Oh, no.

Clark: And by 51, he was dead.

KJC: Oh, my.

Clark: It was just said he gave up. So that's why I tell people you got to keep moving, you've got to keep working and do something you enjoy.

Clark's own determination to "keep working" has involved him in a fascinating series of jobs, and in a harrowing series of health crises. After serving in the Navy he worked for more than two decades as a civilian employee in the defense industry. When the facility where he worked was closed, "I didn't have enough time for even an early retirement, so I put my name out there and I was offered a job in Barstow."

Clark: It was 70-degree weather here and 119 there.

KJC: Oh, my.

Clark: So I lost 40 pounds the first six weeks, because [it was] so hot you don't feel like eating. So I was drinking a gallon of water a day and a gallon of fruit juice.

KJC: Wow.

Clark: The fruit juice threw my blood sugar out of whack. Then all the veins were hanging out, and my wife got concerned and called my doctor She called me in Barstow, wanted to know when I'd be home.

LMB: Hmm.

Clark: Says, 'I'll be there tomorrow.' She says, 'I want to see you first thing.'

LMB: Mmm.

Clark: I go in, the first thing they did was check the blood sugar.

KJC: Yeah.

Clark: It was 940. They said, 'You shouldn't even be walking, let alone alive.'

KJC: Oh, my goodness.

Clark: Normally, at 700 you're in a coma.

KJC: Oh, wow.

Clark: And I'd been driving [more than 400 miles] back and forth in those days. I just, so—

KJC: Wow, so did you just—

Clark: God's been good to me over the years.

KJC: Wow. Goodness.

Clark: Yeah.

KJC: So did you go back to that job and you just—

Clark: Yeah. Well, oh yeah. I stayed on that.

KJC: Okay. Yeah.

Clark: And then in 2001, I had triple bypass.

KJC: Oh, my goodness.

Clark: Then I went back to work in Barstow in two months and worked another year before I retired.

KJC: Okay.

Clark: Yeah. But ten days out of surgery, I got in my truck and drove to Barstow just to prove that I could do it. It was just one of those things, that I wasn't giving up yet.

KJC: Yeah. Yeah. Good for you.

Clark: And then when I retired, I was too young to retire. So I went back to school and became a medical assistant. ... But, you know? Then I got carpal tunnel real bad, so I had to give up drawing blood. I did that for seven years, and so I was still too young to retire. So I took a part-time job at [a local

industrial plant].

KJC: Okay.

Clark: And a car ran over me.

KJC: What?

Clark: So I've got a rod in my neck and messed up my knee and shoulder.

KJC: Oh, my goodness.

Clark: But I'm still too young to retire. So I'm doing estate sales right now.

Work and welfare: the role of government

The Jennings surveys provide detailed records of respondents' occupations and employment histories at various points in their working lives, but rather less about their attitudes toward work and welfare. However, one question borrowed from the American National Election Studies (ANES) and included in the 1973, 1982, and 1997 Jennings surveys does shed light on the evolution of their views regarding the appropriate role of government in this domain:

Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on his own. And, of course, other people have opinions somewhere in between. ... Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

In 1973, when they were in their mid-twenties, the Jennings respondents' average level of support for government ensuring jobs and living standards was 43.9 out of 100, closer to "let each person get ahead on his own" than to "the government in Washington should see to it." By 1982, when they were in their mid-thirties, it had declined to an even lower level, 35.7. By 1997, when they were about 50 years old, support for government involvement in ensuring jobs and living standards had

rebounded slightly, to 37.0.²

Figure 1 provides a comparison of these trends in support for social welfare provision among the Jennings panelists and successive cross-sections of the adult population interviewed in the American National Election Studies surveys.³ The Jennings panelists closely matched the general population in average support for government jobs and welfare in the early 1970s; but that similarity reflects two largely offsetting factors that were specific to the Class of '65. On one hand, the Jennings sample is more conservative than the country as a whole because it excludes people who did not complete high school. In the ANES data, high school dropouts were 11 points more supportive of social welfare provision, on average. On the other hand, it is clear from the ANES data that older people were generally less supportive of government jobs and welfare than younger people were.⁴ This life-cycle effect presumably made the Jennings panelists' views more liberal in 1973 and 1982 (when they were younger than most of the ANES respondents) and more conservative in 1997 (when they were older than most of the ANES respondents).

***** Figure 1 *****

² These figures exclude respondents who said they "haven't thought much about this" or didn't know where they would place themselves on the scale; the proportion excluded declined from 8.2% in 1973 to 6.6% in 1982 and 4.2% in 1997.

³ The standard errors of the estimated average values for each year range from 0.7 to 0.9 in the Jennings panel, from 0.6 to 0.9 for the entire ANES sample, and from 0.8 to 1.5 for the ANES subsamples of Democrats and Republicans.

⁴ In a statistical analysis of the ANES data from 1972 through 1998 allowing for different levels of average support for government involvement in each election year and among high school dropouts, high school graduates, and college graduates, the differences in support associated with age (.701, with a standard error of .127) and the square root of age (-11.93, with a standard error of 1.69) imply a rather sharp decline in average support of 3.6 points on the 100-point scale between the ages of 25 and 34, with a more gradual additional decline of 3.6 points between the ages of 34 and 50.

Statistical analysis of the Jennings data reveals that the factors associated with support for government ensuring jobs and living standards shifted markedly over this time span. In 1973, when the question first appeared in the Jennings survey, blacks, people from high-SES high schools, people who had spent time in college, northerners, and Democrats were generally more enthusiastic about government involvement than whites, people from lower-SES schools, those whose education ended with high school, southerners, and Republicans. By 1982, even after allowing for people's previous views, the impact of partisanship was almost twice as great as it had been nine years earlier, while blacks and (to a lesser extent) women and people from high-SES schools continued to be more supportive than whites, men, and people from lower-SES schools. Family income also emerged as an important factor shaping people's views, with affluent people expressing much less support for ensuring jobs and living standards than those with lower incomes.⁵

By 1997, opinions about government involvement in ensuring jobs and living standards were rather more stable than they had been between 1973 and 1982. Partisanship no longer produced additional movement in views, the additional impact of family incomes was reduced, and the impact of race and school SES probably reversed, though not strongly enough to erase their previous effects. But the most notable development was that changes in support for government involvement in social welfare between 1982 and 1997 were strongly related to pre-existing racial attitudes, as measured by the difference in ratings of blacks and whites on a "feeling thermometer" in 1982. The average level of relative antipathy toward blacks—an 11-point-lower rating than for whites on the 100-point feeling thermometer—implied a 1.7-point reduction in support for government involvement. The expected difference between people with typical high and low levels of affect toward blacks relative to

