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**Edited by Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer:
The Democratic Experiment**

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Chapter One

THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT

NEW DIRECTIONS IN AMERICAN POLITICAL HISTORY

MEG JACOBS AND JULIAN E. ZELIZER

WE ARE NOW in a moment when American political history is flourishing. The contributors in this volume, who are all part of this exciting revitalization of the field, focus on two central questions. The first concerns the relationship of citizens to the government in a context where suspicion of a powerful state has been the overriding theme of American political culture. The second addresses the continually evolving mechanisms of democratic participation. As this volume shows, democracy in America has come alive in political contests over these two issues. Most modern democratic polities have confronted the need to legitimate the exercise of political authority, but that fact poses particular problems in the United States, where a fear of centralized power has left a distinctive mark on American political culture and institutional arrangements. From the beginning, Americans have fought protracted struggles over the exercise of strong central state authority. Given the institutional and cultural manifestations of antistatism, constructing a strong federal government was never easy. At the same time, the basic questions of who would be granted representation and how remained up for grabs. Despite the fact that America is the oldest democracy in the world, the means and extent of participation have never been settled. Although the founders articulated clear ideas about what representative government should be, the forms political power would take were constantly contested and transformed. The mechanisms linking enfranchised citizens to political leaders and the right to representation remained fluid. In essays that go from the founding through the late twentieth century, the authors offer a fresh historical examination of the political problems posed by democratic government and their complex resolutions.

Antistatism has operated as a powerful force in the history of American democracy. Having a long Anglo-American tradition, antistatism became concrete and institutionalized in the United States in battles over slavery, the rise of industrialized capitalism, and the centralizing and standardiz-

ing impulses of the Progressive–New Deal moment. As these essays explore, its multiple manifestations include the endurance of fragmented and locally based political institutions, a devotion to rigid constitutionalism, a reliance on political patronage over bureaucratic administration, the fear of interest groups corrupting politicians, a hostility to federal taxation, and more. Antistatistism derives its strength in part because it has taken on so many different forms. Yet this book is not a tale about how a multifaceted antistatistism prevented the growth of the federal government in America. Rather, many of the authors show how antistatistism shaped the structure of the federal government in particular ways. The result was not simply a state that was weak by European standards, although this was one effect in many areas of public life, but a state that commanded significant political strength in numerous policy domains and one that substantially influenced American life. Furthermore, the authors suggest that the American state did not develop in a linear fashion. This is not a story of a nation that starts with no federal government and ends the twentieth century with a strong federal government. Rather, the pattern of state growth in America was one of fits and starts.

The authors also explore the changing meaning and mechanisms of representative government. The essays consider the relationship of political elites to the voting public, the political and voluntary institutions through which Americans gained their political standing, and mediating institutions that connected citizens to elected officials. Voluntary associations, political parties, interest groups, and other institutionalized forms of political representation have helped government actors enlarge the government that antistatistism kept small. Throughout, fundamental questions of citizenship have served as an animating force of American democracy.

By exploring how struggles over the role of the central state and the character of representative democracy shaped public life, the work in this volume reveals a revitalization of American political history well under way with exciting possibilities for the future. The essays examine pivotal moments and manifestations of the challenge to translate democratic preferences into public policy. In tackling central questions about the American democratic experiment, the contributors all strive to integrate institutions, culture, and society into fresh accounts of the nation's political past, starting with the founding. As historians, we focus on specific times and places and ground our analysis in narratives. Influenced by two new approaches to political history that have arisen since the 1960s—the new institutionalism as well as social and cultural political history (which we label sociocultural political history)—we take seriously the interplay between specific contingent factors and large structural forces. Integrating an institutional analysis with the study of social groups, we document the precise and changing relationships between state and society that have profoundly influenced democratic politics for over two hundred years.

RECONCEIVING AMERICAN POLITICAL HISTORY

In the last three decades, scholars working across disciplinary boundaries and subfields have developed exciting new approaches to studying America's public life, polity, and the exercise of political power.¹ Despite the professional decline of political history since the 1960s,² warnings about the intellectual death of the field were, in retrospect, greatly exaggerated. Historians, along with colleagues in political science, economics, and sociology, fundamentally reconceptualized American political history. This section focuses on the emergence of two important methodological approaches to political history—the new institutionalism (which is composed of the subfields of the organizational synthesis, policy history, and American Political Development) and sociocultural political history—to understand the value of each and the opportunities created by bringing them together.

