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Remaking Power and Politics

I contend that we should remake conceptions of power and politics, taking off from the project of remaking “modernity.” Here, I perform a similar move for “power and politics,” core concepts for history and the human sciences, building on the foundational work of the 1970s and 1980s and bringing in key elements of institutionalist and culturalist critiques. The theories of the early days of social science history were usually materialist, and the character of state policies and political structures was understood to reflect the “balance of class forces,” interests to flow from class position, and power to work in a juridical vein, as “power over.” By the 1980s these common understandings were widely criticized. There were new emphases on the multiplicity of identities and structures of inequality, new questions about the adequacy of materialist accounts of politics. Dissatisfactions were also stimulated by “real-world” developments. However, we see a parting of the ways when it came to addressing these new political conditions and analytic challenges. Moves to “bring the state and other political institutions back in” have been focused on politics, while the scholars taking the various cultural turns have focused on power. The conceptualizations of power and politics have been sundered along with the scholarly communities deploying them. I address both communities and argue for new ways of understanding power and politics emerging from renewed encounters between institutionalist and culturalist analyses. Such encounters and the conceptual work that they will produce can help us reforge a productive alliance between history and the social sciences.

My interest in power and politics was encouraged, as it was for many in my generation, by the “sound of marching, charging feet” that was all around us in the 1960s and 1970s: I was too young for the Mississippi summer, but the young civil rights workers from the North were the children of my parents’ friends and came to visit and tell their tales. At the age of 10 I was taken to my first political event, the March on Washington, by my mother—a woman from the South Side of Chicago, whose outlook had been transformed by World War II and postwar civil rights initiatives, which she had shared with my father, a member of the Illinois Civil Rights Commission. As the firstborn daughter of a progressive father, I owe a lot to his direct support. My mother’s influence was both more foundational and more indirect; her experiences, recounted to me years later, reflected the gains and losses of many women of her generation: she volunteered for the Women’s Army Corps, went to college and on to graduate school at the University of Chicago, got married, got pregnant, dropped out, had me. . . . She stayed politically active until she died, marching for housing integration, taking to the streets with Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) after my brother came out.¹ It was in part her PhD I earned in 1985, and my feminism has always been indebted to her.

By high school and college, I was participating—along with many of you, I have no doubt—in demonstrations and campaigns to end the Vietnam War, for black liberation, for women’s emancipation. But I was also impelled to political engagement by youthful knowledge of intolerable structures and events: the Holocaust, the vicious attacks and murders of civil rights activists, the deaths in Vietnam, female infanticide. Again, like many others, I thought that political action would challenge such horrors, part of the on-and-off “state of emergency” that is modernity. The understandings of power and politics that I absorbed in this atmosphere divided the world into heroes and villains, us and them, in which politics was the means to gain power—power that could be deployed to end such injustices. Politics was about showing the majority what was in their interests.

My journey through Leftist politics in the 1970s and 1980s, attempting to organize a union in an electronics factory, selling newspapers in Boston’s poor and working-class neighborhoods, helping organize protests at the welfare office, brought home to me that very few shared my interpretation of their interests, even if at times there were goals we could agree on. And the various failures of actually existing socialism were sobering—the excesses

of the Cultural Revolution and the Khmer Rouge stood out. So did the evidences of workers' or women's attachments to organizations and practices that I initially thought were "oppressive." These and my intellectual absorption of recent history left me unsatisfied with my earlier ways of thinking. And I found that the only way I could live with intolerable structures was to try to understand them; intellectual work is my psychic relief, though I hope that it also contributes, in however small and indirect a way, to struggles to eradicate these structures.

In this essay, based on my presidential address to the 2010 Social Science History Association (SSHA) conference, I contend that we should remake conceptions of power and politics, taking up from where we left off with the *Remaking Modernity* project, in which I was involved with Julia Adams, Elisabeth Clemens, and a host of others (Adams et al. 2005).² We argued for remaking "modernity," a core concept of historical sociology (and history and the human sciences generally), by building on the foundational work of the 1970s and 1980s and bringing in key elements of institutionalist and culturalist critiques. I want to perform a similar—albeit far shorter—move for "power and politics." We focused on sociology, but I think that the same move should be made with history and the other historical social sciences. This, I think, can also help us revitalize the links between history and the social sciences.