⁵ These results appear in the first and second columns of Table 7.1.

whites (black-white differences in thermometer ratings of +12.3 and -33.7, respectively) amounted to 7.5 points, about three times the expected difference between strong Democrats and strong Republicans or people in the 10th and 90th percentiles of the income distribution.⁶ Racial attitudes were now clearly and strongly shaping views about government involvement in social welfare. While the Jennings data themselves cannot tell us *why* that was the case, it is tempting to attribute the racialization of social welfare policy preferences in the 1980s and '90s, at least in part, to Ronald Reagan's harangues about a "welfare queen" collecting lavish government benefits and, more broadly, to the mass media's strong tendency to portray poverty as a problem concentrated in black urban ghettos.⁷

Despite these shifts in the bases of attitudes about social welfare, it is worth bearing in mind that the overall level of support for government involvement in ensuring jobs and living standards has been fairly constant over a period of more than four decades. This stability is echoed in a complementary tracking of attitudes toward government involvement in work and welfare produced by the International Social Survey Programme's periodic surveys on The Role of Government. On five occasions between 1985 and 2016, ISSP asked whether "it should be or should not be the government's responsibility to provide a job for everyone who wants one" and whether "it should be or should not be the government's responsibility to provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed." In both cases, support for government involvement was steady or gradually increasing.

By comparison with people in other affluent democracies, Americans have long been unusually resistant to government smoothing away the sharp edges of the "work

⁶ These calculations are based on results presented in the third column of Table 7.1.

⁷ Rachel Black and Aleta Sprague, "The Rise and Reign of the Welfare Queen." *New America*, September 22, 2016 (<https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/edition-135/rise-and-reign-welfare-queen/>). On media portrayals of poverty, Gilens (1999).

ethic” by providing jobs or supporting the unemployed. While that gap has narrowed significantly over time, the change mostly reflects people in other countries becoming more conservative in their views. Allowing for the shifting set of countries participating in the ISSP surveys over the years, overall support for government providing jobs declined by more than 10 points on a 100-point scale (from 70.4 to 60.0) between 1985 and 2016, while support for providing a decent standard of living for the unemployed declined by about 8 points (from 72.0 to 63.8).⁸ By comparison, support for the U.S. government helping the unemployed increased by more than 7 points (from 49.3 to 56.9) while support for providing jobs held steady (increasing from 35.1 in 1985 to 35.9 in 2016).

In our own conversations with some of the Jennings respondents, we often asked some version of the ANES question about the appropriate role of government in ensuring employment and living standards. But even when we didn’t, attitudes about welfare and welfare recipients emerged in a variety of ways. In our conversation with Curtis Clark, for example, we asked “which party do you think currently best represents your concerns?” In response, he described himself as a lifelong Republican (in the Jennings surveys, he’d called himself a Republican-leaning Independent in 1965, a not-strong Republican in 1973 and 1982, and a strong Republican in 1997), then turned to castigating the Democratic Party’s penchant for distributing welfare benefits.

Clark: They have a tendency to give everything away free, instead of being forced to work for it. ... They want free healthcare for people who aren’t citizens that come in, people that come to the United—I have nothing against immigrants. I just want them to be legal and do it legally.

⁸ These estimates are based on over 100,000 survey responses from 29 OECD countries, weighted equally, with country fixed effects to adjust for changes in the set of participating countries over time. Data and documentation are available from the ISSP website: <http://w.issp.org/menu-top/home/>.

KJC [affirmative]: Mm-hmm.

Clark: And the idea of handing out taxpayer money for anybody that comes across the border, no matter how they do it. Even from the Philippines, they come in, since they've never worked a day in their life in the United States. And the day they raise their hand and become a citizen, they're entitled to Social Security. They draw more Social Security than a person that's worked 40 years. You know? And I blame the Democrat Party for that.

As a matter of law, Social Security benefits are paid to native-born citizens, new citizens, and non-citizens alike based on their own work history within the Social Security system or that of a qualifying spouse or parent. Yet Clark is convinced that immigrants are somehow favored over “a person that's worked 40 years.”

Concerns about the generosity of welfare benefits, especially for immigrants and minority groups, are common among Americans. In a 2020 survey, 37% of the respondents—and more than 60% of Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents—agreed that “These days, people on welfare often have it better than those who work for a living.” Similar numbers said that immigrants get “more than their fair share” of government resources. And views about welfare recipients were strongly correlated with views about immigrants, Latinos, and African-Americans, suggesting that ethnocentric attitudes loom large in Americans' thinking about welfare and welfare recipients.⁹

Antipathy to welfare is often bolstered by perceptions that people on welfare could

⁹ The survey was commissioned by Bartels and fielded by the internet survey firm YouGov in January 2020, with matching and weighting employed to produce a nationally representative sample. The 3,000 respondents included 844 Republicans and 307 Republican-leaning Independents. Survey respondents expressed their favorable or unfavorable feelings toward a wide variety of social groups on a zero-to-ten scale. The correlations between ratings of welfare recipients and African-Americans, Latinos, and immigrants ranged from .47 to .50. On the impact of racial attitudes and perceptions on Americans' views about welfare, see Gilens (1999).

find rewarding work if they wanted to. In the same 2020 survey, almost 60% of the respondents agreed (and only 22% disagreed) that “Anyone who is willing to work hard can still achieve the American dream.” Again, there were stark partisan differences in views; 82% of Republicans expressed confidence that hard work is still rewarded, while only 6% disagreed. Even after allowing for differences in partisanship, older people and those with higher incomes were especially likely to express confidence in the continuing reality of the American dream.

Gloria Schulz grew up in a working-class community in the Midwest, where her father worked in a factory. She, too, is concerned about overly generous government benefits, citing a state program that issued one-time \$100 tax rebates to parents of schoolchildren. Her first thought is that senior citizens might be more in need of help; but a moment later her thoughts have shifted from considerations of need to the importance of self-reliance, recalling that in her own school days “nothing was given to us.”

Gloria Schulz: I think one thing that kind of upset me was when all these families were getting like \$100 for each of their children that was still in school, and nothing for senior citizens, the ones who maybe need it because they have a harder time. They don't have the income they used to have, and they need more help, a lot of people. I'm at a point where I'm okay, but you see it with some of these people, and they're alone and maybe they can't get their meds and stuff. You hear that a lot, and they need more medication. If I went to school, you took a little lunch along if you couldn't afford the hot lunch, or you didn't eat. Nothing was given to us, and I guess that's how I feel. Nothing was given to us. Work for it. Do it. Don't expect it.

