

Editors' Preface

The occasion for *Studies in American Political Development* is the current revival of scholarship on American institutions and the related turn by political scientists to history. After a long season in which social forces and processes were the predominant topics of study, political structures and elites have gradually been reestablished at the center of inquiry. This “new institutionalism” has not returned to older formalisms. It has, instead, used the work of the recent past as a new point of departure from which to specify more closely the complex patterns of state-society relations. History provides the dimension necessary for understanding institutions as they operate under varying conditions. Beyond that, it is also the natural proving ground for the claim that institutions have an independent and formative influence on politics. This new research agenda argues for a periodical in which these efforts may be brought together, learned from, and debated.

Studies' institutional perspective is defined broadly to encompass the social and cultural institutions that impinge on government as well as governmental institutions themselves. It seeks to bring specialists concerned with particular agencies and organizations into a discussion different from that found in those journals that focus on one institution or another. Its historical perspective is an implicit endorsement of the usual (indeed ritual) call for the crossing of disciplinary boundaries, but the more immediate contribution in this regard may be *intradisciplinary*. *Studies* looks toward the rediscovery of a subject matter common to scholars working in different corners of political science by offering a forum in which their various skills and viewpoints may fruitfully converge. Here again, *Studies* only catches a drift already under way. Our editorial board ranges the spectrum of subfields, theoretical perspectives, and analytic methods. Yet each can be associated with scholarship on some aspect of political change and institutional development in the

United States. *Studies* is based on all these parts, and on the old idea of the greater whole, as a furtherance to our mutual education and the stimulation of ideas.

These purposes are indicated in the format we have chosen. In order to encourage the movement between disciplines and subfields required to analyze change and continuity in political institutions, *Studies* offers greater flexibility in manuscript length than do most other political science journals. This flexibility should also permit the fuller elaboration, where appropriate, of associated issues, approaches, and findings than the shorthand references typical of articles dedicated to more fragmentary interests. We anticipate that our Notes and Exchanges section will, among other things, allow the airing of intellectual controversy, including that generated by research published in the volumes of our annual.

Most of the articles in this inaugural volume are written by members of *Studies*' editorial group. They introduce the enterprise without marking off the limits of our ambitions. Each article confronts existing social science literature and proposes the reformulation of familiar issues through engagement with historical materials. If there is an element of iconoclasm in the result, it is an accident, which, however, may be taken to represent our individual scholarly commitments, our shared project, and an invitation to future exchange. An area of study in creative ferment, as this one is, deserves a publication undertaken in the same spirit.

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