Social Science, History, Power, and Politics

The founding of the SSHA in 1974 was part of a larger shift in history and the social sciences to consider the *political* significance of *social* arrangements and processes. Traditional approaches toward politics and power kept scholars focused on formal institutions, elites, and conventional forms of participation. Instead, social science historians insisted on the significance of "politics from below" and the social sources of power and interests, particularly as rooted in capitalism. These foundational premises about politics and power have, I believe, served to unify, however loosely, those of us who meet each year under the banner of the SSHA.

Indeed, the animating questions of the early SSHA and other encounters between history and social science were stimulated largely by political questions. Scholars felt, in a visceral way, the links between the collective actions and social changes they saw around them and the historical events

and processes they studied: the rise and decline of social movements and revolutions from 1848 through the 1970s, the ongoing “creative destruction” of capitalist development, the processes of war making and state making, the origins and the unsettling of welfare capitalism, the sweeping transformations of the world system by national liberation movements.

In the 1970s, when the SSHA’s first meetings were held, the founding generation wanted “social science history” to address these pressing questions by combining social science method and theory and new forms of historical evidence. These approaches were fruitful, as we know from the early work of Charles and Louise Tilly on contentious politics and the gender relations of capitalist industrialization, to take but two prominent examples.³

The theories of those days were usually materialist with strong Marxist influences. Most commonly, the character of state policies and political structures was understood to reflect the “balance of class forces,” interests to flow from class position and power to work in a juridical vein, as “power over.” Too often the only attention to subjectivity was in the form of measuring “true or false” consciousness on the assumption that “objective” interests could be deduced from social position.

But by the 1980s the common understandings were widely criticized. There were new emphases on the multiplicity of identities and structures of inequality, new questions about the adequacy of materialist accounts of politics. Dissatisfactions were also stimulated by “real-world” developments: from the high point of movement activism and hopes in the 1960s and 1970s there was a sharp shift to the right, symbolized by the elections of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. However, we saw a parting of the ways when it came to addressing these new political conditions and analytic challenges. To put it starkly, moves to “bring the state and other political institutions back in” have been focused on politics, while the scholars taking the various cultural turns have focused on power. The conceptualizations of power and politics have been sundered along with the scholarly communities deploying them. “Bringing the state back in” and, later, institutionalism have been strong in political science, political history (especially American Political Development), and comparative-historical sociology and moves to take some version of the cultural turn, especially in history, anthropology, and, again, comparative-historical sociology. Note that sociology—my home discipline—is on the dividing line. I too am Janus-faced, and I want to address both communities.⁴

Bringing the State and Political Institutions Back In

Political institutionalism has addressed the “failure” of neo-Marxist—or, more broadly, class determinist—accounts of politics with a neo-Weberian approach that highlighted the state as a potentially autonomous actor and institution. Specifically political logics derived from struggles over the means of coercion and administration and of competition in the world system of states. Against the grain of much previous social-historical analysis, scholars argued that politics was not fully determined by economic forces either in the near term or in the “lonely hour of the last instance” (Althusser 1970: 113; for an alternative Marxist view of the “lonely hour” that never comes, see Thompson 1978). Indeed, many scholars in the ranks of the SSHA have contributed to understanding the sources of states’ power, capacities, and distinctive goals; the historically contingent formation of political groups and interests; and the impact on policy outcomes of differences in state structure, capacities, and policy feedback.⁵ More recent innovations, especially under the banner of historical institutionalism, have featured fully processual accounts, which aim to understand the mechanisms of institutional change and continuity.⁶

While mainstream forms of institutionalist analysis have tended to exclude the sexual and gendered elements of politics,⁷ a great deal of exciting research on gender, social politics, and welfare has been done under the auspices of the SSHA—for example, in the miniconferences of the 1990s⁸—and indeed led to the founding in 1994 of the journal *Social Politics* by Barbara Hobson, Sonya Michel, and me.⁹ Most institutionalist analysis is weaker when it comes to understanding culture, agency, constitutive power. To take but one critical example, war making is central to many accounts of state building (canonically, Tilly 1985), but this is seldom linked to its underpinnings in masculine identities or racialized power relations, the creation in empire of “us” and “them.”¹⁰ Scholars in this group typically focus on the institutions of political economy rather than on the organizations that reflect the darker sides of modernity—punishment, regulation of sexualities, “native policies.”¹¹

Marshall Sahlins (2005: 113) critiques the pervasive assumptions in institutionalist analysis and elsewhere about the “utilitarian individualism” of all humans, in which “all . . . actions and options . . . [are] translated into their apparent common denominator of ‘pleasures’ and ‘satisfactions,’ among

which we prudently allocate our limited pecuniary means. . . . All of culture seems constituted by (and as) the businesslike economizing of autonomous individuals.”¹²

