A New Politics of Food? A Policy Regime Approach

Adam Sheingate
Johns Hopkins University
Draft: November, 2012
Comments Welcome

The study of public policy, like the field of institutional analysis more generally, is caught on the horns of a dilemma. Efforts to understand the enduring features of policies can sometimes overlook the dynamic aspects of politics, and an analytical focus on the structural sources of stability can mask an ongoing process of institutional change (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Yet, attention to the dynamics of change carries risks of its own if scholars lose sight of the routinized features of institutional control or the regular patterns of public policy. Politics and policy are characterized by stability and change, durability as well as disruption. This begs the question, what analytical tools do we employ to apprehend the manifold character of polices and institutions? How best can we grapple with the multitude of patterned regularities that in the aggregate create the complex, messy realities of governing?

In this paper, I turn to the concept of a policy regime in an effort to escape from the dualism of stability and change. Such an analytical focus, I argue, draws attention to the way particular governing arrangements take shape, take hold, and, in some cases, come apart. The regime concept is not entirely new: various usages of 'regime' are found across political science. My particular understanding of the term draws upon three literatures whose affinities in orientation and outlook offer a useful synthesis. The first of these is the literature in policy studies which views policy regimes as "governing arrangements for addressing policy problems (May and Jochim 2012, 5)." More precisely, policy regimes consist of authoritative actions, interest group alignments, and prevailing ways of seeing the world that, together, constitute a coherent and durable domain of action around some set of policy goals (Ibid., 3). The second literature I draw from is the field of American Political Development (APD). For APD scholars, regimes are temporal constructions. They are political and policy commitments institutionalized at a particular moment in time that live beyond the conditions or circumstances of their origin. Regimes are durable features of the

polity, but they are always partial, bumping up against other governing arrangements created at different times and for different purposes. Politics is marked by the conflicts and tensions that arise from these many moving parts (Orren and Skowronek 2004, Lieberman 2002, Polsky 2012). The third source I draw upon focuses on the role actors play in the creation, maintenance, and disruption of institutions. This literature combines insights from organizational sociology on the practice of "institutional work" with that of political scientists who emphasize the creative experimentalism of actors engaged in an ongoing process of institutional adaptation. Drawing upon a language of Pragmatism, these scholars reject the dichotomy between "closed" periods of routinized constraint and "open" moments of institutional entrepreneurship; both the reproduction and transformation of institutions bear the mark of creative action (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006, Ansell 2011, Berk and Galvan 2013).

Drawing upon these various literatures, I suggest an actor-centered approach to the study of policy regimes that can apprehend both the durability and dynamism of politics and policy. More precisely, my approach rests on three propositions intended to overcome the duality of stability and change. *First*, policy regimes are durable configurations of institutions, interests, and ideas that together define the scope of power and authority, generate distinct patterns of access and influence, and shape the identities and allegiances of relevant actors. *Second*, policy regimes are never fixed in place because regime maintenance requires an ongoing process of refinement that results in the accumulation of policy innovations created at different times. *Third*, the resulting complexity of policy regimes render them susceptible to disruption as actors bring new issues to the fore, change venues, and build coalitions in ways that challenge the authority, influence, and allegiances sustaining the regime.

To illustrate my approach, I explore features of the contemporary politics of food and

agriculture in the United States. Food and agriculture issues provide a particularly useful case to explore the policy regime concept. First, agriculture in many ways exemplifies the durable features of a policy regime, or the way stable and routinized patterns of policymaking take hold and reproduce themselves over long periods of time. Concepts such as iron triangles and sub-governments capture this stability, and scholars have frequently pointed to agriculture, especially commodity subsidy programs, as an example of a closed and tightly controlled policy domain (McConnell 1966, Lowi 1969). As a policy regime, agriculture appears to be remarkably resilient. Even seemingly significant reforms, as happened in 1996, did not disturb the underlying structure of influence or basic policy commitments (Patashnik 2008). Yet, this durability does not mean that the agricultural policy regime has remained static. In fact, the incorporation of new issues and interests into policy debates has been critical to the resilience of farm programs (Browne 1988). The most important example of this kind of adaptation is the logroll between advocates of food stamps and farm subsidies, a union forged during the Great Society that has provided an important bulwark against declining rural representation in Congress for almost fifty years (Hansen 1991). Moreover, there are signs of policy disruption, understood as "the intrusion of new information…and demands to address it," along several fronts of the agricultural policy regime (May, Sapotichne, and Workman 2009). Examples of this disruption include growing concerns with the health, environmental, and economic costs of industrial food production, including the role of farm programs in creating and sustaining a highly concentrated food system. Whether these disruptions ultimately lead to a reconfiguration of policy is difficult to predict, but there are signs that a new politics of food is taking shape in many cities of the United States. One of the virtues of the regime concept is that it directs attention toward the cumulative effects of what may appear to be only minor perturbations in the politics of policymaking.

In the next section, I review previous work on policy regimes in the APD and policy studies literatures, and I offer a definition of the regime concept that attempts to synthesize the considerable insights of scholars working in both traditions. I then turn to a discussion of institutional work and creative action as a source of both regime durability and disruption. The next two sections examine the agricultural policy regime and the changing politics of food. I pay particular attention to the process of regime maintenance as well as the contemporary challenges to the status quo reflected in debates over the 2012 Farm Bill and a vibrant local politics of food now evident in many U.S. cities. In the conclusion, I return to conceptual issues by discussing the challenges and opportunities of studying policy regimes from both a macro- and micro-politics perspective.

Policy Regimes

I define a policy regime as a durable configuration of institutions, interests, and ideas that together generate distinct patterns of authority, collective action, and interest mediation within a particular field or domain of public policy. My definition and understanding of policy regimes draws heavily from the related research traditions of policy studies and American political development. This section discusses the lineage of the concept in these literatures as well as the overlap and affinities between them.

Turning first to the literature in policy studies, the fullest elaboration of policy regimes is found in a recent series of articles by Peter May and co-authors (Jochim and May 2010, May, Jochim, and Sapotichne 2011, May and Jochim 2012). Several important insights emerge from this work. First, as a descriptive enterprise, the concept of a policy regime provides "a conceptual map of the governing arrangements for addressing a given problem or set of problems (May and Jochim 2012)." More than just the related set of policies within a domain of activity, a regime describes

the broader social, political, and intellectual context in which policymaking takes place. More precisely, May and others describe policy regimes as a constellation of ideas, institutions, and interests. This includes shared understandings about problems and goals, rules that structure authority and the flow of information, and the array of organizations and coalitions that provide support (and opposition) to the regime (Ibid., 11-15).[1] As a descriptive category, regimes are broader than a policy subsystem characterized by a group of institutionally-situated actors organized around the formation and implementation of public policies. In some cases, in fact, a policy regime might span several overlapping subsystems; for instance, the homeland security regime spans aviation, bioterrorism, infrastructure, and disaster preparedness policies (May, Jochim, and Sapotichne 2011). It is interesting to consider whether a similar "boundary-spanning" regime exists in food and agriculture that includes farm subsidies, conservation programs, food safety, and public health (I will return to this question below).

In addition to offering a useful descriptive tool, the policy regime concept also provides analytical purchase on feedback effects in the policy process. Attention to the importance of feedback effects dates back to Schattschneider's (1935, 288) observation that "new policies create a new politics." This critical insight is central in much of the work on historical institutionalism, much of it focused on the way the feedback effects of public policies fundamentally influence the evolution of politics and the articulation of power (Pierson 1993, 2004; Hacker and Pierson 2009). Within policy studies, regime components are seen as mutually reinforcing and self-sustaining, generating positive feedback effects that "profoundly shape politics (May and Jochim 2012, 9)." Attention to the feedback effects of regime components reveals how the coherence and legitimacy

[1] In earlier work , Jochim and may (2010) included issues as a fourth component that defines the foci of a policy regime. Issues might be subsumed under ideas as a set of shared policy commitments or understanding about the scope of a problem addressed through policy.

of a policy regime is an important factor in explaining its durability.

