

the legislative process. Sophisticated techniques are used to gauge the influence of variables and to identify those having only a negligible influence. One lingering question I had, however, is whether transparency as measured through open meetings laws is all that meaningful for altering the information environment. Chapter 3 shows the many different ways that open meetings laws can be measured and Chapter 2 demonstrates that lawmakers certainly had concerns about adopting such laws. But we don't learn much about how dimensions of transparency matter for the information one obtains about the legislature. In other words, what sorts of details about negotiations or compromises are revealed in states with open meetings laws compared to those without? Such information could be acquired from content analyses of news coverage or perhaps by conducting interviews of reporters familiar with the practical effects of these changes. Understanding how transparency alters the information environment is a critical link in the causal chain that requires further investigation. In the conclusion the authors mention the need to consider media effects and this is certainly a question worthy of future study.

Another area that deserves additional study is the role of interest groups. The analysis shows that open meetings laws increase the advantages that incumbents enjoy in PAC funding and lead to a growth in the number of lobbying organizations. Given these findings, future scholarship should consider additional dimensions of interest group involvement. Does it affect the strategies interest groups employ? For example, does the richer information environment provided by openness lead groups to focus more on insider strategies (rather than outsider strategies)? Does openness ultimately enhance the degree of influence these groups have on the policies that legislatures produce?


While much is left for future work, it is important to recognize the book's important theoretical contributions to the literature on legislative politics and representation. It leverages a stunning array of data made available over the past 10–15 years and uses sophisticated analyses to produce critical findings that will be cited for years to come. It sets a standard for how best to utilize differences across states to address important questions about institutional reform.

Throwing the Party: How the Supreme Court Puts Political Party Organizations Ahead of Voters. By

Wayne Batchis. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

350p. \$120.00 cloth, \$39.99 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1537592723000427

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Wayne Batchis has authored a landmark book explaining how the Supreme Court has handed down decision after decision strengthening political party organizations at the

expense of the preferences of government officials and voters. From the start, in chapter 1, the author argues that “[i]ndividual court decisions may, on their own, appear logical and well-reasoned, but the big picture is all-too-often deeply incoherent” (p. 13). The “big picture” that Batchis refers to is the wild expansion of power and engrained constitutional protections political parties have been given by the Supreme Court, while those who would rein in political party influence have been left with few options for change. *Throwing the Party: How the Supreme Court Puts Political Party Organizations Ahead of Voters* is a thoughtful, thorough, and convincing indictment of Supreme Court jurisprudence that has enabled the two main political parties in the United States to metastasize into organizations that seem unable to be restrained.

The book consists of four parts and fourteen chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Part I, titled “Foundations,” provides exactly that. The author explains how and why political parties are unique when compared to, say, interest groups and why applying judicial standards to other similar, but not the same, organizations is inappropriate and damaging to our democracy. Batchis argues that, in his view, political parties are made up of three separate groups: *party in the electorate*, *party organization*, and *party in government*. He explains that the *party in the electorate* is comprised of voters, or people who identify with one of the two major political parties. The *party organization(s)* are the leaders of two main parties, such as the people in charge of the Democratic and Republican national committees. Finally, the *party in government* includes elected members of either party. Each of these groups has different motivations—sometimes voters want more regulation on campaign finance or changes to the primary system—but the preferences of the party organizations almost always win out.

Part I also lays out the book's approach to examining the relationship between political party organizations and the Supreme Court. Using specific policy areas, such as who can access primary elections, campaign finance regulation, ballot access, and gerrymandering, the author explains how party organizations have captured control of these important levers of government and received constitutional protections via Court decisions.

