The Politics of Income Inequality in the United States

This book revolves around one central question: Do political dynamics have a systematic and predictable influence on distributional outcomes in the United States? The answer is a resounding yes. Utilizing data from mass income surveys, elite surveys, and aggregate time series, as well as theoretical insights from both American and comparative politics, Kelly shows that income inequality is a fundamental part of the U.S. macro political system. Shifts in public opinion, party control of government, and the ideological direction of policy all have important consequences for distributional outcomes. Specifically, shifts to the left produce reductions in inequality through two mechanisms – explicit redistribution and market conditioning. Whereas many previous studies focus only on the distributional impact of redistribution, this book shows that such a narrow strategy is misguided. In fact, market mechanisms matter far more than traditional redistribution in translating macro political shifts into distributional outcomes.

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To Bud Kellstedt, for showing me how exciting the research enterprise can be
and
To Jana, for never letting me forget that inequality exists, and that it matters
The Politics of Income Inequality in the United States

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Acknowledgments

It is trite, but certainly true, that authors accrue several debts of gratitude in the course of any project. I am no exception. The initial idea for this book sprang from a conversation with Jim Stimson during graduate school. Jim’s contributions to this effort did not stop with that initial conversation. For many months, he worked tirelessly to help me refine ideas and develop the skills necessary to test them. Along the way, the early stages of this research agenda led to a dissertation, which Jim directed. Simply stated, this project would not have come to fruition without the help and support of Jim Stimson.

I also appreciate the help that the other members of my dissertation committee – David Lowery, Mike MacKuen, George Rabinowitz, and John Stephens – provided in moving this project from a dissertation to a book. David Lowery was particularly helpful in pointing me in some useful directions at the beginning of the project, and John Stephens was the first to suggest that I explore how comparative theories might enhance my work.

During the course of this project, several people have read and commented on aspects of the research program. I thank the following people for their generosity and thoughtful consideration of my work: Michelle Benson, Johanna Birnir, David Brule, Ian Down, Sean Erlich, Chuck Finocchiaro, Richard Fording, David Houston, Mark Hurwitz, Wonjae Hwang, Gregg Johnson, Christine Kelleher, Paul Kellstedt, Jens Ludwig, Andrea McAtee, Jana Morgan, Tony Nownes, Mark Rom, Matt Schneider, Paul Senese, Terry Sullivan, Chris Wlezien,
Acknowledgments

Jennifer Wolak, the political science departments at the University at Buffalo and Tufts University, and participants in the Duke-UNC American Politics Research Group. I am also grateful to Chris Reinard and James Trimble for their research assistance and to Marcus Friesen for his invaluable help during my time in Washington, DC.

The political science departments at the University of Tennessee, the University at Buffalo, and the University of North Carolina supported this project though travel funding, administrative support, and release-time from teaching. Grants and awards funding this project came from the following organizations: the Duke-UNC American Politics Research Group, the Chancellor’s Office at the University of Tennessee, and the National Science Foundation (Grant Number SES-0318044). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in the material are, of course, mine and do not necessarily reflect the views of any of the funding organizations.

Eric Crahan has been a joy to work with. I thank him for his support of this project and his professionalism throughout the process. Also, every member of the staff at Cambridge has worked to make the publication process as smooth as possible. Small portions of Chapters 4 and 5 of this book are reprinted from an earlier article (Kelly 2005). I thank Blackwell Publishing and the Midwest Political Science Association for granting permission to reprint this material here.

The work to produce this book took many years, and there were numerous individuals in my life during this time who provided me with various forms of support and encouragement. I owe special thanks to the following dear friends: Doug Banister, Ashlea Catalana, Michael Catalana, Lynn Charles, Kathy Evans, Turner Howard, Jeremy Jennings, Mary Jennings, Breese Johnson, David Johnson, Peter Johnson, Travetta Johnson, Heather Kane, Patrick King, Judy Long, Kevin O’Donovan, Laurens Tullock, Polly Tullock, Ashley Walker, and Russ Walker. My parents, Connie Kelly and Milt Kelly, as well as my in-laws, Kathy Morgan and Harry Morgan, have been extraordinarily supportive. I also thank my brothers, Jon Kelly and Ben Kelly, as well as my siblings-in-law, Alyssa Lovell and Matt Lovell, for always pushing me to be my best.

Finally, I owe the largest debt of gratitude to Jana Morgan. Her support of this project has been both professional and personal. I
first thank Jana for commenting on every component of this research program from start to finish. In fact, the earlier reference to John Stephens’s help on this project would not have happened had Jana not pressed me to seek John as an addition to my dissertation committee. She has continually pushed my thinking in new and better directions. Jana also poured over every page of this manuscript. Her eye for detail prevented several errors, and, I am sure, made this book better in innumerable ways. Remaining errors, however, are mine alone. Jana is the best professional colleague that I could have asked for on this project.

Her support goes well beyond the professional. People ask me all the time what it is like to have a spouse who shares my profession. The premise always seems to be that it must be very hard. While it is true that our professional lives can pervade almost everything we do, my response to this common query is always the same – “It’s great!” I consider myself one of the most fortunate people in the world to have a wife who not only understands me but understands my work as well. Throughout this project, Jana always provided the sort of spousal encouragement that is typically acknowledged by authors. She prodded during times of discouragement or lack of energy. She provided reality checks when I (rarely) thought things were perfect. She gave me the freedom to do what I needed to do to see this project to completion. But on top of all this, Jana understands theory development, research design, and quantitative analysis. I am not sure what more I could ask!