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Editors' Note

The United States has an ongoing love affair with magazines about the economy. If supermarket shelves stocked with *BusinessWeek*, the *Economist*, *Forbes*, and *Fortune* are any guide, there is clearly much interest in how the economy is doing and what policies might generate more (or less) output. But strangely enough there are no popular magazines focused on how that output is *distributed*. This is surely a puzzle: If we care about the total output, shouldn't we care also about who is getting all that output? Why not a magazine on who's winning, who's losing, and why?

The obvious answer is that we don't typically regard the distribution of goods as manipulable by policy in the same way that we regard total economic output as manipulable by policy. The task of controlling the economy is of course rather like riding a tiger, but the conceit nonetheless is that we *can* ride it, albeit with the assistance of a massive policy apparatus in the form of a Council of Economic Advisers, the Federal Reserve, the Department of Treasury, and so on. And with that conceit comes all manner of magazines devoted to offering policy advice, to second-guessing the Fed, and to questioning whether the president's economic policy is right.

We don't have the same stock of magazines about how to distribute output because we don't have an equally well-developed policy apparatus that tends to matters of distribution. It is no accident that the Council of Distributive Advisers doesn't exist. If there is little in the way of policy apparatus for addressing matters of distribution, there can't be much of the second-guessing that magazines so love, and the advice industry perform remains undeveloped.

We are pleased to introduce a new magazine, *Pathways*, dedicated to rejuvenating the advice industry on issues of distribution, dedicated to the proposition that there are important policy decisions to be made about the distribution of output, even if we sometimes refuse to see them. As with policy making on total economic output, here too there are paths taken and paths not taken, and our job is to foster—to the extent possible—a rational discourse about those choices.

The magazine will go about this job in a resolutely scientific and empirical way. We will present trend data detailing the spectacular times in which we live, times in which some types of inequality are taking off, others declining, and yet others eerily stable. We will present evidence on which interventions work and which don't. We will present summaries of cutting-edge research that is changing how we understand the sources and consequences of poverty and inequality.

We will also build these regular features around a cover story that considers how poverty and inequality policy should be configured. It is fitting that our inaugural issue broaches one of the most basic questions of our time: How, if at all, might a new war on poverty be fought? In early November, we asked each of the top presidential contenders (at that time) to weigh in on this question, extending offers to participate to Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, Barack Obama, and Mitt Romney. We are pleased that Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Barack Obama all chose to participate. The resulting essays, coupled with commentary by the leading scholars of our day, reveal a surprising new willingness to engage on issues of distribution.

One last caveat: If *Forbes* is a "Capitalist Tool," we will by contrast strive to avoid being anyone's tool. Should it be suspected otherwise, one need only read the essay by Charles Murray in this issue, and one need only take note of the heterogeneous politics of our stellar board. We are committed to a truly open debate on issues of distribution that is constrained only by evidence and brute facts.

—David Grusky & Christopher Wimer,
Senior Editors