

PREFACE

In this book, we examine the emergence of biopolitics as an academic perspective within the discipline of political science over the last four decades and review the rich literature of biopolitics as represented by the leading proponents of the perspective. Much of the early work in biopolitics was an attempt to convince political scientists on the importance of a broad Darwinian approach to politics – a needed shift in paradigm away from the predominant standard social science model. Largely, the message fell on deaf ears for many decades, however, in the last decade its marginalization has begun to weaken.

In part the changing status of biopolitics is reflective of a more general pattern in academia, where biological explanations of social phenomena progressively have been viewed as acceptable and even necessary. It has also been facilitated by methodological developments in the life sciences, especially behavioral genetics and cognitive neuroscience, which permit the incorporation of biological variables into studies of social behavior. In addition, this new more receptive atmosphere has been facilitated by a theoretical shift within the biopolitical literature itself where earlier attempts at grand theorizing are being superseded by efforts to use lower-level biological theories to derive and empirically test hypotheses on political behavior. We shall examine this changing scholarly environment and review the rapidly expanding work of the “second generation” biopolitics political scientists as well as relevant work from life scientists and others.

The authors would like to thank Steven A. Peterson and Albert Somit for their strong support of this project and Thomas Dark at Emerald Press for agreeing to publish an authored volume in a series that until now consisted of edited volumes. Although the book represents a joint effort of the five authors, on the basis of their expertise each took the lead on at least one chapter. These responsibilities included: Joseph Losco, biopolitical theory; Patrick Stewart, biopolitical methodology; Odelia Funke, biopolicy; Samuel M. Hines, Jr. comparative/international and environmental/ecological issues; and Robert H. Blank, political behavior. All five authors represent early first generation biopolitics scholars who look forward with anticipation to the work of the second and future generation scholars that builds

upon the contributions of our many colleagues in biopolitics to whom we owe a debt of gratitude and dedicate this volume.

Robert H. Blank
Samuel M. Hines, Jr.
Odelia Funke
Joseph Losco
Patrick Stewart