

Proposed Research

2008-2011 Persistent Poverty and Upward Mobility Theme Project
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I plan to pursue two related research streams as part of the “Persistent Poverty” project: (1) the connection between redistribution/income inequality and political behavior; and (2) the impact of welfare states on people’s economic attitudes and behavior. These interrelated projects share a focus on the role that welfare states – their institutional frameworks as well as specific social and redistributive policies – play in shaping the behavior of low and high income individuals in a variety of domains, including their wellbeing, labor market behavior, and political engagement.

(1) I plan to examine the political causes and consequences of income redistribution and income inequality in the advanced industrial societies, including the United States. In particular, I am interested in adding to what we know about the consequences of income inequality for citizen politics by investigating the reciprocal links between people’s trust in the political system and income redistribution. This project will rely on income inequality and survey data collected in the OECD countries and the European Union since the 1970s.

(2) I also plan to examine the connection between political institutions and public policies – in particular, welfare state regimes and social policies – and people’s employment-related attitudes and decisions. Specifically, I plan to investigate the effect that labor market policies have on work-related behaviors and attitudes among low-income individuals and those who are precarious in the labor market. The outcomes to be examined include experiences of job security and job satisfaction. Moreover, I intend to research the role that social policies may play in supporting or diminishing self-employment and entrepreneurship among low-income individuals. Here, too, I will focus primarily on the OECD countries with the help of cross-national surveys that ask people about their interest in and experience with starting a business, their perceptions of the entrepreneurial environment, and their willingness to finance entrepreneurial activities.