Prestige LP recorded in the early 1950s. It always stuck with me. I hunted down a lead sheet because I wanted to see exactly how he wrote it, and it was very simple." Kuhn eases through the melancholy ballad warmed by Baron's cymbal work and Swallow's resonant bass tones. Swallow's instrument, a modified electric five-string (rather than the acoustic instruments most jazz musicians prefer), sounds particularly guitar-like as it sweetly climbs into the upper register for his solo.

Two of Swallow's compositions also appear on *Wisteria*: the moody "Dark Glasses" and stylish "Good Lookin' Rookie," both offering ample playgrounds for the musicians' improvisations. "He's one of my favorite composers," Kuhn volunteers. "I've played more of his songs than those of any other composer—except for myself."

Most of the compositions on the album are indeed Kuhn's own. "Adagio," "Morning Dew," "Pastorale," and "Promises Kept"—all written for a gorgeous string orchestra recorded on *Promises Kept* in 2000—were originally pretty yet sparse, keeping the nonswinging string players tethered to the arrangements. It was a challenge to recast them for the trio, but one Kuhn eagerly undertook because the smaller number of performers would offer more frequent opportunities to play the pieces. "We could be so much freer," Kuhn states. "Having an orchestra is an amazing gift, but there's nothing we couldn't say with just the three of us."

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Visit harvardmag.com/extras to listen to several of Kuhn's songs.

America the *Politically* Unequal

Can the nation really secure the rights of citizenship?

by ANDREA LOUISE CAMPBELL

RECENT EVENTS have focused attention on two of the most consequential phenomena of our time: growing economic and political inequality. Although the Occupy Movement of 2011 seems to be petering out, it did draw attention to the tremendous gains made by the economy's winners, whose incomes have soared during the past four decades, while those of middle-income and poorer Americans have stagnated. The Super PAC (political action committee) phenomenon of the 2012 election cycle, in which individual donors write multimillion-dollar checks to support candidates (just as they did in the pre-Watergate, pre-campaign finance reform era), highlights growing political inequality and the ability of the very rich to speak far more loudly than other citizens.

In *The Unheavenly Chorus,* Kay Lehman Schlozman (Moakley endowed professor of political science at Boston College), Sidney Verba '53, LL.D. '09 (Harvard's Pforzheimer University Professor emeritus), and Henry E. Brady (dean and professor of public policy at Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy) present a timely and wide-ranging analysis that catalogs and describes the nature and magnitude of political inequality in the United States. They show that Americans strongly uphold and desire political equality, recognizing that democracy depends on the ability of all citizens to make their preferences known. At the same time, Americans tolerate high levels of economic

Illustration by Pete Ryan

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inequality, viewing the market's rewarding of some citizens far more than others as a necessary incentive for individual and societal productivity.

But as the authors point out, one set of values undermines the other: political participation rates in the United States vary tremendously by class, with more affluent and educated individuals far more likely to participate in every kind of political activity. The disparities are smaller for time-based activities like working on campaigns (each of us has only 24 hours in a day) and greatest in donating money. They exist for voting (it's not "one man, one vote" but "lots of non-rich people, no vote") and even protest, supposedly a weapon of the weak. Everywhere in the participatory universe, economic inequality undercuts the possibilities for political equality.

Does it matter that some participate less than others? Absolutely, because those who are active have different policy preferences than those who are not. The authors combine income and education into an index of socioeconomic status and show that high SES individuals are far more conservative on economic issues. The fact that their voices dominate while the poor and even the middle class are ignored moves economic policy in the United States to the right and undercuts the interests and well-being of less-privileged citizens.

Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy* (Princeton, $35)

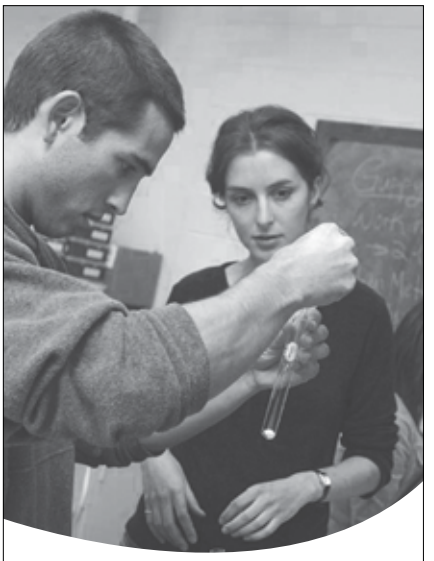
Indeed, this analysis addresses one of the central puzzles in American politics: why is economic policy so conservative? The United States is nearly the richest country in the world in per capita gross domestic product, but has the highest poverty rate among advanced industrialized nations: Why is there so little redistribution from rich to middle class and poor? Why and how can politicians ignore the median citizen, whose economic preferences are more moderate, when the classic political models indicate that politicians should gravitate to the middle in a two-party system?

Because (as the authors demonstrate in perhaps their most fascinating analysis) those who are active in politics have higher incomes and more conservative economic preferences than the median citizen. The median campaign worker, the median donor, and the donor giving the median amount of money, in other words, are richer and economically more conservative than the median *American*—and this is true among both Republican and Democratic activists (although the Republican activists are higher income than their Democratic counterparts). Thus one reason "there is no income confiscation in America" is that "political aspirants seeking the political support needed to be nominated by their parties and to run an effective campaign will be drawn away from the median voter, with clear consequences for policy outcomes."