... I could have, years ago, gone through welfare and everything with hardships, but I thought, 'No. I'm going to make it.' I did. If you want to do it, you can do it, and that's how I feel, knowing that I did it. And I just feel people shouldn't think, 'Well, we'll get this free. We want this. We get it free,' and I hear so much of that now. With our food pantries, some of the people that go

there shouldn't be going there, and then they sell stuff. They get it and they sell it out of the back of their van, and they've been found to be doing that, so when I hear things like that, that upsets me because I love to help people if they're deserving, but I don't want to give it to people who just are not good people or they're going to turn around and abuse it or sell it or something. I want to do it to help someone.

Schulz's conviction that people should "work for it" is buttressed by her confidence that jobs are readily available for those who want them. Here, too, her assessment of what others are entitled to expect is explicitly grounded in her own life experience.

Schulz: From what I heard by word of mouth and from what I read in the paper, there are so many jobs, nobody in this area should be without And that's why I say, if somebody really wants to work, they can work, and as far as people who are struggling, so often what I hear is, everybody wants everything new, and they want it right now. I was never like that. I went to auctions. My first furniture were hand-me-downs or something, and you got it as you could afford it—just like this table and chairs, I got in probably the '70s.

The power of personal experience

Our interviewees' concerns about the impact of welfare programs often seemed to be grounded in second- or third-hand accounts of people—especially immigrants and minorities—abusing lavish benefits unavailable to those who are truly deserving of help. But those second- or third-hand accounts were frequently bolstered by recollections of their own encounters, sometimes years or even decades in the past, with work or welfare. As in other realms of life, people process mediated political information through the lens of their personal experience.¹⁰

¹⁰ Cramer and Toff (2017).

Gloria Schulz was just one of several interviewees who contrasted the attitudes they perceived in contemporary society toward work and self-reliance with memories from their own lives. For example, Barbara Jones, who grew up in the rural South, told us, “I really believe the people in general, in my opinion, has changed from the mold I was raised in. But I was raised in a small country town. The people were just good, solid citizens that worked hard, that loved their neighbors, that went to church—just that perfect neighborhood, even though they weren’t perfect. It was perfect to me; that’s what I grew up in.”

Jones has had health problems, and she and her husband now live with her daughter’s family in an ethnically homogenous small town with many young families. One website offering information on “the best places to live” gives the town an A– rating for cost of living, but D+, D, or F for amenities, employment, crime, schools, and housing.

Asked whether the government has any responsibility to provide people with jobs or a basic standard of living, Jones says, “I don’t approve about giving food stamps, especially to illegals. If you don’t come into this country the right way, then you don’t have a right here and you sure don’t have a right to our money to eat and live off of.” As with Gloria Schulz, her faith in self-reliance is bolstered by a perception that people who work hard can still get ahead, even if doing so sometimes requires unconventional avenues.

Jones: I think there are jobs out there, it may not be the multi-million-dollar job you want, but I think for the majority of people, there are jobs out there. It may take both husband and wife working, and teenage kids, a lot of times, to make the ends meet, but—I don’t know if you’ve ever watched *The Voice*?

KJC: Not for a long time, but I have in the past.

Jones: So many times, these young kids, or young adults, that come on to perform, they have been raised in destitute situations.

KJC: Oh, really?

Jones: And they have lived through it by working, by sticking together as a family, and the family finally saying, 'Follow your dream,' and being there with them. They have survived, they didn't ask the government for handouts, they survived.

Like Jones, Ron Sutton grew up in the rural South. The socio-economic status of his high school classmates was even lower than hers; but his father owned the local tire store, and by the time Ron was in his mid-twenties he had one of the highest incomes in the entire Jennings sample. Yet, when we talked to him decades later, he recalled with pride the self-sufficiency of his childhood neighbors.

Sutton: And you know, as a kid growing up, I grew up in a real poor county. I mean extremely poor county. [My town] was poor, and still is, never will change.

KJC: Really?

Sutton: But we had garment industry then, okay? And garment industry didn't pay anything, but people then, you take a man and a wife, they lived in a rural [area], and they'd raise most of what they ate. They'd have a great big garden, and they'd have a hog out there, and they'd kill that hog, you know, and they'd have a milk cow and chickens for the eggs, and all that stuff. And I cashed many a \$40-a-week paycheck. But a man and a wife both worked, and they were making \$80 a week at that time, and the way they lived, they'd educate their kids, send them to school. Most of them I know of got college degrees. But they were hard-working people, and the government didn't subsidize them. They didn't have a choice. They had a job. They had an opportunity to have a job, so therefore they had one, 'cause that's the only way they were gonna survive. They didn't know what food stamps or welfare was.

Like Jones, Sutton worries about "uncontrolled" immigration. "They walk in the emergency room, they've got to take care of them. You've got to educate them. Feed

them, welfare. And this takes years and years and years for them to grow out of that.”

Ron Sutton’s perspective was also shaped by a very different sort of life experience from Barbara Jones’s—the age-old frustration of employers and managers with the insufficient diligence of workers. Writing in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, Thomas Carlyle complained that “no needlewoman, distressed or other, can be procured in London by any housewife to give, for fair wages, fair help in sewing,” but only those “who demand considerable wages, and have a deepish appetite for beer and viands” whose “sewing proves too often a distracted puckering and botching.”¹¹ 170 years later, in the late stage of America’s industrial era, Sutton found that only two or three workers in a thousand were “good enough” for his construction jobs.

Sutton: You know, I get so many people like to come to work for me, and out of probably—when I was running construction jobs, out of probably, maybe 2,000 employees, I found five that I thought were good enough.

KJC: No kidding.

Sutton: The others were just, ‘I’m here, you gotta make me do it.’

KJC: What do you think the problem is there? I mean, why is that the case?

Sutton: Parents giving them everything, I guess.

KJC: Okay. Okay. Yeah.

Curtis Clark’s doubts about his fellow citizens’ work ethic was rooted in an even older but more searing personal experience.

Clark: And I can remember when I was unemployed. I was going out—this was

¹¹ Carlyle (1850: 28; 35-43). Carlyle urged “these floods of Irish Beggars, Able-bodied Paupers, and nomadic Lackalls, now stagnating or roaming everywhere” to put aside “all this that has been sung and spoken, for a long while, about enfranchisement, emancipation, freedom, suffrage, civil and religious liberty over the world” in favor of “soldier-like obedience, and the opportunity and the necessity of hard steady labour for your living” in “Regiments of the New Era” subsidized by government and managed by “the Captains of Industry.”

in probably '72, '73. I'd been unemployed for about three months. I was going out—this is before computers, so you had to fill out applications by hand. And I was putting in 60 applications a week and I couldn't find a job.

