Political Science:

The State of the Discipline

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to attend public meetings designed by and presided over by the most-marginalized groups in those groups' chosen public spaces. This is prefigured by the meetings currently conducted by grassroots urban coalitions associated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, where public officials meet the social movement on its terms, times, and terrain. What if such practices of engagement between governing institutions and the least well-off were required at regular intervals, so that, for example, representative bodies had to meet with indigenous peoples in places, times, and modes chosen by the latter?

Second, we might aim to design variegated institutions in ways that have more space for tensions between different jurisdictions, scales, groups, and issue regimes to be given a hearing and negotiated. This would render more indeterminate the partial sovereignties and inside/outside boundaries of institutions, in ways that would provide more openings for groups relatively disempowered by given institutional jurisdictions to gain voice and power. Instead of imagining variegated institutions as nested within an overly (neo-Hegelian) systematic framework where domains are clearly demarcated and each layer fits neatly within limits governed by layers higher up, sites might be designed where more interactive powers might emerge. Young's design, wherein "regional government sets a framework for inter-local negotiation, conflict resolution, and cooperation whose issues are on the local, as well as regional, public agenda" (2000, 234), provides an example that might kindle our imaginations of other interinstitutional relations that facilitate engagements between public bodies that are not included in one another.

Third, in conjunction with engagements stemming from sensibilities and practices like those sketched above, institutions might be designed in ways that enhance their capacities *in relation to the capacities of others* for ongoing dynamic transfiguration in response to those whom they disempower at any given point in time. The ever-challenging and essentially translucent aim here is to orient this process of transformation in ways that secure rights and practices of currently established freedom and justice to protect against the bad, while opening them to changes that increase their responsiveness and accountability to those they poorly address.

These modes and institutions of responsiveness may sometimes pose serious threats to smooth coordination. But responsiveness may also often disclose unwonted solidarities that can enhance coordination. In any case, smooth coordination may not always be the most ethical or politically desirable goal. It certainly is *not* when it comes at the expense of justice; and justice and responsiveness are tightly entwined. What the most promising theorists under discussion seek to cultivate, above all else, are our democratic capacities to be more receptive and generous in relation to the *questions* concerning the damages and suppressed possibilities typically concealed by the dominant paradigms of political inquiry.

Gerald Gamm and John Huber

Legislatures as Political Institutions: Beyond the Contemporary Congress[1]

For the bulk of political scientists today, the study of legislatures is the study of the U.S. Congress. Other legislatures do exist, of course. The U.S. states have legislatures. The U.S. cities have legislatures. National, provincial, and local governments throughout the world have parliaments, representative assemblies, and legislatures. Even Europe—and, on rare occasions, the world assembled as the United Nations—has a legislature. But the scholarly world of legislative studies is, overwhelmingly, a world that studies the U.S. Congress. And the study of Congress tends to be the study of the postwar House of Representatives.

Although this generalization fairly approximates the contemporary field, it was not the state of the discipline at the turn of the last century. In that earlier time, when the study of legislatures similarly flourished and enjoyed comparably high stature within the broader discipline, scholars studied various national legislatures. Moreover, studies of Congress were bicameral, historical, and grounded in comparisons with other nations as well as the U.S. states. Wilson (1885) and Lowell (1902) examined the U.S. Congress through the prism of the British House of Commons, and Lowell analyzed data that extended back to the time of the Civil War. Follett (1896) and Fuller (1909) studied the House Speakership by examining its historical development, and each scholar compared the office to antecedents in Britain and the American colonies. Similarly, McConachie (1898), Alexander (1916), and Harlow (1917), in their studies of rules and legislative organization, collected their evidence from state legislatures, other countries, and congressional history.

This paper attempts to assess the state of legislative studies in our own

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legislation affect legislative bargaining outcomes? Similarly, Laver and Shepsle (1996) ask: Given the institutional arrangements that shape government policymaking in cabinets, how do the spatial preferences of political parties affect the allocation of portfolios? And research on committee assignments in Congress asks how the spatial preferences of individual members affect their assignment to committees, given the agenda institutions that exist in Congress—or, in R. L. Hall's 1996 study, the ways in which legislators participate in Congress, taking for granted the particular rules and institutions of the contemporary House.