The analysis also sheds light on another phenomenon distinguishing the current era, political polarization. There is no doubt that elected politicians are polarized: the median Democrat and median Republican in Congress are farther apart than they have been in decades, with little overlap between the parties. This degree of polarization is not unprecedented, but when combined with frequent party-line voting, a supermajority requirement (effectively) in the Senate due to increased threats to filibuster, and an allergy to compromise, it makes for a particularly toxic brew.

A longstanding political-science debate asks whether the public is polarized as well. One authoritative account by Stanford professor Morris Fiorina asserts that the public is not, but rather arranged in a bell curve with its peak in the moderate part of the ideological spectrum. In contrast, *The Unheavenly Chorus* shows that members of the public *are* polarized: the preferences of Democrats and Republicans on both economic and social issues are poles apart. Politically active partisans are even more polarized. And, just as among political elites, "ordinary" Republicans are farther from the median than are "ordinary" Democrats (indeed, over time, Democrats have stayed in place in terms of their policy preferences while Republicans have moved to the right, the same pattern we observe among elected officials).

The dominance of privileged interests continues in the authors' analysis of political inequality among interest groups. Beyond participating as individuals, citizens can also come together in organized groups to press their claims on government. But only a fraction of organized interests with a presence in Washington, D.C., are



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membership organizations for ordinary people—about one in eight. Instead, business interests dominate, and represent the plurality of lobbying expenditures and PAC donations as well. Ordinary citizens do appear in occupational associations, but these mainly organize high-level workers such as professionals. There are no interest groups at all organizing the recipients of means-tested social programs. Indeed, there are no membership organizations for unskilled, low-skill, blue collar, or service workers—except for unions.

The authors make another important contribution by laying out just how crucial unions are for the political voice of the nonprivileged. Unions are huge players on the political scene: from 1989 to 2009, *half* of the top 25 PACs were unions; between 2001 and 2005, unions made one-quarter of all PAC donations by organized interests. But unions are in decline—only 7 percent of private-sector workers are unionized; and union membership is now dominated by public unions of government workers and teachers (typically white-collar workers, many with college educations)—diminishing unions' traditional role in representing blue-collar and lower-education groups.

Unions' slide results in part from the decline of manufacturing and other changes in employment patterns, as well as the increased willingness of management to fight union demands and organizing drives. But political attacks have been paramount too, with successful efforts by union opponents to secure court decisions and National Labor Relations Board rulings allowing members to withhold portions of their dues from political activity, further undercutting union influence—and thus the political representation of nonprivileged workers.

Reforms meant to address inequalities may violate other democratic values or social norms.

Indeed, political conservatives and the privileged interests they champion have been intent on eliminating even the remaining slivers of voice the less-privileged have. The attacks on union political activity are one example; passing voter ID laws and aggressively purging voter lists are another [see "Voter Suppression Returns," by Alexander Keyssar, July-August, page 28]. Although the authors comment on these efforts, one wishes for a more visceral reaction: the implications sometimes get lost in the book's sober, measured, social-scientific tone.

Is there any hope for ameliorating political inequality? One important finding by the authors is that when voter turnout rises, it is mostly because of increased turnout among lower-SES groups (high-SES groups participate at uniformly high rates over time). This suggests that political mobilization has potential as an instrument of equality. The Internet may help mobilize the young, who are quite underrepresented among the active citizenry, although Internet usage has its own SES gradient and may not mitigate economic inequality among political participants.

In general, finding solutions is difficult. Procedural reforms such as vote-by-mail simply make participation easier for those already active; they do not alter existing inequalities. And reforms meant to address inequalities may violate other democratic values or societal norms: mandating a "participatory floor" through compulsory voting impinges on Americans' sense of liberty; creating a "participatory ceiling" with complete public funding of elections may run afoul of First Amendment protections of money as a form of free speech. Above all, it is unlikely that those who benefit from the present system would ever be willing to entertain reforms that would truly chip away at their near-hegemonic power.

These esteemed authors, who have devoted their careers to the study of political participation, have assembled in 718 pages the most complete compendium of political inequality we have—its definition, sources, magnitude, and consequences—together with a consideration of changes in participatory processes that might alleviate inequalities in political voice. In the end, it is a troubling story about the state of American democracy. One can only hope that we find the will to secure the political rights of citizenship not just on paper, but in reality. ▽

Andrea Louise Campbell '88, professor of political science at MIT, is coauthor of The Delegated Welfare State: Medicare, Markets, and the Governance of American Social Policy *and author of* How Americans Think about Taxes: Public Opinion and the American Fiscal State *(forthcoming).*

Chapter & Verse

Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

Carol Ochs is looking for a story, possibly titled "Learning Day," from a 1953 science-fiction magazine, in which all children have a chip implanted that enables them to read. They do, briefly, but only the hero continues reading. Later, they are programmed for their professions. The hero, eager to become a computer programmer, is devastated when told he will not be programmed and will have no profession. He and a few other unprogrammed people live in a pleasant cottage and read. He then goes to the Olympics of computer programming, where a former rival is missing a part and loses. The hero eventually realizes that all the others failed programming day and only those not programmed were free to think.

"red Coke can in the snow" (July-August). Valerie Brader suggested in reply "the beginning of chapter 33 of *Expecting Adam,* by Martha Beck ['85, Ph.D. '94], in which she thinks a pink gleam on the ground near the Charles River is rose quartz, but finds it is styrofoam. She wonders if she is 'robbing myself of beauty with my own cognitive prejudice.'" But Charles Hayford, noting that Beck's book appeared well after he began looking for a citation for the anecdote, which took place on the West Coast and "had a Zen element," hopes for other leads.

Send inquiries and answers to "Chapter and Verse," *Harvard Magazine,* 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138, or via e-mail to chapterandverse@harvardmag.com.

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