KJC [affirmative]: Mm-hmm.

Clark: I went to this union hall, as a laborer to dig ditches.

KJC: Yeah.

Clark: For two bucks an hour or whatever it was in those days. I was desperate for a job.

KJC [affirmative]: Mm-hmm.

Clark: And the guy looked at me and he says, 'I wish I could hire you.' He says, 'This affirmative action has my hands tied. I've got to hire 20 blacks before I hire another white.' He says, 'The sad part, I can't even get them to walk in the door. All they have to do is walk in the door and they're hired.' And it—you know, I'm not saying that's all the blacks today.

KJC [affirmative]: Mm-hmm.

Clark: But there are a lot of them, they just don't want to work, and they got their hand out and it—they're human beings. And I'm not racist. I don't think I am. And it's sad that I just believe that they're doing more harm to themselves.

Clark, a deeply religious man, was clearly shaken by the recollection of his own bitter frustration decades earlier, and his voice broke as he contemplated the self-destructive indolence he perceived among those who “just don't want to work.”

Mary Anderson grew up near a major midwestern city and spent part of her working life teaching in an inner-city school. Asked about her political upbringing, she told us, “I know my parents were primarily Democrats. I somehow pretty much grew up to be a Republican.” She immediately added, “I think being in teaching in the inner-city school made me even stronger in that way.”

KJC: Interesting. Tell me more. How you remember the shift for yourself.

Mary Anderson: I think our biggest issue today with education is poverty. And that we perpetuate poverty by giving so much to the people. Not that they don't need it, but that they have become so dependent on it. And so satisfied with it, a lot of them, or a lot that I dealt with, that they don't really go out and teach their children a love for education to get out of here; it's just like, when you get, it perpetuates it. It's one generation and the next generation.

That's a huge conversation. How do you ever stop this? I don't know that there is any more of a solution other than truly pulling all these kids out of their home, having them raised by somebody who puts the love of education, a work ethic in them. And that'll never happen. Or having somebody go into the home and really work with them. It's a real issue that I saw grow in my years [as a teacher].

KJC: Over time. Even the sixth graders, you felt that when they were in school, they already had a love of education or not.

Anderson: Some did, but many—I remember going on a field trip and we were on a canoe at [a local river]. I was in with a couple of kids, and one little girl said something about, 'I can't wait till tonight. We are going shopping. My mom got her tax returns.' I said, 'That's cool. Where does your mom work?' 'She doesn't work.' I said, 'How do you get a tax return if you don't work?' She went on to explain what you do. She goes, 'When I get older,' it was like, this is my role model, this is what I'll be doing also.

Anderson did not share with us what she learned about how to get a tax refund when you don't work. Perhaps the girl's mother was receiving a federal Earned Income Tax Credit from a previous job. Perhaps it was not "a tax return" at all, but some other form of cash benefit. In any case, what stuck with Anderson was clearly not just that her student was growing up without "a work ethic," but also that the government was "perpetuating poverty" by issuing tax refunds to people who don't work.

Of course, personal experiences are also sometimes used to bolster more liberal views about welfare and immigration. Ed Bradshaw, a lifelong strong Democrat who

was consistently favorable toward government ensuring jobs and living standards, described watching a crew of “immigrant workers” painting a large three-story house next door to one he and his partner were remodeling.

Ed Bradshaw: Three, four days they had that whole house painted. ... I was amazed. And when they were gone, that yard was pristine. There wasn't a speck of paint in it.

KJC: Wow.

Bradshaw: There was not a paint chip. There was no marks on there. You would never know the place had been painted except for the fact that it looked beautiful.

KJC: Wow.

Bradshaw: And when they were done, and they worked from dusk till dawn, or dawn till dusk. You know, they brought their lunch up with 'em, and when the guy came and said it's lunch time, they stopped and they sat up there and ate.

KJC: Oh my gosh.

Bradshaw: And set the lunch box aside of them, and when they got to the bottom, the lunch box went in the truck, and they went up the other side.

KJC: Wow.

Bradshaw: Yep. And they were, there was like an army of locust. But you know what, you wouldn't find an American crew doing that.

As with people on the other side of the political spectrum, Bradshaw's views were reinforced by mediated exposure to the world beyond his own experience.

Bradshaw: But, you know, again, you get the Trumpers, they'll come up and say, 'Oh! They're coming in! They're taking all our jobs!' Have you ever seen what these people do? I saw a video of farm workers loading those boxes with grapefruits.

KJC: Yeah.

Bradshaw: It's like slave labor, and they're doing it for, like, what? \$1.70 an hour or some foolish amount, a ridiculously low amount of money that they get paid. It's piecework. But they pack up a thousand cartons, they have a thousand people and they pay so much a carton. And it's 100 degrees. There's bugs in there flying around 'em all the time and they're swinging machetes eight inches from somebody else. Cutting stuff and putting—I mean, the work they're doing, and it's mind-numbingly boring. Okay? And these are the jobs they're stealing from people like you? Think what—that's what you're giving up, buddy.

LMB: Yeah.

Bradshaw: That's these illegal immigrants. You could be doing that. There you go. Rolling in the money. Oh, wait. No. Horrible.

KJC: Yeah.

Bradshaw: They're giving 'em crap jobs and then complaining that they're doing them.

Wrestling with complexity

In describing a series of in-depth interviews with ordinary people regarding issues of distributive justice, Jennifer Hochschild offered two seemingly contradictory accounts of their views. On one hand, their beliefs were organized around a coherent, broadly shared framework entailing support for equality in the political and social domains but for *inequality* in the economic domain. On the other hand, their attempts to apply this framework to specific cases revealed them to be “profoundly ambivalent, caught up in a series of ambiguous, contradictory, blurred judgments. People are confused, and their confusion manifests itself in helplessness, anger, inconsistency, and incoherence.” Sometimes their principles bumped up against each other, sometimes against their own experiences. Thus, “given the opportunity, people do not make simple statements; they shade, modulate, deny, retract, or just grind to a halt in

frustration.”¹²

Like Hochschild’s interviewees, ours clearly struggled with the tension between wanting people to be self-reliant and wanting to provide for their basic needs. The complexity of the realities on the ground was especially troubling to those with first-hand experience of the welfare system.