The work by May and others is the most sustained, recent treatment of policy regimes, but it is not the only one. Kersh (2009) uses the concept of a policy regime to describe the evolution of the obesity issue from its beginning as an emerging public health concern in the 1990s to an increasingly bounded and well-defined policy domain today. One of the virtues of Kersh's study is that it examines a process of regime consolidation in the making, one marked by a narrowing of debates, stakeholders, and policy alternatives. As Kersh describes, three features characterize this process of consolidation. First, "swirling debates [narrow] into a few primary frames." In the case of obesity, discussions revolve around one of two competing definitions of the problem, one framed around claims of personal responsibility and the other on the availability of cheap, high-calorie foods. Second, "a relatively small group of stakeholders…dominate media coverage and legislative debates." A "roster of established actors" consisting of public health and nutritional science advocates on one side arrayed against the food and beverage industry on the other have become the dominant voices in obesity debates (Ibid., 297-298). Third, "legislative responses [shrink] from dozens of options to a select handful." Policy alternatives to address the obesity problem focus on an increasingly narrow range of options; alternatives appear limited by the dominant frames and formidable interest group coalitions on either side of the issue. In sum, ideas (frames), interests (stakeholders), and institutions (legislative responses) are key to the consolidation of a regime, providing "an important source of stability" but also an obstacle to policy innovation (Ibid., 297).

A similar elaboration of the regime concept is found in McGuinn (2006, 206), who describes a policy regime as "the set of ideas, interests, and institutions that structures governmental activity in a particular issue area…and that tends to be quite durable over time."

McGuinn deploys the regime concept to understand the evolution of education policy from one of minimal federal involvement to the much more active and prescriptive role for government embodied in the No Child Left Behind Act. As McGuinn explains, No Child Left Behind represented an ideational shift from equity to accountability as the guiding principle in education policy. This, in turn, had institutional consequences, transforming the Department of Education from "a grant-administering institution to one focusing on enforcing compliance with federal standards (Ibid., 219)." At the same time, "shifts in the configuration of interests around education" such as the embrace of reform by business and civil rights groups, opened political possibilities for constructing a bipartisan coalition in support of an expanded federal role in education. These developments in education policy since the 1960s illustrate "the politics of policy regime construction, maintenance, destruction, and reconstruction (Ibid., 213)."

McGuinn's work on the education policy regime draws explicitly from the literature on American political development (APD). In this view, regimes are institutionalized political commitments, backed by an ascendant electoral coalition, and guided by a set of shared assumptions or ideas about the purpose of government. Typically for APD scholars, however, a regime describes politics at the macro-level of the polity rather than struggles over individual policies. Despite this difference in emphasis, there are important affinities between the APD literature and the regime concept in policy studies. First, many APD scholars invoke the familiar troika of ideas, interests, and institutions to describe durable arrangements of political authority. Orren and Skowronek (2004, 19), for example, describe these governing arrangements as "constellations of rules, institutions, practices, and ideas that hang together over time." Second, a distinguishing feature of APD scholarship is to emphasize that political authority is always partial and incomplete; politics is marked by ongoing conflict and contestation. The difficulty

consolidating power within a separated powers system results in the accretion of partial governing arrangements that, over time, contribute to a gradual process of transformation (Orren and Skowronek 2004, Lieberman 2002). Third, most APD scholars view public policies as one, if not the, the principal site where consequential political struggles take place (Hacker and Pierson 2009, Orren and Skowronek 2012). However, rather than analyze policy struggles in isolation, for instance as sub-governments, APD scholars typically examine the way multiple policy areas and governing arrangements created at different times impinge on one another as well as interact with the larger political context in which they are embedded. Attention to the temporal character of politics is central to an APD-inflected approach to policy studies. As McGann examines in the case of education, policy change is a gradual process which unfolds "in fits and starts over time" as actors "contend with the political, institutional, and policy remnants of the old regime even as they construct its replacement (McGuinn 2006, 213, 225)."

Combining the insights from policy studies and APD, a policy regime is a mutually-reinforcing configuration of ideas, interests, and institutions that yield a durable governing arrangement. Figure 1 represents this schematically in terms of regime components. First, ideas consist of cognitive and normative beliefs about how the world is or ought to be. Ideas define the nature of public problems and the purpose or goal of public policies. Interests consist of various stakeholders and the resources they bring to bear, material and symbolic, on the policy process. Institutions describe the rules of the game; they help determine the range of available policy instruments and where the locus of authority resides.

[Figure 1 about here]

As Figure 1 illustrates, policy regimes yield distinct patterns of authority, collective action, and interest mediation. Power and authority describe how institutions and ideas are put into

practice: it is a combination of formal rules and cognitive and normative frames. The power of government will remain an abstraction until codified by formal rules and given the backing of force. Conversely, although rules can be sustained by force, legitimate authority stands on some combination of cognitive and normative beliefs. Identities and allegiances describe how ideas and interests shape the capacity for collective action. A mixture of resources and beliefs determine how individuals define their interests and their capacity to find common purpose with others. For instance, Schneider and Ingram's (1993) discussion of the social construction of target populations explores the inter-relation between the material resources of groups and societal beliefs about whether certain individuals are deserving or undeserving of government aid. Finally, the access and influence that groups enjoy in the policy process is a function of both the resources groups bring to bear and the institutional context in which they operate. For instance, the influence of corporate interests in American politics is more than simply the monetary value of campaign contributions. Money matters because of institutional features of the American political system such as the media-intensive character of candidate-centered campaigns and the policy-making authority of Congress. Interest group resources only have value within a particular institutional context.

Policy regimes acquire their durability from the mutually-reinforcing character of authority, collective action, and interest mediation. Drawing from the work of May and others, we can think of this durability in terms of feedback effects that generate policy legitimacy (widespread acceptance) and coherence (consistency of goals). As May and Jochim (2012, 7) put it, "strong regimes advance a shared sense of purpose, establish institutional structures that focus attention on relevant policy goals, and engage a supportive constituency." Consider the evolution of social policies that direct benefits toward senior citizens. Social Security and Medicare combine

the fiscal powers of the modern state (institutions) with the normative belief that government should protect individuals from the financial risks of old age (ideas). The growing role of government in social provision made collective action by senior citizens possible, both because seniors had resources to bring to bear (interests) and because they were deemed deserving of government assistance (ideas) (Campbell 2001). However, the influence of seniors in the political process also depended on the ability of organizations like AARP to leverage the voting and financial power of seniors (interests) in congressional and presidential elections (institutions). Strong regimes, like the one in social policy, benefit from feedback effects that deepen the legitimacy and coherence of policy over time: more generous benefits strengthen senior political activism which reinforces policy trajectories.

However, neither politics nor policy stands still. Drawing from the scholarship in APD, we can examine how regimes on other policy areas as well as become subject to political forces operating at the level of the polity. In the case Medicare, efforts to maintain benefits in the face of fiscal pressures and the ascendance of a neo-liberal faith in market forces creates pressures for reform, exposing fissures among seniors and between seniors and other groups over the future of the program. Recent struggles over health care reform constitute another disturbance as policy makers look for cost-savings in Medicare to fund coverage expansion. Although Medicare is a durable policy regime, it is not immune from disruption caused by proximate policy developments and broader political trends. In fact, actors working within the Medicare regime engage in an ongoing effort to adapt and adjust. Policy evolution occurs at the interface between regime defenders and the entrepreneurial challenges of outsiders seeking to upturn established patterns of authority, influence, and collective action. In the next section, I elaborate further on the role of actors in the process of regime construction, maintenance, and disruption.

Durability and Disruption

One of the insights of an APD-inflected understanding of politics is that a policy regime is not a perpetual motion machine. Put differently, the feedback effects of ideas, interests, and institutions is an important source of regime durability, but one that still requires maintenance if the machine is to keep running. As I describe here, this maintenance is a creative process in which actors must respond to the exigencies of politics. In particular, would-be challengers and advocates of reform seek to redefine the goals of policy, shift the locus of authority, or construct new coalitions that upend, disrupt, and possibly even dismantle an existing regime. This, too, is a creative process. By developing a vocabulary of creative action, it is possible to grasp the evolution of policy regimes amid the ongoing struggles over the scope and purpose of public policy.

