WHO SPEAKS FOR THE POOR?

Electoral Geography, Party Entry, and Representation

KAREN LONG JUSKO

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

This elegant and audacious book is a must-read for anyone interested in the topic of democratic representation. Jusko advances a novel theory of party formation and deploys this theory to explain why it is that low-income citizens are better represented in some democracies than in others. The representation of low-income citizens depends crucially on their distribution across electoral districts. This compelling argument is supported by quantitative comparative analyses and historical case studies of Britain, Canada, Sweden and the US. The book sheds new light on American exceptionalism and brings out intriguing similarities between agrarian-populist and labor-based (social democratic) parties. Jusko's historical data on the electoral geography of income should be an inspiration to us all.

JONAS PONTUSSON
Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Geneva

This book addresses an enduring question – who speaks for the poor? – in an entirely novel way. It fixes the identity of the group so that it is independent of prior political mobilization. This enables the isolation of opportunities for agency by party elites, as distinct from demand from below. Its analysis of microdata from old, difficult-to-access sources is a model of care, attention to detail, and methodological originality. The implications of the study are profound: for representation in general as well as of the poor; for persistence and change in party system patterns; and for the pivotal role of party elites.

RICHARD JOHNSTON
Canada Research Chair in Public Opinion, Elections, and Representation,
The University of British Columbia

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Who Speaks for the Poor?

Who Speaks for the Poor? explains why parties represent some groups and not others. This book focuses attention on the electoral geography of income, and how it has changed over time, to account for cross-national differences in the political and partisan representation of low-income voters. Jusko develops a general theory of new party formation that shows how changes in the geographic distribution of groups across electoral districts create opportunities for new parties to enter elections, especially where changes favor groups previously excluded from local partisan networks. Empirical evidence is drawn first from a broadly comparative analysis of all new party entries and then from a series of historical case studies, each focusing on the strategic entry incentives of new low-income peoples' parties. Jusko offers a new explanation for the absence of a low-income people's party in the USA and a more general account of political inequality in contemporary democratic societies.

Karen Long Jusko is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Stanford University and an affiliate of the Europe Center and the Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and was a fellow at the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University and a National Hoover fellow. Jusko has received research support from the National Science Foundation, as part of a European Science Foundation Collaborative Research Program. *Who Speaks for the Poor?* builds on graduate research that received the Harold D. Laswell Prize for the best dissertation in the field of public policy from the Policy Studies Organization and the APSA Public Policy Organized Section.

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[*Continued after the index*]

For Ryan, Anna, Jack, and Joanie.

I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.

But it is not in despair that I paint you that picture. I paint it for you in hope—because the nation, seeing and understanding the injustice in it, proposes to paint it out. We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of his country's interest and concern; and we will never regard any faithful law-abiding group within our borders as superfluous. The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Second Inaugural Address (1937)

Preface and Acknowledgments

This book is the result of a decade-long effort to understand how electoral rules affect the political representation of low-income citizens. In practice, individuals' votes are (almost) never weighted equally in the tallying of election results: legislatures are limited in size, and seats are almost always contested in districts. When the relationship between votes and seats for groups (rather than individuals) is examined, differences between national vote shares and seat shares can be profound. Groups vary in their electoral power because of the way their members are distributed across districts, and because of the way seats are allocated. What are the consequences of inequality in electoral power, particularly differences in the electoral power of income groups, for public policy and, ultimately, the common good?

My dissertation, completed while I was a visiting graduate student in the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics (CSDP) at Princeton University, provides the motivation for this larger project. A key finding in my dissertation shows that the electoral power of a low-income voting bloc varies across countries. That is, if all low-income citizens (defined as the poorest third in each country) turned out to vote, and they all cast ballots for the same parties, they would elect dramatically different proportions of their legislatures, despite their equivalent shares of each population. This variation transcends the usual distinction between majoritarian and proportional representation: there are consequential differences in the electoral power of the poor, even among countries with similar electoral systems. Importantly, low-income Americans were most under-represented in the mapping of votes to seats, and were pivotal in only about 5 percent of contests for the House of Representatives. (Chapter 8 replicates this analysis with new data, and a new measurement strategy.)

When viewed from the perspective of electoral power, it is not surprising that American legislators appear more responsive to their wealthier constituents (see Gilens 2012, Bartels 2008). American legislators rarely rely on the electoral

support of low-income voters, and few have incentives to be responsive to their interests. Further, because there is a positive relationship between the electoral power of low-income voting blocs and levels of social spending (this finding is also replicated in Chapter 8 in a small cross-national set of countries, but also for the American states), the electoral geography of income offers a new perspective on the relatively limited effectiveness of American social programs.

This earlier comparative analysis of electoral power and social policy drew attention to the importance of parties, and led to a broader question about why parties represent the interests of some groups, and not others. This book develops a general theoretical argument about how changes in electoral geography, or the way in which groups are distributed across electoral districts, create incentives for political entrepreneurs to form new parties. Especially when newly pivotal groups have been excluded from local partisan networks, political entrepreneurs will craft new party platforms that represent the interests of these groups. What matters, then, for the political representation of a particular group in a society is whether it has been favored by changes in electoral geography.

