

In the middle chapters of the book, Urbinati carefully surveys the traditions of representation in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emmanuel Sieyès, and the Marquis de Condorcet, elucidating three conceptions of representation (juridical, institutional, and political) drawn from the eighteenth century that in turn can be used to conceptualize democracy as direct, electoral, or representative (p. 21). This exegetical task allows her to “disaggregate” and to identify exactly who should be understood to be the “demos” in the application of these differing conceptions of representation and, thereby, to elucidate the differing forms of political presence at work in each understanding. Although juridical and institutional theories of representation “emerge and were shaped before the democratic transformation of society and the state” and thus remained “essentially impermeable to it,” Urbinati argues that the same may not be said of the conception of political representation as developed in the writings of Condorcet and traceable in the work of John Stuart Mill. Here she finds the genealogy of a modern conception of political representation that identifies the exercise of sovereignty with a *complex political process* (p. 5), which shifts the focus of representation from a sovereign as “ontological collective entity” to “sovereignty as an inherently plural unifying process” and calls our attention to the necessary functions both of ideology and of partisanship in politics (p. 227).

Representative Democracy consolidates and deepens Urbinati’s previous reflections on this topic (e.g., “Representation as Advocacy: A Study of Democratic Deliberation,” *Political Theory* 28 [no. 6, 2000]: 758–86; *Mill and Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government*, 2002). As in her past considerations, Urbinati refuses to dichotomize representation and participation as two distinct, “alternative forms of democracy” and sees them instead as related forms of action, “constituting the *continuum* of political action in modern democracies” and activating various forms of aegis on the part of citizens (“Representation as Advocacy,” p. 765). This way of seeing them would seem important. Urbinati is not claim-

ing to offer a *new* conception or theory of representation. She is proposing a new way of *seeing* one that already lies at hand, or rather, she is proposing that we “stretch the meaning of representation and see it as a political process and an essential component of democracy” (p. 10). In this way, Urbinati draws on the earlier and definitive work of Hanna Pitkin on the ordinary language of representation as a second point of reference (after Manin) for her argument, by reconsidering Pitkin’s claim that we understand government as representative, “not by demonstrating its control over its subjects but just the reverse, by demonstrating that its subjects have control over what it does” (*The Concept of Representation*, 1967, p. 232). However, for Pitkin herself, such a demonstration is simply not sufficient to draw any direct link between political representation and democracy. To her credit, Urbinati clearly recognizes this (p. 10). However, in Pitkin’s most recent published reflections on the “uneasy alliance” of representation and democracy, her reservations concerning even the potential for such a link appear, if anything, to have grown more fierce: “I am painfully aware of the irony of writing today as an American on—of all things!—democracy and representation. I mean where in the world has representative democracy had a better chance than in America, where its beginnings were so promising and the conditions so favorable? And look at it now!” (“Representation and Democracy: Uneasy Alliance,” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27, [no. 3, 2004]: 335–42, 342).

Urbinati makes an intriguing and almost breathtakingly buoyant argument in *Representative Democracy* that the theoretical and practical tools (i.e., judgment, influence, censure) of political representation *as* democracy are available to us now if we have the perspective to see them correctly. She argues persuasively that neither partisanship nor ideological debate are the necessary enemies of this process, although certainly deception, propaganda, and the powers of electronic surveillance (which are not among the topics of her analysis) may well be. What remains to be seen is whether the political times are with her, and that is a question others will have to answer.

AMERICAN POLITICS

The Transformation of Plantation Politics: Black Politics, Concentrated Poverty, and Social Capital in the Mississippi Delta. By Sharon D. Wright Austin. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006. 247p. \$65.00.
DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070971

— Jeffrey M. Berry, *Tufts University*

The title of Sharon Wright Austin’s new book is intended to be ironic. As the author persuasively demonstrates, there has been no transformation of politics in the Mississippi

Delta, and the area’s wealthy white elite continues to dominate politics there. The lack of significant change is disappointing, as the Delta’s poverty rate is more than three times the national average, and four counties in the area have higher infant mortality rates than some Third World countries.

When poverty and hunger in America were “discovered” in the 1960s, the despair in the Mississippi Delta moved forward, front and center, into the American consciousness. Senators Robert Kennedy and Joseph Clark toured the area, followed later by physicians who documented shocking levels of malnutrition. Hearings were

held in Washington, and the secretary of agriculture was publicly berated for allowing hunger to fester in a country with such agricultural riches.