Perhaps it is these characteristics that contribute to a certain flatness in institutionalist accounts: “puzzling” developments refer to instances in which these “straightforward and businesslike” interests seem not to have been operative, but then, by looking more closely at institutional patternings of agency, we find that indeed they still do. Although there are unintended consequences in these accounts, they derive from the emergent properties of institutions—but they rarely stem from surprises in terms of group identifications and loyalties beyond class, or actors’ conflicts, psychic investments, desires, or attachment to noneconomic goals. For analyses that do try to account for these recurring nonrational aspects of politics, we can do no better than to consider the work that has been done under the sign of the cultural turn.

The Cultural Turns

In *A Crooked Line*, his engaging autobiographical account of the transition from social to cultural history and beyond, Geoff Eley (2005) contends that the rightward political shift of the late 1970s undermined social historians’ beliefs in Marxist teleologies, including the inevitability of workers’ attachment to socialism. They demanded new perspectives on power and politics that took greater account of subjectivity and ideology, contributing to the turn toward cultural history. Historians, anthropologists, and sociologists thus worked to develop a broader, culturalist approach to politics, which largely followed Michel Foucault, with attention focused on the productive power inherent in the discursive formation of categories, subjects, and agency. Practice theory provided another alternative (see, e.g., Ortner 1996 or Spiegel 2005 for overviews and selected readings). George Alter and I are bookended by two people—SSHA past president Julia Adams and incoming president William H. Sewell Jr.—who have made extremely influential theoretical contributions on the topic of agency, which has surely been one of the calling cards of the cultural turn (see, e.g., Adams 1994, 1999; Sewell 1992, 2005). Indeed, Adams’s program last year was organized on the theme of “agency and action” (for her presidential address, see Adams 2011).¹³ So I will take that as read and move to some other concerns of the cultural turn.

The diverse potentialities of cultural “resistance,” as in James Scott’s (1990) unearthing of “hidden transcripts,” largely displaced studies of so-called juridical power. Rather than the (soon-to-be?) socialist working class attempting to scale the pinnacle of state power, we found various other subalterns engaging in resistance. Of course, there had always been workers whose affiliations and desires were not captured by any working-class party and who also eluded the analytic grasp of social determinism. It is no wonder that Antonio Gramsci, the incisive analyst of fascism and hegemony, was so important to emergent cultural studies paradigms and historical studies of ideology. Carolyn Steedman (1986) wrote brilliantly, in *Landscape for a Good Woman*, about the Tory proclivities of her working-class mother as a way to contest the views of E. P. Thompson (1963) about the formation of the English working class and how these views made it impossible to understand the politics of envy, gender, and striving—captured in the yearning of her mother and other working women for a “New Look” skirt. It did not take long, however, for the whole problem of unified political identity earlier articulated with respect to class to be repeated vis-à-vis “women,” famously articulated by Denise Riley (1988) in her critiques of the “category of women.” Every category could be fractured, refused, renegotiated, complicated.¹⁴

A key move in the culturalist shift was taking up questions of subjectivity, ambivalence, contradiction, affect, and multiplicity, often joining with work in gender and critical race studies. Analysts forwarded a notion of “subjectivity at odds with itself” (Rose 1986: 15) via discourse or psychodynamics or both.¹⁵ The psyche was of great *political* significance, as Jacqueline Rose (1986: 14) argued: “Perhaps for women [I would say this for any dominated group] it is of particular importance that we find a language which allows us to recognize our part in intolerable structures—but in such a way which renders us neither the pure victims nor the sole agents of our distress.” Involvement with structures such as sexual difference could not be reduced to complicity or false consciousness.

The cultural turns, and associated moves to foreground gender, race, and empire, produced a fertile outpouring of scholarship that continues today, and I want to bring these theoretical advances to the analysis of politics. But you will not be surprised when I tell you that I am critical here as well. One could take up a friendly critique of the linguistic or cultural turns from the perspective of “lived embodiment,” as does Kathleen Canning (2006), or of

practice theory, as does Rick Biernacki (2000).¹⁶ I am sympathetic to these critiques, but I am more worried about how they make us think about politics. Too often politics is anything that reproduces, reflects, or resists existing distributions of resources and power. In these accounts, cultural “resistance” is *not* linked to collective action and institutions. How do we get from the desire for a “New Look” skirt to voting patterns, to systems of representation that magnify or reduce the influence of specific groups, to state organizations that regulate women’s and men’s lives?