In the turbulent 1960s, a generation of scholars developed a stinging critique of political history as it had been practiced. Amid struggles over civil rights and Vietnam, the New Left criticized the liberal view of American history, which saw little of the social conflict that beset European nations. The liberal view—a depiction of a shared ideological consensus that revolved around individualism and property rights—left little room to account for ongoing battles over race relations and social class. Political historians, the new generation said, had falsely presented a handful of political elites, particularly presidents, as embodiments of a progressive national experience. Moreover, the cycle of the presidential synthesis, in the minds of these critics, did not accurately capture the evolution of politics.³ Younger historians, who came of age in an era when college students railed against President Lyndon Johnson and his fellow Democratic leaders, also doubted an older generation of progressive historians who believed that the expansion of the federal government had stemmed from a desire to serve “the people,” resulting in their triumph over vested interests. They were convinced by a group of maverick historians in this decade who said that liberalism had been an ideology that serviced big corporations, which dominated twentieth-century government despite its democratic rhetoric.⁴ Those critiques led to two seemingly divergent responses. Within the historical discipline, a social and cultural history revolution took place that pushed scholars to broaden their canvas to emphasize the study of American history from the “bottom up” and at the local level, turning to questions such as class formation, gender relations, and cultural consciousness. At the same time, other scholars, in history and in political science, also broadened their inquiries, but rather than studying social groups, they looked at how institutional forces shaped and limited political development and public policy evolution.

Reacting against the liberal, president-centered history of midcentury, new institutionalists shifted their focus to the structure of American government and its impact on public policy.⁵ Much of the scholarship started with the “organizational synthesis” in the 1960s and 1970s, an analysis that saw the emergence of large-scale national institutions, including the corporation, professions, and administrative state between 1880 and 1920 as the most significant development in modern American history. Seeking to understand American politics, scholars such as Samuel Hays, Ellis Hawley, Morton Keller, Robert Wiebe, Barry Karl, and Louis Galambos were more interested in the history of bureaucracies, commissions, and expert staffs than in presidents or cycles of reform.⁶ For them, the central dividing line in American politics was not liberalism versus conservatism but, rather, what they saw as nineteenth-century localism and parochialism versus twentieth-century nationalization and efficiency. Consciously downplaying the differences between presidential administrations and personalities, their work emphasized the long-term structural shifts that shaped conditions within which all political actors operated. For instance, the organizational synthesis showed how much of the New Deal reflected policies and institutions that had been created well before the 1930s. Their research was rooted in the functionalist outlook that took its inspiration from Parsonian sociology and prevailed in the social sciences at the time.⁷

The organizational synthesis inspired policy historians to analyze contemporary political debates and to break free from president-centered narratives. Policy historians opened up the arena of politics to include the unwieldy world of policy experts, think tanks, lobbyists, academics, bureaucrats, staffers, and congressional committees that shaped the workings of government in Washington and state capitals. They were joined by those working in the new field of public history, whose earliest practitioners were deeply committed to tackling policy problems (in the 1980s and 1990s, the field would reorient itself around museums, historical tourist attractions, and computer technology). Based on a course that they taught at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May published a widely popular book, used to teach policy and public administration students, that outlined the practical uses of historical analysis to policy makers.⁸ Although policy historians never formed an association, through their journal, monographs, and conferences they created an innovative interpretation of political history that incorporated a broad range of actors.⁹ In 1989, Donald Critchlow and Peri Arnold launched the *Journal of Policy History* as the main forum for this scholarship.

As a whole, public policy history presented several different types of arguments. Some scholars attempted to show how particular cultural as-

sumptions were embedded in policies, others looked at lost alternatives from the past, and many hoped to provide historical correctives to assumptions and analogies that were used in contemporary debate.¹⁰ In this subfield, it became clear that the history of policies revolved around the stages of the policy-making process (agenda setting, legislation, and implementation), which did not always fit neatly into the standard chronology of political history. In fact, policy scholars suggested that there were multiple histories taking place in politics simultaneously. Each domain had its own historical trajectory, even though the trajectories sometimes intersected.¹¹ Numerous social historians, moreover, contributed to policy history by studying how welfare and education policies impacted, and were shaped by, individuals who received or were denied benefits.¹² Before the start of the *Journal of Policy History*, some of the most original research in this subfield was published in the *Journal of Social History*.¹³