Patricia Myers lives with her husband in a handsome, upscale subdivision in an affluent southern suburb. She is retired from a job in a county social service office. She is a lifelong Democrat, but was rather apolitical and ideologically moderate for most of her life. Her responses to the question in the Jennings survey about government ensuring jobs and living standards, for example, ranged over time from middle-of-the-road to slightly liberal to slightly conservative. Her views have generally become more liberal in recent years, partly in reaction to her brother’s increasingly vocal religious conservatism.

Patricia Myers: I’m not one that thinks everybody can support themselves and take care of themselves. I’m not one like my brother who thinks, ‘Well, just get out and work!’ He’s got a stepson, he should realize that it’s not feasible, it’s not realistic. The people, there’s no way, especially ... here, that they can even work at McDonald’s or whatever and be able to live, they still need the food stamps. So I’m for giving them all that. There’s some that try to get it but don’t need it, but for the most part I’m definitely for benefits, and maybe more benefits to help those people. Because everybody cannot support themselves for—mentally, if they have an IQ of 85, there’s no way, and their whole family is like that? There’s just no way. They need help.

LMB: So, when you were dealing with these people and processing their paperwork, did you often have the sense of, ‘This is somebody who really deserves these benefits and this other person, maybe they could’ve gotten

¹² Hochschild (1981: 258, 238).

along without them’?

Myers: Some. What I didn’t like was when people would come in ... and they’d quit their job—they wanted to do something else. It kind of bothered me that they were coming in and wanted the medical help, when they had had insurance and they had children, and maybe even had health problems, and they had insurance, and yet they quit, gave up the health benefits, because they wanted to try something else.

LMB: Just because they wanted to try something else?

Myers: They wanted to try something else. That bothered me a lot of times. But other than that, most of the time I felt the people deserved it and they just couldn’t take care of themselves, a lot of them. And this was in this county where it’s not as bad, probably, as others. ...

LMB: One of the things that people argue about is trying to stiffen the work requirements associated with government benefits. So if you think about the office that you were working in, would it have been a good thing to try and require people, if they were getting food stamps, to have a job or be in job training of some kind, or ...

Myers: I think that would be good to do that. Of course, it would take more people, more workers to manage it and that costs more money, so I’m not sure in the long run if that would work out, because it takes a lot of—we did that with the AFDC, the money to mothers. We tried to do all that and it takes a lot of—I think they may have given up on that because it takes so many people working to do that, to keep track of them. I think it would be a good thing; it’s just so hard, there are people that need to be working that are just not. But then there’s so many people you might look at and say, ‘Oh, they should be working,’ but really they’re just not—their family, their life, they’re just a mess, you know? Who’s gonna hire them? It’s not an easy thing to fix. They can go to classes and try to get them—and that works for some. But there’s some that are just, they’re just not gonna ever be able to take care of themselves.

While Myers clearly recognized the need to help those who are unable to care for

themselves, her compassion did not translate into a systemic concern about economic inequality or resentment of people “that make so much” because, she says, “they work hard.”

KJC: One thing that gets talked about a lot these days is, there’s kind of a growing divide between the haves and the have-nots. Did you see that in that job? Have you experienced that in your life?

Myers: No, I don’t ... quite understand that, I don’t think.

KJC: Okay, yeah. I’ll ask about it slightly differently. But you don’t have to have a reaction to it. But, some people reflect back on, especially the span of time since you were in high school, that the incomes of the very wealthiest have increased at a rapid pace while for the rest of folks it’s pretty much been stagnant. I just wonder if that resonates with you at all. Like, if you saw it in the clients you worked with or if you see it around here. Maybe not.

Myers: Honestly, no. I’m sure I should notice, but sometimes—I don’t know. I’m sure this is probably really wrong, and probably an awful statement ...

KJC: No, there’s no right answer!

Myers: But sometimes I get a little upset about people complaining about the people that make so much, because they work hard, it’s not like it’s given to them. Maybe it is out of proportion. Then you get into the cheating and the— But, I kind of like some of these that make so much, if they’re so smart and able to do that and all, then, they sort of deserve it. But I’m sure that’s all wrong for a lot of reasons, but I don’t know.

Susan Sorsby approaches the same dilemma from the opposite political direction. Sorsby is a steadfast Republican. In the Jennings surveys, she consistently sided with letting people get ahead on their own and said that people on welfare have too much influence. Yet she volunteers at the local food pantry and wrestles with what she sees there—on one hand, “kids that don’t really have enough to eat,” but on the other hand, “entitled” people who are “just handed all this stuff.”

KJC: How do you feel about people who claim—I should say, not about the people, but how do you feel about the claim that the government should ensure that everybody has a basic standard of living?

Sorsby [shaking her head]: No.

KJC: Tell me why—

Sorsby: This is from my mother. Like, I would go to the food pantry and she was like, ‘Oh, why are you going over there again?’ kind of thing. ‘They give people too much stuff.’ She had to work hard for what she had. She grew up on a farm in the depression and whatever. Earned five dollars a day when she started working. That kind of thing. You know, she had to work hard for what she had. My dad didn’t make that much money. We were poor, well, whatever. So, she had to, you know, scramble for what she had. And why should we give all these people all this stuff?

So, I sort of try not to be totally like that. But, on the other hand, they give them this, they give them that. They just assume somebody’s going to get them their school supplies. Assume somebody’s going to be bringing them lunch. The more they assume that somebody’s going to come and give us whatever we need, then we can spend our money on, you know, alcohol and drugs and cigarettes. You know, stuff that I wouldn’t be able to afford. Why should these people be spending—we give them food stamps. We give them welfare. Then they get food stamps. Then they come to the pantry to get food. Then their kids get free lunches.

You know, the more you give them, the more entitled they’re going to feel. We’re just raising up more and more of these people with entitlement. They just expect to be taken care of. Why should the middle class work hard and, you know, all these people just feel like they’re entitled to it. So, I have a lot of that kind of mentality.

On the other hand, you see kids that don’t really have enough to eat and you want to help them. But, like, at [the food bank], they get so much on a Friday night. Their cart is just heaping. Especially produce and stuff in the summer. You know, they get so much. Just handed to them, you know. All they got to

do is come and prove that their income is less than such and such. They're just handed all this stuff. But, doesn't that not foster more of this? Then they [think], 'You know, sure I can have five kids and somebody will take care of us.' Like, you know, while we have always lived responsibly and within our means, you know, worked hard for what we had, and why should they just be given this kind of stuff?

So, there's sort of a balance. You know, you want to help people who generally [are] in need. But, like, [a friend] is just, 'Oh yeah, we got to help, you know,' he is just so giving. ... 'You got to have—these kids are hungry. They can't learn because they don't have nutrients.' And it's true, to an extent. But the more we help them, the more they're going to have more kids. 'Sure, why not. I can have a couple more kids, why not. Somebody will give us the money.'