Writing in 1986, not so long after the movements of the 1970s had been replaced in analysts’ minds by the fact of white working-class voters’ support for the Right, Rose claimed the political utility of psychoanalysis. When Judith Butler (1997), widely influential in cultural history and beyond, took up similar questions over a decade later in *The Psychic Life of Power*, not only was the analysis more abstract—she is a philosopher and not a historian of course—but it was almost entirely decontextualized. “Power” had no institutional referents. It combined the power of parental love or rejection and the power of the state and the law into one concept; similarly, individual and collective forms of resistance were merged into an undifferentiated notion of politics. How can we analyze extremely variegated political processes, organizations, and institutions with such an apparatus?

In short, on much of the terrain of the cultural turns, understandings of politics are relatively impoverished, and too little attention is given to the varied institutions of juridical—state—rule and collective political action and how these are imbricated with “capillary” forms of power.

Where Does That Leave Us Now in Historical Social Science and Social-Scientificallly Informed History?

These intellectual developments have pushed us to search for fresh approaches to power and politics, and we are encouraged to do so as well by world-shaking political events and processes: the huge global unsettling occasioned by the collapse of the Soviet Union and communist regimes in eastern Europe from 1989 on and the unfolding, part catastrophic (think of 9/11), part slow-moving struggle between Islamism and the Western capitalist democracies. These have helped unseat familiar theoretical categories of analysis and the alliances and enmities that underpinned many aspects of twentieth-century political and social arrangements.

Each of the scholarly movements that I have reviewed has left, as recent studies of gradual institutional change by scholars like my colleagues Jim Mahoney and Kathy Thelen (2010) would have it, layers of academic organization in the SSHA. The different scholarly communities that make up the SSHA confederation have friendly relations. We are an admirably open, “hundred flowers bloom” sort of an organization. But I think that we are at a moment intellectually where we might find ways to integrate our distinctive theoretical preoccupations. This hope is grounded in both perspectives having reached up against certain limits in their understandings of power and politics—the institutionalists groping for better ways to theorize structured agency, culture, and multiplicity, the culturalists looking for ways to tackle newly urgent issues of political economy, global inequality, empire.

I myself began my scholarly career as an advocate of “state-centered” analysis, learning the ins and outs of comparative and historical analysis with my teacher and collaborator, Theda Skocpol, alongside Margy Weir, Bruce Carruthers, and others. So perhaps it is not surprising that I retain a deep interest in the political mechanisms by which power and resources are amassed and deployed. This type of work and its scholarly descendants join high politics and politics from below, attend to organizations and institutions, including of course the state and its varying boundaries and enmeshments with other entities.¹⁷ All of this is critical to maintain.

By the 1990s I, like some other state-centered analysts and historical institutionalists, was increasingly influenced by Foucauldian or, more generally, culturalist approaches to politics and power. My own path to culturalism was via my friendship and collaborations with Julia Adams and George Steinmetz, my first and best teachers from among the many graduate students with whom I have been privileged to work during my years at the University of Wisconsin and Northwestern University. Unlike more purely semiotic approaches, the culturalism of the historical sociologists remains anchored to politics and states, as in Steinmetz’s (1999) edited volume, *State/Culture*.¹⁸ To take an example from an area of research that draws on these theoretical impulses and that has been well represented at the SSHA—what has been called “maternalist” politics¹⁹—we see a rejection of determinism, a contextualization of political identifications, and an accounting for signification. Women do not automatically identify with feminism *or* with motherhood as the basis for making political claims. As Adams has argued, our studies of gendered politics—from familial states to maternalist political projects and policy regimes—should examine the “recruitment of subjects,” which

is to say the “hailing” or “interpellating” of individuals to specific identities. Moreover, we should investigate why some hailings, using some signs—say, of “mother” or “citizen” or “submissive wife” or “mama grizzly”—resonate with some subjects (people!) more than others (Adams 2005; Adams and Padamsee 2001; Padamsee and Adams 2002; on interpellation, see also Win-grove 1999). These claims are also developed by feminist scholars who combine historical excavation and ethnographic investigation to probe how state regulation and the constitution of subjected agency work “on the ground,” for example in Lynne Haney’s fine books on “inventing the needy” (Haney 2002) and new therapeutic technologies of punishment (Haney 2010); here, the significance of “desires” as well as interests is underlined.²⁰ We should not give up the insights of culturalism with respect to understanding agency, subject formation, power, culture, gender, empire, and race.

