ity would be less; the equalizing effect of increasing women's employment is larger than that which would be achieved by closing the gender gap. Another chapter looks at the unpaid work in the household that is (typically) performed by women. Evaluating these "invisible" earnings and including them as part of household income substantially reduces the inequality of the distribution.

These illustrations hardly scratch the surface of this highly informative book. The combination of high-quality income data comparable across countries, international coverage of a period of major change, and insightful analysis based on sophisticated methodologies makes this book a major contribution to our understanding of inequality. *Income Inequality* will influence research for years to come.

Searching for the Spirit of American Democracy: Max Weber's Analysis of a Unique Political Culture, Past, Present, and Future. By Stephen Kalberg. Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers, 2014. Pp. xii+157. $102.00.

Lutz Kaelber
University of Vermont

What values constitute the foundation of American democracy? In what ways were they influenced by ethics in the early American colonies? Have these values changed over the 20th century, and what are the prospects for both continuity and change in the 21st? Stephen Kalberg attempts to answer these questions in this book, aptly characterized by the latter part of its title, *Searching for the Spirit of American Democracy: Max Weber's Analysis of a Unique Political Culture, Present, and Future*.

At only about 135 pages without the glossary, bibliography, and index, this volume is very slim, and in the early parts Kalberg's account is conventionally Weberian yet still manages to convey important insights. Lucidly and concisely, the author retraces Weber's conceptualization of the early American civic sphere arising out of ascetic Protestantism's attempts at world mastery, combined with the infusion of its Puritanical values into the civic sphere via families, schools, neighborhoods, businesses, and civic organizations. This "symbiotic dualism," as Kalberg terms it, between individualism and community building constituted a uniquely American form of practical-ethical rationalism neither shackled to established traditions nor solipsistically individualistic. Its social roots lay in the "Protestant sects," whose cultural representatives, in the form of missionaries, recent research (which the book does not mention) has claimed to have furthered democracy worldwide via mass literacy, education, and active civic groups opposed to corrupt or hegemonic governments (see Robert Woodberry, "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 106 [2012]: 244–74). After the waning of Puritanism in the United States, various secularized civic associations took up the slack to much the same effect, emphasizing self-reliance and self-government (a "strong in-

dividual") while retaining the notion of responsibility for, and duty in service to, the community at large. Weber viewed these associations in decline by the time he visited the United States in the early 1900s.

In the later parts of the book, Kalberg turns to developments from this time forward. He deliberates on Weber's notion of the "iron cage," which he correctly shows to be multivalent and much more ambiguous than when gleaned from a reading of the concluding pages of the *Protestant Ethic* and Weber's associated fears of a declining civic sphere applied to an American context. Kalberg locates these fears, or threats to the civic sphere, in tendencies toward a privatization of work, by which work assumes a purely utilitarian, practical-rational character and a hyperrationalized capitalist market system holds the individual in bondage; in the "Europeanization" of American society sapping its dynamism via bureaucratization, class ossification, and risk-averse political and economic management; and in unbridled materialism in the form of the cult of consumption. If important observers of American culture have indeed confirmed manifestations or expansions of one or several of these developments in the 20th century, Kalberg asks, is the civic sphere as a realm of practical-*ethical* action therefore doomed?

Kalberg thinks it is not, or at least it might not be. Extending the Weberian framework, he posits three possible models. The first is one that puts faith in an unfailing legacy of the ascetic practical-ethical rationalism of old, strong enough to continue into the future in spite of the challenges mentioned above. The importance of "moral values" and "personal integrity," mostly among conservative voters in American elections, is one of its manifestations, Kalberg notes. As one might add, such voters tend to take a dim view of any challenge to the notion of American exceptionalism. It seems questionable whether this model can be sustained on the foundation of a whitening and graying Republican base. The second model locates the vibrancy of American civic culture in its pluralism of worldviews. The direction of American political culture is defined neither by a strong state nor by an array of single-minded individuals, but rather by the outcome of competition among groups with different political and cultural goals and perspectives. What these goals consists of depends to some extent on the vagaries of the maelstrom of modernity, but this model predicts as possibilities both incessant strife to the point of self-obstruction as well as inherent dynamism (as perhaps recently witnessed in the near government shutdown on the one hand, and the rapid advances in the state recognition of the civil rights of gays and lesbians on the other). The sustainability of this model does not seem to be a problem, but the viability of its outcome, American civil democracy, does, for it is conceivable that cultural and political conflicts could reach a magnitude that leaves little room for "middle ground." The third, and perhaps most intriguing, among Kalberg's models is that of cultural specialization, that is, the generation of a civic sphere on the basis of socialization in professional associations. As general civil associations lose their luster and selectiveness, upper-middle-class professional associations rise to prominence (n.b., the American Sociological Association is

listed among them). As Kalberg points out, these associations are not merely interest based but carry extensive ethical codes for professional conduct and obligations with them, and membership in them might be a necessary though not sufficient condition for attaining substantial leverage in the civic sphere. Apart from the fact that ethical codes might at times be blithely disregarded, it seems doubtful, however, that a political culture can lastingly rest on such a small, and arguably elite, foundation, even if such codes and the association members applying them were capable of informing the larger culture in a meaningful and lasting way.

In sum, Kalberg accomplishes a rare feat: to infuse a long-standing and seemingly stale debate on the content of Weber's thought and its merits with startling new insights that show how, in novel ways, to bring back to life the ideas of a man who died almost 100 years ago. These insights beg for a more extensive exploration in an in-depth, book-length treatise, to which this volume, this reviewer hopes, is only a prolegomenon. At that, it is astoundingly expensive (at close to $1 per page of text) but the core issues it delineates deserve to be discussed widely. Weberians and non-Weberians alike, take notice.

Comic Book Crime: Truth, Justice, and the American Way. By Nickie D. Phillips and Staci Strobel. New York: New York University Press, 2013. Pp. viii+289. $75.00 (cloth); $24.00 (paper).

Robert Washington
Bryn Mawr College

Nickie D. Phillips and Staci Strobel's work is a study in cultural criminology that focuses on depictions of crime in comic books. Its analytical perspective suggests that the cultural meanings attached to comic book depictions of crime tend to reflect and reinforce attitudes about retribution and justice in social life. Translating that perspective into a research inquiry, *Comic Book Crime*'s methodology entails three activities: focus group interviews of the comic book readers, content analysis of 200 of the most popular crime comic books from 2001 to 2010, and field work—which involved exploring the social world of crime comic book fandom. Significantly, the study was begun shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. Consisting of 10 chapters that include such topics as terrorism and comic books after 9/11; heroes, deathworthiness, and paths to justice; and race, ethnicity, and crime fighting, this study aims to present a comprehensive sociological analysis of criminality in comic books.

The book's sociological significance can be best conveyed by highlighting several of its key themes: (1) retribution and justice, (2) the social and psychological functions of comic books, and (3) the crime comic book subculture. The first theme, retribution and justice, is linked to some of the study's most intriguing findings. Significantly, despite the readers' strong interest in