Here, I test this argument by focusing on low-income citizens, and present broadly comparative and detailed historical analysis as supportive evidence. This book includes a chapter that focuses on new parties of all types, as well as several analytic case studies of the formation and entry of low-income peoples' parties in the US, Canada, Great Britain, and Sweden. Original datasets that describe the electoral geography of income in each country during the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries provide the empirical foundation of this work, and tie new party entry decisions to changes in the local distribution of electoral power.

Who Speaks for the Poor?, therefore, accounts for both the timing of entry, and presence of low-income peoples' parties. Importantly, this book also provides a new explanation for the current absence of a low-income people's party in the US. When the implications of electoral geography are understood, as this book shows, the absence of a third party is no longer a puzzling feature of contemporary American politics. Instead, the limited responsiveness of American legislators to the interests of low-income voters clearly results from the political economic incentive structures created by American electoral geography.

I am especially grateful to the faculty, who were so generous with their time and support while I was a graduate student. Chris Achen focused my attention on the uneasy relationship between contemporary democratic politics and the common good, and insisted that my question, about democratic responsiveness to poverty, be addressed with clear thinking and straightforward empirical analysis. I hope Chris finds both here, and that this book reflects the best of his teaching.

Larry Bartels made space and provided support for me in the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University. The work done by Chris,

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Larry, and others at Princeton, including Carles Boix, Martin Gilens, David Lewis, Nolan McCarty, Jonas Pontusson, and Thomas Romer, provided the starting point and motivation for my own research agenda. Michele Epstein created a terrific community among faculty, students, and fellows, and I was so glad to be a part of it. CSDP was, at least for me, revolutionary.

In the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan, and in the Center for Political Studies in the Institute for Social Research, John Jackson (my dissertation co-chair), Jenna Bednar, Bill Clark, Robert Franzese, Vincent Hutchings, Ken Kollman, Burt Monroe, and Scott Page offered important guidance and training. Nancy Burns, Don Kinder, and David Howell provided early support while I worked as a research associate with the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and the National Election Study. I am also grateful to Phil Shively, who was then the Chair of the CSES Planning Committee. Phil provided indispensable professional advice, and encouraged my participation in CSES plenary and planning committee meetings. These meetings were some of the best seminars on democratic politics that I have attended.

I feel very fortunate to have held my first position in the Department of Political Science at Stanford University. Those who have served as Chair of the Department during my time here, principally Judith Goldstein, but also Josiah Ober, James Fearon, and Terry Moe, have been extremely generous in their financial support, and have provided the important releases from teaching and service that facilitated the completion of this long-term project. I also appreciate the insightful comments offered by my colleagues who read and reacted to this project, especially Josh Cohen, Gary Cox, David Grusky, Stephen Haber, Jens Hainmueller, Saumitra Jha, Simon Jackman, David Laitin, Margaret Levi, Neil Malhotra, Clayton Nall, Ken Scheve, Gary Segura, Paul Sniderman, Michael Tomz, and Barry Weingast. David Brady and Stephen Haber also provided valuable support in the form of a Hoover National Fellowship. Karen Cook, through the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, also provided for focused research time. Jackie Sargent supported me and my research in so many, many ways; my debt to her is enormous.

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While at Stanford, I have often taught the graduate-level course on research design with David Laitin. (In 2016, Mike Tomz, and then in 2017, Judy Goldstein, joined our teaching team.) This is one of my favorite courses to teach, and many discussions held in our class sessions have structured my research program in important ways. I appreciate David's frank comments and straightforward advice on my own work, am grateful our time together, and for the opportunity to work with really terrific students.

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Patrick Egan, who was a member of my CSDP cohort, has read and offered comments on several versions of this manuscript, always with generosity and a sense of humor. Patrick also facilitated valuable research time at NYU.

This project benefited enormously from participants in a manuscript conference, held at Stanford. Pablo Beramendi, Miriam Golden, Erik Wibbels, John Zaller, and Daniel Ziblatt provided fresh perspectives on the project, and it is much better as a consequence. Others, including Nick Carnes, Richard Johnston, Torben Iversen, Ira Katznelson, Gabriel Lenz, Johannes Lindvall, Keena Lipsitz, Julia Lynch, Eleonora Pasotti, Grigore Pop-Eleches, Dawn Teele, and Jessica Trounstine, have also been generous with their time and comments. I also appreciate the opportunity to present research that contributed to this project at the Political Development Workshop, held at the University of Toronto, the Harvard Meeting on Political Geography, the Inequality Workshop at UBC, and many other seminars and conferences.

Several Stanford graduate students made significant contributions to this project, including Molly Jackman, Simon Ejdemyr, Nick Eubank, and Alex Kuo. Dylan Marando, at the University of Toronto, also provided valuable research assistance. Undergraduate research assistants, including Kevin Allen, Katie Brigham, Nkechi Erondu, Dina Hassan, Justin Lin, Paton Moody, Sara Ramsey, Santana Shorty, Carlie Tenenbaum, and other participants in the Department of Political Science Summer Research College, assisted in the construction of several of the digital shape files used in this book.

Finally, my husband Ryan was steadfast in his commitment to this project, and to my larger research agenda. Ryan's enthusiasm for this book was unbounded, and I appreciate his keen willingness to read and comment. I am so very grateful for our life together, for our families, and for our children, Anna, Jack, and Joanie.

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