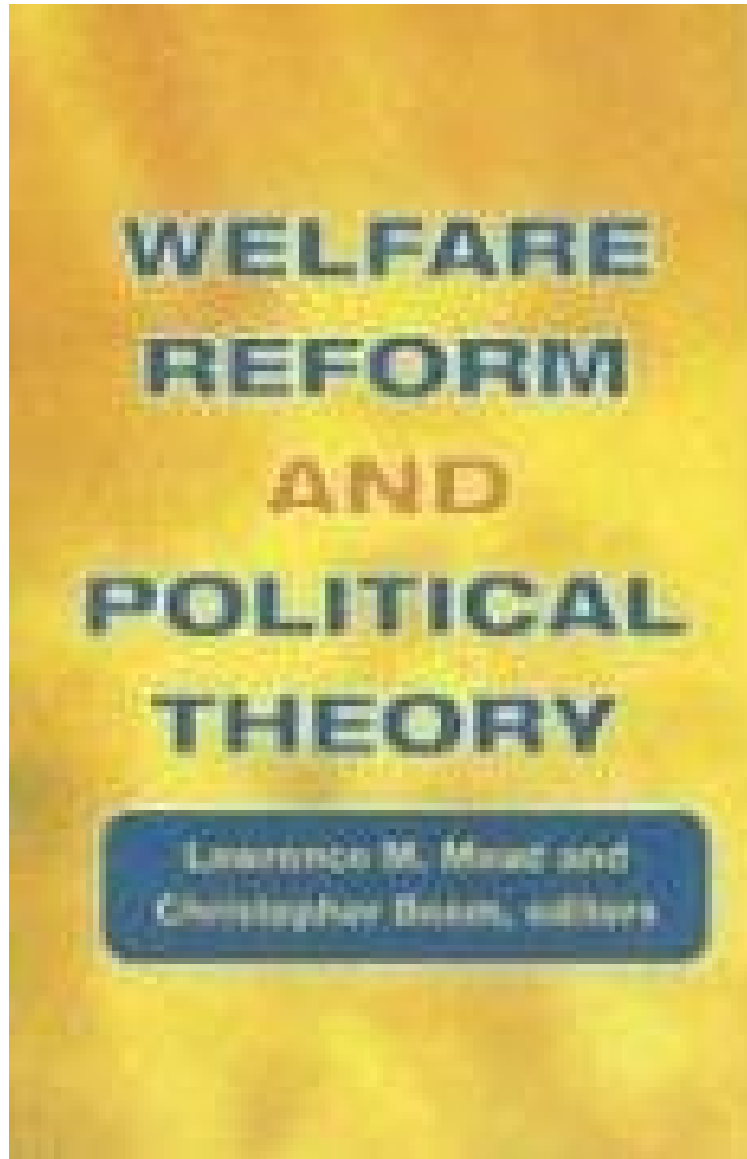


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Welfare Reform and Political Theory

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From Brand: Russell Sage Foundation : Welfare Reform and Political Theory before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Welfare Reform and Political Theory:

During the 1990s, both the United States and Britain shifted from entitlement to work-based systems for supporting their poor citizens. Much research has examined the implications of welfare reform for the economic well-being of the

poor, but the new legislation also affects our view of democracy and how it ought to function. By eliminating entitlement and setting behavioral conditions on aid, welfare reform challenges our understanding of citizenship, political equality, and the role of the state. In *Welfare Reform and Political Theory*, editors Lawrence Mead and Christopher Beem have assembled an accomplished list of political theorists, social policy experts, and legal scholars to address how welfare reform has affected core concepts of political theory and our understanding of democracy itself. *Welfare Reform and Political Theory* is unified by a common set of questions. The contributors come from across the political spectrum, each bringing different perspectives to bear. Carole Pateman argues that welfare reform has compromised the very tenets of democracy by tying the idea of citizenship to participation in the marketplace. But William Galston writes that American citizenship has in some respects always been conditioned on good behavior; work requirements continue that tradition by promoting individual responsibility and self-reliance values essential to a well-functioning democracy. Desmond King suggests that work requirements draw invidious distinctions among citizens and therefore destroy political equality. Amy Wax, on the other hand, contends that ending entitlement does not harm notions of equality, but promotes them, by ensuring that no one is rewarded for idleness. Christopher Beem argues that entitlement welfare served a social function acknowledging the social value of care that has been lost in the movement towards conditional benefits. Stuart White writes that work requirements can be accepted only subject to certain conditions, while Lawrence Mead argues that concerns about justice must be addressed only after recipients are working. Alan Deacon is well to the left of Joel Schartz, but both say government may actively promote virtue through social policy a stance some other contributors reject. The move to work-centered welfare in the 1990s represented not just a change in government policy, but a philosophical change in the way people perceived government, its functions, and its relationship with citizens. *Welfare Reform and Political Theory* offers a long overdue theoretical reexamination of democracy and citizenship in a welfare society.

About the Author LAWRENCE M. MEAD is professor of politics at New York University. CHRISTOPHER BEEM is a program officer at The Johnson Foundation.