In *Remaking Modernity*, Adams, Clemens, and I, with our many colleagues, worked to summon up a “third wave” of historical sociology that would revivify the conversations that had characterized earlier moments in the subdiscipline, which also featured significant exchanges with history (Adams et al. 2005). We were particularly encouraged by the movement in historical sociology to bring some of the culturalist program into studies of states. This work has been prominent in the SSHA, for example, in studies of state categorization projects like the census, which help create race, nation, and ethnicity (see, e.g., Loveman and Muniz 2007). We argued that, if in the earlier phase of historical social science we called the second wave Karl Marx met Max Weber, this mixing of culturalism with institutionalism might be characterized as Weber meeting Foucault. And to some extent, I think that this is what the broader interdisciplinary landscape needs.

However, with the political institutionalists and some political theorists, I want to leave behind the culturalists’ overly capacious approach to politics, which assumes that politics is anywhere power is being reproduced or resisted—which is to say, everywhere. But while power is everywhere, politics is not. We need a conception of politics that is linked to but not coterminous with power. As my friend and former colleague Linda Zerilli (2005: 23) puts it in her remarkable piece of feminist Arendtian scholarship, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*:

The word *political* signifies a relation between things, not a substance in any thing. Housework *becomes* political when two things that are not logically related, say the principle of equality and the sexual division of

labor, are brought into a relationship as the object of dispute, that is, as occasion for the speech and action with which people create the common world, the space in which *things become public*, and create it anew.

This is a critique of feminist proclamations that the “personal is political.” One may—and should—recognize the *potential* political character of all social arrangements, including issues that are classified as “personal.” After all, power is constitutive and productive of these and other relations. But we can distinguish individual resistance or the everyday reproduction of structures from politics, which is public and collective.

So we have Marx, Weber, Foucault, Arendt—but there is still a need for a much deeper understanding of subjectivity to undergird our concepts of politics and power than has commonly been available in social sciences and much history.²¹ I look to feminism here, though let me stress that it is not the only or privileged site from which attention to subjectification or embodiment have grown—think of the work of W. E. B. Du Bois²² and Frantz Fanon²³ and critical studies of race and empire.²⁴ Feminism is simply the site from which I have come to these notions.

So perhaps I can call on Simone de Beauvoir, Butler, Rose, or others from the interdisciplinary fields of gender and sexuality studies, with which I have become familiar through my on-the-job training in gender studies via the “femsem” at Wisconsin²⁵ and my decadelong association with the Northwestern Gender Studies program. As I indicated earlier in my discussion of the cultural turns, the subject question has been central to that intellectual movement. Work in gender studies (allied with cultural history) has also been especially insistent on—to borrow Butler’s (1997) felicitous title—the “psychic life of power” and all the desires, ambivalences, and irrational impulses that persist alongside calculating rationality. I often invoke the caring mother as the emblem of such nonrational actors but, in the interest of breaking with gender stereotypes if not with gendered analysis, think of Marco Materazzi and Zinedine Zidane in the France-Italy World Cup in 2006 and recall that the fight was about what the Italian said about the mother and sister of the Frenchman.²⁶ In any event, feminists’ preoccupation with subjectivities can be traced back to the founding text of twentieth-century feminism and a continuing inspiration, Beauvoir’s *Second Sex* (1952). Feminist work also highlights lived embodiment as a site of power and one possible basis for political engagements.²⁷ There is a lot of room for productive disagreement among accounts of subjectification and embodiment focusing on semiotic,

practice-oriented, psychoanalytic, or discursive processes. At the least they encourage us to reject the culturally thin understandings of subjectivities that abound in some precincts of political analysis. Such notions of deracinated agents give rise to the idea that we can easily shed our investments in—maybe complicity with—“intolerable structures” or, less darkly, in the status quo. This idea is contradicted by the histories we produce and the world we inhabit. So I want to insist on Beauvoir or Fanon or someone like them alongside the others as our “North Stars” for analyzing politics and power.