Part II begins the work of uncovering how the Supreme Court has codified constitutional protections for political parties, beginning with access to party primary elections. It gives the reader an exhaustive history of how political parties began their primary election systems and how they have evolved through most of American history. Chapter 5 presents a hypothetical pair of voters who are engaging in the various types of open, closed, or semi-closed primary systems. In following these hypothetical voters, Batchis explains how some voters are content with current primary election systems, but also, and importantly, he discusses voters who do not fit neatly into either party or belong to the

dominant party of their state, who often run into issues when voting in primaries. Batchis notes that the Court consistently “treats party association as if it were purely voluntary. The result is disenfranchisement, a consequence that is in significant tension with the Supreme Court’s right to vote jurisprudence” (p. 98). Typically, when the Supreme Court hears a case regarding one of the political parties, it judges it as if it were only the party organization, and ignores the other two thirds of what parties are: the electorate and elected officials. This singular view has greatly expanded the power and influence of party organizations while diminishing the power of the party in government, and especially the party in the electorate. In a particularly apt example, the author describes how voters in California voted to enact a blanket primary system that both the major political party organizations opposed. The Supreme Court, as the author notes, decided against the state officials and electorate, shielding the parties by again affirming their First Amendment rights.

Part III details the long and winding history of campaign finance regulations that, while enacted by voters and elected government officials, have time and again been overturned by the Supreme Court due to its doctrine of assuming the parties are entirely private entities with constitutional protections barring their regulation. The Court has so enshrined constitutional protections to political party organizations that “critics of the *Citizens United* decision who feel that its holding damaged the electoral process are often heard arguing for the highly unlikely remedy of amending the Constitution: The majoritarian option of ordinary legislation has been deemed irrelevant by judicial fiat” (p. 146).

Part IV uses ballot access and gerrymandering decisions to further demonstrate the issues involved in regulating political party organizations and offers a novel proposal to potentially fix the situation. In chapter 11 the author brings up an array of cases pertaining to access to official state ballots. In short, the political party organizations dominate these decisions and have in one way or another crafted most regulations regarding who can be on a ballot and what the requirements are. Regarding redistricting and gerrymandering, it is obvious to any observer that political party organizations have captured this constitutionally mandated procedure. In recent years, complaints of highly gerrymandered districts have not been of interest to the Supreme Court. In attempts to halt or slow down partisanship in redistricting, Batchis points out that multiple jurisdictions have created nonpartisan commissions with mixed success.

Part IV also offers a potential solution to party organizations having entrenched constitutional protections: parties as limited public forums. The author suggests that the previous choice to categorize political parties as expressive associations was a mistake, and that limited public forums are the best way forward. This designation “provides a better framework for constitutionalizing the

political party system It would acknowledge the extent to which parties are inextricably integrated into the American system of representative government, while at the same time respecting the crucial traditional role they play in vigorously disseminating and facilitating free speech” (pp. 223–24). In other words, the constitutional middle ground proposed here would allow for restrictions to be placed on party activities like fundraising or discrimination, but leave be their ability to be forums where ideas can be exchanged freely.

The author drives the point home that political party organizations are unique and need a unique judicial solution. The connections Batchis makes between expansive growth in influence from political party organizations over time and Supreme Court jurisprudence is novel and extraordinarily well done. He fleshes out underdeveloped literature surrounding both the influence of the Supreme Court and how political party organizations have grasped control over most levers of government. Batchis has a straightforward solution for this issue that the party electorate and party in government appear to desperately want but cannot seem to get enacted: limits on party power. By using the idea of designating political parties as limited public forums, Batchis gives the Court a way out by allowing the free exchange of ideas to continue while also putting some safeguards in place to help preserve our democracy.

Any scholar of political parties or judicial politics should take the time to read the arguments in this important book. The author clearly and exhaustively explains how political parties have become as entrenched as they are today, expertly explains how the unclear and contradictory jurisprudence of the Supreme Court is squarely to blame, and offers the most likely way to set things right.

Experimental Thinking: A Primer on Social Science

Experiments. By James Druckman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 228p. \$99.99 cloth, \$29.99 paper.
doi:10.1017/S1537592723000294

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James Druckman begins his new book, *Experimental Thinking: A Primer on Social Science Experiments*, by underscoring a remarkable contrast between two presidential addresses given to the American Political Science Association. In 1909, A. Lawrence Lowell declared “we are limited by the impossibility of experiment. Politics is an observational, not an experimental, science.” Yet by 2019 another APSA president, Rogers Smith, asked whether “an excessive emphasis on experiments will unduly constrict the questions political scientists ask.” Clearly, the striking difference reflects the very rapid recent expansion, especially over the past two decades, of experimental political science.