In many respects, scholars of public policy have always been attentive to the important role of innovation and entrepreneurship in the policy process (Kingdon 1984, Polsby 1984; for a review see Sheingate 2003). In recent years, however, several strands of related research have explored in greater depth how the structural location of actors and their access to resources of various kinds afford them with the opportunity and skills to act in politically consequential ways (Skowronek and Glassman 2007, Mahoney and Thelen 2010, Berk, Galvan, and Hattam 2013). This flowering of attention has yielded a better appreciation for the way institutions (including policies) provide a substrate for creative action; actors not only work on institutions, they work through them as well. As a result, we now have a more complete view of the part that actors play in the creation, maintenance, and transformation of institutions.

For instance, scholars of American politics who work on Congress, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary have examined how political entrepreneurs orchestrate ambitious reforms that

enhance their authority within a particular institution (Schickler 2001, Carpenter 2001, Strahan 2007, Crowe 2012). Several common features appear to run through these studies, including the capacity to construct diverse coalitions of support for reform efforts, especially during moments of uncertainty when received patterns of behavior no longer seem to apply. Research in historical-institutionalism has focused attention on how actors creatively break, bend, or otherwise transform the effect of existing rules to suit new purposes (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). This work highlights the opportunities for agency within complex environments where the meaning and application of institutional rules is ambiguous or unclear. One important implication of this line of work is that although the creative interpretation of rules is a hallmark of politics, the effects of creative action vary depending on the political context and features of the institution. Mahoney and Thelen (2010) outline several modes of institutional action and a corresponding set of institutionally-situated actors whose creative exploitation of the rules variously support and subvert institutions. A third line of research examines how political creativity is a constitutive feature of politics; actors "enact" institutions in everyday practice (Berk, Galvan, and Hattam 2013). This work rejects the duality of stability and change, and it shares with APD and historical-institutionalism skepticism toward punctuated equilibrium accounts that contrast long periods of stasis with consequential moments of transformation. However, an emphasis on creativity rejects the idea that agency exists only in the structural gaps of ambiguous rules or moments of institutional uncertainty, emphasizing instead an open-ended process of tinkering and experimentation (Berk and Galvan 2013).

This work has yielded many insights, but it has also produced a panoply of terms. Alongside a traditional vocabulary of entrepreneurs and leaders, we have an increasingly varied taxonomy of institutional action. Thelen and Mahoney (2010), for example, discuss the assorted

roles of insurrectionaries, symbionts, subversives, and opportunists in the process of gradual institutional change. Berk and Galvan (2013) describe varieties of creative action in terms of power and purpose. In terms of the latter, some creative acts resemble a kind of ramshackling or seat-of-the pants improvisation; others resemble the planned experimentation of the engineer. In terms of power, some actions enjoy the authority of privilege; others display the audacity of the weak.

Parsing out the similarities and differences between these various approaches is beyond the scope of this essay. However, one consistent theme emerges that is helpful for developing an actor-centered account of policy regimes. Namely, creative action is just as much a source of regime durability and reproduction as it is a source of disruption and transformation. Given this insight, we can helpfully subsume the range of skills, tactics, and strategies actors deploy for various purposes under the heading of institutional work, a term Lawrence and Suddaby (2006, 215) use to describe "the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions." Drawing upon the language of organizational sociology, Lawrence and Suddaby examine various forms of "situated institutional action." What distinguishes these practices is their purpose: the promulgation of rules and their grounding in beliefs that support the creation of a new institution, the policing of rules and invocation of beliefs to maintain an institution, or the challenging of rules and undermining of beliefs that disrupt an institution.

How might a focus on institutional work inform an actor-centered account of policy regimes? First, the process of regime creation will hinge on some act of consolidation in which actors effectively (and creatively) fasten a set of ideas about the world to a particular set of policies supported by a robust constituency of organized interests. Second, although the process of regime

creation is important, so is the process of regime maintenance. In fact, scholars frequently overlook the creative work required to maintain a regime. Over time, incremental innovations and adjustments to the regime will likely add complexity to the system; accommodating a set of policies to changes in social, economic, and political conditions may result in a baroque arrangement of programs and stopgap measures designed to shore up support or address various shortcomings. Third, actors may begin to exploit this complexity through various forms of disruption; for instance, exploiting contradictions in policy that undermine its rationale, introducing new issues that divide regime supporters, or building alternative networks and program capacities that challenge the dominant regime, often by "flying below the radar." As I describe in the next section, each of these modes of action is evident in the creation, maintenance, and disruption of the food policy regime.

The Food Policy Regime

If the literature in policy studies and APD offers a macro-politics of policy regimes focused on the interplay of interests, ideas, and institutions, attention to the varieties of institutional work suggests a micro-politics of actors who deploy various skills and resources in the service of regime goals. Put differently, our analysis of policy regimes benefits from both a macroscopic view focused on the sources of durability and the gradual transformation of regimes as well as a microscopic view that examines the underlying processes of regime maintenance and disruption. In this section, I endeavor to provide both perspectives by examining the politics of food in the United States. As I describe, policies toward food and agriculture display a remarkable resilience, bearing all the marks of a durable policy regime. Yet outward appearances can belie an underlying process of regime maintenance through which a complex array of programs and policies accommodates various challenges (and challengers). More recently, there are signs of policy

disruption as it becomes more difficult to incorporate these challenges and challengers into the current food policy regime.

The origins of the contemporary food policy regime can be traced back to the New Deal and the passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1933. The act, and subsequent legislation passed in 1938, created a sector-specific system of income supports; it is a social safety net for farmers. But if these New Deal policies set the cornerstone of "an agricultural welfare state" (Sheingate 2001), the consolidation of the food policy regime would take almost three decades before it was complete. In terms of regime characteristics, it is not until the 1960s that a durable arrangement of ideas, interests, and institutions produces a distinct pattern of authority, influence, and collective action in food and agriculture. For instance, agriculture policy today is thoroughly infused with the rhetoric of the family farm, a widely held belief about the virtues of agriculture that taps into a deep reservoir of cultural values. Yet, as Strach (2007) rigorously demonstrates, the "family farm" was not part of our vocabulary until the second half of the twentieth century and it is not until the 1970s that it became a regular part of policy debates. In terms of interests, contemporary agricultural politics on Capitol Hill is dominated by commodity organizations representing the growers of major crops like corn, cotton, and wheat. However, from the 1920s through the 1950s, it was general farm organizations like the Farm Bureau, Grange, and National Farmers Union that held sway. As Hansen (1991) documents, the shift from representation by general to commodity-specific farm organizations took place sometime in the 1960s. The reason has to do with a shift in policy and institutions. Whereas postwar debates over price supports pitted a Democratic-aligned National Farmers Union against a Republican-oriented Farm Bureau, legislation passed in 1965 created a system of direct payments that made it possible to support the incomes of (Democratic leaning) grain and cotton producers in the West and South without hurting

the profitability of (Republican leaning) corn and hog producers in the Midwest. This gave rise to a logroll among commodity groups, which supplanted the general farm organizations in policy debates. It also corresponded to an important institutional feature of Congress: as Jones (1961) described in his seminal work on representation on the House Agriculture Committee, subcommittee jurisdiction was divided according to specific commodities and House members sought membership on those subcommittees with authority for programs important to farmers in their districts. In fact, it was not until the 84th Congress (1955-1956) that a system of standing, permanent subcommittees was organized in the House Agriculture Committee along the commodity lines Jones described (Kursman 1986, 142).[2]

By 1965, the contours of the food policy regime were firmly in place. A distinct pattern of policymaking authority existed in the form of an omnibus farm bill that re-authorized food and agriculture programs for up to five years. The Agricultural Act of 1965 marks the first of these omnibus farm bills passed by Congress. The farm bill process was reinforced by a distinct arrangement of access and influence dominated by commodity organizations and reinforced by the structure of the agriculture committees in Congress. This influence, in turn, relied on a particular form of collective action in which farmers conceived of their policy interests in economic rather than partisan terms. Support for agriculture since the 1960s has largely been a bipartisan affair, even at a time when the two major parties are increasingly at odds on most major policy issues.