I have argued for a particular way of understanding power and politics, and I know that it is not the only one that might emerge from renewed encounters between institutionalist and culturalist analyses. I do think that such encounters and the conceptual work that they will produce could help us reforge a productive alliance between history and the social sciences. Why an alliance and not a merger? After all, some among our ranks identify equally as historians and as social scientists and therefore have moved beyond partnership to fusion. Yet many others retain stronger identifications with their disciplines, albeit sharing a passion for historicizing. And there is a political battle in academe and in the broader intellectual world. We face the demands of administrations not only for economizing but for making gains in a status game that may be stacked in favor of approaches that claim to be objective, scientific, generalizing rather than reflexive, context-dependent, historically specific. In this struggle, the SSHA offers rich intellectual and organizational resources and is also an important refuge for historically minded social scientists or for quantitatively or theoretically oriented historians—those who are slightly at odds with their dominant disciplinary ethos.

Conclusion

In 1940 Walter Benjamin famously described the intolerable structures that are modernity in the essay “Theses on the Philosophy of History”:

A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole

what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin 1969)

Benjamin's vision is one of the most vivid—and bleakest—in modern political analysis. Those schooled in some varieties of Foucauldian theorizing about the pervasiveness of power may adopt a similar stance and feel immobilized—we cannot even speak except in the languages of power. Are we not at such a crisis point? Yet let us historicize. Benjamin, surely one of the brightest stars of the intellectual firmament, lived in a time when state power was held by regimes bent on annihilating him and his democratic, socialist, Jewish compatriots. He was caught between murderous authorities and escape by suicide and chose the latter. We are not in such a moment or place. We should not lose sight of the privilege we enjoy in this moment, in this space: we may challenge power, we may participate in democratic politics. To be able to offer students some alternative to received wisdom, to denaturalize power, and to destabilize orthodoxies is a great privilege of our position as professors and scholars.

Notes

Writing the address for what was a wonderful meeting was far more pleasurable than I anticipated, much as was being president of an association filled with engaged and generous scholars. I thank everyone who took part in organizing it and who participated in the many great panels. For their comments on earlier versions of this essay, I thank Julia Adams, Lynne Haney, Kim Morgan, Paul Moskowitz, George Steinmetz, Linda Zerilli, and, most especially, the students in my graduate seminar on comparative and historical approaches to politics, who, days before I was to give the talk, listened to my trial run, suggested key revisions, and inspired me with their enthusiasm for the political and intellectual projects of historical social science and social science history.

- 1 I am proud that my granddaughter Rowan was taken by her mother, my daughter Joanna, to her first political event—the Gay Pride Parade in San Francisco—at age one and a half.
- 2 Adams, Clemens, and I are the volume's coeditors; the contributors are Richard Biernacki, Rogers Brubaker, Bruce Carruthers, Rebecca Emigh, Phil Gorski, the late Roger Gould, Meyer Kestnbaum, Edgar Kiser and Justin Baer, Ming-cheng Lo, Zine Magubane, Nader Sohrabi, Margaret Somers, Lyn Spillman and Russell Faeges, and George Steinmetz.

- 3 The Tillys' bibliography is too vast to cite here, but for beginners, how about looking at two classics, C. Tilly 1978 and L. Tilly and Scott 1978? And see the recent essays on Charles Tilly's scholarly contribution, on the occasion of his being awarded the Hirschman Prize, from an earlier issue of this journal (Calhoun 2010; Katznelson 2010; Scott 2010).
- 4 My dissatisfaction with this sundering and my memories of deeper exchanges across history and the human sciences helped me decide on the meeting's theme, "Power and Politics."
- 5 For the 2010 meeting, we organized a roundtable, "A Retrospective on *Bringing the State Back In*," on the occasion of the 25th birthday of the book (Evans et al. 1985), which, according to the estimate of the panelist (and past SSHA president) Andrew Abbott, had an audience of about 10 percent of conference attendees. Featuring the comments of several prominent scholars—Abbott, Julia Adams (another past president), Karen Barkey, *Bringing the State Back In* coeditor Theda Skocpol (yet another past SSHA president), and Dan Slater (incoming program cochair)—it elicited a very lively discussion, in which it was clear that the movement to bring the state back in (and the volume that became its symbol) was central to the intellectual development of a very wide swath of social science historians (including me), who in that discussion displayed the wild diversity of positions and reactions it has so productively provoked.
- 6 Another lively panel at the 2010 meeting, "Whither Historical Institutionalism?" featuring the comments of leading institutionalist scholars, Clemens, Meryl Kenny, Jim Mahoney, and Margy Weir, emphasized the critical leverage that historicizing brings to this brand of institutionalism vis-à-vis its rivals, rational choice and so-called sociological institutionalism, and brought out the need for further work on the mechanisms underlying change and continuity and for attention to agency, multiplicity, and gender, among other things.
- 7 While gender and sexuality have often been left out, at least US variants of institutionalism are often centrally concerned with race—perhaps not surprisingly, given the centrality of slavery and race relations in American political development and for its students in the SSHA. At the presidential panel "Race, Nation, Power, and Politics," Christian Davenport and Rogers Smith chronicled US political developments vis-à-vis a kind of census of violence against African Americans and racial policies and legal regimes, respectively.
- 8 See, e.g., Bellingham and Mathis 1994; Boris 1995; Gal 1994; Goodwin 1997; Gordon 1994; Hobson 1993; Koven and Michel 1990; Lake 1994; Mink 1998; Roberts 1995; Skocpol 1992; Valverde 1992—all work that was first presented in these SSHA "miniconferences" in the 1990s, which also featured work reflecting the cultural turn, e.g., Bannerji 2001; Stoler 2002. The SSHA program cochairs Jennifer Mittelstadt and Kimberly Morgan have contributed to the scholarship on gender and welfare in the 2000s (see Mittelstadt 2005; Morgan 2006). In 2010, taking off from that legacy, Beth Bernstein (also one of the coordinators for the Women, Gender, and Sexuality network) and Lynne Haney put together three sessions that featured key