The organizational synthesis also created one of the foundations for another strand of the new institutionalism: American Political Development.¹⁴ During the 1980s, a group of political scientists and sociologists brought historical institutionalism back into the study of politics. In contrast to the tradition of using historical case studies to prove broader analytic arguments, these political scientists argued that politics was a fundamentally historical process.¹⁵ At a time when mainstream political science was moving toward presenting politics as a competition between rational actors who constantly re-created the political playing field—and as a response to previous models of political science that focused on Marxism, pluralism, crisis theory, and electoral realignment—American Political Development offered a compelling alternative to political scientists and sociologists working in different fields ranging from comparative politics to political theory. Scholars such as Theda Skocpol, Eldon Eisenach, Martin Shefter, Amy Bridges, Elizabeth Sanders, Stephen Skowronek, Ira Katznelson, and Richard Bensen argued that politics was profoundly historical and could not be understood otherwise. When these scholars focused on the problem of “American exceptionalism,” meaning the reasons why America’s welfare state seemed meager in comparison to European welfare states, the issue that animated most of the research in the 1980s and 1990s, their answers usually came back to institutions. Each historical period, they said, took place within preexisting institutional structures. As a result, politicians, activists, and organizations always operated within the institutional context that they inherited while newer institutions were layered on top of the old. In a book that helped shape the field, Stephen Skowronek revealed how Progressive Era reformers were forced to construct the modern administrative state over, rather than instead of, the nineteenth-century state of courts and parties.¹⁶ Acknowledging the significance of “bounded change,”¹⁷ this scholarship stressed the influence

of path dependence whereby state builders were constrained by policies and institutions that had been put into place during earlier eras. In contrast to interpretations that stressed the power of big business or the weakness of working-class consciousness, practitioners of American Political Development created a “polity-centered” approach that claimed that the most important constraints on state building involved factors such as federalism, the separation of power, and the underdeveloped bureaucratic capacity of American government.¹⁸

In looking at institutional settings, American Political Development portrayed state builders as having their own autonomous agendas and interests, rather than as individuals who responded only to external social and economic pressure.¹⁹ There were many important analytic concepts that this subfield introduced beyond the claim that institutions mattered. For instance, they used the term “policy feedback” to explain how new policies reconfigured politics. In a landmark work, Theda Skocpol argued that the corruption of Civil War pensions in the nineteenth century caused social insurance reformers in the Progressive and New Deal eras to avoid similar programs that depended on general revenue.²⁰ Other scholars looked at how the structure of the legislative process played a pivotal role in racial politics, since it gave southern legislators disproportionate influence during critical moments of state building, enabling them to protect existing patterns of race relations.²¹ This literature, along with the organizational synthesis, triggered several political scientists and historians to look again at the early republic and antebellum periods to show how national political institutions were extremely important in an era that they felt their colleagues had erroneously considered stateless.²² Historians such as Alan Brinkley who were interested in the fate of the New Deal order and the welfare state recognized that they could not ignore classic questions of statecraft.²³ To advance the subfield of American Political Development, the founders of this group launched a journal, *Studies in American Political Development*, and a section in the American Political Science Association.

While institutional political history looked to structures of governance, sociocultural political history explored social movements and political culture from a nonelite perspective.²⁴ Earlier generations of historians had acknowledged that forces representing the “people” were important to shaping politics, but they had focused their attention on political elites. In contrast, sociocultural political history devoted its archival analysis to political life outside of the White House and beyond Capitol Hill. They rejected the classic arguments of Louis Hartz, who had proclaimed in the 1950s that American political culture had been defined by a liberal consensus since the founding. Instead, they depicted a nation that was replete with bitter social and ideological conflict that bubbled up from the grass roots, where the basic terms of democracy were constantly con-

tested. These historians followed the lead of the short-lived “new political history” in the 1970s, whose practitioners used quantitative techniques to determine what factors motivated voting behavior.²⁵ Although a bountiful literature emerged on the nineteenth-century party system that integrated voting behavior with political institutions, interest in the “new political history” significantly diminished over the next two decades, as social historians believed that electoral studies defined politics too narrowly.²⁶

Covering many different themes and issues, sociocultural political history integrated nonelites into familiar narratives of the past. In a path-breaking work, for example, Eric Foner’s synthesis of Reconstruction recast the story by placing freed African-American citizens at the front and center of the battle to shape this macropolitical event.²⁷ Lawrence Goodwyn, casting aside Richard Hofstadter’s portrait of the Populist movement as backward, marginal, and irrational, claimed these farmers as true democrats.²⁸ Labor historians, moreover, offered some of the most stimulating social histories of politics. In his study of labor in nineteenth-century New York City, Sean Wilentz showed how workers achieved a degree of class consciousness and were able to mobilize in electoral politics by drawing on the ideology of republicanism (rather than socialism) that dated back to the American Revolution.²⁹ David Montgomery traced the complex relationship between changes on the shop floor at the turn of the century and organized labor’s unfolding involvement with the modern state and Democratic party.³⁰ Lizabeth Cohen synthesized popular culture, social history, unions, and political parties in explaining how workers made a New Deal.³¹