In all of these influential studies, since the institutional setting is fixed, it does not and cannot serve as an explanatory variable. A vast body of research on the contemporary Congress has this characteristic. In demonstrating the power and elegance of a theory grounded in the idea that legislators are single-minded seekers of reelection, Mayhew (1974b) took for granted the institutional world of the textbook Congress. This Congress was crucial to Mayhew's argument, since the committee system and the weakness of party reinforced the individuality of career-minded legislators. Despite the centrality of this institution to Mayhew's argument, the demise of the textbook Congress did nothing to shake the influence of Mayhew's theory of legislator behavior. On the contrary, legislative scholarship continues to build on Mayhew's insight and approach.

Since the institutional context is fixed in most Congress research, we obviously do not gain direct insights from congressional studies about how the presence or absence of particular institutions affects the behavior of individual legislators. Instead, we typically develop and test arguments that focus on factors outside the legislative institution itself. Overby and Cosgrove (1996), for example, emphasize the impact of majority-minority districts on voting behavior in the House. Maltzman and Sigelman (1996), in their analysis of one-minute speeches, focus on policy and electoral goals of individual members as their independent variables. In other studies of member behavior, Alan Gerber (1996) emphasizes race and Kiewiet and Zeng (1993) emphasize age as predictors for retirements; Moscardelli, Haspel, and Wike (1998) emphasize ideology and Bailey and Brady (1998) emphasize constituency characteristics as predictors of votes; Cox and Magar (1999) emphasize majority status as a predictor of PAC contributions; Kessler and Krehbiel (1996) argue that individual attributes like an individual's tenure in the House, electoral vulnerability, and individual preferences affect decisions to cosponsor bills; Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold, and Zorn (1997) argue that voting behavior is a function of a representative's constituency characteristics, interest group links, their institutional position within the legislature, party affiliation, and ideology; Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) examine how voting is affected by individual and consituency characteristics, as well as the individual's intention to resign at the next election; and Schiller (1995) looks at how individual characteristics, including an individual's positions within the Senate, affect cosponsorship strategies.

The same bias in the nature of explanatory variables exists in the handful of Congress studies that examine outputs, like policy outcomes. Perhaps the most well developed variable in this context is preference conflict within legislative settings. Thus the literature on divided government, an excellent example of research that focuses on policy, examines how preference conflicts (i.e., divided government) affect policy outcomes (Cameron 2000; Mayhew 1991), the form of delegation to agencies (Epstein and O'Halloran 1999), the approval of presidential appointments (McCarty and Razaghian 1999), and the incidence of budgetary conflict (Clarke 1998).

Historical and comparative approaches, in contrast, have the potential to pose questions of the form: "How does institutional arrangement *x* affect legislative behavior or output *y*?" Such research has a fairly long tradition in studies of parliamentary government, one rooted in research on cabinet formation and dissolution. Strom (1984, 1990), for example, argues that particular legislative institutions (related primarily to committee systems) affect the propensity of minority governments to form. Strom, Budge, and Laver (1994) examine how legislative institutions affect coalition formation more generally, and de Winter (1995) examines how the government's control of the agenda affects the duration of coalition formation processes. Other scholars have examined legislative outputs in non-U.S. settings. Baldez and Carey (1999), for example, examine how rules for making budgets affect budget deficits in Latin America, Thies's (1998) comparison of Japan and the United States examines how committee structures affect the pace of policy change, Huber (1998) examines how turnover in the cabinet affects health care cost containment, and Döring (1995a) examines how the government's control of the agenda affects legislative outputs. Morgenstern (2000) examines how variation in electoral laws affect voting unity in legislatures. And, in a recent formal model, McCarty (2000) explores how variation in a president's veto power affects distributive politics.

Much of the best work in this tradition is on the U.S. states. Thus Francis and Kenny (1997) analyze the impact of term limits on legislative tenure, Abney and Lauth (1997) examine the effect of the line-item veto on budget restraint, and Fiorina (1994) and Squire (1998) investigate the impact of legislative professionalization. Finally, Elisabeth Gerber (1996, 1999) examines the impact of citizen initiatives on policy outcomes. Each of these works helps us to understand how the institutional context in which legislators find themselves affects the choices that legislatures make.

■ | Discussion

Legislative studies is one of the oldest and liveliest subfields in political science. In the late nineteenth century, early leaders of the discipline—from

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