The feedback effects of this regime was so apparently stable that political scientists in the 1960s used agriculture to prove the existence of iron triangles and interest group capture (McConnell 1966, Lowi 1969). However, scholars who looked closely at the inner workings of agricultural policy found a much more complicated picture. For instance, Hansen (1991) examined

[2] Prior to the 84th Congress, subcommittees were simply numbered and did not have established jurisdictions over specific commodities.

how representatives of agricultural interests, first general farm organizations and then commodity groups, gained and maintained access to the House and Senate agriculture committees. The key to this process, Hansen argues, was for interest groups to become a regular source of advice on a recurring issue of interest to constituents. Put in the language of institutional work, Hansen shows how office holders and interest groups jointly mobilized support behind farm programs and then institutionalized that support in a policy process centered in the agriculture committees of Congress. This required a creative act of meaning making, translating the economic conditions of agriculture in various parts of the country into policy preferences articulated at congressional hearings and other instances of lobbying. Although Hansen would not put it in these terms, his account of interest group action portrays the consolidation of a policy regime.

Beginning in the 1970s, concerns over rising food prices, declining numbers of rural representatives in Congress, and increasing restlessness among liberal Democrats with the committee barons who ruled Congress posed significant challenges to the food policy regime. In response, farm program advocates engaged in a critical process of regime maintenance by incorporating food stamps into the farm bill process and solidifying an urban-rural coalition behind nutrition programs and agricultural subsidies. But the accommodation of new issues and interests did not end there. William Browne (1988, 1990) documented the proliferation of interest groups involved in the agricultural policy domain. These ranged from the general farm and commodity groups discussed earlier to a variety of agribusiness and food industry interests as well as environmental, consumer, and health groups concerned about the negative externalities of agricultural production. But rather than compete with one another over the scope or purpose of food and agriculture programs, these myriad interests occupied and dominated an increasing number of narrow issue niches. In fact, Browne's study of interest group activity found that less

than a quarter of the organizations active during the 1985 farm bill debate actually represented farmers (Browne 1988). Reading Browne in light of a theory of institutional work suggests the creativity required to create an issue niche. As Browne explains, “organized interests develop issue identities—indeed are compelled to do so—” in order to develop an issue niche they can occupy and defend from the encroachment of others (Browne 1990, 500). The result was “a fragmented, uncoordinated, and nonaggregated set of programs” that characterized an increasingly broad food policy regime (Ibid., 504). Again, even though Browne did not put it in such terms, he documented a process of regime maintenance; through the 1980s, defenders of the regime granted more groups a seat at the table, but they seldom talked to one another.

The proliferation of issues and interests Browne documented was not inconsequential. Over time, the farm bill process grew increasingly complex as the defenders of the regime tried to accommodate an ever-expanding array programmatic concerns and particularistic demands. Figure 2 captures this increasing complexity with a simple accounting of legislative activity in agriculture over the last eighty years. The 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act contained just two titles, one establishing production control and the other a system of credit. The entire bill consisted of forty-five provisions, or sections, and ran just twenty-four pages in length. The Supreme Court declared portions of the AAA unconstitutional in 1936, so Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 to put farm legislation on a stronger constitutional footing. In doing so, Congress added several new provisions; the act contained five titles and more than one hundred sections. Over the next twenty-five years, Congress made periodic adjustments and amendments to the 1938 act, in 1948, 1949, 1954 and 1956. With the Food and Agricultural Act of 1965, as described previously, Congress consolidated the food policy regime both in terms of policy and politics. Figure 2 illustrates how the 1965 act begin a regular pattern of omnibus farm bills passed

every five years or so. The 1965 act also marks the beginning of increasing regime complexity as Congress added more titles and separate provisions to the farm bill each year. For instance, the 1973 farm bill is the first time that food stamps were included in the legislation (previously Congress voted on food stamps separately). The 1977 farm bill added a separate title for rural development and conservation. The 1985 farm bill contained a separate title devoted to agricultural trade. By 1990, the farm bill had ballooned in size to include 700 sections spread across twenty-five titles, including commodity programs, food stamps, conservation, trade, and, for the first time, organic certification and global climate change.[3]

[Figure 2 about here]

Passage of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act in 1996 represented an important shift in policy. The act removed all acreage restrictions in place since the New Deal and created instead a system of guaranteed payments to farmers regardless of their planting decisions or the condition of the rural economy. In effect, 1996 marked a radical simplification of farm policy; at a stroke, the government eliminated decades of rules that governed acreage allotments, crop loans, and other regulations. Instead, farmers received a check, in essence, just for being farmers. Figure 2 captures this simplification: the number of titles shrank from twenty-five to nine and the number of section dropped from 700 to 424. However, as Patashnik (2008) pointed out, the reform impulse of 1996 did not last long. Low prices, natural disasters, and, uncertain global markets prompted Congress to re-institute some forms of income support and accommodate new issues like biofuels, which became the subject of a separate farm bill title in 2002. By 2008, the farm bill's fifteen titles contained over 600 sections. At the time of this writing, Congress is considering a farm bill that, if passed, would eliminate direct payments in favor of an expanded

[3] For all agricultural legislation passed since 1933, see The National Agricultural Law Center, http://nationalaglawcenter.org/farmbills/ (accessed October 18, 2012)

crop insurance system. As in 1996, this would constitute an important reform, but time will tell whether it proves to be a durable one.[4]

A New Politics of Food

The debate over the 2012 Farm Bill illustrates some of the challenges regime defenders face maintaining a complex set of political and policy arrangements; the food policy regime is groaning under its own weight. The resulting cracks and fissures are evidence of disruption caused by the rise of new issues, an increasingly unfavorable political environment, and the growing influence of an alternative food movement. Although it is much too early to tell whether a substantial transformation in policy is underway, scholars can learn a great deal nevertheless by focusing attention on the way new issues challenge the assumptions underlying policy, a changing political context upsets institutionalized patterns of policymaking, and previously marginal voices begin to coalesce into proto-coalitions. These developments suggest how a reconfiguration of ideas, institutions, and interests might constitute a new politics of food in the United States.

First, the rise of several new issues has exposed the gap between the rhetoric of the family farm and the reality of the industrial food system. For example, the emergence of more dangerous strains of pathogens like *E.Coli* or *Salmonella* coupled with revelations about questionable food industry practices such as antibiotic use or ammonia-treated beef (so-called pink slime) challenge the pastoral image many Americans hold about food and farming. Widely reported outbreaks of foodborne illness and national recalls of meat, produce, and processed food leave many consumers wary. Meanwhile, popular books and documentaries like *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser 2001) and *Food Inc.* expose a brutal reality behind industry claims that their products are "farm fresh." These safety concerns chip away at public confidence in the government agencies responsible for food

[4] Figure 2 includes information on the Senate passed version of the farm bill, has less than 400 provisions in twelve titles.

safety. Between 2001 and 2008, the percentage of respondents to a Gallup Poll question who said they had “a great deal” or a “fair amount” of confidence in government food safety declined from 82% in 2001 to 70% in 2008 (the percentage of respondents who reported “not much” confidence or “none at all” increased from 17% to 29%). More recently, A 2010 Economist/YouGov online poll found that only 44% of respondents trusted government agencies responsible for food safety either “a great deal” or even “some.”[5]

Similarly, the rise of the obesity issue in the United States also questions assumptions about our food. The food system is no longer an unquestioned source of nutrition, but is increasingly discussed as a contributing factor in the rising numbers of overweight and obese Americans (Kersh 2009). As in the case of food safety, popular writers like Michael Pollan have attracted public attention to the negative consequences of farm subsidies, especially their possible role in obesity by artificially lowering the price of sugars and fats. Significantly, a scientific consensus is forming around the effects of the food environment on obesity prevalence, particularly the overconsumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and the over-abundance of marketing messages about unhealthy foods (Institute of Medicine 2012). Although the evidence of a direct link between farm programs and obesity is on the whole weak (Wallinga 2010), the implications of the obesity issue and concern about a toxic food environment deserves is nevertheless an important source of regime disruption in food policy.