I had one kid, because that's all I could afford to send to day care at that time. You know, that kind of thing. It's sort of a balancing act. But, my mother felt quite strongly that—I would go to the pantry when I could, and, 'You're going over there again? That isn't right. We shouldn't be giving these people that stuff.' So, I got it from that side.

Somewhere between Patricia Myers and Susan Sorsby is Stewart Nelson, a retired schoolteacher in California. In the Jennings surveys he described himself as a not-strong Republican and expressed mostly moderate political views, though he told us that he is now "definitely more liberal than I once was." He, too, is torn between the conviction that "basic free enterprise works" and the belief that "government has a responsibility of providing some sort of safety net." While his views are grounded in personal experience with homeless people through his church, he acknowledges with some relief that "I don't know a lot of the details" about how the welfare system functions.

KJC: Do you think it's the role of government to make sure that everybody has a decent job, meaning a job that will provide for them to have a basic standard of living?

Stewart Nelson: No, I don't think it's the government's responsibility. When you have free enterprise, you have situations where businesses boom, and then they crash, and they laid off—Uber laid off I don't know how many thousand people the other day. I don't know what you'd call that. It's a society that—basic free enterprise works. But I do figure it is government's responsibility one way or another to provide a safety net of some sort. I don't know what all the answers were.

At our church, I was helping out a couple weeks ago with what they call safe parking. Because there's a bunch of people that live in their cars around here, and they—it's not safe out there on just any old street. The police come along, 'Hey, you have to move,' or whatever. I see people. One of them was a person who had, I'd say, a pretty good job, and they're living in their car. I think churches can help out a lot, when sometimes they don't. I know that's one of the things Reagan used to talk about. Yeah, we're going to cut taxes and do this and that. But then when there's problems as a direct result of that, then I remember hearing him say, 'Churches can step up and help fill in the gaps'; but we know that is not a long term solution, because we did that for a month and now they're over at some other place.

I would say government has a responsibility of providing some sort of safety net. I hear from some of my relatives who live in [a smaller city several hours away] that there's a lot of people that have cards where they get—I don't know if it's state help or federal help. I don't even know how this works. I remember there used to be stamps or something you could use at the grocery store, but now they got credit cards. I don't know. It seems like there are programs out there that do help people who are making minimum wage or whatever, or disabled or whatever. I don't know all those. I'm happy I don't know a lot of the details. Apparently I'm much better off.

While few of our interviewees claimed to “know what all the answers were,” some did manage to come down firmly on one side or the other of the trade-off between providing for people's needs and encouraging self-reliance. Their personal values or political ideologies led them to prioritize welfare or work, even while they

acknowledged the potential costs of doing so.

As we saw in Chapter 6, Don Peyton's social and political views are animated by a strong impulse toward Christian charity. In response to a question in the 1997 Jennings survey, for example, Peyton strongly agreed that "One should always find ways to help others less fortunate than oneself," and strongly *disagreed* that "It is best not to get too involved in taking care of other people's needs." Over the years, he consistently placed himself on the side of government seeing to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living rather than letting each person get ahead on his own. He also consistently expressed the view that people on welfare have too little influence in American life and politics—one of just 17% of the Jennings respondents who did so.

Peyton is not unconcerned about potential abuse of government programs; but he is committed nonetheless to making them work. "We've got to lift up the downtrodden," he told us. "We've got to help the folks that don't have the same opportunities we do. ... Now, I do realize that some of the programs, people do abuse them. There are a lot of people on welfare that don't need to be. You just have to try to square that away and make sure that they need to be. I don't mind helping people."

Work, welfare, and partisan change

The role of government in ensuring social welfare has been a central point of contention in American politics since the Progressive Era of the early 20th century. The party system was re-forged when Franklin Roosevelt put the Democratic Party firmly on the side of government activism in the 1930s, and in the decades since, Democrats have propelled most of the major expansions of the American welfare state. Thus, it is hardly surprising to find a correlation between ordinary citizens' views about the welfare state and their partisan attachments. What may be more surprising, given the frequency with which political observers have announced the demise of the New Deal

party system, is that that correlation has increased substantially in recent decades.¹³

Figure 1 shows separate trends in support for government ensuring jobs and living standards among Democrats and Republicans in the American National Election Studies samples.¹⁴ The difference in average views between the two groups widened gradually but substantially over time, from 16 points on the 100-point scale in the 1970s to 26 points after 2000. As always with cross-sectional data, it is impossible to tell from the graph whether the widening gap reflects partisan change among people with different views about the role of government or changing attitudes about the role of government among people who were already Democrats and Republicans for other reasons. The Jennings data are uniquely suited to shed light on that question, since they allow us to track the relationship between partisanship and views about the role of government over a span of decades.

Our statistical analyses of support for government ensuring jobs and living standards reveal substantial evidence of partisanship coloring people's views about this issue.¹⁵ The partisanship Jennings' respondents reported in 1965 was a strong predictor of their views in 1973, when the question was first asked. Even after allowing for the impact of demographic factors, college education, and racial attitudes, the expected difference in views between those who had called themselves strong Democrats in 1965 and those who had called themselves strong Republicans was 8 points on the 100-point scale.

By 1982, when the question about government ensuring jobs and living standards was asked for the second time, the impact of partisanship was much larger still. Only about 40% of the opinions expressed in 1973 persisted in 1982, suggesting

¹³ Croly (1909); Sundquist (1983); Carmines and Stimson (1989); Frank (2004).

¹⁴ We treat Independents who said they felt closer to one party or the other as partisans.

¹⁵ These analyses are reported in Table 7.1.

considerable rethinking of this issue as the Class of '65 transitioned from their mid-twenties to their mid-thirties. And that rethinking was substantially shaped by preexisting partisanship. Even after allowing for demographic and other differences, the gap in views between people who had called themselves strong Democrats in 1973 and those who had called themselves strong Republicans widened by 15 points on the 100-point scale between 1973 and 1982.