Whereas social historians looked at the historical influence of those who were outside formal positions of public authority, cultural historians examined the ideological assumptions and underlying rules that governed political behavior from government elites on down. Influenced by anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and philosophers such as Thomas Kuhn, scholars of political culture tapped into a vigorous debate about the ideologies and discourses that had shaped American politics since the Revolution, one subject area where politics remained central in the historical profession.³² Blending cultural, intellectual, social, and political history, the literature on political culture looked at how ideologies, languages, and symbols shaped all political actors in given historical periods.³³ An important effect of the work on political culture was to inspire many gender historians to reenter the debate over the political past. Moving beyond initial efforts to document women’s exclusion from politics, gender historians used the concept of political culture to reveal how women were influential in all periods of American history. Paula Baker, for example, argued that there were two different political cultures in the United States before the 1920s, each of which revolved around distinct conceptions of gender. While women did not participate in male-centered party

politics, Baker claimed that through voluntary associations, female reformers took the lead in social welfare activities and developed new forms of political participation that would later be absorbed by the modern state.³⁴ Linda Gordon, Eileen Boris, and Alice Kessler-Harris, in their studies on the welfare state between the Progressive Era and New Deal and World War II, demonstrated how gendered ideas of work and citizenship shaped domestic policy.³⁵

Bringing together the new institutionalism and sociocultural political history offers today's historians methods for revisiting the study of politics while responding to the powerful criticisms that were raised about the field in the 1960s. In the 1980s and 1990s there was little collective sense that political history was vibrant, especially since practitioners of the new institutionalism and sociocultural political history often worked independently of one another. In large part, that sense reflected the professional status of the field rather than its intellectual vitality. Many scholars were constructing exciting approaches to political history even though the field seemed professionally defunct. The institutional approach helped scholars situate political elites within specific contexts rather than depicting them as embodiments of the nation. The new institutionalism revealed the complex institutional settings within which political elites operated and broadened the historical canvas beyond presidencies to include bureaucracies, legislators, staffers, experts, and policies. The institutional approach also forced historians to develop a more realistic understanding of the constraints that faced all politicians at any given moment in history rather than presenting a nation that could constantly be re-created with each election. Political change, it was now clear, often evolved in response to developments within the political realm and not just from external social pressures, as both older political and newer social historians had claimed. There was growing evidence that preceding institutional relationships structured political change. At the same time, the sociocultural approach pushed historians to integrate a history of social conflict into their analysis of politics and to incorporate nonelite groups into their narratives about political history. It enabled them to consider categories such as gender and race as well as factors such as symbols, ideology, and rhetoric. This collection combines institutional analysis with the study of social groups and culture, synthesizing the past two decades of scholarship into new understandings of American political history.

TOWARD NEW DIRECTIONS

The authors in this collection examine key moments of transformations in American institutional arrangements and reigning political culture. In many instances, tensions within political institutions themselves, as much

as demands from society, generated reform. Several essays examine how antistatism has expressed itself in several overlapping guises from localism and decentralization to a resistance to federal intervention and aversion to federal taxes. That belief, constructed and reconstructed, resulted in cultural ideologies and institutions that complicated efforts to rule at the national level. Other essays explore the evolution of mediating institutions and governing arrangements of representation to accommodate the various strains of American antistatism. In focusing on American politics, these essays explore the cultural and social bases of policy making and their interactions with the institutional structures of government. As a whole, they stress both structure and change in exploring the historical evolution of American democracy.

From the nation's founding, Americans have balanced antistatist sentiment with the need to endow a central government with legitimacy and authority. In her essay Joanne Freeman shows how, among a generation fearful of an overweening state, the personal reputation and honor of the nation's political elites stood in for elaborate bureaucracy and mass politics. As she puts it, "In a government lacking formal precedent and institutional traditions, reputation was the glue that held the polity together." That perhaps made sense in an age when much of politics transpired among a relatively small number of elites who had fashioned the national community. In the 1790s the French Revolution forced the new nation to face a series of crises that would at once challenge the reigning political culture and foster institutional innovations. Soon after George Washington famously counseled against entangling alliances in his Farewell Address, the public found itself divided over France. There ensued a heated and often acrimonious debate in which each side slandered the other's views in newspapers. Given the heavy reliance on personal reputation in an era that preceded the acceptance of political parties, these attacks threatened the very future of the republic, and thus political leaders sought to stifle libelous attacks. By considering cultural factors in examining and decoding political events, Freeman explains why some of the Founding Fathers sought to undermine, through passage of the Sedition Act of 1798, the freedom of speech that many of them had just fought a revolution to obtain. As Freeman concludes, this crisis captures "a government of character striving to become a government of rules within its new constitutional framework."