- issues of this moment in gender studies: “Reconceptualizing Carework,” “Feminist Political Economy,” and “The Agency Gap in Worklife Balance.” In her contribution to the presidential panel “Gender, Power, Politics,” Mittelstadt explicitly addressed the ongoing problem of “mainstreaming” gender into studies of American politics.
- 9 Michel retired from the journal and was replaced by Rianne Mahon, who continues as an editor, and Fiona Williams, who has in turn retired and been replaced by Deborah Brennan; we have been joined by several associate editors, including Kimberly Morgan; see sp.oxfordjournals.org for full details.
 - 10 See Connell 1995 for a classic gender studies text on masculinities and war; see Kestnbaum and Mann 2004 for a historically rich account of war making, mobilization, and masculinities. At the aforementioned presidential panel “Race, Nation, Power, and Politics,” we also had a fascinating exchange between the panelists Barnor Hesse and George Steinmetz on colonialism, empire, and the theories of Carl Schmitt, who has written rather infamously about the creation of “us” and “them” in politics.
 - 11 Of course, even while I appreciate the broadening of what is considered “political” that has come especially from the culturalists, those who have opted to analyze the “dark side” have also often neglected political economy. I would like to see analyses that acknowledge both the “right and the left hands” of the state, following Pierre Bourdieu (see the interview in which Bourdieu invokes the metaphor, www.variant.org.uk/32texts/bourdieu32.html), or, as I think is probably even more apt, metaphorically linking the state’s multiple functions, effects, and activities in the “many hands” of Kali, the goddess of time and change—someone to join Clio as our muse? I do not want to return to highly abstract notions such as we saw in the 1970s–1980s debates over “theories of the state” and the deductive and ahistorical forms of theorizing the links among different activities and practices, but I do miss the aspiration to understand connections across arenas of politics.
 - 12 Sahlins (1995) makes this case even more stunningly in his critique of Gananath Obeyesekere (1992) on the question of “how ‘natives’ think.” Other scholars, such as Adams (1999), have shown the historical specificity of “rational action” even within our own societies.
 - 13 Ivan Ermakoff organized and contributed to a presidential panel that attempted to bridge the conference themes of 2009 and 2010, “Power: Subjects, Agents, Objects,” with comments from Rick Biernacki, Phil Gorski, and Paul McLean, who, drawing on their own past investigations (see, e.g., Biernacki 2005; Ermakoff 2008; Gorski 2003; McLean 2007), covered a prodigious expanse of historical ground in theorizing the relationship between power and agency.
 - 14 How to analyze “Gender, Power, Politics” in this post-deconstructive, post-structuralist moment was taken up in the presidential panel of that title featuring Jennifer Mittelstadt, Dorothy Roberts, and Elizabeth Wingrove.
 - 15 Rose (1986: 14–15) argues that the concept of a divided subjectivity is not in fact incompatible with political analysis and demand but that, indeed, “feminism, through its foregrounding of sexuality (site of fantasies, impasses, conflict and