In particular, the rising attention to obesity has disturbed long standing features of food and agriculture policy in Washington. As noted previously, an urban-rural logroll in Congress—farm

---

[5] The Gallup poll asked “How much confidence do you have in the federal government to ensure the safety of the food supply in the U.S.?” available through *Gallup Brain*, http://institution.gallup.com (accessed October 20, 2012). An online poll of 1000 Americans asked “How much do you trust government agencies for ensuring food safety do their jobs.” Economist/YouGov, September 1, 2010, available through *Polling the Nations*, http://poll.orsub.com (accessed October 20, 2012).

subsidies in exchange for food stamps—has anchored the food policy regime since the 1970s. Advocates of nutrition programs found common cause with farm state representatives; food stamps could simultaneously help the poor and increase demand for farm products. A rising concern with obesity, however, has diluted the influence of this "hunger lobby" in Congress (Berry 1982). On the right, conservatives used the obesity issue to question the rationale behind federal nutrition programs. The conservative *National Review* criticized food stamps as "force-feeding America's poor." Even mainstream news outlets such as the *New York Times* asked "are the poor suffering from hunger anymore? (Summers 2010)." On the left as well, anti-poverty advocates replaced a vocabulary of "hunger" with one of "food insecurity," noting that the poor are less likely to suffer from a deficit in calories than a deficit in nutrients; indeed, obesity rates are highest among the poor because they are likely to substitute cheap calories high in fat as their economic condition worsens (Drewnowski and Specter 2004). Celebrity chefs like Alice Waters and Jamie Oliver, pointed to the poor quality of school lunches, their concerns backed up by public health research showing that participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) may lead to a higher risk of obesity (Whitmore Schanzenbach 2009). In 2010, the Democratic lame-duck Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, which promised to improve both access and quality of school lunches; incidentally, the act cut 2.2 billion in funding to cover the costs.[6] In sum, lining up support for nutrition programs is less straightforward than it once was.

Further signs of disruption are evident in the current debate over the 2012 farm bill; defenders of the food policy regime are operating in a much less friendly political environment. First, the system of direct payments created in 1996 and made permanent in 2002 will likely be replaced by a system of government-subsidized crop-insurance. This shift reflects the politically

[6] Nia-Malika Henderson, "President Obama signs child nutrition bill, priority for first lady," *Washington Post*, December 13, 2010.

untenable position of paying farmers regardless of economic conditions in a time of high farm prices and high deficits. More telling is the fact that Republicans in both the House and the Senate pushed for deep cuts in SNAP benefits. Although the Senate-passed farm bill only cuts $4 billion in nutrition spending, the version of the farm bill passed by the House Agriculture Committee proposes to cut $16 billion over the same ten year period (Chite 2012). At the time of this writing, it is unclear how much of these cuts will need to be restored to pass the House; Democrats have pledged not to vote for the bill and many Republicans want even more cuts to both nutrition and farm programs. In fact, divisions within the GOP forced the leadership to postpone taking up the farm bill until after the 2012 presidential election, over the opposition of the House Agriculture Committee Chair Frank Lucas (R-OK) and the ranking member Colin Peterson (D-MN). The targeting of nutrition programs, in particular, signals a weakening of the urban-rural coalition. Senator Rob Johnston (R-WI) went so far as to propose that the nutrition title be removed from the 2012 farm bill so that it could be voted on separately. The measure went down to defeat, but it did attract forty votes of support.[7]

Although deserving of close attention, it is important not to overstate the effect these disruptions might have for the food policy regime. For instance, SNAP enrollment swelled as a result of the economic downturn and spending increased thanks to the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which included an extra $20 billion in funding in order to provide more generous benefits.[8] More important is that although many free market conservatives and

---

[7] Ron Nixon, "Split Among House Republicans Over How Deeply to Cut May Delay Farm Bill," *New York Times*, July 12, 2012. Philip Brasher, "Farm Bill Outlook Dries Up," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, September 24, 2012, 1914; "Food stamp flap at center of farm bill impasse", *Appleton Post Crescent*, September 17, 2012

[8] Economic Research Service, "ARRA," http://ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-(snap)/arra.aspx, accessed October 25, 2012.

their allies in Congress oppose federal farm subsidies and nutrition programs as a matter of principle, the economic reality is that the bulk of farm subsidies find their way to Republican-controlled congressional districts. As indicated in figure 3, this difference has grown more prominent since 2010; whereas the median Republican district receives almost $7 million in subsidies, the median Democratic district receives only $1.4 million. In fact, Republican freshman in the 112th Congress receive more subsidies than their co-partisans. As shown in figure 4, the median Republican freshman receives $12.6 million in subsidies to his district, compared to $5.3 million in districts held by Republicans prior to the 2010 midterm. Given the pressures within the Republican party, a farm bill is unlikely to pass the House without Democratic support. Yet, Democratic support will require restoring cuts to nutrition programs. In the end, the traditional farm bill coalition is likely to come through again.

[Figures 3 and 4 about here]

Despite this resilience, the struggle over the 2012 farm bill illustrates the tension between the current food policy regime and the larger political context in which it resides. APD scholars use the term intercurrence to capture precisely these tensions when multiple, nested governing arrangements come into conflict with one another (Orren and Skowronek 2004). As described previously, the food policy regime evolved according to its own temporal logic, accommodating various interests in the construction of an industrial food system. But, the food policy regime exists within a broader polity. Formed during the high tide of the Great Society, defenders of the food policy regime must now contend with a sharp ideological divide between parties and a broad skepticism toward government policies of all kinds. The efforts of farm state lawmakers in both parties to pass a farm bill in 2012 illustrate the creative acts of regime maintenance required to keep this cross-partisan coalition in place.

As APD scholars also point out, intercurrent tensions can generate opportunities as well. Advocates of a new politics of food are exploiting conflicts over farm program spending, the rising incidence of obesity and other public health concerns, and the negative consequences of industrial food production in order to push for new policies, particularly at the local level and especially in American cities struggling with the effects of poverty, poor health, and inadequate access to nutritious food. There are several notable features of these efforts. First, advocates point to concerns over obesity or food safety in order to reframe policy debates and challenge widely held beliefs that our food policy guarantees a steady supply of nutritious food. Second, shifting attention toward the public health consequences of food policy brings issues of food and agriculture increasingly under the purview of local political actors, especially public health researchers and municipal governments. In some respects, the flowering of a local food movement resembles other successful efforts at venue shopping in which advocates of policy change find a favorable local jurisdiction to pursue their goals (Pralle 2003). Tobacco politics is a particularly apt comparison, and scholars have speculated whether the obesity issue is following a trajectory similar to that of smoking in the 1980s and 1990s (Kersh and Morone 2005). Like tobacco, pursuing food issues at the local level places powerful industry actors somewhat on the defensive, their overall advantage in financial resources is less decisive in local politics. However, the multiple jurisdictions of the American system are not separate, but overlapping. Consequently, food policy advocates use the connections between federal and local jurisdictions to promote incremental policy innovations. Third, proponents of a new politics of food are linking activists, local officials, academics, and in many cases farmers together in a proto-coalition that might one day challenge the national urban-rural coalition that has sustained the food policy regime since the 1960s. In sum, the new politics of food suggests a novel arrangement of ideas, interests, and

institutions possibly taking shape.

Recent developments in Baltimore, Maryland offer an illustration of these dynamics. Like many American cities, Baltimore suffers from food-related markers of poverty: high rates of obesity, diet-related diseases such as diabetes, and food insecurity. Poor residents encounter numerous physical, economic, and social barriers to accessing healthy, nutritious food. Conceiving food as an urban public health issue, researchers at Johns Hopkins University found common cause with poverty activists and together established a Food Policy Council consisting of local stakeholders with shared concerns. These efforts found a receptive ear in the office of Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon, who in 2008 established a Food Policy Task Force to generate policy recommendations. At the same time, a collection of local foundations and non-profits funded important research, including a food mapping study that used public health data and geographic-information systems to show that retail food outlets in areas of extreme poverty in Baltimore consisted mainly of corner stores offering far fewer healthy food choices compared to the supermarkets located in more affluent parts of the city.[9] These areas of poverty also had the highest concentrations of diet-related diseases. This research helped to establish the concept of a food desert to describe areas of diminished access to healthy food, and it informed the efforts of the Baltimore city government and Food Policy Task Force. In 2010, Dixon's successor, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake announced the creation of the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative and the appointment of the Food Policy Director, Holly Freishtat, to implement the recommendations of the task force. With continued foundation and non-profit support, Freishtat put in place a multi-pronged effort promoting urban farms, improving nutrition in schools, encouraging local farmers markets to accept SNAP benefits, and enabling city residents to order groceries online at