As the nation grew beyond face-to-face conventions and communications among a handful of political elite, the polity expanded. Although most public power centered in local communities, there were several areas where central governing agencies emerged. One of the most important was the Post Office, through which news—a major vehicle for civic life—disseminated. The Post Office Act of 1792 had facilitated the expansion of the press, revealing how institutional changes shaped political develop-

ments. War in the early republic had a similar effect. The nineteenth-century state was not merely the modern administrative twentieth-century state writ small. The bureaucracy never approached the same complexity, the social welfare and regulatory system paled by comparison, there was not a substantial federal income tax system, and the federal government did not engage in the type of foreign military campaigns and domestic investigative activities that would characterize the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the eight thousand local offices of the Post Office did reach into all corners, linking together what was otherwise, as historian Robert Wiebe labeled it, a nation of island communities, and this network even created a growing sense of entitlement among many Americans that the government would provide more help with the domestic infrastructure. Yet, as Richard John argues, the threat of centralized power greatly concerned some Jacksonian-era Americans, particularly southerners who feared that government-assisted economic development would shift political and economic power toward nonslaveholding states. Those fears of a strong federal government led Jacksonians to embrace political parties as an antidote. As John suggests, the patronage of mass parties emerged as a way to place governmental positions under local political control. Thus this nascent state created the technical preconditions for the rise of the mass party, an institution that bound together governance and politics in a nineteenth-century spoils system of patronage.

In the nineteenth century, and in important ways in the twentieth as well, American political life largely revolved around the local rather than the national polity. The institutions and political customs of patronage, localized parties, and federalism conditioned the exercise of central authority. In fact, as William Novak argues, Americans invested so little stock in the authority of a central state that a national notion of citizenship, one that outlined rights and responsibilities, simply did not exist in the antebellum era. Put simply, Americans did not share a singular definition of themselves as citizens of a nation, but rather, they understood their political standing through participation in local associations. Alexis de Tocqueville famously characterized Americans as a nation of joiners and pointed to their rich tradition of voluntary associations as evidence of a vibrant democratic culture. As Novak explains, these organizations—from cemeteries to churches to corporations to cities—all received recognition as public entities under an elaborate system of common laws that outlined rules of membership. In these local bodies civic liberty and self-government came alive. Yet Novak is quick to point out that while Americans joined institutions for all aspects of life, their common laws of membership—their “rights and duties, privileges and penalties, and inclusions and exclusions”—were embedded in undemocratic hierarchies of status. Common-law relationships such as master-servant, guardian-ward, and

parent-child constituted “a mode of governance—a method of distributing public power and regulating the allocation of personal rights and duties.” Indeed, Novak claims that this system, of which slavery was of course a central part, collapsed when, in the absence of a national law of citizenship, common laws could not sufficiently govern the rights of masters, slaves, and freed blacks beyond local borders.

Most changes to America’s governing framework in the nineteenth century occurred under the direction of local and state government officials and within the boundaries of constitutional law. Through the amendment process, the founders had crafted a mechanism to allow for institutional change, but Americans were reluctant to use it before the Civil War. As Michael Vorenberg explains in his essay, “an unchanging written Constitution held . . . the greatest promise of legitimizing the new nation” and providing a source of what he calls “protonationalism,” albeit one defined more by its structure than its content. Unwillingness to amend the Constitution for purposes of social reform stood as a testament to the strength of constitutionalism. Given the centrality of the law to the polity and the propensity to legislate change, reform was both more difficult to enact and more powerful. When the Civil War broke the nation asunder however, that radical break enabled and indeed necessitated a fresh approach to the amendment process. Support of the Thirteenth Amendment to end slavery required not only a commitment to emancipation but also a broader rationale to justify amending the Constitution. The amending rationale the nation’s politicians devised put into motion a new approach to governance when, a generation later amid rapid industrialization and urbanization, constitutional amendments would become yet another weapon in reformers’ arsenals.

Following the Civil War, at a time when many aspects of politics seemed up for grabs, from suffrage to citizenship rights to notions of constitutionalism to the structure of government institutions, many citizens who had a vested interest in the status quo had much to fear.³⁶ At the local level, where the stakes were high and the interlocking processes of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration transformed the nation’s cities, late-nineteenth-century localities spawned movements to limit democratic participation. As Sven Beckert’s essay shows, the assimilation of immigrant newcomers into urban machine politics, even if not into the rest of American life, proved particularly problematic to an older governing elite who sought to restrict suffrage rights through constitutional reform. New York elites discovered, however, that it was difficult to take democratic rights away from citizens once they had them. Even though they failed, a shared set of ideological concerns encouraged northern elites to lend support to the Compromise of 1877, a deal that ended Reconstruction and

undermined democracy in the South by preventing the full enfranchisement of African-Americans into the nation's representative system.