- desire) and of sexual difference . . . is in a privileged position to challenge the dualities (inside/outside, victim/aggressor, real event/fantasy, and even good/evil) upon which so much traditional political analysis has so often relied.” Steinmetz (2007: 60) notes that “the psychoanalytic emphasis on the doubling of conscious processes and motives by unconscious ones opens up a line of political analysis that is distinct from the Marxist, Saidian and Bourdieuan ones.”
- 16 See also Ortner 2006 and Dirks et al. 1993.
- 17 This style of work is well represented in the movement to study taxation, ably led by my colleague and program committee chair Monica Prasad, who has brought a new series of miniconferences—focusing on taxation—to the SSHA (and see Martin et al. 2009). It is also prominent in comparative studies of social provision and regulation, such as featured in assorted comparative politics venues (see, e.g., Huber and Stephens 2001 or some of the research networks active in Europe, such as the Nordic Centre of Excellence: Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Model [REASSESS, reassess.no/id/14497] and Reconciling Work and Welfare in Europe [RECWOWE, recwowe.vitamib.com]) and the International Sociological Association Research Committee 19 on Poverty, Social Welfare, and Social Policy (see, e.g., Béland 2010; Jenson 2009; Korpi 2000; Korpi and Palme 1998; Palier 2010; Orloff 2005 offers an overview of this literature from the perspective of the theoretical debates in historical social science).
- 18 Similarly, the social science history practiced in a number of European research networks focused on social provision has joined political economy, regulation, and culture (see, e.g., studies coming out of the Nordic Welfare State—Historical Foundations and Future Challenges [NordWel], such as Aunesluoma and Kettunen 2008; Petersen and Lundqvist 2010).
- 19 This is the subject of my own current project, “Farewell to Maternalism? State Policies, Feminist Politics, and Mothers’ Employment,” which owes its inspiration largely to the networks I have developed at the SSHA.
- 20 Haney reflects the broader trends to theorize emotion, affect, identification. For another excellent but theoretically quite different example of these trends, see Ermakoff’s *Ruling Oneself Out* (2008) and the *Social Science History* forum on that volume (Adut 2010; Ermakoff 2010; Hall 2010; Kimeldorf 2010).
- 21 The strain of scholarship that deals with improvisation, creativity, cultural schema, and templates for solving problems is, I think, also critical for political analysis (see, e.g., Joas 1996; Sewell 1992, 2005). Biernacki has argued particularly persuasively that goal-oriented action cannot be the only route for culture to enter historical accounts (see, e.g., Biernacki 2005 and his comments at the 2010 SSHA panel “Power: Subjects, Agency, Objects”). For some scholars, pragmatism offers a promising entry point for investigations of creative action and the emergence of new organizational and institutional forms; these issues were discussed at the SSHA panel on pragmatism organized by Neil Gross, with contributions from Gerry Herrigel, Ann Mische, Woody Powell, and Chris Winship.
- 22 Aldon Morris organized a panel on the scholarly legacy of Du Bois, with contribu-

- tions from Cheryl Gilkes and Earl Wright II, while past president Ira Katznelson (1999) titled his address “Du Bois’s Century.”
- 23 Both Steinmetz (2007) and Michael Hanchard (1998, 2006) have taken up Fanon’s legacy for understanding racist colonialisms and their aftermaths.
 - 24 This lineup of guiding theoretical influences inspired my selections for the presidential panel “Rethinking Power,” which included Eley, Hanchard, Steven Lukes, Mariana Valverde, and Zerilli.
 - 25 The “femsem” took the inspiration for its name from the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s “demsem” (demography seminar); it was founded in the late 1980s by a group of brilliant feminist graduate students, too numerous to mention here, alongside a few intrepid junior faculty members who all felt that no serious sociology program should be without a gender concentration.
 - 26 As with many historical events, there are disputes about what actually happened. Take a look at www.youtube.com/watch?v=44vQWvhxca0&feature=related and the myriad spinoffs on the incident. The irony of Zidane *representing* France would be more enjoyable if it were not the case that anti-immigrant politics were taking a particularly vicious turn in these recent years, echoing earlier episodes of European history when the principle of “us” versus “them” took murderous forms.
 - 27 The presidential panel “Rethinking *Gender and Power*,” which focused on Raewyn Connell’s (1987) foundational text, noteworthy for its attention to history, politics, and subjectivity, featured leading gender scholars—Canning, Clare deCouteau, Myra Marx Ferree, and Raka Ray—grappling with Connell’s legacy and its relevance for contemporary issues in gender analysis: bodies, subject formation, discourse, materiality, and materialism.

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