---

[9] The food system map is a project of the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health. See http://mdfoodsystemmap.org/map/ (accessed October 29, 2012).

local libraries. Freishtat also heads the Food Policy Advisory Committee, a continuation of the Food Policy Council that now includes over forty-five member organizations including representatives of local foundations, emergency food providers, food retailers, and city government.[10]

Local efforts to construct a new politics of food are not limited to Baltimore. A number of cities including New York, Hartford, Cleveland, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Francisco have food policy councils and are pursuing similar policy initiatives as those in Baltimore. Efforts are underway to build a broader effort that will bend national food policy debates toward the public health concerns of cities. For instance, the U.S. Council of Mayors established its own food policy task force, chaired by the mayors of Boston and Baltimore. The purpose of the task force is to leverage the political influence of U.S. mayors in national farm bill debates by impressing upon its membership the importance of food and agriculture policies to American cities. This not only includes SNAP and other nutrition benefits but lesser known programs that support urban food initiatives as well. In fact, urban food advocates have become particularly adept at working with officials in the U.S. Department of Agriculture to exploit these opportunities. Although funding for such programs is normally only in the millions (compared to the billions spent on nutrition programs and farm subsidies), it supports local policy experimentation that, through the Council of Mayors, can be disseminated to policy actors across

---

[10] Baltimore City, *Food Policy Task Force: Final Report and Recommendations*, December 2009, available at http://cleanergreenerbaltimore.org/uploads/files/Baltimore_City_Food_Policy_Task_Force_Report.pdf (accessed October 29, 2012); City of Baltimore, *Baltimore Food Policy Initiative*, http://www.baltimorecity.gov/Government/AgenciesDepartments/Planning/BaltimoreFoodPolicyInitiative.aspx (accessed October 29, 2012; Interview with Anne Palmer, Center for a Livable Future, Johns Hopkins University, June 5, 2012; Interview with Holly Freishatat, Baltimore City Food Policy Director, June 19, 2012.

the country.[11]

In sum, a new politics of food is taking shape in many American cities. Coalitions of local policymakers, advocates, activists, and academics are engaged in a vibrant policy experimentation that endeavors to increase access to healthy food for the urban poor. Although it would be a mistake to assume that the current policy regime of industrial agriculture will necessarily give way to a more local and sustainable food system, these experiences are instructive nevertheless. In particular, they illustrate how regime challengers creatively exploit the cracks and fissures in the existing system to promote incremental policy innovations. These innovations depend on new ideas that redefine the meaning of healthy food, new institutional arrangements that shift the locus of authority, and new coalitions of interests that support policy experimentation at the local level.

Conclusion

The case of food and agriculture illustrates the challenge institutional and policy-minded scholars face in grappling with stability and change. Looked at one way, food and agriculture exemplifies policy stability: farm subsidies and nutrition programs demonstrate a remarkable resilience in the face of numerous demographic, economic, and political challenges. The political alliance between the food industry and commodity organizations is formidable indeed, as is the alliance between rural and urban lawmakers that has sustained farm bill politics in Congress since the 1960s. Yet even a cursory examination of food and agriculture reveals that stability does not mean stasis. Food and agriculture policy has evolved to accommodate new interests and new issues, rendering a more complex set of policies and a more complicated politics in the process.

---

[11] USCM Food Policy Task Force Reader: Healthy Food Access and Food Desert Strategies, April 2012, http://www.usmayors.org/foodpolicy/uploads/USCMFoodPolicyTaskForce.pdf (accessed October 29, 2012); Mary Lee, Deputy Director of PolicyLink, "Utilizing Local Policy Change to Expand Access to Healthy Food and Promote Economic Vitality," 80th Annual Conference of Mayors, June 13-16, 2012, http://usmayors.org/foodpolicy/uploads/PolicyLinkHandout.pdf (accessed October 29, 2012).

More recently, a new, local politics of food has appeared that challenges many of the underlying assumptions and traditional actors who have dominated federal food policy.

How are we to make sense of these developments? In this essay, I have argued that the concept of the policy regime provides scholars with an analytical tool that can overcome the duality of stability of change that limits much of policy and institutional analysis. Combining insights from policy studies, APD, and actor-centered approaches, I employ a vocabulary of durability and disruption in order to capture how actors construct, maintain, and challenge configurations of ideas, interests, and institutions. In particular, the policy studies literature provides insight into the way distinct patterns of authority, collective action, and interest mediation reinforce one another in a particular domain of government action. Work in APD adds to this view by emphasizing how regimes are embedded within a larger political context and exist alongside other, proximate regimes to produce a multiplicity of governing arrangements whose tensions and contradictions with one another animate struggle over policy and politics. Finally, actor-centered approaches, particularly the concept of institutional work, direct attention to the creative process of maintaining a regime as well as promoting innovations that potentially alter its character. Combining these three literatures makes it possible to understand how the collection of innovations I refer to as the new politics of food can exist side-by-side with a food policy regime it seeks to challenge but may never completely displace.

In other words, the policy regime approach developed here examines the innovations and gambits characteristic of everyday politics without losing sight of the larger context that shapes the scope of possibilities and structures alternatives. The approach attempts to provide both a macroscopic view of how policies evolve over time and a microscopic view of actors engaged in ongoing struggles for political advantage. Rather than contrast periods of stability and change, the

approach taken here examines how creative processes of regime construction, maintenance, and disruption undergird the durable features of policy that cohere and persevere over time.

Yet, important, and vexing, questions remain. Chief among them is how and why regime disruptions sometimes coalesce in transformative ways. Returning to the example of the food policy regime, it is difficult to predict whether increased attention to the health effects of our food system, efforts to improve access to healthy food for the urban poor, or the cooperative efforts of food activists, public health advocates, and academics will have national repercussions. However, the only way political scientists will learn about the process of transformation is if they remain attentive to its possibility and develop a vocabulary to capture its properties.

References

Ansell, Christopher. 2011. *Pragmatist Democracy: Evolutionary Learning as Public Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Baumgartner, Frank R.,and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Berk, Gerald, and Dennis Galvan. 2013. "Processes of Creative Syncretism: Experiential Origins of Institutional Order and Change." In Gerald Berk, Dennis Galvan, and Victoria Hattam, eds. *Political Creativity: The Mangle of Institutional Order, Agency, and Change*. Philadelphia: Penn Press.

Berk, Gerald, Dennis Galvan, and Victoria Hattam. 2013. "Political Creativity: Beyond Dualist Social Science." In Gerald Berk, Dennis Galvan, and Victoria Hattam, eds. *Political Creativity: The Mangle of Institutional Order, Agency, and Change*. Philadelphia: Penn Press.

Berry, Jeffrey. 1982. "Consumers and the Hunger Lobby." *Proceedings of the American Academy of Political Science* 34: 68-78.

Browne, William P. 1988. *Private Interests, Public Policy, and American Agriculture*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Browne, William P. 1990. "Organized Interests and their Issue Niches: A Search for Pluralism in a Policy Domain." *Journal of Politics* 52: 477-509.

Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2003. *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Activism and the American Welfare State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Carpenter, Daniel P. 2001. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chite, Ralph M. 2012. "The 2012 Farm Bill: A Comparison of Senate-Passed S. 3240 and the House Agriculture Committee's H.R. 6083 with Current Law." Congressional Research Service R42522.

Crowe, Justin. 2012. *Building the Judiciary*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Drewnowski, Adam, and S.E. Specter. 2004. "Poverty and Obesity: The Role of Energy Density and Energy Costs." *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 79: 6-16.

Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. 2009. "The Case for Policy-Focused Political Analysis." Unpublished paper.

Hansen, John Mark. 1991. *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Institute of Medicine. 2012. "Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation." Report Brief.

Jochim, Ashley E., and Peter J. May. 2010. "Beyond Subsystems: Policy Regimes and Governance." *Policy Studies Journal* 38: 303-327.

Jones, Charles O. 1961. "Representation in Congress: The Case of the House Agriculture Committee." *American Political Science Review* 55: 358-367.

Kersh, Rogan, and James A. Morone. "Obesity, Courts, and the New Politics of Public Health." *Journal of Health Policy, Politics, and Law* 30: 839-868.

Kersh, Rogan. 2009. "The Politics of Obesity: A Current Assessment and Look Ahead." *The Millbank Quarterly* 87: 295-316.