At the same time, people's views about the appropriate role of government in the domain of work and welfare were contributing significantly to partisan change. In quantitative terms, this effect was a good deal smaller than the effect of partisanship on opinion—other things being equal, the expected gap in partisanship between someone who had strongly supported government ensuring jobs and living standards in 1973 and someone who had strongly supported letting people get ahead on their own expanded by 10 points over the next nine years (about two-thirds of a category on the traditional 7-point scale of party identification). Nonetheless, this is an impressive effect given the stability of partisanship, even in early adulthood; about 75% of partisanship as measured in 1973 persisted in 1982. A parallel analysis incorporating opinions on several other salient issues as measured in 1973 underlines the political significance of jobs and living standards in propelling partisan change. The impact of opinions about the appropriate role of government in ensuring social welfare is hardly diminished (though somewhat less precisely estimated), while most of the other issues have little discernible effect on partisanship.¹⁶

By 1997, the dynamic reciprocal relationship between attitudes about jobs and living standards and partisanship probably produced little further change on either side. Views about the issue in 1982 do not seem to have contributed to subsequent

¹⁶ Compare the parameter estimates reported in the first and second columns of Table 7.2.

partisan change, at least once the impact of other issues is accounted for.¹⁷ Nor is there much evidence that partisanship shaped the evolution of people's views about the role of government in ensuring social welfare during this period. The overall correlation between opinions on the issue and partisanship, which had increased from .26 in 1973 to .34 in 1982, increased only slightly, to .37, between 1982 and 1997. This stability comports with the longitudinal evidence from the ANES surveys in Figure 1, where the gap between Democrats and Republicans on the issue of government ensuring jobs and living standards increased only slightly over the same period, from 18.9 points in 1982 to 19.1 points in 1998.

The widening partisan gap in opinion after 1998 evident in the ANES data implies that one or both of these processes of adjustment between partisanship and views about the appropriate role of government in providing work and social welfare resumed in the decades after the final wave of the Jennings survey. While we cannot observe these processes directly, it does not seem unlikely that they were fueled, in part, by the increasing salience of race and immigration and their perceived connection to social welfare, on one hand, and partisanship, on the other.

Mary Anderson, for example, told us in 2018 that she “pretty much grew up to be a Republican.” She explained that “teaching in the inner-city school made me even stronger in that way,” and proceeded to tell us about her student whose mother was collecting tax refunds without working. At least part of that evolution seems to have occurred in the past two decades; in the Jennings surveys she had described herself as a strong Democrat in 1965, a not-strong Democrat in 1973 and 1982, and a not-strong Republican in 1997. Ron Sutton and others expressed concerns about immigrants receiving welfare benefits that seemed to reflect pre-existing Republican loyalties, but also to tap into a mental map of the contemporary political world in which immigrants,

¹⁷ Compare the parameter estimates reported in the third and fourth columns of Table 7.2.

welfare recipients, and the Democratic Party were bundled together on one side with hard-working taxpayers and the Republican Party on the other.

Here, too, the example of Curtis Clark is instructive. Most of Clark's political views are conventionally conservative. He evolved from calling himself a Republican-leaning Independent in the 1965 Jennings survey to a not-strong Republican identifier in 1973 and 1982 and a strong Republican identifier in 1997. He consistently placed himself on the conservative side of the ideological scale and expressed opposition to abortion, strong support for the free market, coolness toward labor unions, and support for the police and the military. None of those views are especially surprising for a man who grew up on a small midwestern farm and spent a significant part of his life in the defense industry. But his most strongly felt political attitudes seem to be rooted in the importance he attaches to work, and he explains his own partisan identity in terms of the parties' stands on work and welfare.

Clark told us that the Republican Party best represents his concerns because "The Democrat Party wants to give everything away free." His first thought in that regard was of handing out taxpayer money to immigrants from the Philippines. But in his mind, the partisan valence of work predates the expansion of the federal safety net in the 1960s and the subsequent association between welfare, race, and—later—immigration. Thinking back to his parents' Republican partisanship when he was growing up, Clark settled once again on the perceived connection between the Democratic Party and people who "didn't want to work."

KJC: Do you remember what it was about the Republican Party that your parents felt drawn to, or felt represented by, maybe?

Clark: I want to say that the Democrats were more union-oriented, and a lot of times with the union, when they started out they were good; but as the years went by, it became where you'd have somebody in the union that didn't want to work. All they wanted to do is draw their paycheck. They'd get in trouble,

and the union would bail them out. You know? So the ones that were working were doing twice the work, because the lazy ones that didn't want to work didn't still, because they were union members.

Of course, long-standing party images of this sort cut both ways. In talking about why he is a lifelong Democrat, the Christian singer and radio personality Don Peyton told us that "The Democrats lift up the downtrodden. They try to help individuals." And Janet Albers, an African-American woman who grew up and still lives in the South, said that she and her family "have always been Democrats" because "they represent the lower-income people or understand them better than the Republican Party."

Finally, it is worth noting that, even in the current polarized political environment, many people are not sufficiently engaged for their opinions to translate neatly into partisan loyalties. Gloria Schulz expresses many of the same concerns about welfare recipients as Curtis Clark, Ron Sutton, and Susan Sorsby. "Work for what you want," she insists. "Don't expect everything for nothing." Listening to her, one might guess that she, like Clark and Sutton and Sorsby, is an ardent Republican. But when we asked whether "the Democrats or the Republicans better represent you and people like you around here," her reply was distinctly noncommittal.

Gloria Schulz: I honestly don't really have a firm belief, because once in a while you hear something, and then all of a sudden you hear something else that contradicts it, and I guess in the news, you only hear what they want you to hear. Who knows sometimes what's really going on? ... I don't get into all these Fox network, CNN, where they're going on and on, because they're probably biased, and I think you have to get away from the news. It'll drag you down.

Earlier in the interview, Schulz had told us that her parents "were mostly Democrats." In the Jennings surveys, she described herself as a strong Democrat in 1965, a not-strong Democrat in 1973, and a Democratic-leaning Independent in 1997.

While her drift away from her inherited partisanship comports with her views about work and welfare, she does not—at least not yet—seem to have developed any positive attachment to the Republican Party. Her political history is a testament to the limits of partisan change.

Conclusion

Work looms large in the identities of many of the Jennings respondents. Those who emphasize the importance of work in their own lives, and who recall their youth as a time when hard work was expected and valued, often worry that people today are more likely to “assume that somebody’s going to come and give us whatever we need,” as Susan Sorsby put it. Their concerns frequently focus on the work ethic of African-Americans and immigrants in particular. Our analysis of the Jennings survey data indicates that this racialization of attitudes regarding the appropriate role of government in ensuring jobs and living standards dates to the 1980s and '90s, though our own interviews suggest that it has probably been reinforced more recently by the growing salience of immigration, especially among Republicans.