In the wake of Reconstruction, national politics began to shift attention away from the Civil War and toward the economy, largely as a response to the forces of industrialization that generated the dramatic upheavals of the Gilded Age. In the midst of rapid economic development, the ethnocultural regional loyalties that had been an important factor in partisan attachment throughout the century proved enduring. But questions of political economy were front and center during the Gilded Age, including the gold standard, the regulation of the marketplace, and the tariff.³⁷ Debates over the tariff, for instance, reflected different visions of economic growth and different regional economic interests that were shaping struggles over political economy. In this period, Republicans supported the tariff and other expansions of state power to promote prosperity and northern industrial power. In doing so, as Rebecca Edwards argues, they wrapped their programs in a particular domestic vision of the family-oriented male breadwinner. From fighting Mormonism to setting up the Freedmen's Bureau to supporting a high tariff, Republicans portrayed the use of expanded state authority as a campaign to uphold and protect the home. An elaborate system of Civil War pensions, articulated as a program to maintain stable domestic homes, built partisan loyalty and extended patronage from the local arena to the national. While there were multiple causes behind the enactment of federal legislation in these critical decades, the heavy reliance on domestic rhetoric shows how state builders brokered the new world through familiar traditions and social norms. Such policies not only appropriated the rhetoric of domestic ideology but also envisioned an expanded federal presence in the most intimate aspects of family life.

But there was no direct progression toward a modern administrative state. Nineteenth-century party politics, premised on patronage and services in exchange for votes, mobilized citizens for individual benefits but not in support of a bigger or radically different kind of state. Many historians and political scientists, such as Morton Keller and Stephen Skowronek, have documented the political and institutional obstacles to crafting a powerful administrative state.³⁸ In addition to the parties, most conventional narratives have presented the courts as a major roadblock to state development. While the Civil War may have freed the amendment process from the constraints of constitutionalism, the higher courts by and large hewed to a strict interpretation, proving resistant to an expansion of governmental authority. Local courts, especially the pervasive justice-of-the-peace system, were tied to partisan power. That system, where citizens and noncitizens alike felt public authority most readily, again demonstrates the interlocking web of local politics and governance. In an im-

portant finding, Michael Willrich demonstrates how Progressive Era urban courts abolished their justice-of-the-peace systems, replacing them with professionalized municipal courts signaling a halfway step to a modern state. Rather than simply clearing the way for new administrative agencies that, as of yet, had little political or constitutional standing, these municipal courts themselves became new administrative tribunals. In the process, they inscribed their own cultural assumptions about breadwinner domesticity into social policy. As local judicial institutions, this “court-based social governance” avoided the specter of a large and impersonal bureaucracy and thereby gained legitimacy.

While progressive reformers crafted new administrative mechanisms at the local level, politicians looked for new means to capture votes of ever broadening and diverse populations. The challenge of how to connect citizens and government was key as older nineteenth-century partisan loyalties had less hold and as government assumed greater administrative responsibilities. As Brian Balogh explores in his examination of Herbert Hoover’s 1928 presidential campaign, interest groups became the twentieth-century version of the political party. Balogh shows that the turn to interest groups was not simply a functionalist response but rather a creative political adaptation that linked constituencies to administrative agencies and also organized electoral campaigns. The targeted style of identifying interest groups took its cue from the emergence of a consumer economy that segmented populations not by old categories of region, ethnicity, or party but by income, occupation, and gender. Whereas political parties of the nineteenth century limited the expansion of administrative and bureaucratic government, the interest groups of the twentieth century accommodated that kind of governmental growth by mobilizing citizens in support of particular public policies.

As much as politicians reconfigured constituencies and bound them together into electoral majorities, citizens at the grassroots level influenced state building from the bottom up. Politicians paid close attention to average voters as they crafted public policies and electoral appeals. Challenging the conventional wisdom that consumers remained politically insignificant until the 1970s, Meg Jacobs shows how they were pivotal during the Great Depression as they joined organized labor in pressuring Democrats into building programs that would ensure a federally enforced decent standard of living. Yet the grassroots pressure from consumers that strengthened state building during the New Deal and World War II was not easy to control. Many consumers turned against the state by the 1950s and 1960s. Estrangement between organized labor and the unorganized middle classes produced and prefigured a broader split between an increasingly insulated constellation of interest groups and a mass public ever more hostile to the state.

Perhaps the clearest manifestation of antistate sentiment found expression in broad opposition to taxes. As Julian Zelizer points out, only in times of emergency have politicians been able to raise direct and visible taxes with relative ease. Resistance to taxation at the federal and even local level dates as far back as the early republic.³⁹ Progressive Era state building preceded the federal income tax as the New Deal preceded the mass income tax. Those realities shaped how politicians built the state with citizens paying for earned benefits like Social Security and Medicare through earmarked contributions. World War II enabled the institutionalization of a mass income tax but did not guarantee popular support for ever increasing rates. High taxes could erode postwar expectations of abundance and increased living standards. Moreover, antitax populism remained strong especially as Cold War fears of totalitarian regimes reinforced an American aversion to centralized power. By looking at antitax sentiment, Zelizer reminds us that support for governmental programs does not automatically generate support for a fiscal state. While the federal government has grown, it has faced limits in large part by the resistance to pay for it. State builders overcame voters' resistance but only by continuing to link taxes to specific benefits, as the success of Medicare demonstrated. Given the limits to additional public spending, Americans constructed a private welfare state that at times undercut support for increased governmental services.