Kingdon, John W. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Kursman, Nancy Sue. 1986. "Structure and Policy Shifts: The U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, 1862-1942. Ph.D. Dissertation, Rice University.

Lawrence, Thomas and Roy Suddaby. 2006. "Institutions and Institutional Work." In Stewart R. Clegg, Cynthia Hardy, Thomas B. Lawrence, and Walter R. Nord, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Organization Studies*, Second Edition. London: Sage Publications.

Lieberman, Robert. 2002. "Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change." *American Political Science Review* 96: 697-712.

Lowi, Theodore J. 1969. *The End of Liberalism: Ideology, Policy, and the Crisis of Public Authority*. New York: Norton.

Mahoney, James, and Kathleen Thelen. 2010. *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

May, Peter J., and Ashley E. Jochim. 2012. "Policy Regime Perspectives: Policies and Governing." Center for American Politics and Public Policy, University of Washington.

May, Peter J., Ashley E. Jochim, and Joshua Sapotichne. 2011. "Constructing Homeland Security: An Anemic Policy Regime." *Policy Studies Journal* 39: 285-307.

May, Peter J., Joshua Sapotichne, and Samuel Workman. 2009. "Widespread Policy Disruption: Terrorism, Public Risks, and Homeland Security." *Policy Studies Journal* 37: 171-194.

McConnell, Grant. 1966. *Private Power and American Democracy*. New York: Knopf.

McGuinn, Patrick. 2006. "Swing Issues and Policy Regimes: Federal Education Policy and the Politics of Policy Change." *Journal of Policy History* 18: 205-240.

Orren, Karen, and Stephen Skowronek. 2004. *The Search for American Political Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Orren, Karen, and Stephen Skowronek. 2012. "The Policy State: A Developmental Synthesis." Unpublished paper.

Patashnik, Eric M. 2008. *Reforms at Risk: What Happens After Major Policy Changes Are Enacted*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pierson, Paul. 1993. "When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change." *World Politics* 45: 595-628.

Pierson, Paul. 2004. *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Polsby, Nelson W. 1984. *Political Innovation in America: The Politics of Policy Initiation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Polsky, Andrew J. 2012. "Partisan Regimes in American Politics." *Polity* 44: 51-80.

Pralle, Sarah B. 2003. "Venue Shopping, Political Strategy, and Policy Change: The Internationalization of Canadian Forest Advocacy." *Journal of Public Policy* 23: 233-260.

Schanzenbach, Diane Whitmore. 2009. "Do School Lunches Contribute to Childhood Obesity." *The Journal of Human Resources* 44: 684-709.

Schattschneider, E.E. 1935. *Politics, Pressures, and the Tariff*. New York: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Schlosser, Eric. 2001. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. "Social Constructions of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy." *American Political Science Review* 87: 334-347.

Sheingate, Adam. 2001. *The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State: Institutions and Interest Group Power in the United States, France, and Japan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sheingate, Adam. 2003. "Political Entrepreneurship, Institutional Change, and American Political Development." *Studies in American Political Development* 17: 185-203.

Skowronek, Stephen, and Matthew Glassman. 2007. "Formative Acts." In Stephen Skowronek and Matthew Glassman, eds. *Formative Acts: American Politics in the Making*. Philadelphia: Penn Press.

Strach, Patricia. 2007. *All in the Family: The Private Roots of American Public Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Strahan, Randall. 2007. *Leading Representatives: The Agency of Leaders in the Politics of the U.S.*

House. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Summers, Mary. 2010. "Food and Hunger Politics in the Age of Obesity (and Inequality) Epidemic." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Wallinga, David. 2010. "Agricultural Policy and Childhood Obesity: A Food System and Public Health Commentary." *Health Affairs* 29: 405-410.

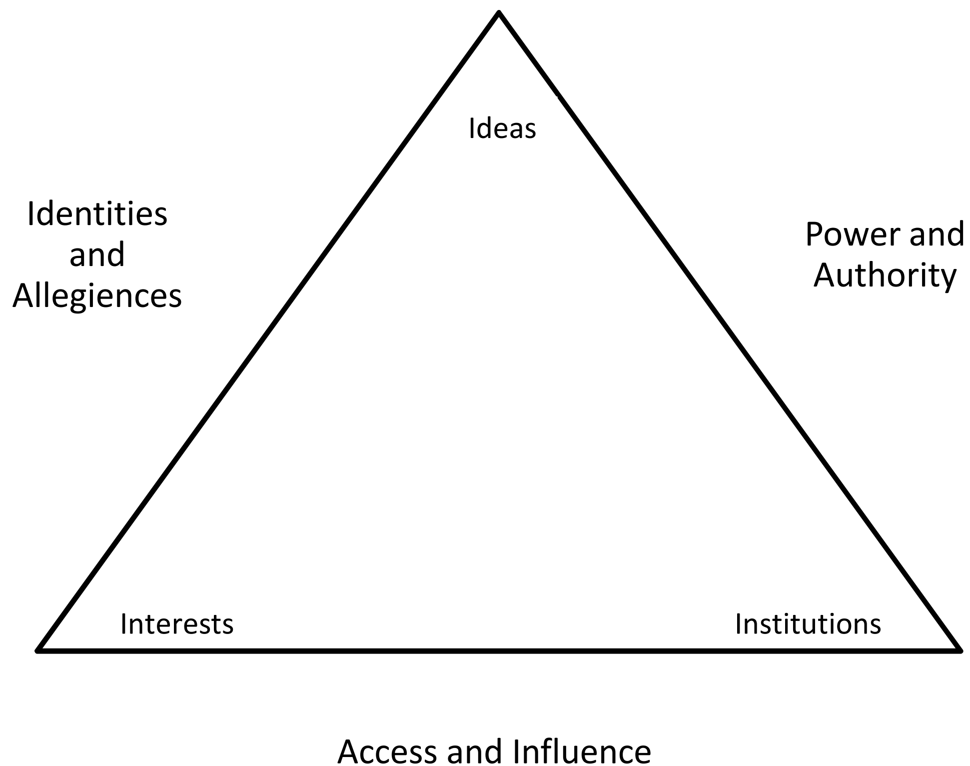
Figure 1: Policy Regimes
Ideas
Identities
and
Allegiences
Power and
Authority
Interests
Institutions
Access and Influence