In the American public as a whole, views about government provision of jobs and welfare have become increasingly correlated with partisanship; the gap between Democrats and Republicans in ANES data grew from 16 points on a 100-point scale in the 1970s to 26 points after 2000. Our analysis of the Jennings data demonstrates that this increasing correlation reflects both a strong tendency for people with conservative views to gravitate toward the Republican Party and a strong tendency for Republicans to develop more conservative views on the issue over time. Attitudes toward work and welfare thus provide a crucial link between personal experience on one hand and broader political orientations on the other, especially for those members of the Class of '65 whose worldviews were most strongly bound up in the notion that “one *must* work.”

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Table 7.1
Bases of Support for Government Ensuring Jobs and Living Standards

Regression analyses of support for government jobs (0-100). Errors-in-variables parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).

	1973	1982	1997
Support for government jobs (lagged)	---	.385 (.059)	.564 (.081)
Republican partisanship (lagged)	-.081 (.038)	-.154 (.037)	-.027 (.043)
Black-white affect (lagged)	.060 (.089)	-.007 (.188)	.163 (.083)
Non-white	15.82 (5.76)	12.94 (6.73)	-9.78 (3.95)
Female	2.34 (2.16)	3.03 (1.69)	2.33 (1.63)
Southern (1965)	-5.12 (2.87)	.90 (2.40)	-.32 (2.00)
Family SES (1965)	-1.11 (1.67)	-.61 (1.35)	.81 (1.22)
School SES (1965)	4.55 (2.58)	2.94 (2.21)	-1.80 (1.87)
College (years)	2.49 (.59)	.05 (.55)	-.11 (.49)
Family income (\$1000s)	-.040 (.030)	-.072 (.018)	-.023 (.013)
Church attendance (lagged)	.016 (.063)	.010 (.044)	-.040 (.035)
Biblical faith (lagged)	-.104 (.092)	.041 (.080)	-.078 (.081)
Intercept	51.06 (7.48)	25.79 (6.82)	29.53 (6.38)
Standard error of regression	26.84	21.72	19.38
Adjusted R ²	.08	.23	.27
N	858	878	893

Table 7.2
Impact of Support for Government Jobs on Partisan Change

Regression analyses of Republican partisanship (0-100). Errors-in-variables parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).

	1982		1997	
Republican partisanship (lagged)	.750 (.039)	.754 (.041)	.722 (.052)	.703 (.052)
Support for government jobs (lagged)	-.118 (.056)	-.105 (.068)	-.106 (.085)	-.017 (.155)
Support for aid to minorities (lagged)	---	.070 (.066)	---	-.108 (.159)
Support rights of accused (lagged)	---	-.143 (.060)	---	.119 (.128)
Support equal role for women (lagged)	---	.021 (.068)	---	-.320 (.122)
Support prayer in schools (lagged)	---	.051 (.035)	---	.088 (.050)
Other countries should be like America (lagged)	---	.086 (.076)	---	.022 (.048)
Non-white	-5.61 (2.69)	-4.94 (2.90)	-15.81 (3.10)	-15.53 (3.60)
Female	-4.80 (1.56)	-5.77 (1.80)	-6.28 (1.86)	-4.38 (1.89)
Southern (1965)	-3.14 (2.06)	-4.45 (2.11)	2.00 (2.22)	.08 (2.44)
Family SES (1965)	1.15 (1.23)	1.46 (1.29)	-.83 (1.37)	-.63 (1.40)
School SES (1965)	3.07 (2.08)	3.55 (2.13)	.60 (2.07)	.32 (2.22)
College (years)	-.36 (.46)	.45 (.64)	-.29 (.53)	.59 (.60)
Family income (\$1000s)	.082 (.020)	.080 (.020)	.031 (.015)	.042 (.015)
Church attendance (lagged)	.011 (.040)	.003 (.045)	.120 (.035)	.062 (.045)
Biblical faith (lagged)	-.001 (.082)	-.055 (.087)	.083 (.076)	-.086 (.096)
Intercept	15.82	16.21	8.38	35.25

	(7.03)	(8.75)	(5.98)	(12.39)
Standard error of regression	20.34	20.04	23.52	22.88
Adjusted R ²	.55	.56	.52	.54
<i>N</i>	907	907	922	922

Table A1: Estimates of Measurement Reliability

Estimates of measurement error and reliability based on Wiley and Wiley (1970) measurement error model applied to 1973, 1982, and 1997 data ($N=935$).

	Measurement error	Var(ϵ)	Estimated reliability			
			1965	1973	1982	1997
Family income	---	--- [1]	---	.805	.805	.805
Church attendance	16.02	256.53	.668	.791	.823	.823
Biblical faith	11.17	124.80	.681	.754	.758	.771
Partisanship	10.82	117.11	.883	.856	.868	.896
Trust in government (scale)	13.37	178.87	.498	.575	.574	.571
Other countries should be like America	32.65	1066.28	.571	.440	.540	.516
Feelings toward the military	13.14	172.79	---	.679	.630	.577
Did the right thing in Vietnam	27.92	779.79	---	.618	.468	.447
Legalize marijuana	16.74	280.28	---	.804	.767	.742
Women should have equal roles	19.31	372.90	---	.649	.480	.275
Government aid to minorities	15.36	236.05	---	.702	.657	.626
Government jobs and living standards	15.82	250.40	---	.651	.571	.499
Influence of poor people	21.23	450.55	---	.372	.435	.478
Influence of labor unions	20.23	409.30	---	.440	.466	.606
Influence of big business	11.33	128.42	---	.750	.639	.687
Influence of women	21.13	446.50	---	.385	.407	.447
Influence of blacks	25.54	652.04	---	.490	.544	.491
Influence of people on welfare	22.72	516.36 [2]	---	.622	.670	---
Black-white affect	14.08	198.28	.681	.469	.626	.419
Risk violating rights to reduce crime	19.50	380.20	---	.600	.481	.478

Support for school prayer	24.93	621.29	.642	.668	.658	.638
Pro-life opinion	15.85	251.22 ^[3]	---	---	.760	.772

[1] Given the substantial increase in the average income of Jennings respondents over the course of their working lives, the assumption of constant measurement error variance seems implausible for this item (and indeed, produces out-of-bounds estimates of reliability). Instead, following Heise (1969), we assume that the reliability of measured income is constant across survey waves.

[2] Our estimate of measurement error variance for the influence of people on welfare is based on averaging the estimated measurement error variance for the influence of poor people, the influence of women, and the influence of blacks.

[3] Our estimate of measurement error variance for pro-life opinion is based on applying the Wiley-Wiley model to data for the same question from the 1992-94-96 ANES panel study.

Figure 1
Support for Government Ensuring Jobs and Living Standards, 1972-2016

