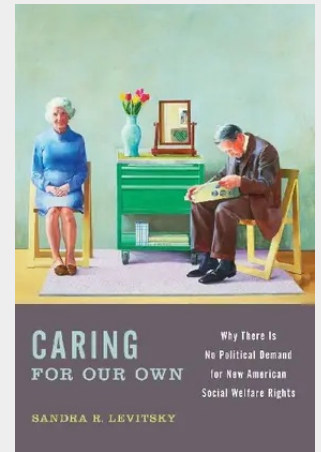


Caring for Our Own

Why There Is No Political Demand for New American Social Welfare Rights

"In *Caring for Our Own*, Sandra Levitsky has written a moving and perceptive account of the dilemma facing those who provide care for frail family members. Based on in-depth interviews and participant observation with family caregivers and the social workers that attempt to ameliorate their burden, this book uncovers the complex ideological and political factors that have made long term care the neglected stepchild of the welfare state in the United States."-Jill Quadagno, Mildred and Claude Pepper Eminent Scholar in Social Gerontology, Florida State University Aging populations and dramatic changes in health care provision, household structure, and women's labor force participation over the last half century have created what many observers have dubbed a "crisis in care": demand for care of the old and infirm is rapidly growing, while the supply of private care within the family is substantially contracting. And yet, despite the well-documented adverse effects of contemporary care dilemmas on the economic security of families, the physical and mental health of family care providers, the bottom line of businesses, and the financial health of existing social welfare programs, American families have demonstrated little inclination for translating their private care problems into political demands for social policy reform. *Caring for Our Own* inverts an enduring question of social welfare politics. Rather than asking why the American state hasn't responded to unmet social welfare needs by expanding social entitlements, this book asks: Why don't American families view unmet social welfare needs as the basis for demands for new state entitlements? How do traditional beliefs in family responsibility for social welfare persist even in the face of well-documented unmet need? The answer, this book argues, lies in a better understanding of how individuals imagine solutions to the social welfare problems they confront and what prevents new understandings of social welfare provision from developing into political demand for alternative social arrangements. *Caring for Our Own* considers the powerful ways in which existing social policies shape the political imagination, reinforcing longstanding values about family responsibility, subverting grievances grounded in notions of social responsibility, and in some rare cases, constructing new models of social provision that would transcend existing ideological divisions in American social politics.

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