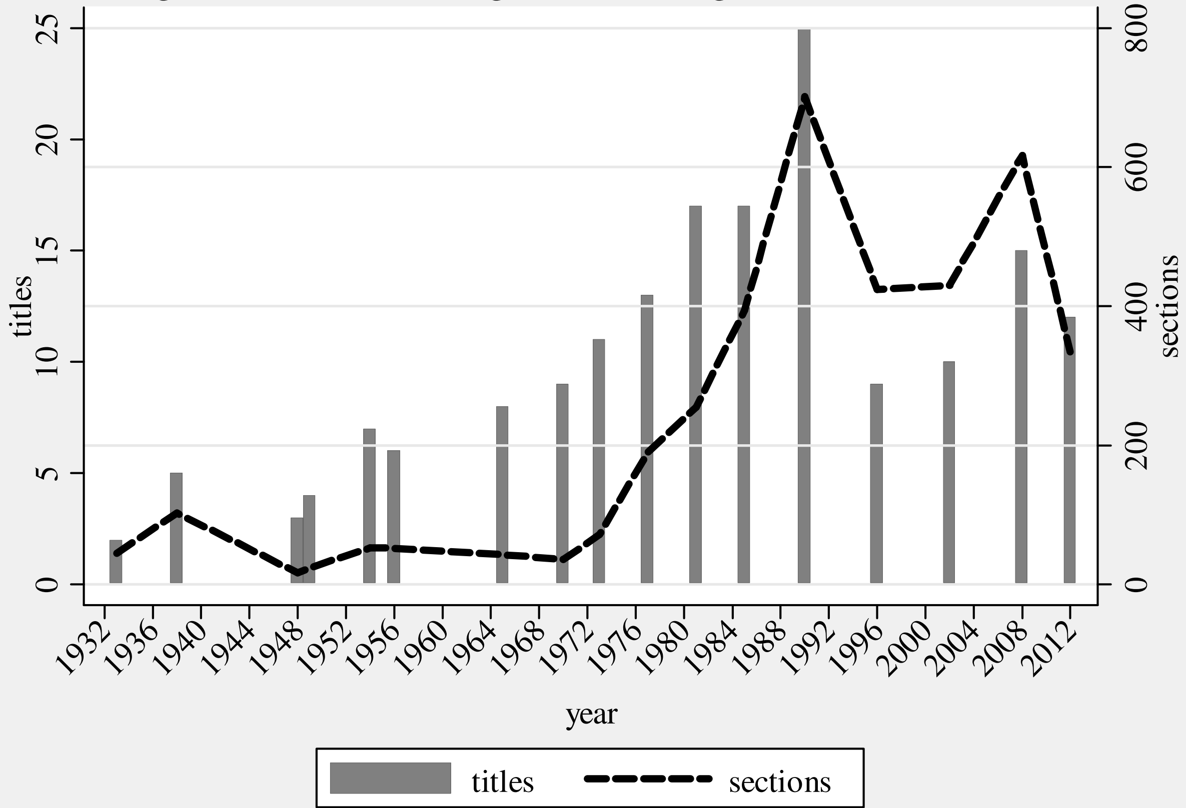

Figure 2: Food and Agriculture Legislation, 1933-2012
titles
0
5
10
15
20
25
sections
0
200
400
600
800
year
1932
1936
1940
1944
1948
1952
1956
1960
1964
1968
1972
1976
1980
1984
1988
1992
1996
2000
2004
2008
2012
titles
sections

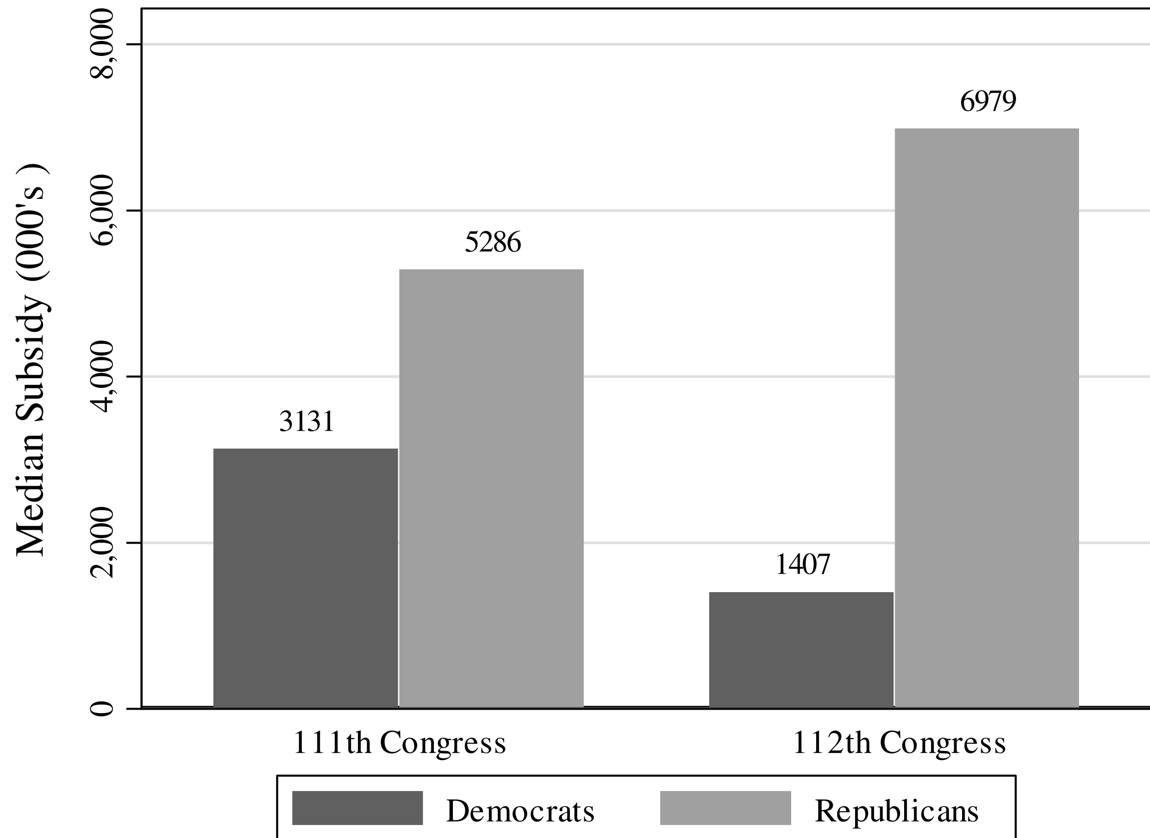
Figure 3: Median District Subsidy by Party and Congress
Median Subsidy (000's)
0
2,000
4,000
6,000
8,000
3131
5286
1407
6979
111th Congress
112th Congress
Democrats
Republicans
Source: United States Census of Agriculture, 2007

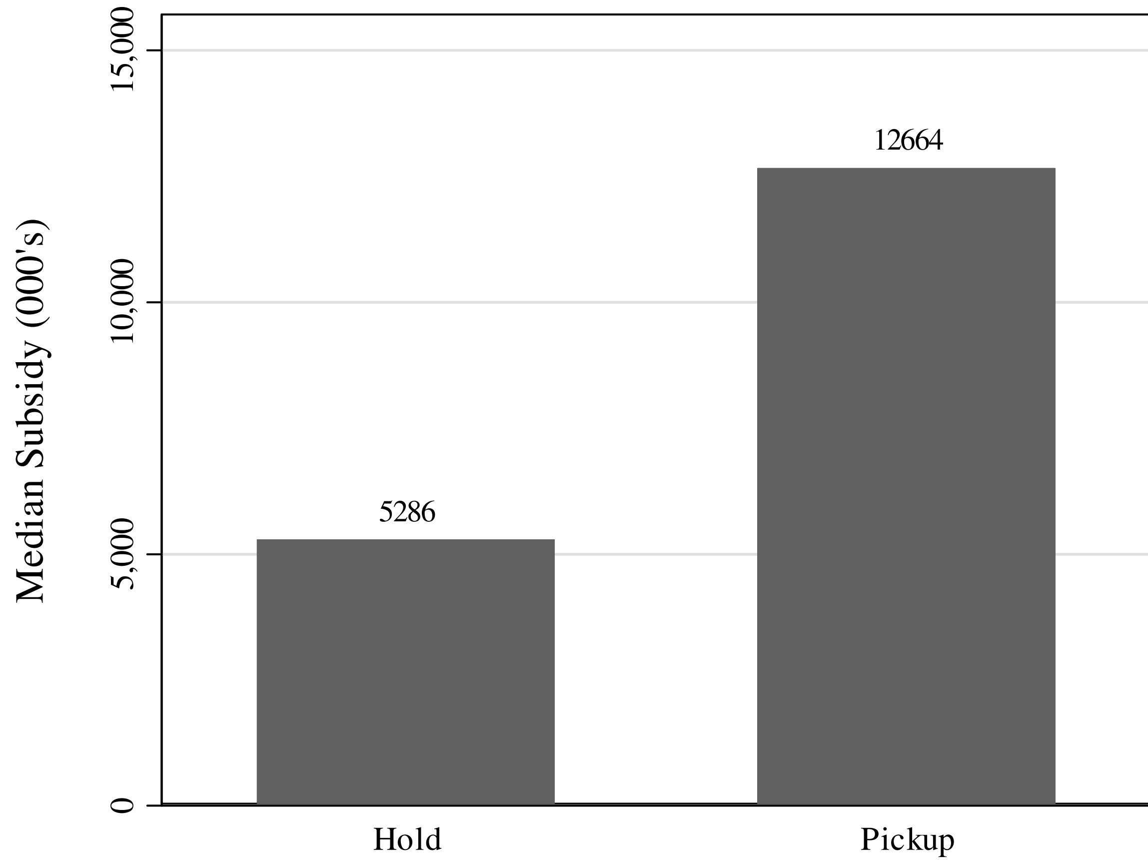
Figure 4: Republican Districts in the 112th Congress by Seat Status
Median Subsidy (000's)
0
5,000
10,000
15,000
5286
12664
Hold
Pickup
Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2007