American ambivalence about a strong central state meant that powerful local institutions shaped and structured federal power. Indeed, since the Progressive Era, local governments continued to expand and centralize their administrative and regulatory capacities in no small part to facilitate new federal programs under their control. Here local public officials gave meaning and expression to expanded federal power, in the process themselves becoming more bureaucratized. While we know much about the creation of the New Deal, we know far less about how these programs reconfigured local politics, or how their distribution was determined and administered locally. Thomas Sugrue shows how President Johnson's Great Society programs, particularly the War on Poverty, which envisioned the creation of new community organizations outside local machines, faced constraints as had the New Deal. The Supreme Court, after a short burst of federal-empowering decisions, shifted much authority back toward the states in crucial policy areas such as redistricting and school integration. Sugrue explains that local administration enabled racial and class biases to influence the delivery of state largesse.

Nowhere did antistate, localist sentiment emerge more strongly than in the growing suburbs of postwar America. According to Matthew Lassiter, suburban middle-class voters developed an ideology revolving around property rights, individualism, and limited government, even though the

suburbs themselves had been shaped by federal programs such as tax credits for home owners and the GI Bill. Inadvertently, government programs gave rise to a constituency that opposed further government intervention. This suburban ideology became a primary obstacle to Great Society programs that aimed at ameliorating racism. Democrats and Republicans vied for these suburban middle-class voters in an era when stable political majorities proved elusive. Suburban ideological views ensured that federal programs to tackle racism would not advance.

Since the founding, practical questions of democratic governance have forced Americans to negotiate between antistatism (in both institutions and culture) and the need to rule. Today Americans have a large central state but one that accommodates antistatism. When central administration grew, local governments did not wither away, and the institutional mechanisms and cultural legacy of popular participation remained. Moreover, the means of attaching citizens to the state have continuously evolved. In exploring that process, the authors range in the degree to which they emphasize questions of political legitimacy, notions of the public, and the structure of governmental institutions, but these issues are embedded in all the pieces. In their sweeping conclusions, James Kloppenberg and Ira Katznelson argue for the promise of a new political history.⁴⁰ By drawing on new insights about public policy, political institutions, social movements, and political culture, as Kloppenberg and Katznelson point out, today's generation of historians stands poised to integrate and capitalize on the new institutionalism and sociocultural history. Collectively, these essays demonstrate the exciting potential for applying social and cultural approaches to politics and conversely analyzing the institutional setting for political battles.

NOTES

1. Mark H. Leff, "Revisioning U.S. Political History," *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 829–53. Steven M. Gillon, "The Future of Political History," *Journal of Policy History* 9 (1997): 240–55; Joel H. Silbey, "The State of American Political History at the Millennium: The Nineteenth Century as a Test Case," *Journal of Policy History* 11 (1999): 1–30.

2. William E. Leuchtenburg, "The Pertinence of Political History: Reflections on the Significance of the State in America," *Journal of American History* 73 (1986): 585–600.

3. They picked up on a critique raised several decades earlier in Thomas C. Cochran, "The 'Presidential Synthesis' in American History," *American Historical Review* 53, (1948): 748–53.

4. Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1963), and James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State* (Boston:

Beacon Press, 1968). They were also influenced by the sociological work on social control by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971).

5. Julian E. Zelizer, "Beyond the Presidential Synthesis: Reordering Political Time," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 345–70. The boundaries between policy history and American Political Development have always been difficult to discern. Indeed, a large number of scholars consider themselves part of both fields. The primary difference, in the minds of some, has been that American Political Development pays closer attention to institutional structures and analytic models of political history while policy historians tend to produce more archivally based and textured accounts that revolve around the policies themselves.

6. Ellis Hawley, *The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966); Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Louis Galambos, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American history," *Business History Review* 44 (1970): 279–90; Morton Keller, *Affairs of State: Public Life in Late-Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977); Louis Galambos, "Technology, Political Economy, and Professionalization," *Business History Review* 57 (1983): 471–93; Barry Karl, *The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915 to 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

7. Louis Galambos, "Parsonian Sociology and Post-Progressive History," *Social Science Quarterly* 50 (1969): 25–45. For critiques of this scholarship, see Brian Balogh, "Reorganizing the Organizational Synthesis: Federal-Professional Relations in Modern America," *Studies in American Political Development* 5 (1991): 119–72, and Richard R. John, "Governmental Institutions as Agents of Change: Rethinking American Political Development in the Early Republic, 1787–1835," *Studies in American Political Development* 11 (1997): 347–80.

8. Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

9. For some key works, see James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty, 1900–1980* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Thomas K. McCraw, *Prophets of Regulation: Charles Francis Adams, Louis D. Brandeis, James M. Landis, and Alfred E. Kahn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); Edward D. Berkowitz, *Disabled Policy: America's Programs for the Handicapped* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Christopher L. Tomlins, *The State and the Unions: Labor Relations, Law, and the Organized Labor Movement in America, 1880–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

10. For a detailed history of this subfield, see Julian E. Zelizer's "Clio's Lost Tribe: Public Policy History since 1978," *Journal of Policy History* 12 (2000): 369–94, and Hugh Davis Graham, "The Stunted Career of Policy History: A Critique and an Agenda," *The Public Historian* 15 (1993): 15–37.

11. Recent work has started to look at the complex relationship between public policy and corporate benefits, often subsidized by the government and produced

by collective bargaining. Jacob Hacker, *The Divided American Welfare State: Public and Private Benefits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Michael B. Katz, *The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001); Christopher Howard, *The Hidden Welfare State: Tax Expenditures and Social Policy in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); Steven A. Sass, *The Promise of Private Pensions: The First Hundred Years* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Beth Stevens, "Blurring the Boundaries: How the Federal Government Has Influenced Welfare Benefits in the Private Sector," in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, ed., Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 123–48.

12. Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

13. See, for example, W. Andrew Achenbaum, "American Medical History: Social History and Medical History"; Daniel Fox, "History and Health Policy"; James Reed, "Public Policy on Human Reproduction and the Historian," *Journal of Social History* 18 (1985): 343–64; 383–97.

14. For a discussion of origins, see Julian E. Zelizer, "Stephen Skowronek's *Building a New American State* and the Origins of American Political Development," *Social Science History*, forthcoming.

15. Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, "Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science," in *Political Science: State of the Discipline*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner (New York and Washington D.C.: Norton and American Political Science Association, 2002), 693–721.

16. Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Another crucial foundational book was Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

17. Paul Pierson, "Not Just What, but *When*: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes," *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (2000): 76.

18. Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1992). The same institutional logic was used to explain political and policy retrenchment. Paul Pierson, for instance, found that American conservatives in the 1980s were not very successful at rolling back the federal government, since public policies had created active constituencies who resisted their attacks while the structure of American political institutions made it difficult to mobilize against existing programs. Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Retrenchment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

19. This concept was introduced in the following two pioneering works: Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol, and Peter Evans, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

20. Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

21. Robert C. Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

22. Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); and “Governmental Institutions as Agents of Change: Rethinking American Political Development in the Early Republic, 1787–1835,” *Studies in American Political Development* 11 (1997): 347–80; Colleen A. Dunlavy, *Politics and Industrialization: Early Railroads in the United States and Prussia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Kenneth R. Bowling and Donald R. Kennon, eds., *The House and Senate in the 1790s: Petitioning, Lobbying, and Institutional Development* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

23. Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Knopf, 1995). For important works by other historians, see Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds. *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order: 1930–1980* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

24. The promise of this approach to political history has been touched on in Leff, “Revisioning U.S. Political History”; Gillon, “The Future of Political History.”

25. Samuel P. Hays, “The Social Analysis of American Political History,” *Political Science Quarterly* 80 (1965): 373–94; Paul Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1970); Joel H. Silbey, Allan G. Bogue, and William H. Flanigan, eds., *The History of American Electoral Behavior* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978). For a synthesis of the history of voting, see Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

26. Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: Wiley, 1978); Joel H. Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Mark E. Neely, *The Union Divided: Party Conflict in the Civil War North* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Paula Baker, “The Midlife Crisis of the New Political History,” *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 158–66.

27. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

28. Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage, 1955). For an analysis that builds on Goodwyn, see Steven Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850–1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

29. Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

30. David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865–1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

31. Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
32. James T. Kloppenberg, “The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse,” in *The Virtues of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 21–37; Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967).
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36. Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*.
37. Richard Benschel, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
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39. Robin L. Einhorn, “Slavery and the Politics of Taxation in the Early United States,” *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (2000): 156–83; Robin L. Einhorn, *Property Rules: Political Economy in Chicago, 1833–1872* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
40. For an excellent volume that offers overviews of each era of American politics, see Byron E. Shafer and Anthony J. Badger, eds., *Contesting Democracy: Substance and Structure in American Political History, 1775–2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).