Wright Austin's book is an attempt to find out what has happened in the Delta since that time. With the Voting Rights Act and the creation of various economic development programs, one might have hoped for political empowerment and economic advancement by blacks in this heavily African American area of Mississippi. In depressing detail, the author proves that neither has emerged since the 1960s. There have been slight advances, politically and economically, but blacks in the Delta remain justifiably frustrated at the lack of progress.

The Transformation of Plantation Politics is an eloquent and powerful book. Wright Austin has amassed a great deal of data on income, education, and elections in 11 core and seven peripheral Delta counties. She also interviewed political elites in the area and her historical research appears surefooted. Her most important finding is that a sharp rise in the number of black officeholders has done little to help African Americans in the Delta. On the surface, African American candidates have done well since the Voting Rights Act enfranchised a population largely prevented from voting. There were only 57 black elected officials in Mississippi in 1970; by 2000 the number had risen to 897.

Wright Austin determines that this success at the ballot box is a false prosperity. She notes that "[e]ven in counties with black voting-age populations of 40% and above, African American contenders have won few county and county-wide elections" (p. 105). The local offices that blacks have won, such as seats on the city council, have brought them limited influence. Since they could no longer keep blacks from voting, the "plantation bloc practiced ingenious methods" to dilute black voting strength (p. 102). These tactics included instituting more at-large elections, gerrymandering districts, and changing elected offices to appointed ones. In the Delta today, power lies at the county level and African Americans have fared poorly in winning county supervisory elections. In the small towns that dot the Delta, African Americans may hold office but those offices possess little authority.

Two theoretical frameworks guide Wright Austin. The first is community power, and she asks which of four theories (pluralist, elitist, regime, and incorporation) best explain political development in the Mississippi Delta. Not surprisingly, she finds elitist theory to be an apt guide to the power structure of the area, but she also finds incorporation theory to be useful. Drawing on Rufus P. Browning, Dale R. Marshall, and David H. Tabb's *Protest Is Not Enough* (1984), Wright Austin offers her most interesting analysis on the theoretical side. Unlike the 10 northern California cities in *Protest Is Not Enough*, where the elections of minorities to city councils catalyzed minority-white coalitions, the election of African Americans to city councils in the

Delta has done little to generate biracial coalitions. Wright Austin makes it clear that incorporation is a complicated process, not yet fully mapped out, and that tipping points in local politics may prove illusory.

The author's second theoretical framework is social capital theory. She argues that "bridging" social capital—linkages between blacks and whites—is sorely missing in the Delta and that this has contributed significantly to the problems that African Americans have experienced in trying to move forward in the political and economic realms. Her views are certainly logical and make a great deal of sense but, that said, her data are not ideally suited to allow her to go beyond broad generalizations. Most social capital research has utilized surveys of attitudes and behavior and measurements of organizational populations, memberships, and interaction. Lacking such data, Wright Austin draws instead on her interviews with local leaders and on small case studies of politics in the Delta.

There are some glimmers of hope. Wright Austin finds that race relations are improving and that the need for economic development in the Delta may nurture more cooperation in the future. African Americans have become more successful in organizing community groups, and a handful of community development corporations have scored some small victories. At the same time, her sobering analysis suggests that progress will continue to be slow. *The Transformation of Plantation Politics* has much to teach us, and scholars of the politics of the South, race relations, and urban politics will find this excellent work to be particularly valuable.

America's Crisis of Values: Reality and Perception.

By Wayne E. Baker. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. 328p. \$18.95.

DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070983

— Philip A. Klinkner, *Hamilton College*

Wayne Baker's *America's Crisis of Values: Reality and Perception* offers a recent addition to a growing literature in political science that examines the perception and, perhaps, reality of the polarization of American politics around cultural and moral issues. In this book, Baker sets out to provide an empirical examination of three aspects of America's perceived crisis of values. The first of these is the trend hypothesis: In recent decades, America has experienced a significant decline in its commitment to traditional moral values. The second is the comparison hypothesis: Moral values in the United States have declined relative to most other nations. Third and finally is the distribution hypothesis: Americans have become increasingly polarized in their commitment to traditional moral values.

To test these hypotheses, Baker relies on survey data from the World Values Survey, a large, cross-national survey conducted in various waves between 1981 and 2000.